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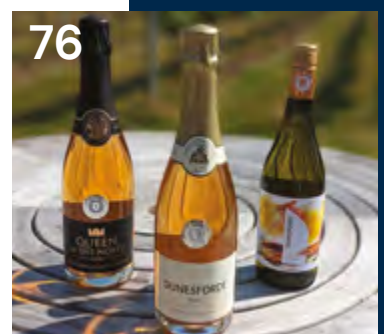
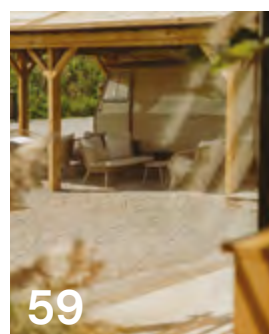
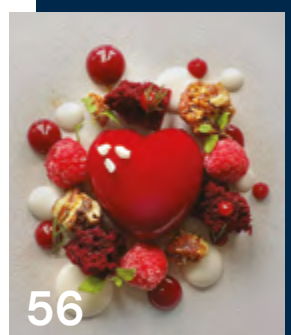
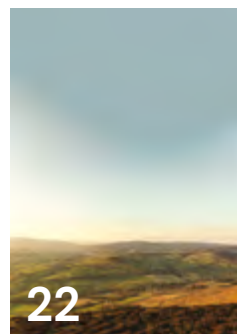
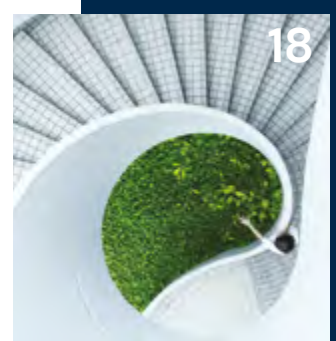
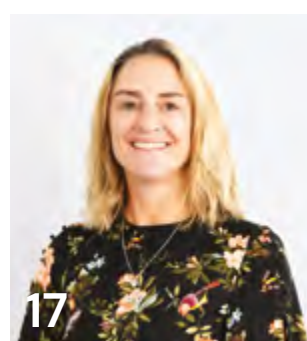
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Contributors Round up



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.



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.

Let me introduce myself

Editor's notes from
Jessica Laing



As we firmly settle in to 2024, I'm feeling optimistic about the coming year – my first as editor of Portfolio North.

After a three-year hiatus – during which time I pivoted into new realms of content management, PR, marketing and copywriting – I'm delighted to have returned to the world of publishing.

Magazines have always had a special place in my heart. A journalist and writer since the tender age of 21, I've been fortunate enough to lead and edit a number of brilliant titles during my career – most of which were, and still are, firmly rooted in the North East.

Home to a growing number of trail-blazing businesses and inspiring individuals, the North East – and indeed Yorkshire – is never short of fantastic stories – and it's always been a joy of mine to be able to share them in the pages of a magazine. Something tangible. Something you actually take the time to sit with, indulge in, lose yourself in. A rare thing in today's fast-paced, on-the-go, digital world.

I remain a big believer in the power of print and I'm delighted to add Portfolio North to my roster. As editor, it's my job to make each edition better than the last, with insightful

and impactful editorial that engages, educates and entertains. And I vow to do just that.

I'm looking forward to taking good care of the magazine's editorial vision and, in time, boosting its reputation – and I hope you'll join me on what I'm confident will be an exciting and rewarding journey. I'd like to extend a warm and heartfelt thank you to Cassie and the rest of the team for welcoming me into the fold.

Even when you're back doing what you've always done and loved, settling in to a new environment, getting to know a new product and finding your place within a new team can feel daunting – but their unwavering support and confidence in me have made the last couple of months feel like home.

I'd also like to thank all the new clients I've met – many of whom you'll read about in the pages of this edition – for their well wishes.

Here at Portfolio North, we are committed to building and nurturing the relationships we have with our clients – the people who trust us to

help fly the flag for their business and personal brand – and it's been a pleasure getting to know them.

In our first Yorkshire edition of the year, we've given you an extra helping of must-read content to help you kick off 2024 in the best way possible – and I can assure you it's only a taste of what's to come.

From success stories in the worlds of investment, property and lending, to expert advice from big names in environmental, architectural design and more, we bring you the latest business news and updates, coupled with exclusive interviews you won't read anywhere else.

If that wasn't enough, we also take you on a tour of Middleton Lodge's new and highly-anticipated Forest Spa, whisk you away to one of Yorkshire's most luxurious country escapes, Kip & Nook, reveal the best places to spend ski season and talk lessons in life and business with one of Yorkshire's best-loved figures – Valeria Sykes.

Call me bias now, but it's a real page-turner, I assure you. Happy reading.

News from across Yorkshire

Henley Group expands its offering with £2.1 million investment in new steel division



Yorkshire-based specialist construction firm, Henley Group, has launched a new division, HZS Stainless Steel, to expand its offering for clients within the construction industry.

Leading specialist construction firm, Henley Group, has expanded its offering within the construction industry by investing £2.1 million into the launch of a new division, HZS Stainless Steel, based in Wakefield.

The new steelwork division will manufacture stainless steel components such as brackets, restraints, and fixings for GRC (Glass-fibre Reinforced Concrete) projects. The new division complements the Group's established GRC cladding, stonework, and masonry offering, completed under its Henley Stone Specialists division. The new HZS division aims to increase efficiency and accuracy for clients by eliminating the need for multiple contractors. Henley Group can now manufacture and install steelwork components needed for projects inhouse, meaning cost and lead time efficiencies for customers, resulting in greater transparency for the end client.

To deliver the offering, Henley Group has acquired a 10,000 sqft factory in Ossett, strategically placed adjacent to J39 of the M1. The Group has invested £500,000 on industry-leading equipment and machinery, including CNC machines, press brake folding machines and a state-of-the-art laser cutter. A team of eight specialists have recently been recruited within the new division, including two welders, one of whom brings over 30 years of welding experience.

Esh Group set for 'even greener' future with 2040 net zero target



North of England firm, Esh Group, has outlined its commitment to becoming a more sustainable contractor with the launch of a carbon reduction strategy named Even Greener. By taking achievable steps across the business to reduce carbon emissions year-on-year, Esh Group aims to achieve net zero by 2040.

This year, Esh signed up to the Science Based Targets Initiative (SBTi), committing to both short and long-term goals, with a key part of the Even Greener strategy being a series of headline targets to be achieved ahead of 2040. Targets include 100% of owned fleet being fully electrified or low carbon vehicles by 2035, and a 65% reduction in business operating carbon by 2034 - specifically, Scope 1, 2, and Scope 3 waste, business travel, upstream transportation, and staff commuting.

Chief executive, Andy Radcliffe, said: "The subject of sustainability and carbon reduction is of huge significance to the way we, and the industry, does business now and in the future. We must make changes and contribute to a worldwide sustained reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. It is essential that the targets and plans we make, can be achieved.

"A considerable amount of work has gone on behind the scenes for over a year now, with the support of an external consultant. We have analysed our baseline data, identified opportunities and considered what steps we can take across the business towards an operating model that will reduce our carbon emissions year-on-year.

"This is the beginning of our journey, one that we are committed to, and one that we are not alone on, as the construction industry as a whole discovers the best route to take."

Yorkshire plant-based firm hire 'perfect fit' as CEO to oversee boom period



A sustainable food manufacturer has appointed an experienced new CEO ahead of a crucial stage in the firm's growth. MYCO are ramping up production of their plant-based protein at a new purpose-built production site in North Yorkshire.

David Wood has been hired as CEO as part of their growth strategy, which will see almost 70 new jobs created over the next three years.

"I'm thrilled to be joining MYCO especially at such an exciting time in the company's expansion," said David.

"This company has huge potential, and extraordinary work is being done here every single day to make a new generation of mouthwatering and sustainable plant-based products that make swapping out meat that bit easier for consumers.

"I was blown-away by the vision and ethos at MYCO, and I couldn't be more excited about the future and where the company is headed."

Bringing with him a quarter of a century of leadership experience from across the food industry, David has a

proven track record of building and revitalising business.

In his new role, he will oversee the development and launch of MYCO's new environmentally sustainable food strategy at the firm's pioneering 20,000sqft site in Leeming Bar. The vertically farmed production unit is the first of its kind in the UK, and MYCO's co-founder and chairman, John Shepherd, added: "This is an exciting time for MYCO, and we know David is the right person to help us grow the business."

New partner joins Schofield Sweeney



Yorkshire-based law firm Schofield Sweeney has appointed Stephen Lewis as a partner in their litigation team.

Stephen has over 25 years of experience resolving issues and disputes

for all sizes of businesses and private individuals.

Stephen commented, "I am delighted to join a gem of a Yorkshire firm with a truly national outlook. I was instantly

attracted to their "people first" approach to clients and colleagues and I'm looking forward to actively supporting the development of the business and its clients for many years to come."

Stephen's specialisms include commercial and contract disputes, material damage, product liability, professional risks, insurance policy disputes and volume damage recovery programmes (highways infrastructure, buildings and vehicles).

Stephen has devoted a large part of the last 5 years to seeking justice and compensation for sub-postmasters affected by the Post Office Horizon IT scandal. He has overturned criminal convictions and secured several millions of pounds of compensation and is delighted that ITV's drama 'Mr Bates vs The Post Office' has finally made the wider public aware of the ordeal many sub-postmasters have been through. He will continue to support those who have not yet claimed compensation for their financial losses or have not sought to clear their name after being prosecuted for theft or false accounting.

Alistair Brownlee MBE becomes official sport ambassador to the 2024 UK Corporate Games in Leeds



Two-time Olympic Triathlon Champion Alistair Brownlee MBE has today become the Official Sport Ambassador to the 2024 UK Corporate Games that will be taking place in Leeds.

The UK Corporate Games, which has been running since 1993, is ranked as the

most comprehensive multi-sport event in this country. Following a joint bid from Leeds City Council and the University of Leeds, the games will be utilising some of the best sport venues across the city for its fun-packed programme. The University of Leeds has unrivalled sports facilities

such as The Brownlee Centre, the UK's first purpose-built triathlon training centre and the Edge, a state-of-the-art gym.

In line with the city's drive to host major sporting events, the UK Corporate Games will follow a long line of successful large-scale events that have been hosted in recent years including the Rugby League World Cup, World Triathlon Championship Series, and the Ashes. Next summer's Games are expected to generate more than two millionw for the local economy and will showcase Leeds to visiting business representatives as an attractive option if their company is considering relocation or expansion.

The UK Corporate Games will see thousands of competitors from small and large organisations across all business sectors take part. It gives businesses the opportunity to integrate and engage employees, network, address CSR strategies and raise brand awareness. The Games are designed to be inclusive and open to all for the benefit of all, it is the perfect event for organisations to put staff welfare at the top of their agenda's.

There is an extensive list of over 20 sports to choose from, ranging from golf, to cycling, to table tennis. Whether its dragon boat racing, basketball, softball or padel, there is something for everyone.

Multi-million-pound renovation of Edwardian Inn completes in North Yorkshire



A multi-million-pound renovation of a well-known Edwardian hotel in the cathedral city of Ripon has been completed - with stunning results. Formerly called the Ripon Spa Hotel, the elegant, historic, newly-named Ripon Inn has been through a 40-week construction programme of extensive internal and external works, on behalf of its owners, The Inn Collection Group.

Silverstone Building Consultancy was project manager and contract administrator for the renovation which added 18 additional bedrooms and involved a major upgrade of its public rooms including a ballroom, terrace bar and self-contained Turf Tavern Bar Bistro.

The 58-bed inn, which is set in six acres of gardens, has had a new state-of-the-art kitchen and a specialist broiler grill installed - aimed at establishing the venue as a go-to place in Ripon for quality, pub-style food.

The property, which closed in summer 2020 and was acquired by its new owners in 2021, is now reopen to the public.

Aldwark Manor Estate unveils further plans for new fine dining restaurant



Aldwark Manor Estate has revealed more details about its plans to introduce an exceptional fine dining restaurant in Spring 2024.

The £3 million addition to the North Yorkshire hotel is part of significant, ongoing investment that will further enhance its luxury offering.

The hotel's owners have so far invested over £18 million in the estate, including this latest development, with more investment in the spa, conference facilities and additional bedrooms yet to come. The new fine dining restaurant

- Chartwell - will offer tasting menus boasting locally sourced, seasonal ingredients, classically and accurately cooked, to deliver an exceptional and memorable dining experience. A team of talented chefs will deliver British cuisine with a modern Savoy twist, influenced by French chef, restaurateur and writer, August Escoffier. The menu will feature a diverse array of dishes, each a masterpiece in its own right, designed to cater to a variety of palates.

Christophe Gitton, Estate Director at Aldwark Manor Estate, says: "This is an

incredibly exciting chapter for Aldwark Manor Estate. The owners are investing heavily in the hotel to ensure we can continue to deliver excellence. We can't wait to introduce this exceptional dining experience to our guests which will capture 1940s glamour whilst bringing the individuality and 'never ordinary' stamp that you'd expect from our wonderful estate. We're also delighted to welcome Chris O'Callaghan as our new Executive Head Chef and there's no doubt that Chartwell will put Aldwark Manor Estate on the foodie map."

Samira Effa competes in top cooking competition show



Samira Effa, Head Chef at Bar & Restaurant EightyEight, is competing in the 2024 series of hit BBC cooking competition, Great British Menu. This is Samira's third time competing on the hit

BBC TV show, previously taking part in the 2019 and 2020 series. Samira has been Head Chef since June 2022 at the Asian-inspired EightyEight, located at Grantley Hall hotel in North Yorkshire.

Samira Effa, said: "I am so proud to be taking part in the Great British Menu for the third time this year, the fact that I've been asked back again is really humbling. The show has a fantastic following with viewers from not just the chef world, but further afield and I love to see it ignite excitement in food for so many people. It really demonstrates that food can bring people together in that shared enjoyment of an experience."

Simon Crannage, Executive Chef at Grantley Hall, said: "It's fantastic to see Samira on our screens once again, showcasing her culinary passion and flying the flag for Yorkshire. Samira has exceptional talent and I'm extremely proud that she is able to express this on Great British Menu once again this year. I'm sure it will come across on your screens, but Samira champions Yorkshire produce wherever she can in her cooking, with so many fantastic ingredients coming out of the Yorkshire region to use. We're looking forward to watching her journey on the show and wanted to say a huge congratulations to her for competing for the third time."



New 'Nike Rise' concept store to launch at Trinity Leeds

Nike has announced it will open its concept store 'Nike Rise' at Trinity Leeds this year.

The 10,000sq ft store will take a prime location on the ground floor at Trinity Leeds, in the former Victoria's Secret unit. The Nike Rise store in Leeds is expected to open in 2024 and aims to enhance shopping experiences through innovative digital experiences and services that enliven the sport pulse of the city, including a digitally powered Footwear Fastlane which shares footwear product stories, benefits and technical information, Nike by You personalisation - allowing shoppers to customize new Nike products and a bra and leggings

destination, helping female athletes find their right fit. Steven Foster, Centre Director at Trinity Leeds, said: "We're proud to welcome Nike Rise to Trinity Leeds, giving guests the chance to experience something new and exciting that they won't be able to find anywhere else in the region."

"It speaks volumes that such an iconic international brand has chosen Trinity Leeds, demonstrating the strength of the centre - and the city - as a go-to retail destination. "Following in the footsteps of other big names including Zara, as well as new arrivals Lounge and Build-A-Bear, Trinity Leeds continues to attract global retailers to the city."

Six by Nico takes diners down the rabbit hole with new menu



Six by Nico Leeds, the conceptual culinary experience which rotates its themed menu every six weeks, is bringing a touch of childhood nostalgia with its latest innovative six-course tasting menu - available from 15th January to 25th February 2024.

Introducing the 'Mad Hatters Tea Party', a brand-new six-course dining experience handcrafted to bring to

life Alice's adventures in Wonderland through a series of edible delights. The latest culinary masterpiece will be the sixth menu to be served up at the renowned restaurant and promises to transport guests into another dimension with its creative selection of courses, as snacks and aperitifs. This menu is set to offer an unparalleled dining experience, blending unique flavours, textures, and presentations that defy expectations within the Leeds foodie scene.

Chef Nico Simeone spoke of the latest menu, "The Mad Hatter's Tea Party is our ultimate celebration of creativity and taste. Our commitment to redefining food experiences is reflected in every dish, and we're so excited for guests in Leeds to join us on a tasting menu adventure where gastronomy meets the whimsical and fun. I am beyond proud of the success and growth that Six by Nico has had in Leeds and I'm keen that this new menu will receive the same incredible reception that its successors have."

A first look inside Leeds' luxury Oriental restaurant



From the owners of Leeds-favourite Blue Sakura, Blue Pavilion is a new, fine-dining restaurant which celebrates the essence of East Asian cuisine.

The impressive £3m venue, situated off Merrion Street, Woodhouse Lane and Albion Street, boasts stunning interiors, inspired by Chinese culture including blossom, lantern lights, and Chinese Zodiac statues.

The stunning restaurant also features an impressive bar, which will serve premium cocktails such as "Jiuzhaigou Hu" (created with Roku, Aperitif Wine, Blue Curacao, Lemon, and Bitters), as well as exclusive spirits, including The Macallan Sherry Oak (25-year-old).

Blue Pavilion's menu will include a number of set menus as well as an a la carte menu, featuring signature dishes such as Dim Sum Platters, Peking Duck with Caviar, Japanese Shiroyaki Wagyu Beef, a sought-after delicacy, and Taiwanese Sanbei Chicken.

The restaurant also boasts three private dining rooms which can accommodate between 11 and eight guests.

The site features a state-of-the-art adjoining karaoke venue, K-CUBE, where guests can enjoy post-dinner entertainment in a private and stylish setting. The largest of the three private dining rooms also has its own private karaoke room.

Chiu Tong Huang, Director at Blue Pavilion, added: "Blue Pavilion has been designed with luxury in mind - from every element of the food and drink offering, to of course, the venue itself. The result is something truly stunning and unique that will captivate our diners and offer a gastronomic experience like no other."

Azets in Yorkshire announces six senior promotions



Azets, the Top 10 UK Accountancy firm, has announced six senior promotions across the Yorkshire region.

Becky Maguire and Claire Needham have been appointed Office Managing Partners of Leeds and York, respectively, whilst Nick Barker, Stephen Garbett, Jessica Lawrence and Chris Blackburn, are promoted from Director to Partner.

Becky Maguire, Head of Tax for the Yorkshire region, will now also oversee the 120-strong Leeds office in her new role. Claire Needham, who leads the

Technical Accounting and Valuations team who help clients with more complex needs for various transactions such as initial public offerings (IPO), de-listings, mergers and acquisitions, will now also manage the team of 140 in York.

The appointment of new Office Managing Partners comes at a time of continued growth and opportunity for the York and Leeds offices of Azets and is recognition of the leading presence the firm has in each city.

Within the Corporate Finance team, both Nick and Stephen have been

promoted from Director to Partner. Nick Barker has 20 years' experience working on a variety of transactions for owner-managed businesses, including business sales and acquisitions, MBOs and MBIs, and fundraising projects across several different sectors, including financial services, manufacturing, transport, veterinary and healthcare, retail, food and hospitality.

Stephen Garbett focuses on mergers and acquisitions, as well as private equity and finance raising transactions. His experience spans a range of sectors including renewable energy, manufacturing, healthcare, IT, arts and leisure.

Jessica Lawrence has been promoted to Partner in the firm's growing audit team. Working with a wide range of clients, from owner-managed start-up businesses to large corporate entities, she also leads the region's audit work for the charity and not-for-profit sectors, bringing together a multi-disciplinary team to service client needs.

Working within the Accounts and Business Advisory Services team, Chris Blackburn specialises in providing advice to owner managed businesses in the hospitality sector. Within his new role as Partner, Chris will continue to also provide specialist compliance and advisory services to the equine sector, including horse trainers, breeders and owners.

New comms agency Jasper launches with investment from Umpf



Communications and marketing business Jasper has launched in Leeds, following investment from established award-winning agency Umpf.

The new entity will share office space with Umpf on the city's waterfront and both parties will take advantage of collaborative working opportunities.

Launched by Julian Pearce, a PR professional with two decades of experience in media relations, stakeholder comms, marketing and brand, Jasper promises an agile approach to communications, putting an outsourced expert at the boardroom table for clients.

The arrangement gives Jasper an

immediate physical footprint in the heart of the city centre, and the ability to draw on creativity, resource and experience from Umpf's 14-strong team, based in Leeds and London. Jasper launches with a strong line-up of clients and project work, some of which is being delivered alongside Umpf.

On setting up the new business, Julian said: "Jasper represents a long-held ambition of mine to set up and run my own agency bringing together the knowledge I've gathered and my own ethos on good communications. I've lived in Leeds half my life and am proud to call the city my home. Having delivered strategic communications advice for some of Yorkshire's brightest and best brands, as well as major national organisations, I'm excited for this next chapter.

"Umpf coming on board and taking a stake in the business is the icing on the cake for me. Adrian and I started our PR careers at the same agency and I spent a spell working alongside him around a decade ago. I hugely admire their work and feel honoured to have been welcomed in by such a great team."

Making waves – superyacht company grows senior team as global expansion continues





West Nautical – the international superyacht company with head offices in Newcastle – has announced the appointment of two new senior team members as the company continues to grow and expand internationally, most recently with expansion to Dubai.

Neil Schofield joins the growing company as new chief operating officer, while Paul Williams joins the team as client manager. Both will be operating from West Nautical's central Newcastle office in Jesmond.

The appointments are instrumental in the ongoing development of the company's UK & European, Eastern European and Dubai offices, as the start of several progressive changes within the company planned for 2024.

West Nautical will continue to develop its strong and sustainable reputation, consolidating its position as a leader in delivering high quality superyacht services within the luxury yachting industry.

While the company operates globally, the Newcastle-based offices are the heart of West Nautical, delivering maritime services and luxurious yacht charter holidays to the people of the North of England and beyond.

The company will be continuing to focus on partnerships and events with fellow luxury service and goods providers in the region this year, with the aim of educating attendees about the world of luxury yachting and the phenomenal experiences a yacht can provide, whether through ownership or a charter holiday.

Managing director, Geoff Moore, said of the new appointments: "I'm thrilled to have both Neil and Paul join us during this crucial time of growth.

"Neil brings with him a huge amount of maritime expertise from his background in technical roles, logistics and commercial shipping and Paul is an extremely experienced sales and client-relationship manager, with a wealth

of knowledge of the luxury industries - particularly in the local Newcastle area.

"Both roles are integral not only as West Nautical continues to grow on an international level, but as we continue to forge long-lasting relationships with our local clients. The Jesmond office was built with this in mind, to allow us to have a presence amongst our clientele, where they are free to pop in and see us at any time."

A North East local, Neil has always had an affinity for the ocean, growing up holidaying on his father's sailing yacht along the Scottish coast. This, combined with his love of tinkering with car engines, led him to join the Merchant Navy 22 years ago as a marine engineer at the age of 17, which enabled him to travel and see the world.

He has worked ashore in both technical and commercial roles for shipping companies for over 19 years, most recently working for marine transport and project logistics company, Osprey. His role involved transporting huge structures, largely for the oil and gas sector, starting as project co-ordinator and moving up to managing director roles over a 10-year period.

The maritime industry allows Neil to combine his personal passion for seafaring with working with a diverse range of people. When asked what he most enjoys about the maritime industry he said: "No two days are ever the same which really keeps me focused. Seeing projects through from conception to completion gives me an immense sense of achievement."

As chief operating officer, Neil will be working predominantly from the UK,

with travel to visit West Nautical's global offices, connecting the international teams, the personnel of which now sits at 55 people.

Paul has spent the last 19 years working in the motor trade, where he started out on the forecourts of independent used car garages. He moved to a main dealer in 2013 as a used car salesman for MINI, before quickly moving to BMW where he worked his way up from salesman to sales leader. From here, his career progressed to Bentley as a showroom manager, before then spending the last two and a half years as brand manager for Ferrari Newcastle.

On working with clients in the luxury industries, Paul said: "I love getting to know clients on a personal level.

"When selling cars for volume brands, you don't really get to know your client or spend much time with them. Working with luxury brands gives you the time to find out more about them as an individual. It's fascinating learning what they do and how they got to where they are today."

Now ready for a new challenge, Paul is looking forward to transferring his extensive high-end customer experience to the maritime industry with West Nautical. He will be instrumental in the new and ongoing partnerships West Nautical has with local luxury brands, focusing on sourcing and serving clients for all West Nautical services. His primary focus will be on the North East and North West of England, where he has a very strong working knowledge of the customer base.

www.westnautical.com



Bradley Hall raises £55,000 at annual Festive Fundraiser

Full-service property specialist Bradley Hall hosted its annual Festive Fundraiser in December with the aim of raising tens-of-thousands of pounds for local charities NE Youth, Bravehearts of the North East and Great North Children's Hospital Foundation.

The event, which hosted 600 guests at The Fed, Gateshead, was supported by key sponsors – Housebuilders Strata Homes and Pubs with Rooms company The Inn Collection Group – and raised £55,000 in total.

Since the launch of its annual fundraiser, Bradley Hall has raised and donated over £300,000 for local charities, community action projects and grassroots sports clubs. The firm has contributed to helping over 30 different regional charities and sporting groups including NE Youth, Marie Curie Newcastle's Hospice, Heel & Toe Children's Charity, Morpeth Rugby Club, ABF The Soldier's Charity, Glendale Agricultural Society, as well as local food and toy banks across the region.

Cassie Moyse, group marketing director at Bradley Hall, said: "2022's Festive Fundraiser was a great success and we were delighted to have enjoyed yet another fantastic event in December, in partnership with Inn Collection Group, Strata and Portfolio North. Having The Inn Collection Group and Strata on board allowed us to raise even more funds for these deserving charities in exchange for some excellent exposure for the businesses.

"Since starting our Christmas fundraising event a few years ago, we

have raised a staggering amount for local organisations, which wouldn't have been achievable without the support of our sponsors, guests and the charities involved – as well as all the very generous people and organisations who donate raffle and auction prizes every year.

"Hundreds of charity and community service users have been supported by the funds raised and donated and we are truly grateful for everyone who has been a part of our Festive Fundraisers."

2023's Festive Fundraiser also marked 35 years of Bradley Hall, which has grown from operating a single office to branches across the North, including Alnwick, Morpeth, Gosforth, Durham, Teesside, Sunderland, Newcastle and Leeds. Bradley Hall's growing expert team continue to work towards making the North a better place, to live, work and socialise.

Neil Hart, group CEO at Bradley Hall, said: "Being able to raise money for three very important local charities such as NE Youth, Bravehearts of the North East and the Great North Children's Hospital Foundation is something we are very proud of and we would like to thank our guests and business partners who have purchased tables and the local businesses which have donated prizes.

"As a northern business, it's important

for us to do what we can to support community organisations and charities which support our local people. Our Festive Fundraiser brings together a lot of people who can each give a little, meaning that we can collectively make a positive impact to the charities which we work with. Thank you to everyone involved."

The Inn Collection Group has been supporting NE Youth – a leading North East youth development charity – since 2019. Owing to this, the pub with rooms group were keen to support them further through a partnership of Bradley Hall's Festive Fundraiser.

Sean Donkin, The Inn Collection Group's managing director and NE Youth trustee, said: "We were delighted to support Bradley Hall's Festive Fundraiser in December.

"Supporting our local communities is hugely important to us and these two charities do brilliant work in the North East, so becoming the partner sponsor was a great fit for us."

Gemma Smith, managing director of Strata, said: "We were delighted to sponsor Bradley Hall's 35th birthday Festive Fundraiser to raise money for some amazing charities. The fun-filled event was one to remember and raised a great sum to help some of those most in need."

Leading property agent appoints new director as part of its ambitious Yorkshire expansion

A chartered surveyor with over 20 years' industry experience has been made a director of North of England property agency, Bradley Hall.

Katie Lister, who joined the firm's Leeds office last year as a chartered surveyor, has been made associate director of the firm.

The move follows a significant investment by Bradley Hall into a new, larger Leeds head office in 2022 and almost a dozen appointments and promotions since the move.

Speaking about the promotion, she said: "I am thrilled to have been made associate director at Bradley Hall - which marks a significant milestone in my career.

"The firm has grown rapidly over recent years, opening nine offices across the North of England, so it is great to be taking on this role in what is an incredibly

exciting period for the company."

Yorkshire born and bred, Katie studied Urban Land Economics at Sheffield Hallam University, before going on to work for regional offices of firms such as Lambert Smith Hampton, Donaldsons and Eddisons/LIV, as well as spending a year working for DTZ in Australia.

She added: "Having worked in Yorkshire for the best part of two decades, I have been aware of Bradley Hall for many years and was excited to join the firm last year when I learned of the opening.

"I was looking for an opportunity to learn and grow with a firm and quickly established that staff retention was high and career progression was achievable.

"I am really pleased to be here and I'm looking forward to helping grow the business as we look to the future."

Neil Hart, chief executive at Bradley Hall, said: "We take great pride in investing in the professional development of our team and Katie is a great example of how we are committed to continue doing just that.

"Since joining Bradley Hall last year as a chartered surveyor, we've been blown away by her desire to always go above and beyond to support her clients and ensure she always delivers the best positive service, so this promotion is very much deserved.

"It also reaffirms our commitment to continue investing in Yorkshire. Since we opened our new Leeds head office here in 2022, we've created over a dozen new jobs and with Katie as an associate director and more projects in the pipeline, we are looking forward with her to continue growing our presence in the region."

For more information about Bradley Hall, visit www.bradleyhall.co.uk



Unveiling the future – how Yorkshire's commercial property market is shaping up in 2024

As we step into 2024, Bradley Hall reveals why Yorkshire's commercial property landscape is poised for a dynamic and transformative year.





While 2023 provided its challenges – including sky-high inflation and a hefty hike in interest rates – 2024 is predicted to be a year of positive and prosperous growth for the property market – for the first time since the pandemic.

Yorkshire's commercial property sector is witnessing a particularly significant shift, fuelled by innovation, sustainability, evolving work patterns and more. A transformation reflecting both global trends and region-specific dynamics.

Here, the Yorkshire team at Bradley Hall – the North's full-service property specialist – share their insights into some of the key facets shaping the commercial property landscape in this diverse, up-and-coming county.

Sustainable design takes centre stage

Eco-friendly design is no longer just a buzzword—it's a non-negotiable aspect of modern commercial properties. From green roofs and energy-efficient systems to sustainable materials, developers are prioritising environmentally-conscious and energy-efficient designs that align with the global push towards a greener future – while grappling with new legislation around biodiversity sites and other roadblocks.

Flexibility redefined

The traditional office model is evolving – and flexible workspaces are becoming the new norm. 2024 is marked by a surge in demand for adaptable office spaces that cater to the changing needs of businesses – especially in cities such as Leeds.

Many businesses will be looking to reduce office space, while the demand for co-working spaces, hot-desking options and hybrid models will rise, providing companies the flexibility to scale and adjust their operations seamlessly.

Tech-led smart buildings

The integration of technology into commercial properties is not a novelty, but in 2024, it's set to reach new heights. Smart buildings with advanced systems for security, energy management and personalised user experiences, such as Internet of Things (IoT) devices, artificial intelligence (AI) and automation, are becoming the gold standard. Properties equipped with this state-of-the-art tech infrastructure will attract businesses seeking to enhance operational efficiency, peace of mind and overall productivity.

Geographical shifts

We expect a re-evaluation of preferred business locations, as remote work blurs traditional boundaries. Secondary and tertiary markets may experience increased interest, offering cost-effective alternatives for businesses while providing investors with untapped potential in emerging regions.

Wellness-focused environments


A healthy workforce is seen as a key factor in productivity and employee satisfaction – and in 2024, employee wellbeing is at the forefront of commercial property trends. Developers are incorporating wellness features such as green spaces, fitness facilities and even natural light optimisation to create environments that enhance the physical and mental health of occupants. Properties that prioritise such amenities and features will appeal to businesses looking to create a holistic and positive work environment for their employees.

Rise of mixed-use developments

The lines between work, leisure and living are blurring as mixed-use developments gain popularity – especially in places such as Bradford and Harrogate. These integrated spaces combine residential, commercial and recreational elements, creating vibrant communities where people can live, work and play without the need for extensive commuting.

For more information about Bradley Hall, visit www.bradleyhall.co.uk

Visit Bradley Hall's Leeds office at 6 Park Place, Leeds, LS1 2RU.



The down-low on drainage and sewage

Craig Burman, head of Environmental and Regulatory at Schofield Sweeney Solicitors LLP, demystifies all things drainage and sewage – revealing everything homeowners and tenants need to know to help keep their systems in check.

I'm the first one to agree that it's very hard to make sewage and drainage exciting. But on the other hand, I have seen plenty of excitement caused by sewage and drainage that has gone wrong.

We really don't like to think about it. We push a flush or turn on a tap and expect our plumbing to deal with the consequences. And most of the time, it does what it should. However, with heavier rainfall and rising water levels, this is not something we should take for granted.

As a general rule, the property owner - or tenant - is responsible for maintaining the pipework within the boundary of their property. Blockages must be cleared at their cost and normally by their contractor. Many of us have learned through bitter

experience that flushable wipes are not that flushable and tree roots can find their way into most clay pipes.

Where two or more properties are connected, even on private land, the drain is likely to be a "lateral drain", which must be maintained by the water company. If your neighbours drain across your land, it may not be your responsibility to maintain these drains or sewers.

If you're lucky enough to be connected to mains sewerage, the waste from toilets, sinks, showers and baths will go via a system of sewer pipes to a waste water treatment works. Once outside your boundary, pipes normally become the responsibility of your water company. There are, however, exceptions to this rule.

Did you know?

- Properties not connected to mains sewerage systems will often have a septic tank, sewage treatment plant or a cesspit that allows solids and liquids to separate. Liquids will be discharged to ground, or a watercourse, and solids are pumped out periodically. This is normally the property owner's responsibility to maintain and operate. It's not unusual for multiple properties to be connected to the same sewage treatment system, and all share the cost.
- Some commercial and residential developments have a private sewage treatment plant installed by the developer. Many of these are adopted by the water company when the development is complete, but some remain in private ownership and properties using them have to contribute to their upkeep. These are known as private sewers and sewerage systems.
- The Victorians thought it was a good idea to combine surface water and sewage into one system, called a combined sewer overflow, or CSO. It combines clean rain water and untreated sewage to take it to the local sewage treatment works. This means everything from a property goes to in a single pipe to the same place.
- If you don't have a CSO, or don't live in an area without mains sewerage, surface water from roofs, driveways, patios and hard surfaces normally goes into private drains on the property - which are the owner or occupier's responsibility. Once outside your boundary, surface water pipes are the responsibility of either the local authority, the highway authority or the water company, depending on the type of drain. Many of these find their way into a river or stream.

I think it's fair to say that most of us have no idea where our surface water drains end up - and why should we if they are not our responsibility? That said, let me give you three very good reasons why you should be inquisitive about your surface water drains.

Risk of flooding

When river levels rise, two things can happen. Drain outlets can become submerged and the drain stops discharging, or water travels backwards up the drain system, due to the force of the water at the outlet. Either way, it is not good news for anyone upstream.

Faced with an obstruction, water will find its way out of the system where it can. Flooding around manholes and drainage grates often occurs. I always used to think it was because there was too much water

trying to get in, but often it's the water already in the system trying to get out. Sometimes it's both.

Once water starts coming out of drains, it's extremely difficult to stop it. It will find low lying areas and many properties have been flooded due to drains being overwhelmed by the volume of water.

Those of us who haven't been flooded before should not be too complacent. Drains that block will often cause the same issues. If you notice water sitting around a drain where it doesn't normally do so, don't ignore it. It may be a sign the drain has blocked or collapsed downstream.

Combined sewer overflows

You may have seen in the news the problem of sewage discharging into rivers during heavy rain. Believe it or not, CSOs are designed to do this.

The major flaw with CSOs is that during heavy rain, the system is overwhelmed by the volume of water and the sewage treatment works cannot cope. At a certain flow, the mix of sewage and surface water is intentionally diverted to a river or the sea. The sewage should be diluted by the rainwater, but often it's still enough to cause pollution.

CSOs will occasionally spring a leak or discharge outside storm conditions. This can be very unpleasant. If you are unlucky enough to be flooded by this murky cocktail, it will contaminate everything it touches, inside or outside. For most of us, it's a very nasty surprise.

It can also be a surprise to property owners that they cannot normally sue a sewage undertaker whose assets are causing flooding or contamination. If the damage is caused by the condition or capacity of the sewage network, the Water Industry Act 1991 sets out a scheme of compensation.

Anyone aggrieved by such impacts needs to use the compensation scheme and/or ask the relevant Secretary of State to make an enforcement order requiring upgrades to the system.

Pollution

Surface water drains that go to a watercourse have the potential to cause pollution.

I have represented many businesses who have a spill or incident and find their yard drains have taken pollutants to a local watercourse, with disastrous consequences for fish and aquatic life. Prosecutions by the Environment Agency for this sort of pollution are not uncommon.

But it's not just chemicals which cause pollution. Milk and silt are also harmful to aquatic life by lowering oxygen levels in the water. Wet concrete is very alkaline and can have a big impact on pH levels.

If you deal with any kind of pollutants, I recommend you have up to date drainage drawings and plans in place to prevent pollution.

Checklist

It sounds like doom and gloom, but most drains and sewers work as they should. When they don't, it can cause a lot of stress and anxiety - especially when it rains heavily. To minimise any unpleasant experiences, I suggest the following to property-owners:

1. Know where your stopcock is and make sure it is working and can be turned off
2. Don't flush your wipes - even if they say they are flushable!
3. Maintain manhole covers and inspection chambers so they can be accessed easily
4. Keep an eye out for standing water or flooding - and act quickly if you see it
5. Know where your drains are and how to clear them if they become blocked
6. Have a drainage plan or sketch, showing what is going where. You can ask for these details from the local authority or water company (there may be a charge)
7. If you have previously been flooded, or you are in a low-lying area, find out what flood resilience measures will lower the risk of future flooding
8. Keep emergency contact numbers somewhere safe!



Craig Burman is Head of the Environmental and Regulatory at Schofield Sweeney Solicitors LLP. Craig specialises in flooding, drainage and water management issues and can advise on a wide range of water and drainage related issues.

For more information, visit www.schofieldsweeney.co.uk

Brownfield bonanza

£53 billion of unused land in Yorkshire
could deliver 175,000 new homes



Yorkshire has an estimated £53.2 billion of Brownfield land ripe for the development of new homes, according to new regional analysis.

The study, carried out by specialist property lender, Together, using valuation data from development site sourcing specialists, Searchland, shows the potential for 175,602 new homes.

The government has signalled its intention to prioritise building on disused and previously developed land rather than concreting over the Green Belt, with Prime Minister Rishi Sunak launching a £1 billion fund last year.

But, despite this support, cost increases, viability challenges and access to private finance remain a barrier for Brownfield development projects, according to Together.

Matt Boggan, corporate relationship manager for Yorkshire, says: "Our analysis into Yorkshire's Brownfield land highlights the immense potential for the region.

"With over £53 billion worth of untapped resources, there is a unique opportunity to breathe new life into Yorkshire's communities.

"Previously developed sites tend to come with more complex issues. For example, remediation, particularly for old, industrial land can prove challenging, which means that mainstream lenders may shy away from looking to provide funding to kick-start smaller brownfield renovation projects.

"However, we believe it's time for developers and investors with a clear vision to come together with funding partners to provide innovative urban regeneration schemes, which can really revitalise Yorkshire's landscape."

The lack of available new homes - and where to build them - will be a key battleground in the run-up to the next general election. New research has revealed that the government is already missing its own targets by about 80,000 new dwellings a year, according to the Home Builders Federation.

Ministers have been warned that new homes will have to be built in even greater volumes than the current target of 300,000 per year in England to keep up with the rate of home-building in other developed countries.

Matt says that the regeneration of Brownfield land in Yorkshire's cities could go some way to meeting this future housing need.

"There are already some incredible projects underway to rejuvenate previously developed land," he says.

"We have the £500 million South Bank scheme in Leeds, for example, which is designed to extend the city centre by making the best use of brownfield land.

"The regeneration of some of Sheffield's disused industrial areas has also been impressive, with whole new communities springing up at Kelham Island over the past few years and plans for similar urban regeneration at Attercliffe, just outside the city centre.

"These kinds of schemes can - and should - be replicated in other areas of the county to really maximise the potential of available land."

He adds: "At Together, we recognise the need for lenders who are flexible enough to meet the financing requirements of developers and can work quickly to secure the Brownfield land needed to achieve their ambitions, while addressing Yorkshire's housing shortages."



Mitchell Fasanya, co-founder and CEO at Searchland, says that while the Brownfield development is no "magic bullet" to solve the national housing crisis, it could offer opportunities for developers to provide good quality, affordable homes in Yorkshire.

He says: "Brownfield regeneration can be a complicated and expensive process and so it can often be overlooked. The other issue it poses is a somewhat lopsided level of availability from one area of the country to the next. For example, some towns and cities are home to just a handful of sites, while others boast thousands.

"However, Yorkshire certainly falls into the latter in this respect and with such a dire shortage of homes in Yorkshire's towns and cities, Brownfield sites could certainly provide part of the solution.

"Central to the government's Levelling Up agenda to deliver growth across the regions is to provide the homes people want, where they're needed, with house-building and regeneration seen as a key driver of future prosperity.

"Our data shows that there are opportunities out there for developers to meet this aim by re-using unloved and abandoned wasteland. However, what we need is a co-ordinated and common-sense approach from funders, developers and local council planning departments if we're going to address the issue of housing supply on a large scale."

For more information, visit www.togethernessmoney.com



AI – worth the hype?

Jon Leighton, MD at Land Digital, shares his thoughts on the digital innovation that has everyone talking.

Over the last year, the hype around artificial intelligence (AI) has started to gain momentum - and I mean serious momentum. ChatGPT, for example, reached 1 million users in five days and surpassed 100 million in just two months.

But, along with skyrocketing adoption, we've also seen an increase in articles that outline the inevitable human demise it will bring, terminator-style.

Yet, while I'm no John Connor, I can confidently assure you that we won't be battling the T-2000s for global domination anytime soon. But, will the rapid adoption and evolution of AI change the everyday way of life and the roles of professionals in certain industries?

The short answer is: well, it depends. I never claimed to be an AI expert, but what I can offer is my opinion and perspective as someone who has worked in digital for a while.

AI is a very broad topic that can mean different things to different people. It might mean large language models, machine learning, superintelligence, or self-awareness. And it has actually been around in its various costumes for quite some time. In fact, the earliest successful AI program was written in 1951. That's right - AI in some form predates your grandparents twisting to Buddy Holly.

But, over the past year, it's large language models, or LLMs, that have been making all the headlines in the world of AI. LLMs like ChatGPT, Bard, Claude and more have started to take prominence in all our feeds and inboxes, marking perhaps the most significant new wave of AI in the mainstream since the emergence of smart speakers like Google Home and Amazon Alexa, which now already look very dated in their interactions.

So, how will all of these technologies change our everyday life and the way we work? Who knows - I did say I wasn't an expert. But, I am confident there will be change, just as there was throughout the industrial revolution - and a lot of us remember the change the internet brought with it and the impact this has had on our daily lives.

Our working lives are already going through a period of change. There has been a greater adoption of technology over the past few years, which has evolved the way we interact and manage our professional workload, but I feel the bigger changes are yet to be seen. Industries that dedicate huge amounts of time to carrying out repeatable tasks or consume and summarise large amounts of content will need to look at their business model to identify future risks and assess how their models can adapt to change.

What else? Well, what about the four-day working week? This might actually be able to be introduced while increasing productivity, rather than settling for the same level of output. Hey, why even stop at the four-day week? Why not three, or even two days? You get the idea.

Will all of this be positive? I remember when I moved up to the North East 20 years ago and my parents gave me an A - Z roadmap, which is how I learned to navigate around the big roads (don't judge me, we only had one roundabout where I grew up). At the time, I retained a lot of that information, but since the mass adoption of



navigation I have relied more and more on just following the arrow. I know I'm not alone in saying that following this arrow has got me in a lot of trouble in the past.

Now, I think it would be fantastic if we enable AI to do all the 'boring' jobs and leave us to focus on being creative. That's a far better outcome than letting AI do our thinking for us, which I feel would be a real shame and a great loss that we might not notice until it is too late.

But, to me, all of this doesn't signal that the robot uprising is right around the corner, but rather, marks the beginning of a new era where we will rely more and more on the advancement of AI to power our daily lives. The intention of AI isn't to help produce the same results for less, but instead to empower us all to do more, whether that's in our professional or personal lives.

In other words, think of LLMs more like Arnold Schwarzenegger in Terminator 2 than the original. But, that's not to say they can't still pack a real punch - you still wouldn't mess with Terminator 2 Arnold. While current LLMs may not understand the words they generate in relation to the prompts provided, this doesn't mean that these words can't impact us and our lives. After all, humans don't need to understand what they say for the words to have a positive or negative meaning to someone else.

So, as we race to embrace the latest AI innovations, it's vital we remain conscious and responsible for the ways we use and interact with it day after day and reflect on lessons learnt from social media and the unexpected outcomes that medium has created.

www.landdigital.agency



Smart Media Buying receives prestigious national cinema award

North East media buying agency, Smart Media Buying, received the prestigious Best (New) Use of Creativity in Cinema award for its JD Sports King of the Game 2022 cinema campaign at the recent national Digital Cinema Awards 2023.

Smart Media Buying, based in Houghton-le-Spring, was recognised for its creative and innovative approach to cinema media buying by the 7th annual Digital Cinema Awards. The awards, held at BAFTA in

partnership with Campaign, showcased and rewarded the best strategic use of cinema medium and work created by the media industry in 2023.



The category, Best (New) Use of Creativity in Cinema, celebrated campaigns that demonstrated the clever use of new ideas and innovative thinking for the cinema medium to deliver something tangible for the advertiser.

Hayley Shaw, JD Sports Fashion plc's Media & Partnerships Manager said:

"This award is a testament to all the teams at JD, Smart Media and DCM, who worked seamlessly together to ensure this media campaign was a success.

"As a first time buy for the business in this particular medium, we wanted to maximise every touchpoint of the cinema journey and create an authentic experience for our consumers. Using great insights and planning, we created a powerful and bold campaign that delivered excellent results and we are thrilled to have now also received industry recognition in the form of this award."

The 7th annual Digital Cinema Awards saw intense competition among strong national media buying agencies of all sizes representing many of the most impressive national brands across the UK.

Nominees in the Best (New) Use of Creativity in Cinema included Havas Media Network, Havas PLAY on behalf of Kia, EssenceMediacom on behalf of No 7 Beauty Company, Wavemaker on behalf of Paramount +, Initiative on behalf of Prime Video, Starcom on behalf of Samsung, and OMD on behalf of Tourism Ireland.

Mark Clancey, Smart Media Buying Managing Director, said: "It's truly an honour to receive this award among such prestigious nominees. It represents a culmination of months of hard work by the Smart Media Buying and JD teams to introduce the brand to a new advertising medium and creatively bring to life what you see on screen through engaging and eye-catching experiential activity."

Smart Media Buying's approach to cinema saw JD adopt cinema as their lead medium as they sought to reach 16-24-year-olds during a particularly busy 2022 Q4. The results of the campaign far exceeded typical benchmarks, proving Smart Media Buying's creative approach to media buying enabled JD to reach its target audiences at the busiest time of year.

Rachael Cochrane, DCM Regional Sales Director, said: "Smart Media Buying encouraged and guided JD into cinema advertising, enabling them to embrace the medium whole-heartedly and truly make their investment count.

Using great insights and planning, they created something bespoke for the big screen that was contextually relevant and imbued with creative merit. It was a powerful and bold campaign that delivered excellent results."

Smart Media Buying specialises in cinema, TV, radio, and press advertising together with DOOH / OOH and direct mail on both a hyper-local, national, and international level.

A close-up photograph of a person's hands being washed under a running faucet. The water is clear and flowing, creating a dynamic scene with splashing. The hands are positioned palm-to-palm, and the fingers are slightly spread. The background is a plain, light-colored wall, emphasizing the action of handwashing.

Winning the war on washroom facilities



It's a topic none of us really want to talk about. Still, if we're honest, hygienic washroom facilities are something we all appreciate when we're out and about. North East-based commercial hygiene and washroom provider NWR Hygiene is continuing its push, working with owners and managers of businesses and organisations to underline the importance of providing a high-standard washroom facility.

In the ongoing battle for impeccable washroom facilities, NWR Hygiene is emerging as an industry leader, having recently made significant inroads in Cumbria and West Yorkshire. The company's commitment to service excellence has led to further expansion into key sectors, including education, hospitality and care homes.

Managing director, Chris Lowery, successfully expanded his sales team earlier this year, welcoming Louise Cardwell to help expand the operation throughout the Lake District and Cumbria and focusing further on growth across the Yorkshire region, a move supported by existing account manager Rakhee Soni.

It was a gamble which has paid off. NWR Hygiene has recently welcomed the Yorkshire-based T&R Pub Group Ltd to its clients list, working with the group to ensure that convenient female hygiene solutions are provided at its premises across Leeds, Bradford, Huddersfield and Wakefield. The hygiene specialists have had further wins across the Yorkshire region, onboarding residential care homes in Halifax and Bradford and a Primary School also based in Bradford.

Chris Lowery commented: "Having spent most of our time focusing on the North East, it's time now to push the boundaries and expand our reach further afield.

"Getting the right people for the job was crucial to our plans. We needed people who understood the market and could build a network to reach our target market, whether geographical or sector-based."

In addition to celebrating the successes gained in the Yorkshire region, the team have also added the Grade 1 listed Silverholme Manor located on

the Graythwaite Estate in Ulverston to its impressive client list. The eco-friendly manor house and wedding venue is working with NWR to ensure that all guests have access to high-end washroom services that are befitting of its place in the market.

Continuing the push into the education sector, further education college and leading training provider in the South Lakes, Kendal College has joined the client list for the provision of hand dryers, clinical and medical waste, floor mats and general washroom services. With a commitment to the community, Louise has also worked with the Barrow-based Cavendish Street Social Club to upgrade their facilities to a high standard.

Chris said: "Whether we are working with a care home or college, we take the time to truly get to know the needs of that organisation or business.

"We get under the skin to understand the types of people who use the facilities, their needs, and how we can facilitate these needs safely and hygienically. Once we start chatting with a customer, we usually find we have the solution to their needs."

With consumer behaviour and expectations changing constantly, is this having a knock-on effect?

Chris said: "It certainly is. These days, users of washroom facilities expect a high standard of environment. It's not enough anymore to provide the basics - people want working equipment, sanitised environments and odour-free facilities.

"With cutting-edge technology and a dedicated team, the battle for better washrooms is being won, one facility at a time."

For more information about NWR Hygiene, contact Chris Lowery on 01207 505275 or visit www.nwrhygienegroup.co.uk

Answer me this...

Jake Hinchliffe

Director of Orange
Design Studios

In our new monthly column, we ask industry experts to share their thoughts on popular and trending topics within their field...

How is today's technology impacting architectural design?

“ There are a few trending topics in the archi-tech world right now that are really stealing the show - including BIM, Sustainable Analysis, Virtual Reality and Parametric Design. But let's not forget the elephant in the room - Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Some people think that AI will eventually make our jobs obsolete, leaving us with nothing to do but lounge on a beach somewhere while it takes care of business. But you know what? I don't agree. AI is advancing at a lightning-fast pace, but I believe it will actually enhance our profession - architectural design - instead of eliminating it. It'll help us work smarter, not just harder.

By embracing AI, we'll be able to design with incredible speed and precision. We can collaborate seamlessly with our clients, visualize and understand concepts instantly - it's like having our very own superpower. The possibilities are endless. Imagine combining AI concept design platforms with BIM, Instant Designs and Instant Technical Information. It's mind-boggling.

Sure, there are a few smaller plug-in platforms available for Autodesk, ArchiCAD and Sketchup products, but midjourney seems to be the go-to choice for concept imagery in our industry (although there are other platforms available).

Even if you're running a small practice with just a handful of staff members, there are plenty of AI tools that can make a world of difference. They can accelerate various tasks like managing social media posts, formal documents, processes and systems. So, besides all the exciting aspects, AI can also be a great help with back-office responsibilities.

Now, let's play devil's advocate for a moment - you might be wondering why clients should pay us if AI can handle it all. Well, here's the thing - clients actually stand to gain a lot from this too. Our main goal is to design exceptional homes and spaces, right? If we can reach that goal more efficiently with the help of AI, they'll enjoy a more effective client journey and appreciate the added value. And trust me, AI will only continue to progress and evolve in the future, so the benefits will keep growing.

Orange Design Studios is a visionary architectural design studio, in the heart of West Yorkshire. Based in the town of Mirfield, its expert team works with clients to make their dream homes a reality. Services include architectural design, interior design and project management, spanning a variety of projects including bespoke residential homes, extensions and housing developments, as well as commercial properties.

www.orangedesignstudios.co.uk

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Top training for the North's screen sector workforce

Northern screen agencies have joined forces to support the development and training of the screen sector workforce across the North of England.

Screen Alliance North is a new BFI Skills Cluster partnership created by Liverpool Film Office, North East Screen, Screen Manchester and Screen Yorkshire with the support of the BFI National Lottery funding. The four screen agencies have come together as a lead skills body for the North of England to tackle skills shortages and improve access to quality training provision for diverse talent and communities across the screen sector.

The initial three-year programme will enable the four partners to work strategically across the broader North to build a stronger, happier and more inclusive skilled workforce, helping to secure its future as a leading global centre for screen production.

Screen Alliance North was formed from the BFI's initial roll out of £8.1 million, awarded to partners across the UK to

support the screen production workforce through Skills Clusters, thus enabling lead organisations to work collaboratively with local industry, education and training providers to develop clearer pathways to long-term employment in film and TV production.

The BFI Skills Clusters investment aims to strike a balance between building on existing production infrastructure to provide new entrance and development opportunities in the most established areas of activity, while also helping to grow local crew bases in more emergent areas.

The funding focusses on establishing localised support for skills development and training with a clear aim to create new opportunities for people from underrepresented backgrounds to pursue careers in the sector.



To date (since April 2023) Screen Alliance North has reached over 6,000 new entrants and crew with placement opportunities, training, industry events and on-set experience - from trainee opportunities on long-running BBC Children's drama in Northumberland, to crew mixers in the shadow of the Liver building. Screen Alliance North will continue to reach all corners of the North, ensuring all have access to a wide-ranging programme of support and opportunities to develop.

With year two fast approaching, Screen Alliance North is hoping that the foundations and partnerships they've created in their first year will enable them to continue to increase their reach and begin to expand on their pan-northern activity. This all begins with a series of

Connected Communities events that will see crew, new entrants and production companies come together for three engaging flagship events in Hartlepool, Manchester and Liverpool.

With themes ranging from wellbeing and good work practice, environmental sustainability and diversity and inclusion, these events will strengthen participants confidence in the northern screen sector, foster local camaraderie and provide essential opportunities to make new contacts.

As a key strand of the work Screen Alliance North are doing around accessibility in the screen industry, all three events will run both in person and online, meaning anyone across the North can be part of this engaging series.

The events will take place in March 2024 and people are welcome to register their interest by visiting www.screenalliancenorth.co.uk

A close-up portrait of a man with a beard and mustache, wearing a suit and tie. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be wooden slats. The name 'Matt Boggan' is overlaid in large white text on the left side of the image.

Matt Boggan

Better together

Together works hard to help people and businesses achieve their property ambitions, while getting to know the people behind the numbers. We speak to business development director, Matt Boggan, about his role and why the company's unique approach to lending helps it stand out from the crowd.

While some lenders rely on a by-the-book, tick box approach to finance, in today's ever-changing lending landscape, Together is doing what it's always done best. Its ethos has remained unchanged for nearly 50 years – common sense lending for people from all walks of life.

Led by an expert team of property finance specialists, its mission is to help make their clients' property aspirations a reality.

One of those people is Matt Boggan.

Born and bred in York, he has worked in banking and finance for over two decades. With a degree in business and finance from Salford University, he admits he "fell" into banking – but soon found his feet and a love for the job.

Since then, his career has seen him working for big-name banks, providing mainstream SME and commercial property lending at NatWest, as well as lending for purpose at Dutch-regulated Triodos Bank.

Unsurprisingly, though, for this humble Yorkshireman, it was the last one that struck a chord – and set the tone for what was to come.

"Before joining Together, my work was mainly centred around social, environmental and cultural purposes. Things like social housing and healthcare. Things that impact – and really matter to – so many people," he says.

"I spent time developing the North of England arm of the business – my own back yard if you like – and I really enjoyed it. Meeting people out in the real world, building relationships with them and, ultimately, helping them in big, tangible ways."

"I got a real kick out of it – I realised I had a real appetite for that type of lending – and so when it came to moving on, my hope was to join a company that shared the same desires and goals.

"I'd also just had a little boy, which prompted me to really think about my next steps and make sure I was doing something worthwhile."

Fortunately for Matt, worthwhile work is Together's forte.

On a mission to find more ways to say "yes" and open doors that other lenders may have closed, the company works hard to make its commercial finance, personal loans and mortgages more accessible for, as it says, "real people living in the real world."

With a flexible, human-led approach, it creates lending opportunities for today's modern world. Anything from developers looking for multi-million development finance loans to complete their latest ambitious property project, to a first-time landlord seeking a buy-to-let mortgage to start building their own investment property portfolio, or an investor needing a bridging loan to buy, refurbish and sell a property for profit.

In terms of personal finance, and unlike many mainstream banks, Together takes into account a potential borrower's personal circumstances. They could be a director of multiple companies – with a complex income – looking to buy a £3 million mansion, or an NHS nurse wanting to buy their own council flat.

"Together's human approach to lending was – and still is – a huge pull for me," says Matt.

"We're a company that is very much driven by our values and morals. No two cases and no two customers are the same, but one thing always remains – we strive to get to know the people behind the deals.

"For us, it's all about 'bigger picture lending'. Every case is considered on its merit. We work hard to understand our clients' reasons for borrowing, what their goals and hopes are, what their worries are and what's important to them.

"In doing so, not only are we able to build genuine and trusted relationships with them, we're also able to tailor our services to their specific needs and, ultimately, help them in the best and most effective way possible.

"In a nutshell, Together has never forgotten its roots – how it came to be all those years ago – and that's evident in the work that it does. It's why I'm so proud to be part of the team."

Those roots were put down back in 1974, when Together's first loan was to a vicar for a £1,000 on a car worth £2,000.

Fast-forward nearly five decades and, from humble beginnings, Together has grown into one of the North West's most successful private businesses.

An award-winning organisation with 750 employees – most of whom are based at its headquarters in Cheadle, Greater Manchester – and a loan book of more than £6.4 billion.

In his role as business development director, Matt has an almost evangelical zeal for sharing Together's success story, as well as shining a light on the business' impressive service offering and meeting new faces. Something he's more than happy to do.





"I'm a big believer that, to succeed in this kind of job, you really need to be out more than in," he says.

"That's why I spend around half of the working week out on the road, meeting existing and prospective clients, visiting sites, networking and, basically, just being as customer-facing as I can.

"We understand the challenges people can encounter when it comes to accessing finance - especially in the current tough economic climate - which is why visibility, especially when it comes to my job, is so important.

"We want our clients to be able to put names to faces and to see that there's a real person there to help.

"It's up to me to fly the flag for the business and to assure our clients that no matter the case type or challenge, whether big or small, we're in this together."

The business' approach to lending has helped all kinds of property professionals realise their vision.

Derelict churches have been transformed into affordable housing. Neglected cat and dog shelters have grown into thriving pet home-from-home businesses. 70-year-old tea rooms have been restored to their former glory. Luxury care homes have been built. Struggling village pubs have been saved.

A feel-good catalogue of happy ending stories that is growing all the time.

"You can't help but feel proud when you think of those success stories," says Matt.

"They're the results of Together's outside-the-box thinking and focus on customer outcomes. Wherever possible, we try to avoid that 'computer says no' scenario and look at ways of making things happen.

"This doesn't mean cutting corners - in fact, it's the opposite. We work really hard, with the help of our specialist teams, to find solutions that other lenders might not uncover.

"It's about doing the right thing for our customers - all of whom are normal people with goals and aspirations. Property dreams, as it were. If we can make those happen, we will."

Matt says that a focus over the past few months has been promoting Together's commercial bridging

loans and other longer-term finance to Yorkshire's property entrepreneurs, particularly those looking to bring Brownfield - or previously developed land - back into usage. This follows the announcement of a £1 billion fund from the government as part of its Levelling Up agenda.

According to Together's own research, up to £53 billion worth of Brownfield land is currently sitting unused and unloved and the lender wants to support investors and developers in creating more homes, offices and leisure spaces for the people of Yorkshire.

"Brownfield offers up so much potential for the region," says Matt.

"Our analysis of data, provided by data company Searchland, estimates that there's enough Brownfield land in Yorkshire to build 175,600 new homes.

"Developing this unused and unloved land would give people a chance to get on the property ladder and build new lives and communities."

The disused land could also be used for building Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBS) to meet the huge current demand, with more than 200,000 students across the region's universities, Matt says.

"Landlords and developers should bear in mind the potential value of increasing their portfolios by investing in student housing. High demand, low supply and record university admissions highlight the gains to be made and looking to Brownfield land for such developments could be fruitful.

"York is already seeing such plans coming to fruition, with a new four-storey, 275-bed scheme which will include a gym, yoga studio, games room, cinema, co-working space and communal dining areas.

"Developments like these help nurture a community and create a truly desirable space - factors which will undoubtedly appeal to Yorkshire's student populations.

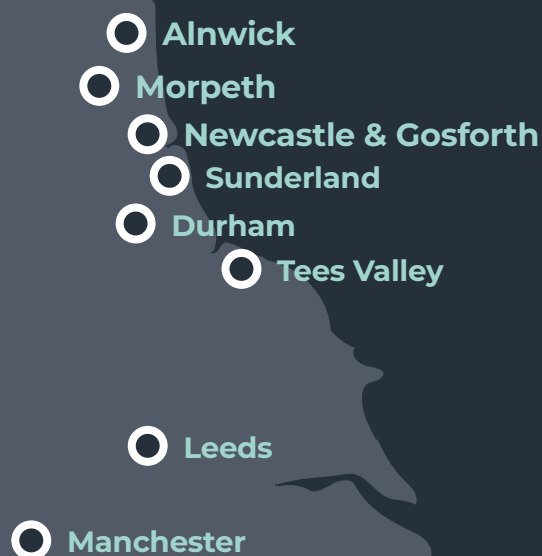
"At Together, we recognise the need for lenders who are flexible enough to meet the requirements of developers and investors and can work quickly to provide the finance needed for them to achieve their ambitions."

For more information, visit www.togethermoney.com

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Lifestyle

The latest luxury lifestyle news, from travel and interiors, to health, wellbeing and more

BoConcept means business



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 and Yorkshire 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-yet-functional furniture, the brand has

partnered with Copenhagen-based architects, Bjarke Ingles Group (BIG), to launch its exclusive Nawabari collection.

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. 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 is available in BoConcept stores globally, including Monks Cross York, Redbrick Leeds and Fenwick Newcastle.

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

www.boconcept.com



Cupertino desk
£1,949



Arch travertine sculpture
£85



Imola chair
from £2,979



Paddle pendant
£729



Ottawa sectional sofa
from £5,099



Ottawa dining chair
£269



Hauge dining table
£1,599



Dye Leaf sculpture
£54



Lugano sideboard
£2,679



Bergamo sofa
from £6,659



Bolzano armchair
from £1,349

Modern organic

Thinking of updating your space?

Pared-back interiors that bring the outdoors in is one of this year's biggest home trends - and it's easy to achieve with the help of BoConcept. Introducing Modern Organic - a pleasingly eclectic blend of Scandinavian minimalism, mid-century and bohemian design styles, layered together with naturally inspired-elements to form a refined, but textural, space.

BoConcept has stores in Leeds, York and Newcastle.
For more information, visit www.boconcept.com



Cancún outdoor coffee table
£649 (available March 2024)



Curve marble bowl
£259



Princeton barstool
from £469



Common Dandelion artwork
£179



Cosy plaid
£66



Cancún outdoor dining chair
£459 (available March 2024)



Bouclé heavy cushion
£139



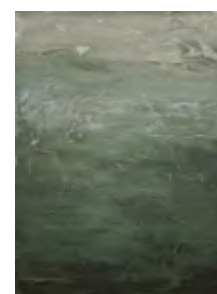
Modena 2.5 seater sofa
from £1,299



Expose side table
from £339



Form runner rug
£699



Deep green gallery artwork
£499



Designer makeover

Yorkshire-based construction company, Henley Stone Specialists, was appointed to assist in the refurbishment of Burberry's flagship store, with works recently being completed at the prestigious New Bond Street location.

Located in one of the world's premier luxury shopping destinations – the heart of London – Burberry's flagship store, which is a total of 22,000 square metres of high-end luxury fashion, has undergone a remarkable contemporary makeover.

The work completed re-affirms Burberry's position as one of Britain's leading luxury brands, while preserving its rich and unique heritage.

Teaming up with the main contractor, Forcia, Henley Stone Specialists enhanced the store's exterior, with a full natural stone exterior façade re-build.

Henley Stone upheld the store's minimalist aesthetic by installing Portland stone across the full façade, as well as granite plinths and paving. To attain a refined texture, the stone surfaces underwent a sandblasting process while in manufacture. A fine picked finish was achieved where required on site, using a bush hammer, adding depth and character to the design.

The craftsmanship and modifications not only transformed the store's aesthetic appearance, but also created a more inviting visitor experience. The exposed first floor allows consumers to glimpse into the luxury retail setting, complementing the open-plan interior throughout the store.

Shaun Henley, founder and managing director of Henley Group, commented: "It's not every day that you get to work in the vibrant hub of luxury retail within the heart of London.

"Our goal was to uphold the architect's vision by capturing the essence of modern British luxury while also preserving the rich and unique heritage that Burberry holds. It's a testament to the dedication and craftsmanship of our team that we've been able to achieve this balance.

"We are also incredibly proud to work alongside Forcia on this project to help create a truly stunning building that authentically reflects the personality and values of the iconic Burberry brand."

For more information about Henley Group, visit www.henleystone.co.uk

Lessons in life and business

Valeria Sykes,
owner,
Grantley Hall







The best piece of business advice I've ever been given is to surround yourself with people that you trust and that share the same vision. When I embarked on the Grantley Hall project, I knew that I had to have a team of people behind me that understood the overall goal of creating somewhere that would really put Yorkshire hospitality on the map. Throughout my life and career, I've learned that the key foundation for happiness and success is to surround yourself with like-minded individuals.

From a very young, age my love and interest in nature has helped teach me to be happy and grateful for the simple things in life, which really helps to keep my feet on the ground. In fact, one of my favourite areas of the hotel, is our beautiful grounds, which look amazing throughout the seasons.

One of the most significant pieces of life advice I always go back to is "enjoy your achievements as well as your plans", which is from one of my favourite poems called "Desiderata", by Max Ehrmann. The poem has always

resonated with me and means "things desired" in Latin. It gives the reader a positive framework to go through life and has always been a pragmatic source of inspiration for me throughout my life and my attitude towards it.

One life lesson I wish I'd learned sooner is that patience is key and that some things cannot be rushed. Grantley Hall is a prime example. It was purchased back in 2015 and, after a lengthy four-year restoration project, it was transformed. The property needed a lot of work carrying out to it and we wanted to ensure that the project was done to the highest standards. Grantley Hall was designed and created to BREEAM standards - the world's leading sustainability assessment method for new buildings.

Growing up in Yorkshire has taught me the importance of resilience, determination and pride in whatever you do. A huge reason the family embarked on the recreation of Grantley Hall was to create something Yorkshire could be proud of and I would like to think that we have achieved that goal - and more.



Valeria Sykes

One of the hardest lessons I've learned in business is to try to maintain a positive and constructive outlook during testing times. The same goes in life - remaining strong and positive even when times get tough. It can be hard, but doing so provides the opportunity to improve and evolve going forward.

When I look back on my life and career, I see now that working with my family has been paramount to the success I've had. Especially when it comes to Grantley Hall, as we all share the same aspirations, along with the same hard work and determination to make them a reality. Being involved in many projects over the years, varying from interior design ventures to large-scale commercial projects, has really helped prepare me for the Grantley Hall journey.

When I think about what's required to succeed in life and business, the biggest parallel is to stay true to yourself and your morals, even in difficult times. There will always be challenges in life - both personally and professionally - but the trick is just knowing how to approach everything with a positive attitude.

As I reflect on my life so far, one of the things I've learned most about myself is that I love being busy and like to have different areas to direct my passions. I have a true passion for restoring old buildings, so when I saw the empty Grantley Hall estate for sale I knew that it was a project that I had to embark on. I wanted to restore it back to its old glory so that we could celebrate the very best of our county. I've always been a proud Yorkshire woman, but throughout Grantley Hall's restoration I became even more passionate for my county; using Yorkshire's suppliers, products and people to create the hotel into what it is today.

I don't think I'd give my younger self any advice, even knowing what I know now. I'm not sure I would need to tell her anything - my life has gone down a path which I wouldn't ever wish to change. Through all the good and bad times, I am here now and all the more happy for it.

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Press pause



Tucked away within its enchanting estate, Middleton Lodge's new Forest Spa promises guests a journey into relaxation like no other. Our editor checks in...

Location

On edge of the Yorkshire Dales, nestled within Middleton Lodge's 200-acre Georgian estate, you'll find a spa with a difference. A one so relaxing, so utterly divine, I've urged just about everyone I know - family members, friends, mother-daughter duos, couples - to book up. It doesn't happen often, but Forest Spa is just one of those places. It leaves a lasting memory that you want others to share.

Open to both visiting guests and hotel residents, the on-site sanctuary opened this summer and is the latest stage in Middleton Lodge estate's impressive - and oh-so beautiful - development.

Owner James Allison - who has spent the last 20 years transforming the historic site into an award-winning destination to stay, wed, play, eat and now spa - was at the forefront of its design, alongside the estate's creative director, Rebecca Tappin.

With a vision of creating a place where people can connect with nature, press pause and leave feeling rested and grounded, Forest Spa has been inspired by forest bathing - a Japanese practice that means to be at one with nature, among the trees, and being mindful of your outdoor surroundings. A concept that informs everything from the spa's botanical good looks to its jaw-dropping facilities.

Style

Sitting somewhere between a rustic Tuscan villa and a cosy French farmhouse, a visit to Forest Spa feels like being transported to another corner of the world - umpteen miles away from Yorkshire.

A place to curl up and cocoon and re-energise in the elements interchangeably. A breathtaking place, inside and out, with so many corners of relaxation to discover throughout your spa journey.

Inside, think blonde wooden beams and exposed stonework. Cosy nooks and crannies, filled with plush cream sofas and chairs to sink in. Blankets and pillows galore. Crackling log burners, flickering lanterns and candles. The faint smell of balmy eucalyptus oil in the air. Green foliage and wicker, bringing the outdoors in. Outside, stone walls surround you with open views across the estate's rolling fields and peaceful woodland. The scent from the many plants and flowers fills the air. Comfy, sleep-inducing loungers line the grand heated pool - the heart of the

spa.

In short, a soothing and holistic aesthetic - with nods to air, water, fire and earth - that is perfectly in keeping with the rest Middleton Lodge's estate, which is also home to two 18th century stone-built restaurants, romantic courtyards, on-site self-catered cottages, 57 bedrooms and two acres of lush walled gardens.

Facilities

Our spa journey began in the Pool House. Here, you're invited to kick-back pre or post-treatment, or stay a while and enjoy a spot of lunch. You can even hunker down and enjoy a luxury manicure or pedicure at a dedicated nail station, tucked away at the back - which my friend did.

A central stove provides gentle warmth throughout, while large, floor-to-ceiling doors open out to the pool area and thermal spa, providing dreamy views to swoon over while you eat.

Stretching an impressive 15 metres, the outdoor pool is, arguably, Forest Spa's main attraction. At least it was for us. The fact that it's heated is the icing on the cake, allowing for the longest and relaxing of dips all year round - even on a frosty winter's day.

Even in early autumn, the weather wasn't on our side during our visit, but the white skies and chilly temperatures took absolutely nothing away from it. A few warm lengths, emerged in the gentle steam that the pool emits, was one of the highlights of our visit.

From there and with a glass of fizz in tow, we headed over to the bubbling outdoor hot tub nearby - which is nicely sheltered to create a feeling of cosiness and privacy - before unwinding in the serene Thermal Spa.

Here, you'll discover everything you need to kick-start the senses, including a sauna, with views of the estate's rolling parkland, as well as a stone-walled plunge pool and a tadelakt steam room.

After enjoying all it had to offer, we took great pleasure in stretching out - our cheeks healthy and pink after a final stint in the sauna - on a couple of loungers by the log fire with soft throws and pillows.

We could have easily stayed here another couple of hours - it's the perfect place for catch-ups between friends or a bit of quiet time with a good book - and only managed to tear ourselves away because we had treatments ahead of us.



Treatments

If you're anything like me, you'll know that a spa visit isn't quite complete without a treatment of some kind. And although a Forest Spa experience is more than satisfying without one, I just had to see what it had on offer.

Some years ago, all forms of pampering at Middleton Lodge took place between two small treatment rooms. Now, massages and other rituals take place within six wooden outdoor huts, tucked away in the estate's grounds, surrounded by wild flowers and medicinal herbs. Two of them are bathing huts, complete with log burning stoves and bath tubs.

The leafy walk up to my individual hut was a picture-perfect moment for me - in what felt like an oasis of tranquillity - before I happily surrendered to my chosen ritual. The Forest Spa's treatment menu includes everything from body and Indian head massage to facials, scrubs, bath hut experiences and specially-curated signature treatments - all made special with products from two of the spa world's biggest names - Aromatherapy

Associates and VOYA. Gentle and restorative, with a focus on natural ingredients, both brands fit perfectly with Forest Spa's ethos.

Committed to having the most relaxing day I'd had in months - perhaps all year - I chose the VOYA Total Massage Journey. A 90-minute show-stopper, combining body brushing to boost circulation and release toxins with a stress-melting face, scalp and full body massage, using organic seaweed oil.

I won't give too much away as I want - urge - you to discover its powers for yourself. But let's just say this - I left feeling a stone lighter in both body and mind.

Back in my white fluffy robe, I retreated to the spa's nearby Relaxation Lounge, where a complimentary herbal drink, along with nutritious snacks, were waiting for me by gentle candlelight, along with stunning views overlooking the hut garden.

Food and drink

Post-treatment, we returned to the Pool House for a few small plates from the spa's

nourishing lunch menu. In keeping with Middleton Lodge's renowned estate-to-plate ethos, all dishes are balanced, fresh and cooked using ingredients growing on the estate wherever possible.

For us, it was protein-packed flat iron chicken with just-picked broad beans and zingy gremolata, homegrown lettuce with smoked cheese, avocado and chipotle, followed by estate honey panna cotta with thyme-roasted peaches.

A sweet end to an unrivalled spa experience - made special with impeccable service and packed with local flair - that is yet to be matched.

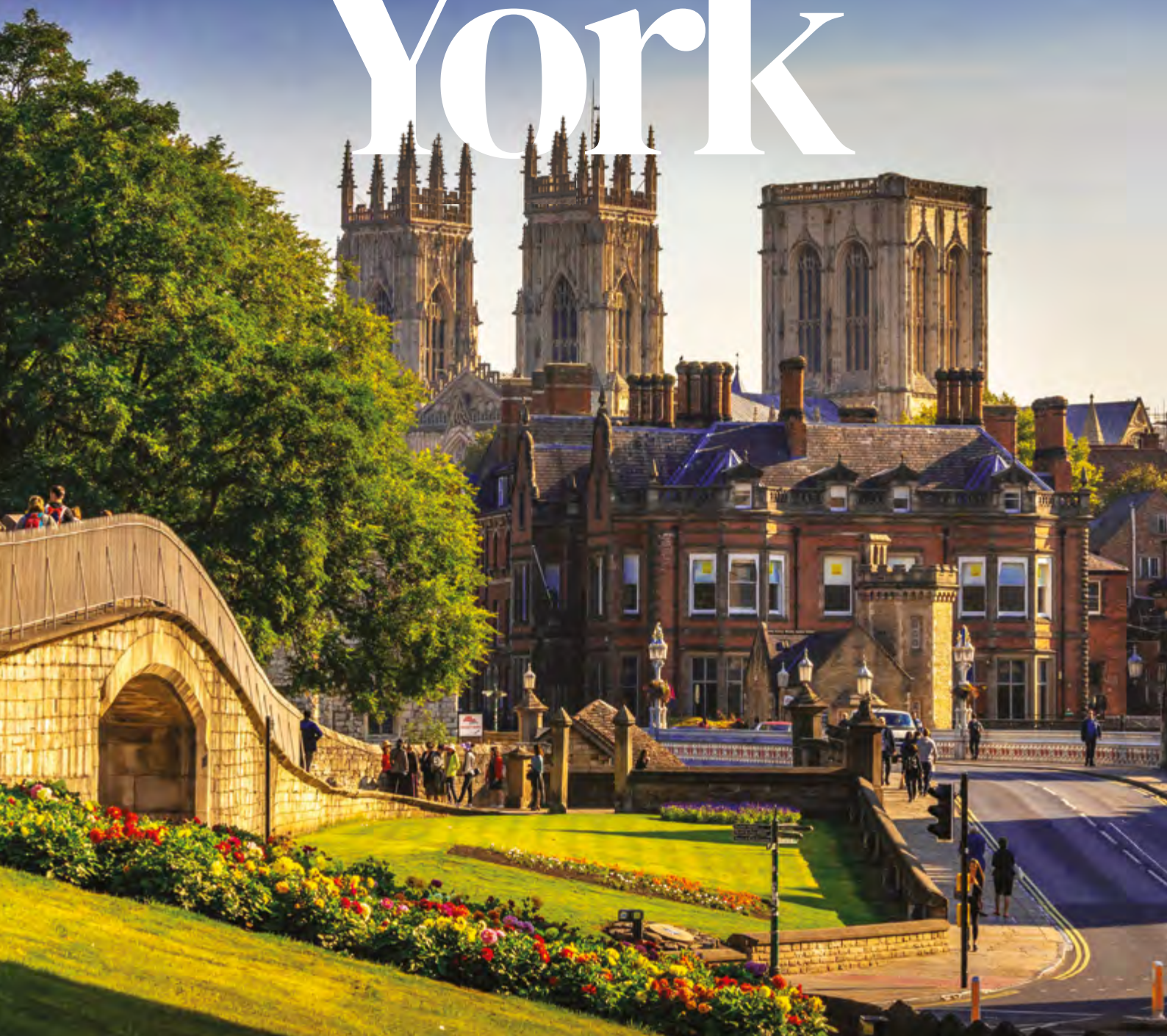
Book it now

Hotel residents and day spa guests can choose between a range of experiences, which include morning, afternoon and evening packages and a Day Spa and Day Retreat offering. Individual massages and beauty therapies are also available.

For more information and prices, visit www.middletonlodge.co.uk

Ten things
you might not
know about...

York



Steeped in history and blessed with cobbled city good looks, York is one of most charming and picturesque cities in the UK – but it's also one of the most interesting. We round up some fun trivia...

one

It's known for its "snickelways"

The city's "snickelways" – otherwise known as narrow, winding pedestrian paths and hidden alleys – offer a charming way to explore the city away from the main streets.

two

It's the birthplace of Guy Fawkes

Guy Fawkes – infamous for his involvement in the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 – was born in Stonegate in 1570.

three

It's home to the largest gothic cathedral in Northern Europe

The city's iconic York Minster stands tall as the largest of its type in Northern Europe. It's said that it took over 250 years to build, with work starting in the 1200s until 1470.

four

It has its very own cat trail

York's Lucky Cat Trail takes feline fans on a free scavenger hunt through its winding streets to find a number of cat statues – which are scattered randomly throughout the city. Each one has its own unique story to tell.

five

It's home to the shortest street in England

You'll find the tiny street – called Whip Ma Whop Ma Gate – between Fossgate and The Shambles.





six

It has a rich chocolate heritage

The city played a significant role in the history of chocolate production – and was once home to some of the UK's most famous confectionery brands, including Terry's and Rowntree's. The Rowntree factory – which opened in the 1800s – was the training ground for the founder of Cadbury, who then went on to train the founder of Bournville.

seven

It's considered one of the most haunted cities in the UK

York Dungeon, The Treasurer's House, Ye Old Starr Inne and the Golden Fleece pub are among its reputed haunted locations.

eight

It has a multi-layered history

Beneath the modern city lies a complex network of medieval and Roman structures. The York Minster Undercroft, for example, reveals archaeological layers spanning centuries.

nine

It's home to the longest medieval city walls in England

Walking along them provides both a historical and scenic experience, offering views of the city's rooftops and buildings. It's said that all buildings inside the city walls are not permitted to be taller than York Minster, so as not to block pedestrians' views of the iconic landmark.

ten

It inspired the iconic Harry Potter series

It's widely believed that author, JK Rowling, used The Shambles as inspiration when creating the image of Diagon Alley in the Harry Potter novels and movie adaptations.



A background image featuring a bouquet of pink roses on the left and two heart-shaped pink macarons on the right, set against a light, neutral background.

Valentine's Day gift guide

With Valentine's Day approaching, love is in the air – and what better way to show you care than by treating that someone special with a gift to remember. Our luxury gift guide is a one-stop shop for romantic presents and thoughtful experiences to suit every taste and style.

By Anna Robinson



For the tech-lovers...

Sonos Move

With locations in Newcastle and York, Fenwick has been at the heart of northern shopping for 150 years. From luxury food hampers to designer clothes and homeware, the iconic department store has something for everyone – including tech for partners who love their gadgets.

A Sonos Move is an ideal gift for the music-lover in your life. The portable, voice-controlled speaker is connected to Google Assistant and Amazon Alexa, meaning your loved one can play their favourite music, check the news and set alarms through hands free instructions. Sonos is renowned for its unrivalled sound quality and sleek, modern speaker designs.

Ideal for listening to music while cooking in the kitchen or enjoying a summer drink in the garden, the speaker is a fantastic addition to any home and is accessible for even the most technophobic of recipients.

www.fenwick.co.uk

Lumie Bodyclock

Spring is just around the corner – but until it arrives, one of the best ways to get through the dark winter nights is with a Lumie alarm clock.

The gentle light slowly wakes you up without the need for a screen or typical loud alarm sounds. Instead, it mimics the natural light of sunrise, enabling you and your loved ones to wake up gradually and

peacefully, helping you to feel refreshed and energised.

Coloured mood lighting, Bluetooth connection, DA radio channels and gentle, natural sounds make this the ultimate alarm clock for a better nights' rest. Get yours from John Lewis in

www.johnlewis.com



For the food-lovers...

Six by Nico experience

Six by Nico – which has locations in Leeds and Manchester – is offering diners special vouchers to help them give the gift of food heaven to their partner. Every six weeks, customers vote on a new six-course tasting menu, inspired by a theme, destination or concept.

The current menus on offer are inspired by Alice in Wonderland and the funfair and promise guests an unforgettable dining experience.

www.sixbynico.co.uk



Coastal Hampers

If a hamper filled with the best North East based produce sounds like the perfect gift for your other half, then Coastal Hampers is your go-to, offering a variety of options to suit every taste and budget.

Created by Newcastle local, Sam Black, the business has enjoyed great success since launching during the pandemic.

Working with an array of local producers and suppliers, the hampers are beautifully packaged and feature high quality, delicious food and drink. Ideal for foodies with a passion for local businesses, their Ultimate Taste of the North East hamper includes goodies from companies such as Fentimans, Cullercoats Brewery, Northumberland Cheese Co and Whitley Bay Fudge Company.

www.coastalhampers.co.uk

For the travel-lovers...

An overnight stay at Grantley Hall

Nestled just outside of Ripon, Grantley Hall is luxury hotel that undergone significant restoration in recent years. Boasting a Michelin-starred restaurant alongside six dining spaces, a state-of-the-art spa, impressive suites and even an outdoor thermal pool, the hotel makes for the perfect romantic getaway.

This Valentine's Day, why not give the gift of luxury with an overnight stay for two with dinner. Guests can choose to dine in one of the hotel's three restaurants, enjoy access to its Three Grace Spa and gym and wellness centre and spend the night in either a deluxe room or the Royal Suite, which provide stunning countryside views.

www.grantleyhall.co.uk



A weekend break in a Host & Stay property

Fancy treating your loved one to a romantic weekend break? Leading holiday home manager, Host & Stay, has thousands of properties on offer for a cosy few days away together.

Founded in North Yorkshire by Dale Smith, the company has seen exponential growth in recent years and now manages luxury holiday homes and caravans across the UK.

With homes available in some of the most picturesque parts of the country - including the Northumberland coastline, the rolling hills of Yorkshire and the Lake District - there's a property to suit everyone, from hikers and bikers to those simply wanting to relax and reconnect with each other.

www.hostandstay.co.uk



For the spa-lovers...

Spa day at Rudding Park Hotel

Rudding Park Hotel in Harrogate offers the very best in spa day experiences - which make perfect gifts for Valentine's Day.

Including access to the hotel's roof top spa and garden, indoor pool, juniper log sauna, bucket shower and escape zone, plus a two-course lunch and a 50-minute treatment, a luxury spa day at here guarantees ultimate relaxation.

www.ruddingpark.co.uk

An experience at Titanic Spa

Set within the hills of the Pennines, Titanic Spa is the first Eco-Spa in the UK. The spa sits within a restored textiles mill and features 20 treatment rooms, offering everything from pregnancy massage to sessions in its private mud chamber - perfect for couples.

Locally-sourced food is available to enjoy at lunch or dinner and there is even accommodation - including luxury apartments - on site if you fancy enjoying an overnight stay. An ideal gift for an expectant mum or a great one to enjoy as a couple.

www.titanicspa.com

For the style-lovers...

Master Debonair

With sites in York, Sunderland and East Boldon, Master Debonair is one of the north's best-loved menswear stores, specialising in high-quality clothing for gents who love investing in their daytime and evening style. From three-piece suits to bold shirts and tweed caps, the store can provide a whole wardrobe for your loved one this Valentine's Day.

If you're not sure what would suit or fit, a gift voucher for Master Debonair makes for the perfect gift, allowing them to choose for themselves with the help of Master Debonair's friendly staff - who also offer one-on-one fitting and tailoring advice.

For those looking to treat their other half to a statement accessory, the store's range of pocket watches are just the ticket. Available in silver, bronze and wood, they add a touch of gentlemanly class to all suit styles.

www.masterdebonair.co

UGG Tasman slippers

Ideal for the fashionista in your life, UGG's latest Tasman slippers are making waves on TikTok and Instagram and are frequently sold out.

Available in a range of colours at Harvey Nichols Leeds, the trending slippers are made from high-quality suede and the brand's renowned plush lining for unbeatable, long-lasting comfy wear.

www.harveynichols.co.uk

Escape to the country



Known and loved for its off-grid containers, cosy cabins, luxury lofts and more, Kip & Nook is one of North Yorkshire's best-loved destinations for a country getaway with a difference – and it's growing bigger and better. [Our editor takes a tour...](#)

The story

Kip & Nook has come a long way in recent years. What started as one cabin has grown into a collection of in-demand properties, with a unique offering that makes it stand out from the crowd.

Tucked away in North Yorkshire's rolling countryside – 250 acres to be exact – it's now considered an ultimate boutique hotel, promising so much more than your average staycation getaway.

A place that effortlessly bridges the gap between rustic and luxurious, in which interiors-addicts can marvel at expertly-designed accommodation, off-grid fans can unplug and get back to nature and wellness-lovers can truly unwind.

The accommodation

Six standalone properties currently make up Kip & Nook's portfolio – all with their own identity and all dog-friendly, too.

Each one is individually-designed and made special with unique interiors and features to suit different types of guests. But although they might differ in style and size, one thing remains true wherever you choose to lay your head – you're guaranteed a peaceful and undeniably good-looking stay.

Ideal for couples longing for a romantic hideaway, or friends in search of a relaxing bolthole where they can hunker down for the night undisturbed, **The Den** and **The Cabin** tick all the boxes.

Both properties sleep two guests and promise a tranquil, off-grid experience, along with unrivalled scenic views thanks to their uber-private countryside locations.

Surrounded by rolling flowering fields stretching as far as the eye can see – and not a person, car or building in sight – both properties are self-sufficient and feature

rooftop solar panels – meaning the electricity here is powered entirely via green energy. You won't find any Wi-Fi connection either – instead, guests are encouraged to embrace a stripped-back, tech-free way of life and get back to nature.

The Den's good looks take inspiration from open-plan Scandinavian cabins, characterised by a natural wooden interior, enhanced with black, industrial-style detailing for a modern twist. Soft furnishings and rattan accents provide texture at every corner, while a log burning fire provides warmth and a classic cabin vibe. Climb the industrial ladder to discover a super king bed situated on the first-floor mezzanine, offering a truly unique sleeping experience.

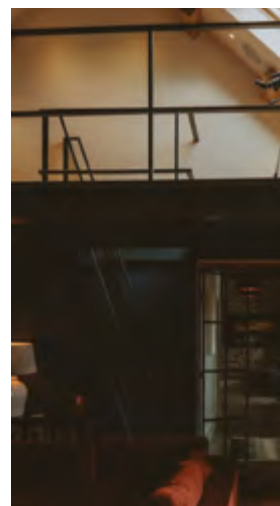
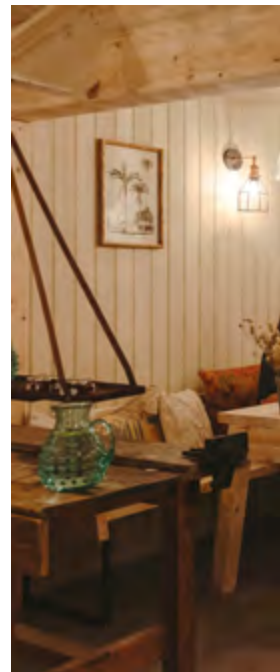
Over in **The Cabin**, the interiors are a little more contemporary – though still pared-back, with wooden features, a log burning fire and floor-to-ceiling windows for a warm, bright and minimalistic feel throughout. You'll find a gas stove kitchen and a fully-functioning heated shower in the adjoining outbuilding.

Large decking areas with private wood-burning hot tubs and outdoor furniture surround both properties and you'll even find an outdoor firepit and waterfall shower – with nature as your backdrop – if you're staying at **The Den**.

Also made for two guests, the OG Container and its sibling property – aptly named **The Baby Bro** – which lies only 30 metres away – are deceptively spacious and offer a unique and modern spin on a rustic country retreat.

Highlights include open plan living areas, cosy snugs, log-burning fires and bi-fold doors, opening out to plenty of private outdoor space for soaking up the sun, relaxing in your own wood burning hot tub, or curling up by the fire under the stars.

Green-fingered guests will love **The Baby Bro's** private Japanese-inspired garden



too - complete with a rope swinging chair, fire pit and even an outdoor shower.

Visiting as part of a group?

The Barn and **The Loft** have everything you need for a stay to remember - from multiple rooms and zones for unwinding, socialising and celebrating, to fully-equipped kitchens for hosting and luxury bedrooms to kick back in.

Perfect for special occasions, **The Barn** sleeps eight people - be it a mix of family, friends or both - and features a bespoke open-plan kitchen with its own AGA cooker, a boot room for those exploring the site's grounds, a grand family bathroom and a stunning wrap-around courtyard with a super-generous wood-fired hot tub. Whoever bags the master suite is treated to a deluxe en-suite bathroom and a private balcony, complete with a hammock-style chair.

Over in **The Loft**, a modern, luxury aesthetic reigns supreme. Sleeping four guests, it's Kip & Nook's most contemporary build so far with a fun and flexible design, right next door to the site's communal space for food and drink, yoga, cooking, gaming and more.

Inside, you'll discover a self-catering kitchen, a Scandi-style dining area and a statement spiral stairway leading to the second floor, where you can take advantage of a cinema screen TV, a cosy snug area and good-sized bedrooms, made special with natural textures and furnishings as a nod to the property's rural postcode.

The workshop

Kip & Nook's communal space - which all guests have exclusive access to - is the place to be for fun activities, good food and more to make your stay extra-special.

Decked out with a mix of modern and vintage interiors - from old-school cars and retro signage to an industrial-style bar - the unique hang-out provides friends, family and couples with a space to enjoy everything from pool and ping-pong to darts and game consoles.

Food and drink

Guests are treated to breakfast is served each morning of their stay - and everything is

prepared to order. Choose from a full breakfast served with eggs to your liking, or ask Kip & Nook's chef to whip you up something special from the kitchen's specials menu. Find a spot in the site's brand new Breakfast Room and dig in.

Fancy a bite in the evening? Wood-fired pizzas and drinks are served from the bar inside the Workshop.

Menus are available online, but remember to pre-order your meals and pre-book your time slots before your stay.

Wellness

Kip & Nook's latest developments cater to wellness fans - specifically couples or friends looking to take relaxation to the next level during their stay.

Its **Kirami Wellness Experience** promises 90 minutes of undisturbed bliss. An oasis of tranquillity, deep within Kip & Nook's rural grounds - with jaw-dropping countryside views thrown in for good measure.

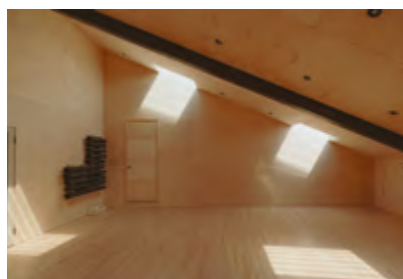
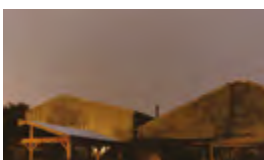
Down a peaceful path, guests will be taken on a mini spa-like journey, including a traditional Kirami sauna from Finland, an invigorating outdoor cold drench shower, an icy plunge pool and a cosy outdoor seating area around a crackling fire pit.

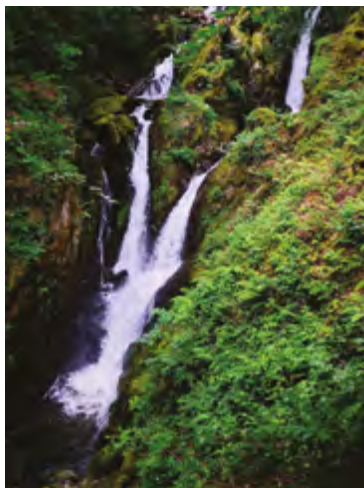
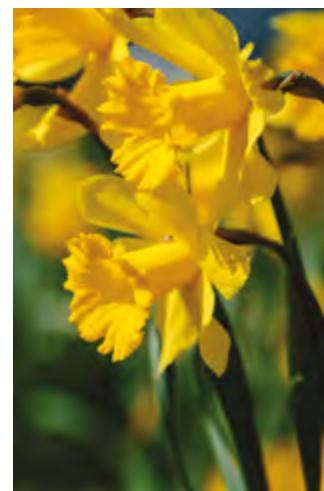
My verdict? A party for the senses that works wonders for the mind, body and soul. A real must-do.

For those in search of something a little less stimulating, **The Breathing Room** provides the perfect space to drift off, zone out perhaps practice a bit of meditation. Grab a fresh robe (and a comfy hammock chair) and kick back under calm dimmed lights with your drink of choice.

In need of a stretch? Kip & Nook's very own **yoga studio** could be one of the most serene I've found around these parts. Choose your class that takes your fancy (they're on offer four days a week - including weekends) and find your flow during your stay - just remember to book ahead to secure your spot on the mat.

For more information, or to book, visit kipandnook.com





Top wellness walks for spring

Spring's arrival means longer, lighter days and more time to enjoy the great outdoors. And what better way to stretch your legs and clear your mind than taking to the hills and beyond in Yorkshire's best-loved national park...

If you hadn't heard, wellness walks are on the rise. The kind that see you stomp away stress, get back to nature and boost those all-important endorphins.

And whether you're getting your steps in solo, with the dog or with a friend or two by your side, there's no better place to do it in Yorkshire than in the North York Moors.

The national park stretches from the Cleveland Hills in the west to the North Sea coast in the east and is known and loved for its diverse landscapes – from heather-covered moorlands and deep dales to rolling hills and breathtaking coastal cliffs – that make every walk a memorable one.

It's also home to variety of trails and footpaths – perfect for walkers, joggers, hikers and everyone in between – with natural beauty guaranteed at every signpost. Here's a few worth trying as we settle into spring...

Roseberry Topping circular walk

This iconic hill near Great Ayton offers stunning panoramic views of the North York Moors. The circular walk takes you through woodlands and across open moorland before ascending Roseberry Topping, providing a fantastic vantage point to admire the surrounding landscapes.

Sutton Bank and the White Horse Walk

Begin your walk at the Sutton Bank National Park Centre and embark on a circular route that leads you along the edge of Sutton Bank. Enjoy breathtaking views over the Vale of York and spot the famous Kilburn White Horse carved into the hillside.

Goathland and Mallyan Spout waterfall

Start your walk in the picturesque village of Goathland, known for its scenic beauty, through woodlands and across moorland to the enchanting Mallyan Spout waterfall. The perfect place to rest your feet and cool off on a warm day's hike.

Rosedale Abbey and the Ironstone mines

Explore the historic landscape around Rosedale Abbey – once a bustling centre of the ironstone mining industry. The circular walk provides glimpses into the area's industrial past, offering a mix of moorland and wooded sections with scenic views.

Farndale Daffodil Walk

In spring, the Farndale Daffodil Walk is a must-visit for its colourful and vibrant display of wild daffodils. The easy riverside walk near Low Mill showcases a carpet of golden blooms and is a stunning way to experience the beauty of the North York Moors.

'Tis the season to ski

With direct routes to some of Europe's most popular ski destinations, hitting the slopes has never been easier, thanks to Newcastle International Airport.



With ski season now in full swing, there's no better time than the present to start thinking about nabbing a last-minute trip to one of Europe's best-loved ski resorts.

Ski season runs from early December to late April, during which time families, couples and friends can enjoy easy access to some of Europe's big name ski hotspots, as well as more affordable and less populated areas.

Whether you're visiting as part of a snowy weekend getaway or during the school holidays, Newcastle International offers a wide choice of flight times and

destinations to choose from. Countries such as France, Switzerland and Italy receive a large amount of winter sports-lovers each year, but lesser-known resorts – including those in Norway, Bulgaria and Austria – shouldn't be overlooked.

Here, the team at Newcastle International Airport share their top places to fly to for a trip of a lifetime up in the mountains...

Austria

Innsbruck

Up to one flight a week with TUI and Crystal Ski (December – March). Nearest ski resort is Olympia SkiWorld - a collection of nine ski resorts around the city of Innsbruck that have joined together to form one "super resort."

Salzburg

Up to two flights a week with Jet2.com, TUI and Crystal Ski (December – April). Popular ski resorts include Zell am See, Saalbach and Obertauern. A Salzburg Super Ski Card grants you access to ski resorts around Salzburg.

Bulgaria

Sofia

Weekly flights with Balkan Holidays (December – March). Bankso is the most popular resort in Bulgaria - just 90 minutes from Sofia Airport.

France

Grenoble

Weekly flights with Jet2.com (December – March). A flight to Grenoble means you can choose to ski at a variety of resorts around the French Alps, including the popular Alpe d'Huez, Chevalier and Megeve.

Norway

Stavanger

Up to four flights a week during winter with Loganair. Western Norway is home to 36 ski resorts, including Voss Resort, Myrkdalen and Strandafjellet. With good value for money ski schools and a notably quieter destination, Norway is ideal for families learning to ski.

Spain

Barcelona

Up to two flights a week during winter with Ryanair. With the Pyrenees mountains just a short drive away from the sun of Barcelona, a ski holiday on the French-Spanish border can be reached within two short hours. Masella is popular for night-time skiing, due to its powerful lighting system. The mountain has 65 slopes and nine black runs for skiers looking for a challenge.

Switzerland

Geneva

Up to four flights a week with Jet2.com, TUI and easyJet (December – April). In the heart of the French-Swiss Alps, Geneva is a gateway airport for hundreds of ski resorts. Morzine is just an 85-minute drive from Geneva Airport and offers 650km of slopes to enjoy. Champéry is a short journey away, providing snow-sure conditions at an altitude of 2,466m.

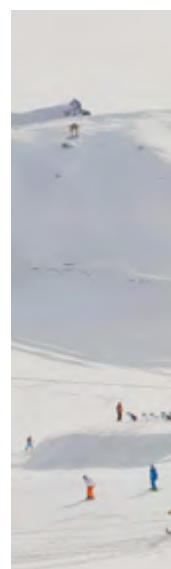
Italy

Milan Bergamo

Up to two flights a week during winter with Ryanair. Milan sits within a mountainous valley, meaning the city is surrounded by ski resorts. Chiesa, in Valmalenco is a small village, just two hours away from Milan by car. Thanks to Italy's new Snow Train initiative, securing a special Train+Shuttle+Skipass allows you to reach the slopes and leave your car at home. The Snow Eagle, one of the largest cable cars in Europe, provides access to the slopes of Alpe Palu, with more than 50km of ski slopes and a snowboard park, which frequently hosts World Cup competitions.

www.newcastleairport.com

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The jewel of the desert

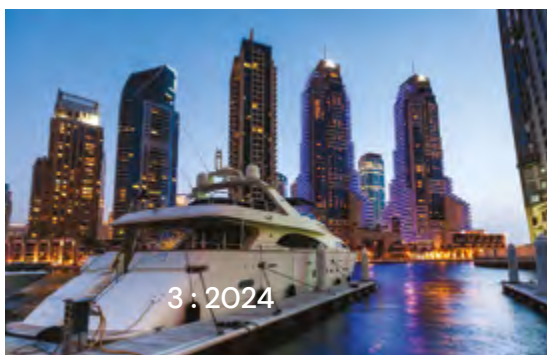
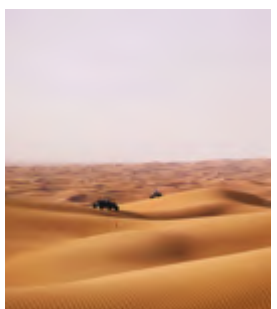
Discover luxury day charters in Dubai

By Geoff Moore



With its unique blend of opulence and innovation, Dubai has quickly become the jewel of the desert, beckoning travellers from all over the world to its shores as its popularity increases each year.





Renowned for its futuristic skyline, punctuated by record breaking structures like the Burj Khalifa and the Palm Jumeirah, the city is truly a testament to formidable architecture. Intertwine phenomenal scenery and turquoise ocean with the best boutiques, exhilarating activities, like dune surfing and desert safaris, and some of the best beach clubs in the world, and you can see why Dubai is high on the list when it comes to a break that has everything.

The city's marinas are no exception to the splendour and magnificence, bordering the tranquil waters of the Persian Gulf. And what better way to take in the cosmopolitan skyline and enjoy the spoils of the ocean at the same time than from the decks of a luxury yacht?

While you can embark on a yacht charter holiday in the region for as long as you wish, many are now opting to test their sea legs with a luxurious day charter before committing to a yacht charter for a longer period of time. If you are heading to Dubai for three nights, one week, or longer, add some extra magic and spend a day on the water. A full-day charter presents a complete exploration of Dubai's iconic landmarks, with ample time to relax and take in the splendour of the skyline.

For those seeking a more condensed, but equally captivating escape, a half-day charter promises an immersive experience in a shorter span, allowing you to discover essential highlights of Dubai's breath-taking coastline, ensuring your journey is packed with impressive sights and memorable moments.

With full day and half day charters becoming the new favourite way to relax, discover why so many people are choosing to charter a yacht in Dubai.

The ultimate luxury day trip

If you're looking to celebrate and make your trip to Dubai even more memorable, a crewed yacht charter ticks every box. Your yacht will come with its own experienced captain and crew, meaning you can sit back and relax while your crew serve drinks, set up the water toys and ensure you have a fabulous time.

Watersports and water toys

Thrill-seekers can revel in an array of watersports, from jet skiing, water skiing and paddleboarding to exhilarating wakeboarding adventures for those seeking an adrenaline rush. Explore beneath the waves with a Seabob, or take a leisurely paddle with the inflatables, with various options available for all skill levels and paces.

Beach clubs

Arrive in style and anchor at a private beach club along Dubai's coastline. Bask in luxury, from Nikki Beach to Zero Gravity, there is a great range of beach clubs in the city. Unwind on pristine shores, sip champagne and revel in the exclusive amenities, from beachside lounges and live DJs to fitness classes or themed parties.

Snorkelling and diving

Dive into the crystal-clear waters of the Persian Gulf. Explore vibrant underwater ecosystems, encounter diverse marine life and witness the beauty of the Gulf's thriving coral reefs. Depending on your level of experience, diving instructors can be arranged if needed.

Sunset views

Indulge in the mesmerising views of Dubai's skyline as the sun sets over the horizon. Relax and enjoy a leisurely cruise aboard the yacht, while sipping on your favourite drink, soaking in the breathtaking transition from day to night.

Ocean dining

Delight your tastebuds with a gourmet dining affair on deck. Tailored to your preferences, there's nothing like feasting on fresh and delicious food with your favourite people as you cruise the crystal-clear waters with sea air in your lungs.

Fishing

The Persian Gulf, along with its various bays and inlets, offers ample opportunities for fishing. Popular fishing spots include Dubai Marina, Jebel Ali and the waters around Palm Jumeirah. It's worth being aware that some species may be subject to catch-and-release regulations to help maintain sustainable fish populations.

Events

If you're in the region for an event such as the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, why not enjoy a day charter with your group? Whether you're experiencing the event with friends or business partners, a yacht offers a great place to relax and enjoy each other's company.

Celebrate in style

Yachts are the perfect setting for special occasions. Whether it's a birthday, engagement, anniversary, or any other celebration, consider chartering a yacht for a memorable experience in a private and intimate setting, away from the crowds.



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Wine & Dine

The latest food and drink news, from
the finest wines and must-try recipes
to new restaurant openings and more

Getting to know you

Callum Woodcock, CEO and founder of wine investment platform, WineFi, talks business goals, favourite bottles and what his flourishing new business can offer today's vino-lovers...

What inspired you to start your own business?

I started my career at some of the big investment managers and during my time there I noticed that people were increasingly interested in diversifying into alternative assets. We've started to see some "alts", like private equity, become more accessible, but investing in fine wine has remained a complicated and opaque topic. My hope is that through education and transparency, we can bring more investors - especially those who are not necessarily wine-drinkers - to this asset class.

Why should people consider investing in wine - and how can WineFi help?

As an asset class, fine wine has a fascinating profile. We've detailed data stretching back to the early 2000s and since then wine has outperformed many major equity indices. It is, ironically, quite an illiquid asset, which makes it resistant to panic-selling. This means it is also very stable - behaving a lot like gold does as an investment. It's also uncorrelated to traditional assets like equities and bonds, making it a solid diversifier, and in some circumstances is even exempt from Capital Gains Tax in the UK.

What does a typical working week look like for you?

We're a start-up, so every week is different. That said, I typically spend most of my time talking to prospective clients who want to know more about what we do, along with our investment committee and suppliers.

Tell us about your connection to Yorkshire?

I grew up visiting family in Harrogate, which is a beautiful part of Yorkshire. It's a place that is close to my heart and I have some lovely memories of the area. Yorkshire has a rich heritage and is home to some fantastic, up-and-coming cities. There seems to be a wealth of opportunity and real buzz about the region at the moment.

What was the first wine you ever tried and what can you remember about it?

The first was probably something like Echo Falls at a house party when I was a teenager. But the first "fine wine" I remember trying was a glass of 1994 Chateau Palmer. I just remember being struck by the history of it more than anything else - a wine as old as I was, from a chateau that had been producing wine under that name since the end of the Napoleonic wars.

What is your favourite wine now and why?

I love a Gewürztraminer. Luckily for me, Sainsbury's do an excellent one for about £8. Not what you would consider investment grade, but certainly easier on the wallet!

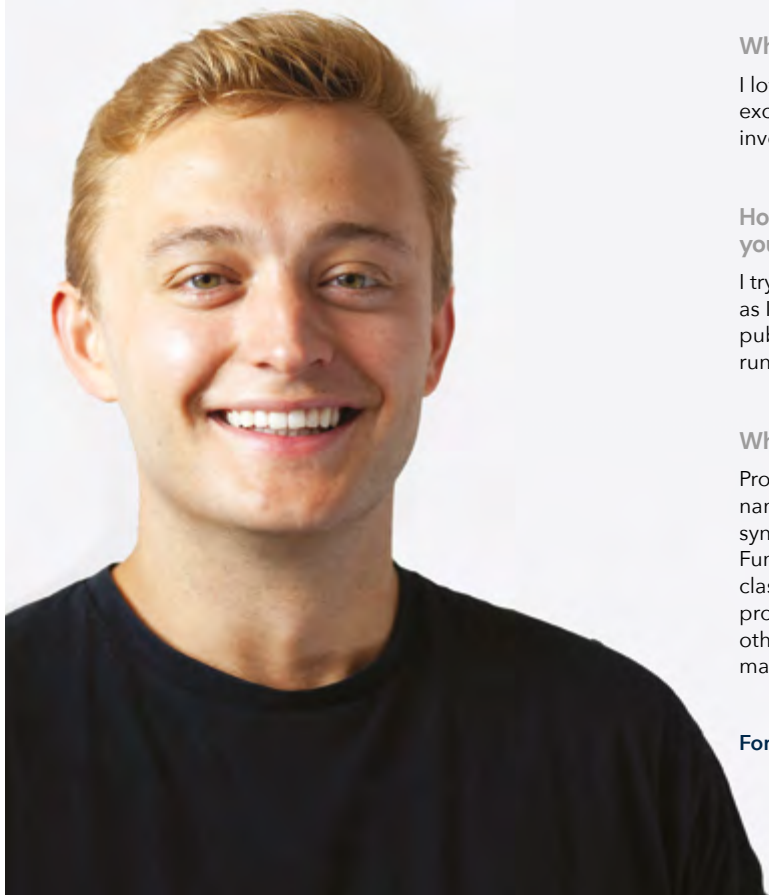
How do you spend your time when you're not running a business?

I try and get out of the house and do some exercise as often as I can. A cycle with a podcast, or a long walk - ideally with a pub at the end of it. One of my New Year's resolutions was to run a triathlon, so we'll see where we get to with that.

What are your hopes and goals for 2024?

Professionally, I want to see WineFi grow into an established name for wine investment. My goal is for it to become as synonymous with wine investment as Vanguard is with Index Funds. I think there is a great opportunity to open this asset class up in a way that benefits the whole ecosystem, from producers and merchants to importers and investors and others. Personally, I have a wedding to plan - I'm getting married in 2025!

For more information about WineFi, visit www.winefi.co.uk



RomanHoliday

Our contributing wine editor, David Harker, discovers la dolce vita, exploring the neighbourhoods of Rome.





Rome has everything; history, culture, style and of course wine. So what have the Romans ever done for wine lovers? Well there's Est! Est!! Est!!! di Montefiascone, an extraordinary name for an often ordinary wine. Or there's Frascati from the hills overlooking the city. And that's about it for wines that you might find at home. But when in Rome...

Start with La Fiaschetta. A discreet doorway on the corner of the quiet Via dei Cappellari. A short walk from the hotspots of Plaza Navona and Campo de' Fiori but a world away from the tourist traps. Small, simple, authentic and an enthusiastic owner touchingly proud of his regional wines. Be sure to book.

Behind Campo de' Fiori is, L'Angolo Divino. This divine corner has been serving wine since 1946. And from the weary look of the patron he hasn't missed a shift. Take a seat at the bar and work your way down the chalk board of wines by the glass. Nibble on cheese and charcuterie and chat until you get a smile.

Across the Ponte Sisto footbridge is Trastevere, literally across the Tiber. Stop at Trapizzino Trilussa for a wine list dedicated to regional wines and snack on suppli, the traditional Roman street food. Then join the chatter of the evening passeggiata. Through winding, cobbled streets delivery trucks squeeze between pavement tables. This is the Rome of your imagination. Sunlit, bustling, beeping Rome. Around every corner the promise of Audrey Hepburn hugging Cary Grant on the back of a speeding Vespa.

The heart of this vibrant neighbourhood is the Basilica di Santa Maria, one of the oldest churches in the city. For those who follow a different religion pop into the club shop of Trastevere Calcio, Rome's third football team with a history dating back to 1909.

A little further south is Testaccio. A traditional working-class area and the cradle of another football team, AS Roma. This recently gentrified neighbourhood of plane trees and pink pastel buildings makes for a pleasant Saturday morning stroll.

The indoor food market is worth a visit to mingle with gesticulating locals.

Grab a slice of Pinsa Romana and try a glass of natural wine. From the market head to Piazza Testaccio, pause to watch the kids playing in one of Rome's many fountains and then turn towards Via Marmorata for a real treat.

Volpetti Salumeria is an historic delicatessen with terracotta and white tiled floors, where rows of hams hang from the ceiling, artisan cheeses crowd under the glass counter and wines from the length of Italy line the wooden shelves. Sit at a marble topped table for a small bite, a glass of Franciacorta and people watch discerning Italians selecting their Saturday night treats.

For a casual supper step next door into Taverna Volpetti. Enjoy a short menu of seasonal dishes and my favourite wine list in Rome. The list is presented by self-confessed wine addict, Matteo Tomljanovich. Matteo turned his back on corporate life - including a spell at Proctor and Gamble, Newcastle - to devote himself to a love of wine. Let his passion guide you through a list that features cheerful Cesanese from Lazio and rare treasures from Piemonte.

Beyond the ancient Aurelian Walls is the student neighbourhood of Ostiense. De Gusto is a tiny, friendly Enoteca dedicated to wine, spirits and sake. Why sake? "Because I like it," shrugs the owner. Close by is Trecca - Cucina di Mercato, simple ingredients cooked well.

On a Sunday morning - to escape the city heat, choked traffic and tides of tourists - depart teeming Termini on an early train to Frascati. The attractive hilltop town is a pleasant thirty minutes climb past ancient aqueducts, through vineyards and orchards. Ristorante 'Na Fojetta is reassuringly traditional and a perfect place to enjoy a leisurely lunch of Porchetta; the classic Roman slice of slow roasted, boneless pork stuffed with herbs. Perfect with a bottle of Frascati.

Lazio is not the most lauded of Italian wine regions but it has a generous climate, volcanic soils, and passionate wine makers committed to sustainable viticulture. Their wines, made from Bellone, Grechetto and Cesanese, may never leave the region but when in Rome can be enjoyed by the curious wine lover who knows where to look.

David's Roman address book

La Fiaschetta

Via dei Cappellari, 64

L'Angolo Divino

Via dei Balestrari N.12/14

Trapizzino Trilussa

Piazza Trilussa 42

Volpetti Salumeria

Via Marmorata 47

Taverna Volpetti

Via Alessandro Volta 8

Enoteca De Gusto

Via Gabriello Chiabrera, 58A

Trecca - Cucina di Mercato

Via Alessandro Severo 222

Ristorante 'Na Fojetta

Via del Risorgimento 4, Frascati

What's in a name?

The Romans seem to have an awful lot of words for places to eat and drink, so what's the difference?

Enoteca

A traditional enoteca is a wine shop where you can taste local wines before buying. The concept has evolved so that you may also be served a small selection of snacks alongside the wine.

Salumeria

A delicatessen. Some may have a few tables where you can enjoy cured meats and cheese with a glass of wine.

Osteria

Originally a place serving only wine. Today the emphasis is more likely to be on a simple menu of traditional, local dishes.

Taverna

An inn or tavern serving drinks with food available.

Trattoria

A sort of Italian bistro. Traditionally a casual dining place, often family owned, serving rustic local food.

Ristorante

A more formal, full service restaurant.



Uncorking wine investment

Callum Woodcock, CEO and founder of wine investment platform, WineFi, debunks the myths around investing in fine wine – and reveals what budding investors need to look out for when searching for asset bottles...

In recent years, there has been growing interest in fine wine as an investment. Looking at the data, it is easy to understand why.

Over the last 20 years, the Liv-ex 100 fine wine index has consistently outperformed the FTSE 100, rivalling even the S&P 500 in terms of performance. On a regional level, this is even more pronounced – with Burgundy outperforming even the NASDAQ over the past five years by a full 30%.

It is uncorrelated to traditional asset classes – likes stocks and bonds – and behaves a lot like gold, as a stable asset to hold during times of economic uncertainty. Perhaps most interestingly for UK investors, it is also exempt from Capital Gains Tax (CGT) in most circumstances.

But not all wine makes for a good investment. In fact, WineFi estimates that only 1% of wine globally can be considered truly “investment-grade.”

“It’s hard to tell how much investment-grade wine is out there,” says Callum.

“The wine market is very opaque as so much is in private hands, but we estimate that there to be an investable universe of about £4.5 billion.”

There are a variety of factors that make a wine investable – brand, vintage quality, critic scores – but all of them contribute to the same objective: the likelihood that someone will buy the wine for a higher price at a later date.

There are a limited number of “blue chip” producers across a handful of top wine regions and only a finite number of bottles can be produced by each winery every year – the quality of which varies from vintage to vintage.

As the wines improve with age and bottles are consumed or damaged, they become increasingly scarce. At the same time, as global wealth increases, so too does demand for high-end wine.

“The fine wine market is driven by supply and demand,” explains Callum.

“This combination of ever-increasing scarcity and growing demand helps to drive prices higher.”

Callum and his team imagined WineFi – a next-generation investment platform for fine wine – as a way of solving the problems that prevent more investors from discovering wine as an asset class.

“Education is so important,” says Callum. “If you Google ‘how to invest in wine’, the only resources that appear are thinly veiled adverts for wine investment businesses. For this asset class to enter the mainstream, there needs to be far more content out there to allow investors to make informed decisions.”

WineFi is backed by an investment committee of industry experts, including two “Masters of Wine” – the wine industry equivalent of a PhD – and has seen interest skyrocket since the launch of their private beta in October 2023.

“We are really humbled by the response from the market,” says Callum. “We have seen a huge volume of inbound interest from investors, who were only vaguely aware of wine as an investable asset and who want to gain exposure. We take a very gentle, consultative approach, which I think helps.” The WineFi team takes a narrow view of the market, looking at around 300 producers across France, Italy and California.

“We take a value investing approach across a relatively small investment universe. There are excellent Spanish, German, South African and Australian wines, but none of them meet our criteria.”

To retain its value, fine wine must be stored “in bond” in a UK-government approved warehouse, where conditions are tightly controlled.

“Light, heat, humidity and vibrations can all impact the quality of the wine. If you plan to sell the wine, then a future buyer needs to know that it has been stored in perfect condition – not in your cellar at home.”

Encouragingly, for the wine trade, the average age of a WineFi’s investor is just 34, versus the average age of a wine investor more generally, which is 58. “The wine trade knows that they need to attract a younger demographic to the market and wine investment is a novel way of appealing to that audience”

The WineFi team and platform has attracted the attention of leading venture capitalists, eager to encourage access into an untapped asset class. They are backed by SFC and Founders Capital, as well as prominent angels like incoming Inchcape chairman Jerry Buhlmann.

5 of the best... fine dining restaurants in Yorkshire

Whether you're celebrating a special occasion or simply wanting to take your next date night to new and tasty levels, these fancy foodie spots promise to impress from starter to dessert...



The Black Swan at Oldstead Oldstead, York

A Michelin-starred, four AA Rosette restaurant, known for its inventive, farm-to-table dishes and luxury rooms. Owned and run by chef Tommy Banks and his family and the sister venue to Roots York and The Abbey Inn.

The Old Vicarage Ridgeway, near Sheffield

An award-winning fine dining restaurant in a historic setting (a grand Victorian country house), recognised and loved for its exquisite seasonal menus and attention to detail for over 30 years.

theoldvicarage.co.uk

The Star Inn at Harome Harome, near Helmsley

A renowned Michelin-starred gastropub on the edge of the North Yorkshire Moors, known and loved for its mouthwatering dishes - most of which celebrate local ingredients - and charming, cosy setting.

www.thestaratharome.co.uk

The Pipe and Glass Inn South Dalton, near Beverley

A family-owned (and run) gastropub, popular for its mix of traditional and contemporary dishes - all of which showcase locally-sourced ingredients wherever possible. The former coaching inn - which has one Michelin star to its name - can be found on the picturesque Dalton Estate.

www.pipeandglass.co.uk

Skosh York

A modern and stylish restaurant with chef-owner Neil Bentineck at the helm, serving up small, but refined, plates that pack a punch. Expect diverse flavours and colourful dishes - each one showcasing creativity and skill. Currently enjoying a mighty makeover, but due to re-open from February this year.

www.skoshyork.co.uk



New direction

Two Michelin star chef, James Close, is set to join Rockliffe Hall to head up a new and exciting culinary development.



James Close, Chef Patron of County Durham's two Michelin star Raby Hunt restaurant, is joining the luxury five-star hotel to open a new restaurant, as well as oversee and develop the culinary direction of the resort.

Close was the first chef in the North East to be awarded two Michelin stars, making his restaurant one of just 20 two Michelin-starred restaurants in the UK - and the only two-star restaurant in the North East. It was also placed fourth in The Good Food Guide's Top 20 Most Exciting UK Restaurants of 2022.

After 14 years at the restaurant, Close is excited about the opportunity to both challenge himself and to create a world-class, five-star destination in the North East, with unique and varied culinary experiences, elevating the hotel's already exceptional service and award-winning facilities - which including an award-winning spa and golf course.

Close's new restaurant will continue his current global approach to gastronomy, but a new bespoke space will allow interaction with the chefs, who will take diners on a journey inspired by the best cuisine from around the world.

Close will be joined by his wife, Maria, who will head up development, along with his head chef, Adam Molloy.

The new restaurant is targeted to open later in 2024, however Close will join the hotel in February, which will allow him time to get to know its current culinary offerings before identifying opportunities to strengthen its dining experiences - adding his passion and personality.

Close said: "To join Rockliffe Hall as culinary director is an incredible opportunity and the perfect progression to take everything we have developed and achieved at Raby Hunt to the next level. This is the next step in our ambitious journey.

"I'm always striving to do better and I'm looking forward to being part of an ambitious team that wants to lead the way in the culinary hotel space and modernise what a luxury country hotel offers its guests across gastronomy, service and experiences.

"I'm very thankful to all the people who have believed in us and been involved in our journey so far - repeat diners, guests travelling from further afield, chefs, suppliers, and Michelin - all of whom have played a big part in my career. We look forward to continuing our relationship with all of them in the future.

"We are spending time getting to know the hotel's current culinary offerings and then look forward to strengthening the resort dining experiences. People can stay updated by following me and Rockliffe Hall on social media."

Shauna Robb, general manager at Rockliffe Hall, added: "We are delighted to welcome James to Rockliffe Hall. James' appointment as culinary director marks the beginning of an exciting new phase in Rockliffe Hall's journey and will support us in our ambition to become a world-class luxury destination, offering the best in five-star experiences to all our guests."

www.rockliffehall.com



A wine-lover's paradise – in the heart of North Yorkshire

Nestled in the Vale of York, lies Dunesforde – a lush, four-acre vineyard and one of the most northerly wine-making sites in the UK.

By Anna Robinson



Working in harmony with the area's cool climate and using inspiration from the vineyards of Tuscany, it produces high-quality fruit to make distinctive, characterful, award-winning English wines.



Peter Townsend and his family have lived in the village of Upper Dunsforth for 40 years. Since 2016, they have been growing their own grapes and producing their own wines on a plot of land close to the family home. Winning regional and national awards - and supplying to Michelin restaurants - Dunesforde has gone from strength to strength. Peter's brother, James, initially brought the wine interest to the rest of the family. For many summers, starting in 2011, James spent time in Tuscany working on organic farms, living in a castle and exploring vineyards.

Returning each autumn with a passion for wines, the Townsend family decided to visit Tuscany and stayed in guest rooms in the castle, enjoying the many local vineyards the region has to offer.

Peter - who was previously an accountant - and his family went back out the following year to look at buying a vineyard, but the prices were outside their budget. They also looked at sites in Bordeaux and England's south coast.

Back in Yorkshire, they considered four different sites, before finding the perfect spot just 100 yards from the family home. With a good amount of shelter, rainfall, temperatures and soil, the space was ideal for a vineyard - and in 2016 the family planted 6000 vines.

James, who has been studying to be a winemaker for the past three and a half years, oversaw the project and managed the planting operation. The rest of the family supported in other roles and funded the buying of the land.

Following two years of growing, the first harvest was picked in 2018 and over 80 volunteers from the village came to help the family in picking the grapes.

They then found a wine producer in Wolverhampton who bottled and labelled the first batches of wine in January 2019. By the October of that year, the wine was ready to be released to the public and two varieties - Bacchus and Solaris - were released. The wines were stocked in Michelin-starred restaurants around Yorkshire and sold online and at the vineyard itself.

Peter was happy with their first efforts but felt that there was still a lot to learn and so embarked on wine tasting courses - until, sadly, Covid halted his plans.

Since then they have built custom tasting rooms and a terrace area, which is popular in the summer time with guests enjoying a drink and small plates.

Their wines have gone on to win gold and silver awards, as well as a regional trophy for best wine in the North.

The Townsend family pride themselves on high quality wines, with a focus on getting better every year.

Dunesforde's aim is to create a diverse portfolio of wines, with four varieties and 10 different wines made every year, including still, sparkling, red, white and rose wines. The range is diverse with something to suit every taste.

Each year, they produce 10,000 to 12,000 bottles, with 2,000 of the most popular wines and the smallest batch being just 201 exclusive bottles.

Peter is incredibly proud of the site they occupy: "It is a really special place - a little piece of paradise."

At the vineyard, they offer tours and tastings year-round, most popular in the summer months. A two-hour slot includes a 30-minute walk around the vines, a history lesson in wine and a tasting of between two and eight glasses, with the Grand Tasting including small plates. Prices for the tastings start at just £27.50 - an affordable and enjoyable way to while away a sunny summer afternoon.

There is a real focus on history within the Townsend's mission. Peter explained that the Romans introduced wine into Britain and the process of winemaking continued until the war years in the early 20th century.

With a nod to their history, the Queen of the North wine is named in tribute to Queen Cartamandua, leader of the Brigantes tribe in Northern England. Developments for Dunesforde are in the works, with a plan to expand, plant more vines and build a winery on site. Vineyards, however, are not a quick turnaround and take many years of work for good grapes to grow. Peter and the team hope that the vineyard will be multi-generational, continuing their legacy for years to come.

They will soon be releasing new wines, including a Special Reserve. They are also preparing to host events such as birthdays, corporate days and workshops in their hire space.

They already host wine and food evenings with local chefs, such as Simon Gueller of Box Tree and Steph Moon of Ridding Park. Talks from nutritionists in their 'Lunch and Learn' series will see healthy eating take to the stage, too, as private chef Michaela Hanna creates live dishes that support female hormones and a balanced diet.

For more information, visit www.dunesforde.com



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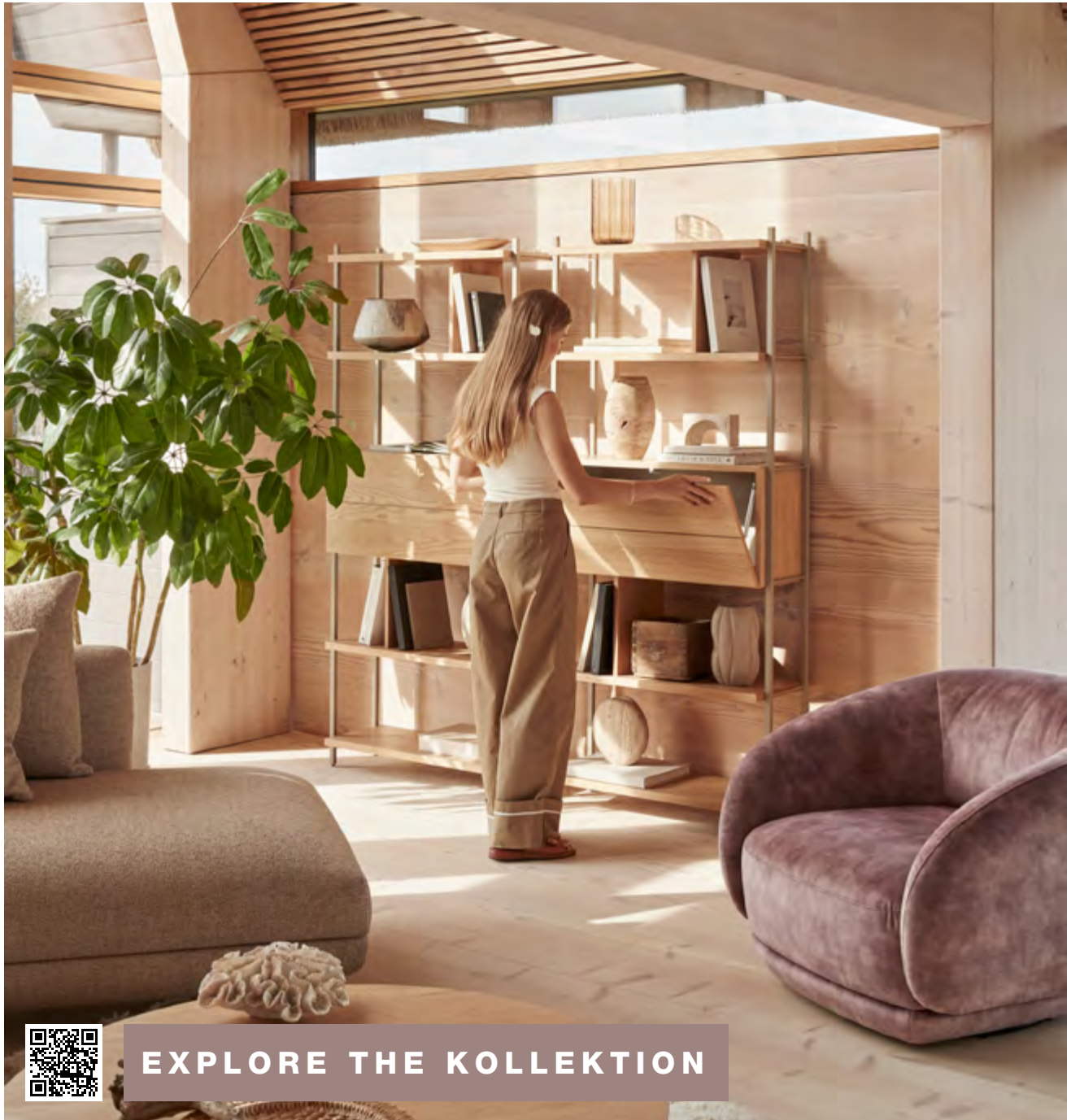
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