

ISSUE 26 | 2024

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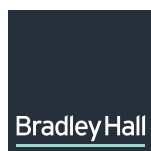
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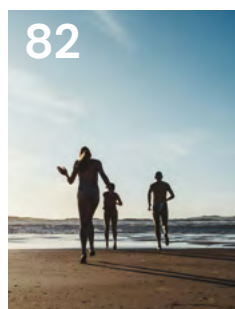
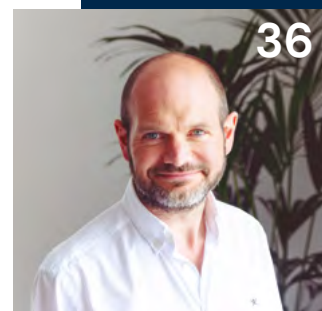
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# Contributors Round up



## Recipes Terry Laybourne

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

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

In 1998, Terry was awarded a 'Catey' (celebrating the best in the UK hospitality sector) for Independent

Restaurateur of the Year. Awarded an MBE in 1998 for services to the restaurant and tourism industries, Terry began his training in some of Europe's finest hotels, returning to the region to spend eight years as lead chef, building a formidable reputation for the Fishermans Lodge restaurant in Jesmond Dene, Newcastle.

It was in 1988 that he and his small team went solo to establish 21 Queen Street which has evolved into the much larger 21HG. In 2006 Terry was awarded a life time achievement award at the Northern Hospitality Awards. Terry has been a member of the Academy of Culinary Arts since 1998.



## Travel Geoff Moore

After joining the Merchant Navy at 18 then entering the superyacht industry in 2007, Geoff has had the privilege of travelling to all four corners of the globe as a crew member on board some of the yachting industry's most prestigious vessels. Fast forward 20 years, whilst the days of transporting and looking after celebrity

guests are behind him, he now runs West Nautical from its global headquarters in Newcastle upon Tyne. They offer a range of nautical services, with a special focus on curating and organising unforgettable luxury superyacht holidays to the world's finest destinations.



## 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.



# Brighter days are coming

Editor's notes from  
Jessica Laing



Spring is just around the corner and I don't know about you, but never have I been more ready for lighter mornings, warmer temperatures (albeit slight – we are in the North East after all) and the first shoots of daffodils and snowdrops in my garden.

There's an optimism about the early days of spring that I love. The cold begins to thaw and after what feels like months of hibernation, we all begin to emerge from our winter slumber and out into the sunlight. There's a sense of hope and renewal in the air.

It's the knowing that lighter days are coming – and not just literally. It's the reason why, for me anyway, the clocks catapulting forward really does feel like a turning point.

Inspired by the new season's arrival, we've filled the pages of this issue with inspiring, feel-good content that I hope will bring a touch of sunshine to your downtime – whether you're reading while savouring your morning coffee, between meetings or at the end of the working day.

Read on to discover uplifting stories in the worlds of technology, energy, commercial property and more, along with exclusive interviews, expert advice and one-of-a-kind thought leadership

features from some of the most successful and up-and-coming figures and businesses in the region – all of whom are looking to and feeling good about the future.

We also reveal some of the best places on Newcastle's thriving quayside for wine tasting and bottomless brunch, provide the backstory behind the re-opening of one of Northumberland's most iconic fashion stores, share our top wellbeing tips for getting the most out of Daylight Savings and let you in on what we're watching, reading and listening to this month – from powerful podcasts and TED Talks to must-read books.

Whichever pages take your fancy, I hope they put a spring in your step. For exciting news and updates, don't forget to follow us on social media. Never before have our growing channels looked more vibrant or full – and our new senior digital executive, Charlotte Cooper, plays an integral role in that.

We're delighted to welcome her to Portfolio North team and look forward to watching her flourish – and take our social media content and online engagement to new heights – in her new role. You can read more about her appointment in the pages of this issue.

As always, I'd like to extend a huge and heartfelt thank you to our clients – old and new – for trusting us with their fantastic stories, allowing us to shout about their achievements and shine a light on all the good things that lie ahead for their businesses as we settle into a brand new season and look to the future. Brighter days are certainly coming.

Happy reading.

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# News from across the North East



## Sunderland Restaurant Week is cooking up a storm

Sunderland's celebration of international cuisine is set to return in March – with the opportunity to visit some of the newest eating spots across the city. Sunderland Restaurant Week – organised by Sunderland BID – will take place from 16-24 March, giving diners the chance to visit old favourites and check out some of the latest additions to the city's dining scene.

Among the venues taking part for the first time are Keel Tavern, which offers a range of wholesome comfort food as well as generous sharing platters and recently launched Indian restaurant, Saba Maison De Luxe. These Things Happen at Harbour View, Roker has also signed up to take part, as have The Italian Kitchen Bar and Restaurant at Thompson Road, which has a menu packed with Latin favourites, covering everything from pizza and pasta to risotto.

Along with the new "recruits" the week will also see special offers available at some of the event's most popular regulars, including Angelo's Ristorante, Asiana, House of Zen, My Delhi and Spent Grain. Rumour Has It at Green Terrace was part of Sunderland Restaurant Week last year and didn't hesitate to commit to take part again.

"We have signed up to take part in Sunderland Restaurant Week again because it was such a huge success for us first time around," said Lynsey Foster, owner of Rumour Has It. "We were busy throughout the last event with both regular and new customers and we're looking forward to having the same experience."

## Teesside Freeport best performing in the country



Newly released official statistics have named the Teesside Freeport as the best performing Freeport in the UK.

The statistics handed to the Business and Trade Parliamentary Committee by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities show the Teesside Freeport to be outperforming the other eight zones in terms of 'Total Investment', 'Foreign Direct Investment' (FDI), and 'Current Employment'.

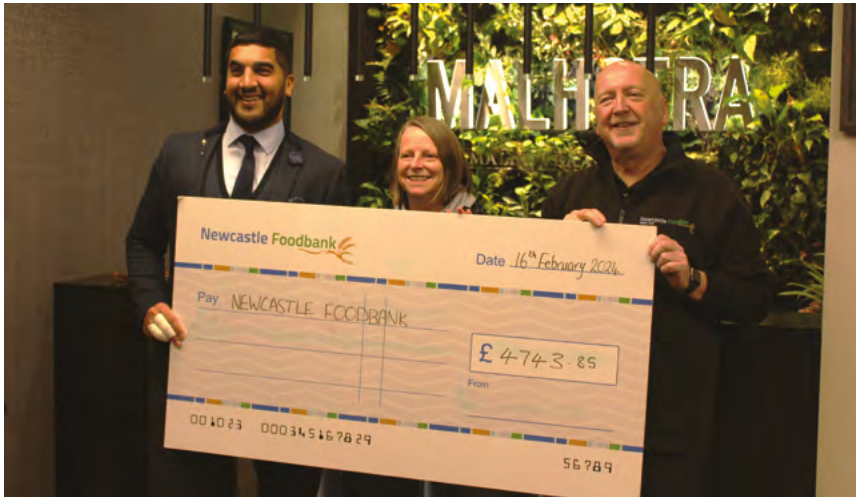
Of the 5,740 jobs that have been created nationally in Freeport areas, more than one third of these (2,150) have already been delivered in Teesside. This news comes fresh off the back of confirmation that 9,000 jobs have been contractually secured on the Teesworks site which forms part of the wider Teesside Freeport.

In terms of Investment, Teesside again leads the way by a significant margin, securing £1.1billion of capital expenditure. This can be broken down further with Government figures showing £500million coming from domestic sources and £602million coming by the way of FDI.

To put this in context, the next best performing Freeport, with regard to secured investment, is the Humber who have secured £516million – less than half of the amount pulled in by Teesside.



# Dementia Matters... to Malhotra Group



A charity supporting those with dementia has received the backing of one of the North East's leading hospitality businesses. Malhotra Group plc has chosen Newcastle-based Dementia Matters as its nominated charity for 2024 - having raised almost £5,000 for its 2023 charity, the West End Foodbank.

And the Group's head office team and staff across its portfolio of hotels, bars and restaurants will now initiate a programme of fund-raising activities throughout the coming year. Dementia Matters provides

specialist care, support and advice to people with dementia and other neurological disorders, such as acquired brain injury, stroke, multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's disease.

Operations director, Atul Malhotra, believes the partnership will be mutually beneficial to the group and the charity.

"We will, of course, aim to raise funds and awareness of Dementia Matters and the excellent support, advice and care they bring to those with dementia and their loved ones," he said.

"It is a very cruel and indiscriminate condition and we hope that, through working with Dementia Matters, we will each learn more about it and about how to best support those affected by it - be they our own loved ones, our customers or members of our wider communities."

Bev Reid, CEO at Dementia Matters, said the charity was "delighted" to be the Malhotra Group's chosen charity for 2024.

"Each year, like many charities, we rely increasingly on fundraising to ensure we continue to provide much needed services to all those who need us," she said.

"Collaborating with a high-profile organisation like the Malhotra Group not only supports our fundraising efforts but also - and very importantly - helps to raise awareness about dementia and all that it entails.

"We have already begun to discuss some exciting plans with the Malhotra team for the year ahead, which we hope will, amongst many things, help realise our dream to have a new minibus, allowing more individuals to attend our specialist dementia day centre and for our residents to have valuable trips out."

Malhotra Group has revealed it raised a total of £4743.85 for its 2023 Charity of the Year, Newcastle West End Foodbank, to which it also donated food items.

## Love at first sight for The Ullswater Inn after Valentine's Day reopening

A Lake District hotel that famously flooded three times in the space of two weeks back in 2015 has reopened following a multi-million-pound refurbishment by The Inn Collection Group. The Ullswater Inn is the new identity bestowed upon the former Glenridding Hotel, following works which have transformed it into a vibrant new pub with rooms at the heart of the village.

Taking 13-months to complete, the inn reopened on Valentine's Day with residents and visitors to Glenridding falling instantly in love with the new-look venue. Building on a heritage of providing hospitality of more than 160 years, it was straight back to that purpose when the doors opened at midday, with eager customers packing the bar within minutes.

Over the course of the first day back, food and drink from the inn's bill of fare was extensively tasted, with more than 120 meals ordered between Noon and 9pm and more than 500 drinks



enjoyed too. Almost 20% of the alcoholic beverages sold showcased local flavours too, with pints of Tirril's Ullswater Blonde,

Bowness Bay's Fell Runner and measures of spirits from The Lakes Distillery all proving popular.



## Luxury Alnwick hotel to open this summer

A modern five-story building will adjoin a Georgian former schoolhouse in Alnwick to create Northumberland's newest luxury getaway in summer 2024. Bailiffgate Hotel is located in the historic former premises of Duchess High School, overlooking the Barbican entrance to Alnwick Castle. With 48 bedrooms, suites, and apartments, as well as a stylish bar, restaurant, and private dining room, the hotel will offer a variety of accommodation options.

The hotel represents a significant investment by Northumberland Estates

in Alnwick's tourist economy, which, alongside existing shops and attractions, will entice a new generation of tourists to Northumberland and have a positive impact on the town. In addition, the hotel hopes to appeal to locals with an amazing new bar and restaurant.

The age of the building has caused a number of delays, but the hotel is now on schedule to open in the summer and a number of key staff have been appointed. Bernard Bloodworth, a former pupil at the school, has been appointed General

Manager. Bernard said: "While the delays to the hotel have been frustrating, we are absolutely determined to get this right.

"Bailiffgate House holds a lot of memories for the people of Alnwick, and we want to make sure that everything from the décor and architecture to the menus and service exceeds expectations. As we approach opening, we will be recruiting for staff and running some special offers for former pupils who we hope will be intrigued to see what their former classrooms have become."

## Newcastle United Foundation Careers Hub now open in Metrocentre Gateshead



Newcastle United Foundation has partnered with Gateshead's Metrocentre to establish an innovative Careers Hub which was launched at a special event attended by centre founder and former Newcastle United Football Club chairman Sir John Hall.

Now open in Metrocentre's Upper Green Mall, the Careers Hub, operated by Newcastle United Foundation, will provide an inspirational and inclusive space for young people to explore employment opportunities, receive career advice and support in developing workplace skills.

A celebratory event to launch the Careers Hub saw Sir John officially open the site within the Metrocentre Community Hub alongside guests including Ian Burns, Service Director at Gateshead Council, Metrocentre retailers and senior management and staff from Metrocentre and Newcastle United Foundation.

Sir John said: "I was delighted to open the Careers Hub at the Metrocentre, the latest initiative of the Foundation. Being part of the community was always my dream - the community here give so much of their life to Newcastle United. I applaud the ambitions of the Foundation and wish them every success in their future ventures."



# Muckle LLP becomes first B Corp law firm in North East and Cumbria

Leading regional independent law firm Muckle LLP has announced its certification as a B Corporation® (or B Corp™), becoming the first legal firm in the North East and Cumbria to join a growing group of companies reinventing business by pursuing purpose as well as profit.

B Lab, the not-for-profit behind the B Corp movement, confirmed Muckle met the rigorous certification process, which assesses a company's performance across various criteria, including social responsibility, environmental impact, transparency, and accountability. B Corp certification has become a mark of distinction for companies prioritising social and environmental impact alongside profitability. This groundbreaking achievement reflects Muckle LLP's unwavering commitment to its ESG strategy and continuous improvement, leading the charge in



ethical and sustainable business practices within the legal industry in our region.

Senior Partner and head of the ESG Programme at Muckle, Hugh Welch, said: "Being a responsible business and caring for the wider North East community has been at the heart of our business for the

last two decades. Becoming a Certified B Corp is a wonderful endorsement of all that we are doing. It will also be the catalyst for us to increase our community contribution and to show how we believe that business can and should be a force for good."

## And then there were six



Time is running out for buyers looking for a new build home on one of the North East's most sought-after developments. There are only six houses left at Miller Homes North East's Oakwood Grange site at Hazlerigg. And their prime position, at the heart of a mature residential area just six miles from Newcastle, means potential buyers are lining up to view them.

With excellent transport links along with a wide range of local amenities, Oakwood Grange has proved popular with first time buyers and families looking

for more space as well as those wishing to downsize.

Each of the remaining six homes is fully detached and the four bedroomed Denwood and Asterwood properties have a single garage while the five bedroomed Denford and Beechford house styles have integrated double garages. And Miller Homes has launched a trio of incentives to speed up the buying process and save buyers money.

These include an offer to pay the first year's mortgage and meet the cost

of carpets or a deposit match scheme - designed to help those struggling to save sufficient funds for a deposit get their foot on the property ladder. If a potential buyer has saved five per cent of the total property price of their desired Miller home, the company will match it up to £20,648 - making the journey to homeownership or property upgrade smoother and more accessible.

And the third incentive is part exchange with the possibility of a contribution to the deposit.



# UK premiere of Jackdaw

Stockton sparked last month for the UK premiere of independent feature film, Jackdaw. Stars, cast, crew and local VIPs attended the first screening of a locally-shot and produced film by North East native Jamie Childs. The public were also invited to four simultaneous screenings at Showcase de Lux Teesside, which hosted the star-studded event. Jackdaw is in cinemas now. The film was part funded by the North East Screen Industries partnership through the North East Production Fund and production was supported by North East Screen.



Alison Gwynn, Chief Executive of North East Screen and Charlie Kemp, Head of Creative Place at TVCA



Cast Rochelle Goldie, Thomas Turgoose, Jamie Childs (Writer/Director), Oliver Jackson-Cohen, Jenna Coleman, Allan Mustafa



Jamie Childs, Jackdaw Writer/Director, Jenna Coleman, Oliver Jackson-Cohen



Jamie Childs, Jackdaw Writer/Director and Ben Houchen, Mayor of Tees Valley



Alison Gwynn, Chief Executive of North East Screen and Ben Houchen, Mayor of Tees Valley



Rob Phillips, Gayle Woodruffe, Alison Gwynn and Lisa Laws, North East Screen



Katie Strachan and Holly Anderson, North East Screen Film Office



Gayle Woodruffe, Operations Director, North East Screen, Callum Grant, Jackdaw Producer and Alison Gwynn, Chief Executive of North East Screen



Tees Valley Combined Authority Press team with Jamie Childs, Jackdaw Writer/Director





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# North East battery manufacturer champions future talent

A global battery technology supplier, headquartered in Peterlee, has welcomed 10 apprentices to the business.

Alexander Battery Technologies (ABT), which designs and manufactures customised rechargeable battery packs for a range of industries, has developed apprenticeships across the business in various departments such as administration, engineering, and marketing. The apprentices work on live projects, working closely with customers and ABT's wider supply chain network.

The training programmes are designed to bridge the current skills gap in the battery technology sector, particularly in electronics engineering. By offering permanent employment opportunities post-apprenticeship, the Peterlee-headquartered manufacturer is not only investing in the professional development of young, local people, but also ensuring a sustainable talent pipeline for the future.

The international company, which operates in key sectors including robotics, telecommunications and e-mobility, currently employs more than 120 people and expects this to grow significantly in the next few years.

Amy Jefferson, HR manager at Alexander Battery Technologies, said:

"As a people-led organisation, our apprenticeships are a cornerstone of our long-term strategy to futureproof our workforce in the fast-changing battery technology industry.

"Each division within the business hosts an apprentice who is given structured development and mentorship support as they progress throughout their training. Over 10% of our workforce are actively involved in training programmes - something we're really proud of.

"By investing in apprentices, we're not just filling immediate roles but helping to maintain our competitive edge globally too."

Apprentices are enrolled in a variety of courses, ranging from degree apprenticeships to Level 3 and Level 4 apprenticeships. ABT has established key partnerships with local training providers who provide classroom learning with on-the-job skills gained at ABT's facilities.

For example, the company's engineering apprentices attend classes at East Durham College one day per week and spend the remaining four days working at ABT. Conversely, administration apprentices engage in

online learning modules while on the job. Other training partnerships include those with University of Sunderland, Teesside University, Paragon Education and Skills and QA Training.

To further enhance the success of its apprenticeships, managers at ABT are involved in an apprentice mentoring course. This initiative aims to refine their mentoring skills, fostering a culture of continuous learning and development across the organisation.

Ellie Filip, 19, an engineering apprentice at ABT, said: "I'm enjoying my apprenticeship and learning so much whilst getting a lot of support from the wider engineering team.

"It's not just about the technical skills I'm acquiring but also about the confidence they instil in me to tackle challenges.

"Every day is different and exciting which motivates me in my role and continued career path - I really look forward to coming to work."

**For more information about Alexander Battery Technologies, visit [www.alexandertechnologies.com](http://www.alexandertechnologies.com)**



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# NE Youth Charity receives 'vital' funding boost

NE Youth – a North East charity that supports young people – has received a significant cash injection.

NE Youth has received a donation of £16,000 from property specialist, Bradley Hall, which it hopes will have a 'profound and lasting impact' on its ability to continue supporting disadvantaged young people across the region.

With many direct interventions with young people losing funding due to external budget cuts, the charity was confronted with the stark reality of either tapping into its reserves or shutting down essential services altogether.

Despite being faced with difficult funding challenges, NE Youth has remained steadfast in its commitment to the youth it serves, knowing that the need for support and guidance is greater than ever. The funding was raised courtesy of the company's Festive Fundraiser at The Fed in Gateshead in December 2023,

which saw the company raise over £55,000 for charities across the region.

Emma Rundle, business development manager of NE Youth, said: "We were delighted to be a part of Bradley Hall's Festive Fundraiser again in 2023, as we knew that any donation we received would go a long way in plugging these funding gaps."

"The funding gave us confidence as an organisation to continue delivering the vital work that creates real, tangible outcomes for some of the most disadvantaged young people aged 11-25 in the North East."

The funding has proved a critical lifeline to NE Youth, ensuring the continuation of vital youth provision for over 280 young people across two local authority areas and enabling the charity

to secure alternative funding for all youth sessions starting in February 2024.

Recent activities funded by the donation have included enriching experiences such as boxing sessions, trips to the pantomime and visits to trampolining parks, serving as powerful catalysts for personal growth and development among the region's young people.

Neil Hart, chief executive of Bradley Hall, said: "Caring for our community is at the heart of Bradley Hall's ethos, and we are honoured to have been able to support NE Youth Charity through our festive fundraiser."

"The incredible work they do in providing essential support and guidance to disadvantaged young people is truly inspiring."





## Great North Children's Hospital receives five-figure donation

The Great North Children's Hospital Foundation has received a major boost in the form of a £16,514 donation.

The money, which was raised through Bradley Hall's festive fundraiser event last Christmas at The Fed, Gateshead, has helped fund the hospital's MediCinema.

Located within the Royal Victoria Infirmary (RVI) Hospital in Newcastle, the MediCinema stands as a beacon of comfort and entertainment for patients and their families during challenging times.

Offering a fully functional commercial-style cinema facility, the MediCinema is designed to provide a much-needed escape for patients, including those confined to beds or reliant on wheelchairs.

With a capacity for around 58 attendees per screening, it delivers regular cinema screenings, ranging from the latest releases to personalised screenings for patients.

The partnership between Newcastle Hospitals Charity and the MediCinema

has been instrumental in furthering the reach and impact of the initiative, ensuring that more patients and families can benefit from therapeutic film screenings.

The funding will sustain the operational costs of the RVI MediCinema for the next three years, facilitating an expansion of film offerings and an increase in the frequency of weekly screenings.

From April 2022 to March 2023, the MediCinema welcomed a total of 2,285 individuals, including 1,157 inpatients, 403 patients in wheelchairs and 182 patients utilising beds, along with 1,069 caregivers.

Emma McQuitty, fundraising coordinator for Newcastle Hospitals Charity, said: "It was a pleasure to be part of such a fantastic event. We're incredibly grateful to the team at Bradley Hall for their generous donation towards

the Great North Children's Hospital Foundation.


"The funds raised will go such a long way to help make our young patients' hospital experience a little easier."

Cassie Moyse, group marketing director of Bradley Hall, said: "We are immensely proud to have been able to contribute to such an amazing cause.

"The MediCinema is such a well-used facility that has a profound impact on enriching the lives of patients and their families during their hospital stays.

"It is so important for us at Bradley Hall to support local charities and initiatives, and we are beyond honoured to have partly funded the MediCinema this year for all those who need it.

"As we look forward to the year ahead, we hope to continue raising funds for such fantastic causes and helping as many people as we can through our efforts."



# Bradley Hall partners with Esh Group to deliver award-winning employability programme

The Northern property experts are set to deliver employability skills and career guidance provision in local secondary schools.

Bradley Hall has pledged its support to developing the workforce of the future by joining employability programme, Building My Skills, as a delivery partner.

The initiative was launched in 2009 by North of England construction firm, Esh Group, in partnership with Ryder Architecture and Arup. Bradley Hall has signed up for the first time in 2024 to deliver dedicated careers guidance sessions to Year 9-12 students across the North East and Tees Valley.

Aiming to provide students with an insight into sectors and careers that they may not otherwise know exists, Bradley Hall will showcase the property sector and all the opportunities it has to offer.

With business leaders snapping up their opportunity to support the programme, Richard Rafique, commercial managing director at Bradley Hall, said: "For many of us when we started out in our careers, we didn't have access to this type of initiative. Giving young people a direct line of enquiry to the business community will be a huge benefit to their career aspirations, but also the wider region as we seek to upskill the workforce of the future."

"At Bradley Hall, we take great pride in upskilling our staff and promoting from within, so we're always on the lookout for our next team member, whether that be

a surveyor or administrator, so getting involved in programmes such as Building My Skills is a great way of helping showcase such opportunities to young people interested in getting involved in the industry and building a successful career of their own."

A total of 30 businesses from the construction and built environment, energy and utilities firms, IT, legal, marketing, sport and professional services industries will deliver sessions throughout the programme. Students will attend four workshops between January and June, each delivered by a different business from a wide range of sectors.

This year, the programme will incorporate a purpose-built app, on which students can access and complete one of four digital 'checkpoints' after each session, which will assist them when mapping out their own career aspirations - standing out from the competition, presenting yourself online, on paper and in person.

A proportion of the students who complete the workshops will be invited to a mock interview day, with all business partners who deliver sessions being invited to host one or more panels. Education partners will be allocated interview slots depending on checkpoint completion rates throughout the series of workshops and

students may be invited to second interview opportunities should businesses have opportunities available.

Corporate Affairs director at Esh Group, Darush Dodds, has been buoyed by the 2024 sign ups, with over 5,000 students from 29 schools getting involved.

He said: "Building My Skills is specifically designed to make young people aware of the breadth of opportunities available across the region, change their perception of different industries and 'lift the lid off' local businesses by showcasing roles that many students don't know exist."

"When we launched BMS in 2009, we had just five schools involved. Now, almost 15 years later, we're on the verge of supporting our 60,000th student through the programme, all from different demographics. We are thrilled to be working with such a variety of businesses from across the North East and Tees Valley."

Dodds added: "The mock interview day is always a huge success. It provides valuable interview experiences but can open the door to second interviews for businesses who have opportunities - apprenticeships, traineeships or paid placements - available. We've already started delivery of BMS 2024 and we're excited to see how students grow over the coming months."

To find out more about the Building My Skills programme, visit [www.eshgroup.co.uk/constructing-local](http://www.eshgroup.co.uk/constructing-local)



# Sale and leaseback – what's in it for you?

**Richard Rafique, commercial managing director at Bradley Hall, reveals the benefits of a sale and leaseback transaction – and how it can help your business.**



Sale and leaseback transactions stand out as a mutually beneficial arrangement for both business owners and occupiers and savvy investors. This transaction involves two distinct, yet interconnected, processes - the sale of a property followed by its leaseback to the seller, typically the operating business.

## **Seller's perspective**

For the business-owner or seller, embracing the sale and leaseback approach becomes a strategic move to leverage the capital value of their property.

This entails selling the property to an investor while securing a leaseback arrangement, allowing the business to continue its operations within the premises for an agreed-upon lease term.

Notably, the leaseback component enhances the property's value, offering a secure income stream for the investor and ensuring stability for the seller's occupational business.

This innovative financial manoeuvre injects cash into the business, serving as an alternative to conventional bank financing, or other loan options. Unlike refinancing, this method enables the seller to realize 100% of the property's value - a notable advantage compared to the approximate 70% achievable through refinancing.

Moreover, the rent payments under the leaseback arrangement may prove more economical than high-interest finance rates.

Additionally, the fully tax-deductible nature of the rent further enhances its attractiveness compared to loans, where only interest is tax-deductible. The sale aspect not only crystallises the property's capital value at the sale date, but also shields against the risk of value fluctuations when the property is used as security for a loan over an extended period.

## **Buyer's perspective**

From the investor's viewpoint, the sale-leaseback strategy is alluring. It involves the creation of a new lease, maintaining its full term at current Market Rent levels. The lessee, typically a business with a proven trading history, commits to the location and often reinvests the transaction funds to fuel further business growth and expansion.

## **Is it time for a sale leaseback consideration?**

If you're contemplating injecting capital into your business for various purposes such as expansion, acquiring new equipment, property enhancements, hiring staff, or debt repayment, the sale and leaseback process merits serious consideration.

Separating the sale of your business property from the business itself may unlock additional value, particularly in a robust market with high values and strong buyer demand. The opportune market dynamics present an ideal moment to maximize the value derived from this strategic financial move.

For more information, contact Richard at [richard.rafique@bradleyhall.co.uk](mailto:richard.rafique@bradleyhall.co.uk)



# Riverside Sunderland

## – the UK's most ambitious city centre regeneration project

**Leader of Sunderland City Council, Cllr Graeme Miller, explains how the ambitious project to transform the former Vaux Brewery site and Sheepfolds is redefining the city.**

When I first moved to Sunderland 32 years ago, the football club still played at Roker Park and the clipping and clapping sounds of the Vaux dray horses still reverberated throughout the city's streets.

Fast-forward through the years and the city is almost unrecognisable. Pit heaps have been transformed into ski slopes and stadiums and the shipyards of yester-year have made way for world-leading education campuses, offices and new industrial hubs.

Yet, despite the city's skyline being almost unrecognisable from that rainy day in 1992, it gives me great pride to be able to say, as the leader of Sunderland City Council, that arguably the country's most ambitious regeneration project – and what must be the city's most ambitious ever project of its kind – is gathering pace.

Spanning both the north and south sides of the River Wear, Riverside Sunderland, stretching from the former Vaux Brewery site to Galley's Gill and the Sheepfolds, is not just a significant development for the North East – but the entire UK.

Delivering over 1,000 homes, one million square feet of Grade A office space, new parks, leisure destinations and a new footbridge, the spectacular transformation of this 32-hectare brownfield site is being held up as an exemplar when it comes to urban regeneration.

Housing is a central pillar of this. When you compare Sunderland to other medium and large sized cities in the UK, we have one of the smallest city centre populations and this has really been felt over recent years.

Shifting consumer habits have left less people visiting the nation's high streets, which is where city centre populations can really help fill the gap when it comes to people spilling out into bars and restaurants after office hours. By providing housing for over 2,500 residents, the impact will be huge.

So too will the impact of high-quality office buildings, providing jobs for over 10,000 employees. The first three buildings – The Beam, The Yard and our magnificent City Hall – are already up and running, with Maker & Faber – two grade A buildings backed by





significant investment from Legal & General - resulting in more people than ever before working in the city centre. And that's not even the half of it.

Culture House, situated on Keel Square, is now rising from the ground and will be a world-leading library and events venue providing a huge boost to the city's cultural offering.

The Botanist and Keel Tavern recently opened their doors under the new Holiday Inn, with The Muddler and other venues set to follow suit.

Superfast 5G-ready Wi-Fi will make Sunderland - and Riverside Sunderland in particular - one of the most digitally-connected areas in the North of England. A huge boon for both residents and businesses.

The Housing Innovation and Construction Skills Academy (HICSA), backed by George Clarke's MOBE and Education Partnership North East, will train the construction professionals of tomorrow and will be situated on the Sheepfolds.

The construction of a £36 million world-class medical facility - which is now underway next to City Hall - will not only be a positive step for the NHS - which will be far better located for patient-access - but for the city centre, which will benefit from the increased footfall brought about by thousands of patients and staff accessing the hospital every week.

Sheepfolds' Stables will see the Grade II-listed former railway stables overlooking the River Wear transformed into a hub of

independent food and drink venues and retailers.

The National Esports Campus - just opposite the Stadium of Light - will position Riverside Sunderland as the home of esports in the UK. In 2022, the global esports market was valued at just over £1billion - and the industry is showing no signs of slowing down.

A new footbridge connecting the Sheepfolds and the former Vaux site will further expand the city centre footprint by figuratively and literally bridging the gap between these two key areas of the city.

New community allotments and public realm, boasting stunning views across the city, River Wear and out to sea, will also provide a truly exceptional place to play and a great destination for those living and working here to lead more sustainable, healthy lives.

All in all, these developments - which are all already moving at real pace - have seen more cranes than ever before tower over the city skyline in recent years. And with more developments in the pipeline, it's hard to even picture how the city will look in five years' time, never mind in decades to come.

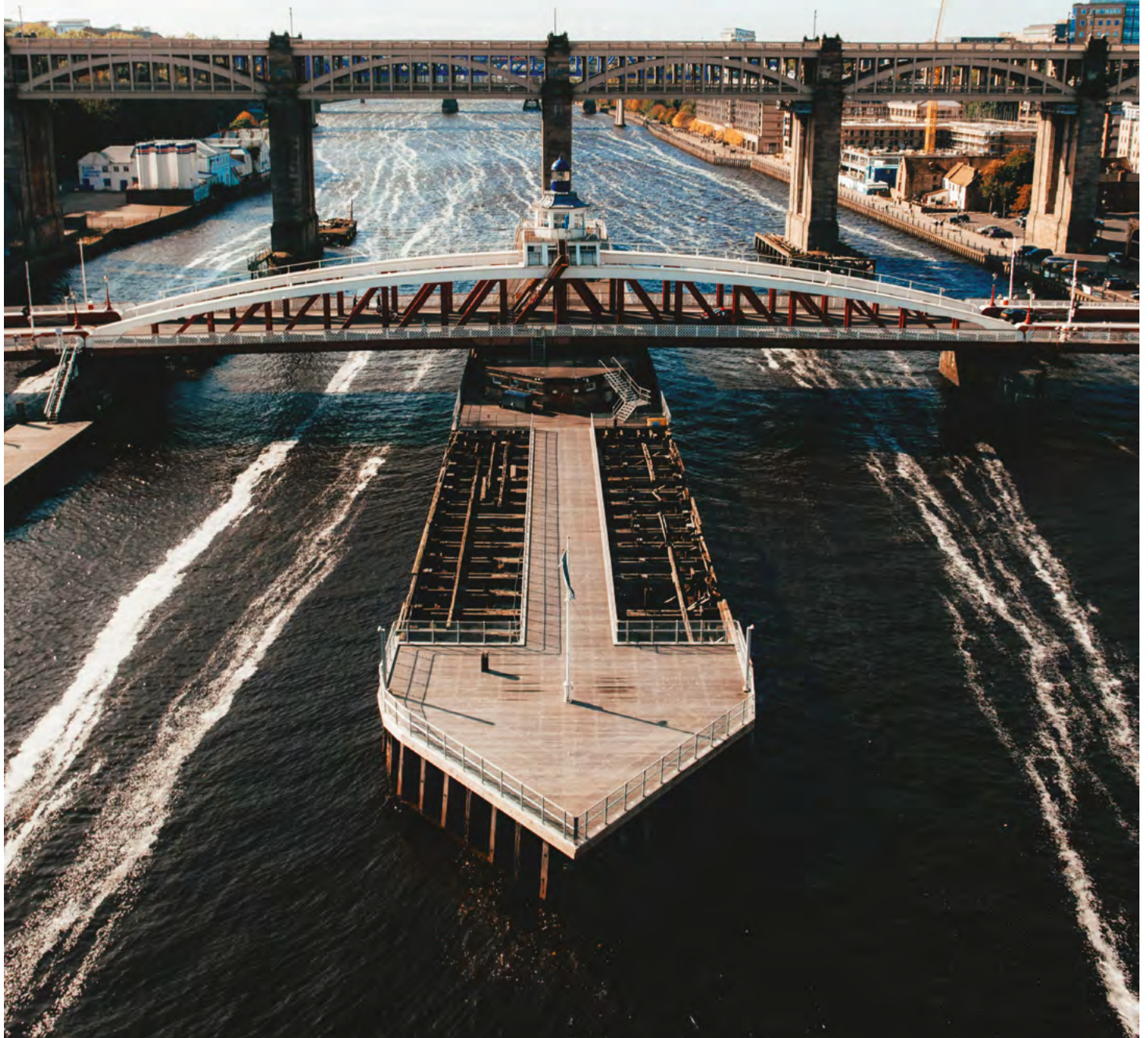
We are facing the future with optimism and confidence and Riverside Sunderland is key to that, breathing new life into the beating heart of the city while transforming it into a dynamic, carbon-neutral urban quarter like no other.

It is an incredibly exciting time for everyone associated with the city, but what is even more exciting is that the best could still yet be to come.

To find out more about Riverside Sunderland and to keep up to date with the latest developments, visit [www.riversidesunderland.com](http://www.riversidesunderland.com)



# Praise for Port of Tyne





# Port of Tyne has been recognised for its efforts to localise its supply chain after onboarding a number of new local suppliers last year.

Port of Tyne outlined plans in its Tyne 2050 strategy to boost local and regional growth across the North East by providing more opportunities to the region's businesses.

This led to the port becoming one of the first organisations to sign up to the South Tyneside Pledge - a commitment to think locally on procurement, recruitment, school engagement, volunteering and more.

Since signing the pledge, the agreement has seen the port welcome a host of North East businesses into its supply chain, while providing an increased number of opportunities to its existing suppliers.

One example is its collaboration with Jarrow-based Rescue Pod - a safety training company specialising in working at height, rescue and first aid.

Since the two organisations began working together last year, having met at South Tyneside Pledge events, Rescue Pod has provided training to a number of the port's training instructors, empowering them to effectively deliver auto-descent training to their employees.

Gary Hannah, director at Rescue Pod, said: "It was a great privilege to be accepted by the port to deliver the training to their instructors and we have since built on this relationship by supplying working at height equipment and servicing auto descent equipment to the site.

"The South Tyneside Pledge has allowed us to be visible to large and small businesses in the borough and has assisted in our business growth. We look forward to seeing what doors the Pledge will open in the future."

Another company to have benefited from the port's commitment to localise its supply chain is The Health Insurance Group, which is based out of South Shields' One Trinity Green.

The company has been procured by Port of Tyne to help it better provide for its staff by allowing it to provide employee benefits such as private healthcare, a company cash plan and death in service employee benefits.

South Shields-born Adam Brown is the company's employee benefits specialist and believes the contract is a great example of how collaboration between local businesses can help boost the region's economy.



He said: "It was through the pledge that we were able to get in to see Port of Tyne and tender for their employee benefits. Our tender was successfully accepted and the port is now one of our biggest clients.

"We are excited to be working with the Port of Tyne and ecstatic that the pledge ethos for local business collaboration is working."

Port of Tyne was introduced to both Rescue Pod and The Health Insurance Group courtesy of the South Tyneside Pledge.

Delivered by South Tyneside Council, the pledge aims to encourage South Tyneside organisations to focus on local activities and practical steps, such as local procurement and recruitment, that can help the borough thrive.

Garry Thompson, head of people at Port of Tyne, said: "The Port of Tyne is intrinsically linked to the success of the North East economy, which is why we committed in our Tyne 2050 strategy to increase the number of opportunities we are able to provide local businesses.

"It was also the main motivator behind our decision to sign the South Tyneside Pledge, which aims to help businesses across the borough to procure the services of other local organisations and provide employment opportunities to

local residents.

"Over the past 12 months, we've engaged with a number of local businesses courtesy of the pledge, procuring the services of fantastic businesses such as The Health Insurance Group and Rescue Pod, and we are hoping to continue building on this success as we look forward to the year ahead."

Cllr Margaret Meling, lead member for economic growth and transport at South Tyneside Council, has praised the port's efforts and its commitment to the pledge, dubbing the organisation "an exemplar of progressive business".

She said: "The importance of the port to the borough and the wider region can't be underestimated. The organisation was one of the first to sign the pledge, recognising the benefit of local collaborations, procurement and employment opportunities to create a more prosperous future. We thank them for their commitment to the borough and its workforce."

**For more information on South Tyneside as a place to do business, visit [investsouthtyneside.com](https://investsouthtyneside.com)**



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# Portfolio North appoints senior digital executive



## Portfolio North announces Charlotte Cooper as senior digital executive within its growing team.

In her new role, Charlotte will be responsible for managing Portfolio North's social media platforms - including Instagram and LinkedIn - as well as creating new and unique digital content across all channels.

As well as focusing on growing and developing Portfolio North's online presence and increasing engagement across its social media channels, Charlotte will also work closely with new and existing clients to create impactful social media content and campaigns for their businesses.

Her appointment will help to drive the business' digital growth and further support the team in its mission to make Portfolio North the most-read and best-loved magazine across the North East and Yorkshire not only in print - but online, too.

Charlotte, who hails from Gosforth, has a wealth of experience in social media management and content creation.

Charlotte said: "I'm thrilled to be joining Portfolio North at such an exciting time for the business.

"I look forward to building on its current success and growing our digital presence, while working with new clients across a variety of industries."

Cassie Moyse, director of Portfolio North, said: "I am delighted to welcome Charlotte to Portfolio North. "Charlotte joins the team at an extremely promising time, during which we are experiencing exciting growth and reaching new heights in both the print and online world.


"Not only will her appointment allow us to support more clients and offer more digital marketing services, it will also allow us to drive more traffic to our website, news app and newsletter subscriptions.

"In her new role, Charlotte will help us to continue growing the magazine's influence and credibility within the region with the best entertaining and engaging social media content - and I look forward to watching Portfolio North's digital presence flourish and expand over the coming months."

Armed with a growing team and offering, Portfolio North is gearing up for another successful year, during which it will continue printing 35,000 copies to its loyal readers.

The business' impressive readership has been established for many years, maintained by a unique distribution strategy that ensures each edition is delivered directly to key businesses, prestigious residential areas and influential decision-makers across the North East and Yorkshire.

Committed to delivering the best in quality and sustainability, in 2024, Portfolio North's printed North East editions will be debuting a brand new look and feel - including a more luxurious and eco-friendly paper weight and a shorter, portable size for easier on-the-go reading.



# How films (used to) predict the future

**Jon Leighton**, managing director at Land Digital, reflects on some of his favourite 80s tech films and asks the question – did any of their predictions about the future of digital come true?

Films in the 80s were awesome and even as we watch them now - admittedly through nostalgia-tinted glasses - this is still the case. So awesome, in fact, that the majority of them are now being remade or having a sequel created for them (although the jury's still out on whether these live up to the originals).

That's because the 80s were a time of exciting creativity. Well, when it comes to movies at least - you only have to listen to a day of Absolute 80s on the radio to realise that there are only so many hits you can make with a synth.

And yes, I'll admit that I might be a little bit biased, if only because all of the great 80s action heroes were called John. John Rambo, John Matrix, John MacLane, John Connor...the list goes on (as do the similarities between me and them, honest!).

An interesting part of a lot of these movies was the predictions they made about the future of tech and while the timings might not be 100% accurate, many of the concepts came pretty close.

So, I thought it might be a little bit of fun to jump in the DeLorean and time

travel back to the cinematic universe of the 80s to take a closer look at some of these predictions and if/how they came true. So, hop in - where we're going, we don't need roads...

## Back to the Future 1 & 2

Back To The Future was my favourite film growing up and of course these films featured a wide range of predictions about the future. Well, I say future - Marty and Doc actually travel to 2015 in Back To Future 2. Feel old yet?

In less distressing news, many of these predictions actually came true in one way or another. Take the ability to transfer funds from one person to another, for example.

Elsewhere, biometrics play a huge role in the films, from opening the door to paying the taxi driver - this isn't far off the contactless payments we have today, and biometric locks have been around for a while (you've probably even got one on your phone!).

Another big part of the films is wearable tech. Who wouldn't want a pair

of trainers that tie themselves? And the good news is that these are now available, with Nike leading the way on the next generation of 'smart shoes'.

The bad news is that these will currently set you back a decent chunk of cash. Of course, we also have smart watches that collect a whole host of data, and even smart shirts that may well have been inspired by films like these.

For me, perhaps the most notable prediction from the films is video calling. In Back To The Future, we see Marty's dad get sacked over a video call, which was an accurate prediction of what the future might hold for communication - although I doubt anyone could have predicted just how much time we'd end up spending on Teams or Zoom!

That's not to say Zemeckis and co got everything right in these films. For example, even though they have been predicted in the 'real world' and attempted many times, we're yet to see a hoverboard or flying car. I guess we aren't ready for that yet, but our kids are going to love it.



Elsewhere, one of the film's more subtle predictions was digital billboards. Digital billboards are now something we're used to seeing in everyday life, but these didn't exist when the film was released in 1982. That being said, the film has aged well, even if the companies advertised on these billboards no longer exist, notably Pan Am and Atari.

## Short Circuit

Focusing on the first Short Circuit and forgetting about the sequel for a minute, this film depicts an experimental military robot that develops human-like intelligence and consciousness after being struck by lightning. Classic.

Short Circuit makes a number of accurate predictions on how robotics might be utilised in a number of scenarios and, across these predictions, touches upon many interesting ethical points that are major points of discussion today.

For example, take the utilisation of robotics in military environments that has been well documented over the years, or even what happens should a robot become sentient and start to develop its own moral compass. In this instance, it was good news for the human race - and as the capabilities of AI continue to rapidly evolve day after day, here's hoping for the same in real life.

As we exited the 80s and left the hairspray behind, films continued to explore our future relationship with tech, albeit in a different capacity. As our technical capabilities began to grow, films became less concerned with what we could achieve, and more interested in exploring the implications of this evolution.

90s classics like Jurassic Park, for example, explored interesting ethical dilemmas around using tech to play god, while The Matrix introduced us to the mind-blowing idea of living in a simulation.

So what about the films of today? Films of the 00s certainly didn't take us far, and unfortunately this doesn't look like changing anytime soon. Ironically, new developments in tech like streaming have changed how we consume films and, in the process, have impacted the topics films explore - they're no longer interested in big concepts like our relationship with tech and the future it may create, but instead focused on sequels, remakes, and franchises that guarantee profit in a rapidly depleting market.

But it's not all doom and gloom. While we may not see these concepts explored in the same way on the big screen, our changing viewing and consumption habits likely means that TV will take up this role and pick up where films have left off.

And on that note, does anyone know when the next season of Black Mirror is out?

[www.landdigital.agency](http://www.landdigital.agency)

## Weird Science

Weird Science is another one of my personal favourites, telling the story of two high school students who create a computer simulation of a 'perfect woman', only to accidentally bring her to life.

So, what did this film predict? Other than the continued inability of male teenagers to talk to girls, it also predicted 3D printing. OK, maybe not quite in the way we have come to understand it today - thankfully we're not able to 3D print humans (or at least not yet). But of course, we're now able to print 3D replicas and models, albeit a slow process that's yet to live up to all the hype.

## War Games

While it's not exactly the fun time we got to have with Broderick in Ferris Bueller, War Games is a great film which sparked the interest of many kids who had just sat in front of a computer for the first time and wanted to see what happened if they pressed all the buttons.

War Games was a stark prediction of how important cyber security would become by highlighting the dangers of hacking. And as we know, this prediction has more than rang true in today's digital age, with the security of sensitive information only becoming more vital as we woke up to how susceptible it was to hacking. And let's be honest, a lot of

companies are still learning this, so maybe it's worth a few of you streaming this film on Amazon Prime over the weekend.

## The Running Man

When it comes to 80s Schwarzenegger films, thankfully The Terminator has remained fiction so far (even with the rise of AI). But what about The Running Man?

Well, although slightly on the extreme side of reality TV, this film makes some interesting predictions about digital consumption and how our viewing habits would evolve - and the mammoth popularity of Squid Games on Netflix last year proves that the film wasn't far wrong.

Sure, this is still fiction and I don't think we'll ever get that far in real life, but there's still something to be said for how The Running Man captured our collective fascination with extreme reality TV. Do you think someone in the 80s would have guessed that former politicians would go on TV to munch on kangaroo anus?

## Blade Runner

Blade Runner is undoubtedly one of the greats and while replicants do not currently exist (that we know of), other elements of the film have become a reality. For example, video calling is as widespread throughout the film as it is today - even if we wish it wasn't!

# UNW hosts e-commerce founders round table event

Newcastle-based independent chartered accountancy and business advisory firm, UNW, recently hosted the latest in a series of round table discussions to be held following the creation of a collaborative e-commerce founders group. Gathering on Thursday 25th January, a number of local online retailers discussed the impact Artificial Intelligence (AI) is having on their industry and how they are leveraging its capabilities to streamline processes, boost efficiency and drive growth.

Having supported several leading online retailers – many of whom have gone on to enjoy impressive growth and success – UNW remains well-positioned in the e-commerce space. The firm has helped facilitate the creation of the group which is designed to be a place for representatives from the North East's key online retailers to come together to learn from each other's experience while sharing advice, networking and building relationships with like-minded owners and operators.

As opposed to a sales forum environment, the aim of the group is to create an enjoyable and informal setting in which founders and senior executives are encouraged to openly share their thoughts, experiences and knowledge, and meet new people operating in similar and differing fields.

The most recent event was chaired by Robert Cooper – a former e-commerce business owner, director and advisory figure in the North East – and attended by some of the region's best known established, emerging, and private equity-backed online businesses, including Rowen Homes, The Handbag Clinic, Bazaar Group, Wave Direct, Powertool

World and Katy Sue Designs.

Corporate finance partner at UNW, Nick Broadhead, also joined the discussion and provided valuable pointers and insights based on his industry experience.

Throughout the session, founders, directors, and heads of e-commerce engaged in a thought-provoking dialogue on the transformative potential and challenges posed by AI. Topics ranged from the role of AI in content creation and efficiency improvement to concerns about authenticity and the evolving landscape of AI tools. Participants also delved into the implications of AI advancements for future business strategies and the importance of data-driven decision-making in staying ahead of the curve.

Key highlights included discussions on leveraging AI to streamline content creation processes, ensuring brand consistency, and navigating the evolving dynamics of online engagement. While acknowledging the benefits of AI in driving efficiency and innovation, participants emphasised the enduring value of human elements in fostering genuine connections with consumers.

UNW will be hosting another e-commerce founders group event later this year and is keen to hear from any online retailers interested in joining the forum. To learn more or to register your interest, email [enquiries@unw.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@unw.co.uk)







Rez Gachean



Jasmine Nemri, Sue Balfour



Charlotte Staerck, Ben Staerck, Tom Jeffrey



Sue Balfour



Charlotte Staerck



Robert Cooper



Tom Jeffrey, Charlotte Staerck





# Sustainable solutions

## The Green Energy Advice Bureau launches a new sustainable solution to help businesses reduce their energy costs and journey towards a greener future.

Sustainability and 'net-zero' are key terms for businesses across all sectors. Now more than ever, trying to source sustainability solutions is top of the agenda. Reducing costs and consumption is a win for both the environment and profit margins for business owners, so why isn't every company on top of their energy contracts?

Ultimately, finding the right energy deal and affordable sustainability services requires time and expertise that most business owners don't have.

That's why Doncaster Rovers has launched a partnership with the Green Energy Advice Bureau (GEAB). As a customer, they have installed GEAB's market-leading Energy Monitoring System (EMS), demonstrating their commitment to sustainability in 2024.

Further to this, as a partner, they are now recommending GEAB's energy consultancy services to their customers and sponsors, helping other businesses reduce their costs and emissions too.

### What is an Energy Management System – and why should businesses get one?

Most businesses have no idea where their energy usage comes from. The team at GEAB has a saying: "You can't manage what you can't measure". And that's where EMS comes in.

Users can utilise this technology to get instant, accurate insight into the energy consumption at circuit level on site. This means taking measurements behind the meter, looking at every touch point for energy consumption. With this information, businesses can identify areas of wastage and take action to reduce both emissions and annual costs.

Another major benefit of EMS is preventive maintenance. Using this technology, businesses can spot a problem with a machine or air compressor when it suddenly starts to consume more, or less, energy. The EMS picks up on these discrepancies, enabling businesses to take action to make repairs long before a fault would normally be identified.

Doncaster Rovers have just completed their first step of analysis and have already identified several key areas of inefficiency, just from EMS readings of nighttime consumption. This is now being narrowed down and investigated at site level.

### How can EMS tell you what action to take just by taking readings?

The technology doesn't tell you what to reduce. Instead, it is an account manager who does the analysis, using the data captured by the EMS. Upon completion of investigation, GEAB's account managers are able to quantify the associated consumption, carbon and cost reductions.

"It's astounding how easy it is to make changes once you've got the insight," says Richard Rae, a senior sustainability consultant at GEAB.

"It can be as simple as comparing two kiosks operating on the same site and realising that one kiosk is leaving their lights on over the weekend.



Richard is carrying out the analysis at Doncaster Rovers. "This account is going to be really interesting," he says.

"They have offices, kitchens, car parks, cellars and concession stores, as well as the stadium. We're running analysis to examine consumption at different times of day and seasonally - including match days and club events.

"From the initial consultation, we have already been able to commit to a minimum 10% reduction in annual consumption solely due to the installation of the EMS."

### If it's that easy, why don't all businesses have EMS installed?

It can be very expensive to install Energy Management Systems. Each unit requires an upfront investment, which many business owners can't afford.

GEAB, however, offer a Capex free solution for all businesses, enabling establishments of all kinds and sizes to start their journey to becoming more sustainable.

### What other sustainability solutions does GEAB offer businesses?

2024 is looking to be a really exciting year for sustainability for Green Energy Advice Bureau. The business has just undergone a rebrand, moving in a new direction with sustainability at the forefront. It is rapidly building a team to keep up with EMS demand and is branching out with new partnerships every day.

Solar panels are the next big thing and, just like EMS, GEAB offers a Capex free solution for businesses.

Net-zero is a huge priority right now - this means businesses are doing what they can to neutralise their carbon footprint. There are many products available on the market to help businesses reduce their emissions, so it's

key that businesses speak to an expert who can find you the right solution based on the nature of its operations.

### What is the Capex free solution and why is it so important?

GEAB recognised that the barrier to entry for sustainability was just too high. The irony being that the businesses that were most worried about their overheads didn't have the capital to buy the technology to reduce their costs. With such a push for net-zero, GEAB knew it needed to do something to help business-owners access the products which would enable them to reduce their emissions and achieve their goals of carbon reduction.

"You don't get business owners picking up the phone, looking for a cheaper energy deal, then suddenly finding thousands extra in their budget to install solar panels. It just doesn't work like that," said Liam Spence, head of sustainability at GEAB.

"Even with the best intentions, going green requires money and considering how tough the market has been over the past few years, purse strings are tighter than ever."

Making sustainability solutions affordable to businesses is a top priority for GEAB moving forward. All sustainability products, be they solar panels, EV charging or EMS, cost money to purchase and install. GEAB has taken on the initial cost of this purchase and installation so that businesses can implement new, greener practices without any upfront investment.

Part of the growth plan for GEAB means building partnerships with businesses and associations that are looking to promote sustainable practices to their members. Lots of associations and member organisations are trying to help their customers with their net-zero goals. Working with GEAB gives their members or customers access to these bespoke

offers to better control their energy.

Paul Cobb, CEO and founder of the Green Energy Advice Bureau, said: "The truth is, every business needs energy, but almost no business-owners have the time or expertise to source the right solution for their needs. That's where our energy experts come in.

"We can negotiate and secure bespoke contracts, be that procurement via suppliers or sustainability products directly. Working with a broker is a no-brainer because they have the expertise and supplier relationships to ensure you are on the right contract for your requirements."

### If I'm interested in sustainability solutions for my business, where do I start?

Your first step is to get advice from an expert who can analyse the nature of your business operations, your requirements and capabilities. You can contact Green Energy Advice Bureau directly for a free sustainability consultation for your business.

Remember, sustainability isn't just about installing new technology - it's about working smarter and reducing costs at a basic level.

If your customer base comprises of other businesses, you could also go one step further and discuss a partnership opportunity with GEAB, enabling you to offer your customers or members these energy saving solutions.

To discuss how GEAB can find the right energy solutions for your business, visit [geab.com/portfolio-north](https://geab.com/portfolio-north) or call 0191 821 0049.

If you are interested in exploring a partnership opportunity with GEAB, email [partnerships@geab.com](mailto:partnerships@geab.com).

## 3 Steps of EMS

1

Installing our technology at each location provides real-time energy use visibility and controls energy usage for maximum efficiency.

2

Our sustainability experts will analyse your data and provide guidance on how to optimise energy usage while also meeting your net zero goals.

3

Opportunities to save will be regularly highlighted, and in some cases, control can be executed remotely and automatically.

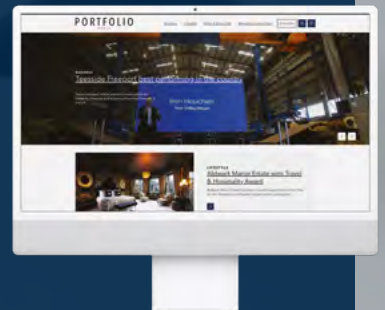




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# Smart Outdoor Media expands with investment in Frisk Radio Ltd

Smart Outdoor Media Ltd, a frontrunner in the digital Out-of-Home (OOH) advertising sector, proudly announces its acquisition of a stake in Frisk Radio Ltd – a fast-growing commercial radio station in the North East.







This partnership heralds a new era of collaboration, poised to revolutionise the advertising landscape and offer unprecedented opportunities for brands to engage with their target audiences.

Frisk Radio Ltd, renowned for its energetic mix of dance and pop music, stands to benefit significantly from this alliance. By leveraging Smart Outdoor Media Ltd's extensive network of over 350 digital billboard screens, it gains access to a vast platform to amplify its reach and connect with new listeners in new and innovative ways.

Frisk's Radio's director, Stuart Landreth, said: "We've spent two years building the Frisk brand. Our existing listeners love the product, but our biggest challenge has been breaking through to new audiences.

"Having access to Smart Media's screen network will put our name in front of tens of thousands of adults every single day, on key commuter routes around the region."

Founded in 2019, Smart Outdoor Media Ltd is at the forefront of digital OOH advertising. With a diverse portfolio of advertising screens in prominent locations, including the Tyne Tunnel and Sunderland's Keel Square, Smart Media continues to set the standard for impactful advertising in the North East.

CEO of Smart Outdoor Media Ltd, Mark Catterall, said: "Frisk's team demonstrated an incredibly efficient and scalable approach to radio broadcasting and station management.

"This acquisition will allow Smart Outdoor Media to evolve into a multi-channel agency, capable of delivering campaigns with both audio and visual elements and maximizing ROI for advertisers."

As Smart Outdoor Media Ltd and Frisk Radio Ltd embark on this exciting journey of collaboration, both entities remain committed to delivering excellence and driving success for advertisers and audiences alike.

# Answer me this...

**Brendon Hayward**

Joint managing director of Osbit

## How can innovation help a business grow in the offshore wind industry?

☛ The world is transitioning to a greener future, but much more needs to be done to hit the government's ambitious clean energy targets.

In the last decade, the offshore wind sector has seen an explosion in growth, driven by advancements in technology, innovation and a commitment to cutting carbon emissions.

Innovation in offshore wind has undoubtedly helped the industry to address key challenges, such as safety concerns and reducing the costs of offshore wind, but for the industry to continue to thrive and for businesses to continue to grow, innovation must go hand in hand with supply chain collaboration.

Without a genuine bond between innovation and collaboration, we will never hit the targets to increase the UK's offshore wind capacity to 50GW by 2030. By their very nature, offshore wind projects are large scale and complex endeavours that require much coordination between stakeholders and delivery partners to increase industry efficiency, cost effectiveness and sustainability.

It is those companies that both innovate through technology and collaborate with other industry players that have the best chance to grow their business and spearhead a successful green energy future.

Embedding innovation in the offshore wind industry requires investments in people, culture and processes. Sharing expertise and knowledge enables networks to share economies of scale, resources and investments, fuelling future industry growth.

By innovating new technologies, project delivery processes and constant learning and collaboration, together with investing in the

skills and expertise of teams, businesses of all size and shapes will benefit from the offshore wind boom. This in turn helps to drive overall industry improvements, helping to build resilience, safeguard the future and mitigate risks.

Alongside our innovations in technology and people, we are also innovating what collaboration looks like and tools to harness data in order to learn.

Tailwind has helped Osbit grow by providing a valuable tool that increases collaboration with our clients and derisks their projects. It enables supply chain businesses to reduce costs across the full project installation lifecycle, increase operational efficiencies, improve safety performance, share knowledge and best practice – innovation at work.

The transformative waves of technological innovation and innovating in people, culture and skills are steering businesses across the UK offshore wind industry to a more sustainable and resilient future.

Any businesses that continue to innovate will reap the rewards and make a significant contribution to the country's clean energy goals and stand out as exemplars of harnessing the power of offshore wind.

Knowledge, skills and expertise are at a premium right now and an innovative approach to recruitment – such as student placement, graduate engineers and apprenticeships – is key. With the accelerated growth of offshore wind across the globe and the adoption of innovative technologies, businesses operating within the sector must continue to nurture, support grow and develop their talented teams.

Osbit aims to unlock a clean energy future by creating smarter technologies. It designs and builds cutting-edge engineering systems – in subsea burial, foundation, cable installation, lifting and installation and access – to overcome the offshore challenges of tomorrow. Its team of experts develop innovative engineering solutions to make offshore wind happen at scale, redefining what is possible to drive the clean energy sector forward. In 2022, Osbit was awarded the Queen's Award for Enterprise in innovation and has a proven track record in delivering game and industry-changing solutions. A founding member of the Venterra Group, the business is meeting the challenges of the offshore wind industry's ever-increasing technical sophistication.

[www.osbit.com](http://www.osbit.com)



# Ongoing appointments ensure UNW Audit goes from strength to strength

In the wake of sustained growth and new client wins, Newcastle-based independent chartered accountancy and business advisory firm, UNW, continues to invest substantially in recruitment and the development of its audit team.



Following the successful integration over the last 12 months of Martin Cross at partner level, the firm recently also appointed Nicola Coleman as an audit partner.

Having worked extensively with privately-owned entrepreneurial businesses and not-for-profit entities within the 'Big 4' and for a regional independent firm, Nicola was recruited to support the firm's ongoing growth.

Nicola joins the existing audit partner team of Andrew Wilson, Fern Rivett, Dave Redhead, Anne Hallowell and Martin Cross, with the firm also announcing the imminent arrival of an audit partner currently heading up the audit division of a regional office within a 'Big 4' firm.

Reflecting on the senior appointments, Andrew Wilson, managing

partner at UNW, said: "Given our continued success in attracting high-quality clients and our commitment to providing them all with the best advice and service, this investment at partner level is timely.

"Our partner team possesses a wealth of experience and expertise in delivering to our expanding audit portfolio. Furthermore, they have a track record of passing on their experience to the wider team, ensuring that we are developing our own talent to become the leaders of tomorrow. I confidently anticipate promotions to partner level within the foreseeable future.

"We do not chase growth and we are not obsessed with numbers, but we know that if we have the best team, we will continue to progress. We are entering an

exciting phase in the development of our business and are doing so from a position of real strength."

Speaking of her motivations for joining the firm, Nicola Coleman said: "What really attracted me to UNW is the strength of its reputation in the region for delivering service excellence and achieving the best results for its clients. With demand for our audit services now greater than ever before, I feel like there is a real and exciting opportunity for the firm to continue to grow.

"UNW have recruited very well in recent years at apprentice and graduate level and have a great track record of developing exceptional talent. Ingrained in the team culture is a collaborative and supportive approach, with the ambition to be the best at what we do."



# 75 years of Mincoffs

## Mincoffs Solicitors reflects on a successful 2023, which marked 75 years since its inception.

Founded by renowned solicitor Harry Mincoff, Mincoffs Solicitors has gone from strength to strength over the years, growing into an award-winning business with a team of more than 100 at its Jesmond offices.

Originally specialising in criminal law when it was founded in 1948, the firm acted in a variety of landmark rulings, including the first tug-of-love custody case and the infamous murder of Angus Sibbett - which inspired the cult classic film, *Get Carter*, and the song *5:15am* by Mark Knopfler.

Mincoffs later expanded its practice areas to licensing and commercial property work as it welcomed partners Austen Science and Howard Gold in 1958 and 1969 - with the business adopting the name, Mincoff, Science and Gold.

With strong historical links to the success of the region, Mincoffs provided legal advice to The Magpie Group during its rejuvenation of Newcastle United in the early 1990s and also played a key role in the city becoming the party capital it is today, using its specialist knowledge to create groundbreaking solutions for the firm's hospitality and leisure clients as they

navigated complex licensing and gaming laws. Mincoffs' corporate department also acted in the first AIM flotation in the North East and its expertise in capital markets work deepened over the subsequent years as it helped many of its other clients in their own journeys to the public markets.

The team continues to advise a number of listed companies, both in relation to their market obligations and generally.

In the same year the firm celebrated its 75th anniversary, its position in the marketplace was showcased by its ranking as the region's number one firm for deal volume across the entirety of 2023, as per the Experian Market IQ FY2023 report.

The business has also continued a period of prolonged growth and expansion, welcoming more than 20 appointments last year and achieving an 18 percent fee increase across its nine departments.

Paul Hughes, senior partner and head of corporate, is confident the business' growth trajectory will only continue in the future.

"Mincoffs Solicitors has a rich and

varied history and we are proud to have played a key part in the North East's development over the decades as we have grown into the firm we are today," he said.

"All these years on from when Harry founded the firm, it is brilliant to be in such a strong position in not only the regional market, but also nationally as we continue to receive instructions from across the UK and further afield."

"Ultimately, our success is a testament to the hard work of our entire team, who go above and beyond to deliver service excellence for our clients across the board."

Alongside corporate and commercial services, the firm's offering includes employment, dispute resolution, licensing, real estate, residential conveyancing, family and wills, trusts and probate services, with significant experience in manufacturing, technology, healthcare, leisure and hospitality, and media and entertainment.

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



**Straight talking,  
hard working  
and forward thinking  
since 1948.**

Mincoffs Solicitors

# Retirement – is it ever too early to start planning?



**Chris Brown**, chartered financial planner and adviser at Lowes Financial Management, challenges the notion that retirement planning can wait.

A common misconception is that retirement planning is for those in the twilight of their careers, and if you're not quite there yet, there's nothing to worry about. However, it's never too soon to get started. And while it's also never too late, proper planning and a comfortable retirement go hand in hand. In this article, we'll help put you on a path to your perfect retirement, with guidance around pensions, investments, tax-efficient saving strategies and what goes into a robust retirement plan.



## What is retirement planning?

In a nutshell, retirement planning is about getting your financial ducks in a row so you can live comfortably after your career has ended. As with any financial planning, it's an ongoing process that requires diligent management and regular reviews - and you should not go into it hoping for quick wins. A more measured, meticulous approach allows you to adapt to changing circumstances, whether they are your own, regulatory, or societal, which is the kind of approach we utilise.

Pensions are the most popular product associated with retirement, but your broader finances and investments are also key parts of the puzzle. Combining these aspects of your life gives you a better chance of reaching an enjoyable retirement.

## Why is retirement planning so important?

Effective, tax-efficient retirement planning means taking income from several different sources, such as pensions, investments and savings accounts. There is a lot to consider, so it's not simply action taken today, it's action not taken today that can have a significant impact on your retirement income and lifestyle.

Let's explore some of the taxation rules that currently apply to pension contributions. In the UK, you won't be taxed on your pension contributions as long as they are below the lesser of 100% of your earnings or £60,000 a year, which is known as your annual allowance. If you go over this amount, you may be able to carry over annual allowances you did not use in the three previous tax years. If there is still an excess, this will be added to your income and taxed accordingly.

Rates change, as do rules and regulations around savings, so it's never a case of setting up a retirement plan and leaving it until you retire. It will need to be adapted and changed to maximise tax allowances and optimise your strategy, which is something we at Lowes are passionate about as wealth management experts.

## What are your options?

First, you have your pensions. There are three types of UK pensions available:

**Personal pensions** - these are pensions you set up and manage yourself. They can include self-invested personal pensions (SIPPs) and stakeholder pensions, to name two.

**Workplace pensions** - these are set up by your employer. Generally, both you and your employer contribute to your workplace pension every month, but the amount will depend on your rate of pay, job and eligibility.

**The state pension** - the state pension is provided by the government and is based on your national insurance contributions and your age. The current state pension age is 66, which is when you will start receiving payments. However, this is set to increase in the future.

## Savings accounts, investments and annuities

ISAs are another popular option for retirement and can be a tax-efficient way to save and invest. With Cash ISAs, Stocks and Shares ISAs and more available, your returns are usually exempt from income tax or capital gains tax. Another alternative is annuities, which are insurance contracts that ensure a regular income either now or in the future. They are purchased with a lump sum and

there is a large range of options available. Income from annuities is typically subject to income tax.

Then, there's investing. Over time, investing in shares, bonds, property and even less well-known solutions, like structured investments (a speciality here at Lowes) has been shown to yield better results than most savings accounts. At Lowes, we are adept at constructing retirement portfolio clients are comfortable and confident with, selecting the appropriate mix of investments at any one time.

## How can I withdraw my retirement funds?

When you retire, you can generally draw a tax-free lump sum from your personal pension, which will usually be 25% of the fund's value, but it may differ for different schemes. The rest of the funds can be used as an income, taxed at your marginal rate.

For some, it works to consider phasing your lump sum withdrawals over several years, rather than one. This helps you make the most of tax benefits, and since the pension funds will potentially grow over time, you could have even more tax-free cash available further down the line.

All in all, the critical thing is to have a strategy which runs through your pensions and investments in a way that boosts your retirement income as much as possible. It is also important to gain an understanding of the complexities of withdrawals, taxation and other regulations, which can be difficult if you aren't an expert. That is why it's advisable to speak to a professional, trustworthy financial planner when thinking about your retirement.

## Finding the right adviser for you

Pension and retirement planning is a specialist subject and the value of experience and expertise is high in an ever-changing regulatory environment.

As chartered, multi-award-winning, independent financial planners, we have over 50 years of experience and have provided advice to clients and their families for generations. With a highly qualified team of analysts, advisers and support staff, we deliver a personalised approach built around your circumstances and goals - and we're here to help you achieve the retirement of your dreams.

## A personal approach for your personal situation

It all starts with a conversation where an experienced, qualified adviser will discuss your finances and ambitions with you. From here, we will explore a variety of retirement planning options and strategies before deciding on the best course of action.

With access to a vast market, our pensions and retirement advice is flexible and bespoke, with everything we recommend based on your circumstances and aspirations.

## Long term advice

With Lowes' retirement planning service, you'll enjoy regular reviews from an expert who has your best interests at heart. Here, we will evaluate what's working and what isn't, what needs to change and anything else that can boost your chances of success.

Why? Because when it comes to your finances, long-term planning is crucial - and this is especially the case for retirement planning. At Lowes, our advice is impartial and from a place of deep expertise and client-centricity. We always look to the future and adapt your strategy in a way that works for you. By working together, we can work towards the retirement of your dreams.

Lowes Financial Management is one of the longest standing Independent Financial Advice firms in the UK, based in Jesmond, Newcastle. Regularly recognised in professional awards (including being named ILP Moneyfacts 'Investment Adviser of the Year', 2023) and were amongst the first firms in the UK to achieve the accreditation 'Chartered Financial Planners'. With exceptional client satisfaction, over 97% of clients\* would recommend Lowes to friends, family or colleagues. Lowes Financial Management is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. \*Lowes Biennial Client Satisfaction Survey, 2023

# Looking to the future – how the North East's commercial property market is gearing up for 2024

Bradley Hall reveals top trends to watch as the region's commercial property market settles into a brand new year.







As we head towards the spring of 2024, the region's commercial property market is heading for brighter days and preparing for what many experts believe will be, in some areas, a positive turning point after a few challenging and unpredictable years.

Key factors attributing to experts' optimism include a hopeful fall in the UK base rate and low levels of developments, putting downward pressure on vacancy rates and, in turn, delivering rental growth – but it doesn't stop there.

The North East's commercial property sector is poised for a significant transformation over the coming year, swayed by increased environmental responsibility, changes to work patterns, evolving business model trends and more.

Northern commercial property expert, Bradley Hall, has seen an increased uptake in a variety of commercial property spaces during the start of 2024. The firm has completed on dozens of deals, with retail space as the front runner, with office, industrial and development acquisitions and leases being agreed across the North East.

Here, Bradley Hall's commercial property team shares its insights into some of the emerging key trends influencing the region's commercial property landscape.

### Retail space

Retail space has seen a vast evolution in recent years, with many big-name casualties along the way leading to empty units and fears over what the future of Britain's high streets would be.

Alongside the closure of many traditional 'shops' has come the opening of experience-led shopping, including sites like STACK, which mix together smaller,

local retailers with a range of places to eat and drink. Even larger department stores are concentrating on creating a range of quality eateries, bars and cafés to attract visitors – the prime example being Fenwick Newcastle with its range of venues including Mother Mercy, Porterhouse, El Fuego, Café 21 and Saltwater Fish Company based across its multiple floors.

'Buying local' has also seen a resurgence, which has encouraged more small retailers to set up shop in locations away from the high street.

### E-commerce business sites

Four quick years have passed since the Covid-19 pandemic began, but a number of the changes it introduced still remain today – including a rise in online businesses. Coupled with UK's not-so-recent exit from the EU, this has allowed for more businesses to hold on to larger amounts of stock and take better control of their supply chains – thus increasing the demand for space, such as large and small distribution warehouses and centres.

Tech hubs and innovation districts  
Cities across the North East are establishing tech hubs and innovation districts to attract startups, entrepreneurs and established tech companies. These areas offer specialised commercial spaces, networking opportunities and access to talent pools.

### Revitalisation of industrial zones

Former industrial zones in the North East are undergoing revitalisation, transforming into modern commercial spaces for manufacturing, logistics and creative industries. Adaptive reuse projects breathe new life into these areas while preserving their industrial heritage.

### Sustainable building

Environmental issues – including climate change and biodiversity – will remain at the forefront of new developments and existing commercial spaces. New biodiversity net gain regulations – enforced in the UK from January of this year – and increased importance around climate risks to buildings and infrastructure will no doubt be at the forefront for many occupiers, investors and lenders.

### Integrated spaces

Mixed-use developments – ones that combine commercial spaces with residential, retail and recreational areas – are set to gain popularity in many parts of the North East. Not only do integrated spaces like these maximise land usage, they also create communities in which work, leisure and living can combine, helping to increase the work-life balance many people are looking to achieve now.

Many businesses will be looking towards adaptive reuse – repurposing existing commercial properties into vibrant, mixed-use hubs – over the coming year.

### Transit-oriented development

With an emphasis on sustainability and urban mobility, there's a growing focus on transit-oriented development in the region. Commercial properties near public transportation hubs are set to experience increased demand due to convenience and accessibility.

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



# Out with the old, in with the loo







**While some might argue that spring cleaning is merely an annual event, others may say it's a mindset – a commitment to continual improvement. Chris Lowery, managing director at North East-based commercial hygiene and washroom provider, NWR Hygiene, would undoubtedly agree.**

Spring cleans aren't just for the home. With the lighter, brighter days just around the corner, it's time to shake off the winter months and start bringing washroom facilities up to scratch.

The team at NWR Hygiene is helping to do just that, advising owners and managers of businesses and organisations across the country on how to provide a high standard of washroom facility.

In a world where cleanliness is paramount and where businesses and organisations are judged by their facilities, there's no room for outdated or offensive-smelling bathrooms.

From the serene ambience of hotels to the high footfall of schools and colleges, maintaining pristine washroom facilities is imperative.

Welcome to the era where spring cleaning transcends mere tidying - it's about rejuvenating the very essence of sanitation.

#### **Hygiene - a necessity, not a nicety**

Hygiene has become synonymous with health and well-being. Ensuring bathroom facilities are clean and up to date isn't a choice - it's a responsibility. The implications of subpar sanitation extend beyond aesthetics - they are now major contributing factors to customer satisfaction and business reputation.

#### **Solutions for sectors**

Each sector has its unique requirements - something the team at NWR understands. Whether it's the opulent expectations of hotel guests or stringent regulations in medical institutions, addressing these diverse needs requires a nuanced approach to ensure that the solution is the right solution.

#### **Experience matters**

Gone are the days when a mop and bucket sufficed for washroom upkeep. Today, technology plays a pivotal role in ensuring optimal hygiene standards. From sleek, touchless fixtures to discreet automatic sanitisers, innovative solutions are revolutionising cleanliness. NWR remains at the forefront of this technological wave, offering cutting-edge products to elevate washroom experiences.

#### **A fresh outlook for odours**

Odours can quickly tarnish the reputation of any establishment, no matter how immaculate its facilities may appear. Combatting odours requires a multifaceted approach - not just masking odours but addressing the root causes.

As we navigate the ever-evolving landscape of washroom hygiene, one thing remains certain: the importance of clean, up-to-date facilities cannot be overstated. So, it's out with the old and in with the loo - a journey towards a cleaner, healthier and happier washroom experience.

For more information about NWR Hygiene, contact Chris Lowery on 01207 505275 or visit [www.nwrhygienegroup.co.uk](http://www.nwrhygienegroup.co.uk)

# Woman on a mission

**North East Screen is making big leaps in putting the region on the map as a destination for TV and film.** We spoke to Alison Gwynn – a leading figure behind the organisation – about her journey to becoming a driving force behind its resurgence and future ambitions.

If you looked up 'woman on a mission' in the dictionary, you'd find Alison Gwynn's name next to it. A "working-class lass from Jarrow", as she puts it, who remains as dedicated to making a difference now, as she was during the early stages of her career.

Her working journey has been a varied one and yet at every new turn her goal has been the same – to do worthwhile work that matters.

"I've always been the same – a normal lass from the North East, who is a little bit of an entrepreneur, just trying to do some good in the world," she says.

"The thing I've always been really interested in – and passionate about – is doing work that makes a difference to people's lives. It's just always been a motivation – a pull – of mine.

"A big chunk of my early career was spent working in marketing. Like many young people starting out in the world of work, I didn't really know what I wanted to do, or where I'd like to end up. But I found something I was good at – and marketing was it."

Alison's first big role was at Traidcraft – a fairtrade organisation in Gateshead's

Team Valley – where she spent 10 years climbing the ladder, starting in a junior marketing role, before progressing to head of marketing, merchandise and buying. She then decided to dip her toe into the corporate world in a head of brand position – but it wasn't to last.

"I did it for a year and hated it," she says. "I was the only woman in the senior management team and someone asked me to make them a coffee on the first day. Let's just say it didn't sit very well with me.

"I left that environment as fast as I could. When you know, you know."

In the years that followed, Alison followed her passion for do-good work to ethos-driven businesses – including Newcastle's Life Science Centre which, at the time, was still in its infancy.

"I remember when we opened the Centre's ice rink – that was one of my projects," she recalls.

"That got me thinking about how businesses with one mission can become commercially-viable by earning income through other areas. After all, it's all good and well having a dream, but if you don't make money, you can't deliver whatever your mission may be."





**"And for someone like me, in my position, you have to believe that you really can make a difference – and encourage others to work together and believe the same thing."**



Later, she would join a small organisation that would transform into what we know now as Seven Stories – a thriving charity, visitor centre and museum in Ouseburn Valley, dedicated to children's literature.

Headhunted by its founders – who had a vision of creating a vibrant and unique centre for children's books and learning – it was Alison's job to help turn a feel-good dream into reality.

"Looking back, that was the role that really flipped the switch for me – turning a creative organisation into a commercially-viable business that brings a bit of good to somebody's life.

"I stayed there for 14 years, during which time I met thousands of young people. Future creative geniuses, who had bags of talent, potential and ideas. We were

supporting and nurturing them through their early education and I'm sure inspiring them to work in the creative industries as adults too, but then I'd think to myself – hang on – where are the jobs?

"That part always frustrated me, but spurred me on too – especially as a mum of three. It felt personal in a way. I love making money for organisations so they can thrive, but being a parent, I'd always think – but who's going to employ my kids? What kind of future will they have?

"My children are adults now, but I still think that way today. It's something I've carried with me ever since – and something that still motivates me where I am now."

Where she is now is North East Screen – formerly known as Northern Film and Media.

As the region's screen agency, the organisation works with and supports businesses, professionals and emerging talent within the film, TV and screen-based arts industries.

Through its production fund, film office and skills and development arms, its aim is to put the North East on the map as a place for film and TV to be made, as well as creating inward investment and jobs, enabling more people in the region to enjoy fulfilling, long-lasting and well-paid careers in the industry.

It was the business' commitment to the region's future generation of creatives, despite the obstacles in front of it, that struck a chord with Alison.

Nearing a milestone birthday in her life, she decided to take the plunge and leave the secure job she loved to embark on a new challenge.

"I was 48 and felt like I had one big job left in me," she says. "It was a risk. At the time, the organisation was only just surviving, having been underfunded and under supported for the best part of a decade.

"The screen industry was tiny in the North East – in some areas it was totally non-existent – when I joined. At that time, if you were from the region and wanted to work in film or TV, you'd have to leave home and go down to London or the South East. It's an industry that's worth £7 billion and yet, at the time, less than a quarter of the productions were made in our region – and that hit me really hard.

"I remember thinking to myself – but we have so much talent up here? So much opportunity? So much potential? And yet we were at such a low point.

"Originally, my role was around partnerships and programmes, but really, it was about trying to save and grow the business.

"It was either going to close or re-invent itself – and I saw it as a chance to make a real difference for our region and the people in it.

"I truly believed – and still believe – that the people in this industry should be able to make world-class content, be paid a proper wage and be able to sleep in their own beds, right here, in the North East.

"I felt like I had something to prove, so I went for it. It was struggling, so the way I saw it, the only way was up."

Since joining in 2016, Alison has played an instrumental part in North East Screen's comeback, helping to fly the flag for the region as a place for excellence and drive as much interest and create as many opportunities as possible on her doorstep.

In her current role as chief executive, she is tasked with identifying new sources of revenue, expanding the organisation's commercial opportunities and broadening its relationships with potential stakeholders.

Or, as she likes to put it, "shout as loud as I possibly



can from the top of my lungs that this industry needs to be taken more seriously and that the North East is more than worthy of investment”.

One of the ways she's taken North East Screen from struggling to thriving is by gaining the support of all 12 local and combined authorities and forming a powerhouse partnership with the BBC – something that, for her, stands out as a career highlight.

“My geographical catch is where Yorkshire ends and where Scotland begins, as well as all across the North East,” she says.

“At one point, thanks to its combined authority funding, we were doing really well in Tees Valley – we started producing some really good stuff down there. But it wasn't until we formed the North East Screen Industry Partnership (NESIP) with the BBC and all the local and combined authorities that things changed and we lobbied really quickly.

“The BBC – which had made a commitment to make more telly in the nation's regions and less in London – was brilliant. It recognised the North East's potential and made a commitment to spending a minimum of £25 million over five years, providing we and the local and combined authorities could agree to join forces and co-fund some of the infrastructure support around it.

“Two years in and big strides have been made. To have the level of commitment and investment from the local and combined authorities is brilliant and, as delivery partner for the programme, North East Screen has been able to do some amazing work.”

Through the organisation's growing film office, that work includes supporting incoming productions in finding crew, unbeatable locations and making filming in the region seamless.

“Whether it's Indiana Jones taking over Bamburgh Castle, Robson Green touring Northumberland with his mates or Lloyds Bank looking for a breathtaking beach to film their black horses advert, we help every production find the right places to film and the best people to help them.

“Our crew database provides us with the best professionals in the region, while our comprehensive locations database means that we can find what productions are looking for. We have filming and friendly charters with all 12 local authorities, which have all given us the freedom to film in their areas.”

“Luckily for us, finding great places in the North East isn't hard. We have castles, beaches, countryside, small towns and big cities, industrial landscapes, rugged areas and everything in between. And it's all so accessible, too. The depth and breadth we can offer productions is phenomenal. We live in the best place in the world if you ask me.”

Its development team and skills team, meanwhile, support regional production companies, supply chain companies and above the line talent to win business, as well giving established crew and new entrants to the industry the skills and opportunities, they need to succeed.

“We also run events and work with the region's universities and colleges to help spread the word that you don't actually have to have boat-loads of qualifications and experience to work in the screen industry. The entry-level pathways to becoming a trainee or a runner are brilliant. I want everyone to know if you're hardworking and have a twinkle in your eye, you can succeed.”

Finally, the organisation's £3.8 million production fund, supports world-class content filming in the

region to secure sustainable, high-end productions and attract inward investment and jobs.

“Our production fund really is the cherry on the cake,” says Alison.

“We insist that any productions who come here employ at least 50 per cent of their crew from the region. We also insist that all trainees on any production are from the North East and for every pound of investment, we expect that production to spend at least £7 in the region.

“Our Film Office supported 63 productions last year and we have double coming up this year. The momentum is growing faster and bigger than anyone imagined and I'm feeling hopeful about the goal of establishing year-round production one day in a few years' time.”

Speaking of goals, unsurprisingly, for someone like Alison, it seems nothing is off the table.

“Devolution is the biggie – that's my main goal. To have the screen industry recognised for its economic growth potential.

“The last two years of our five-year partnership have been a roaring success – we've smashed every target, we've welcomed more productions, we've created more spend in the region and seen more and more people actually return home to the region because of the sustainable work we've been able to create. But I want to do more.

“It feels like we've spent the last couple of years saying ‘the North East is open for business, come on in and see what we've got to offer’ and now things are actually taking off.

“So, for someone like me, I'm now thinking – how do we turn a £3.8 million production fund into a £10 million one? How do we supercharge?

“It's also an ambition of mine to start changing the way people – future generations – think about the screen industry.

“There's an illusion that it's very arty and creative when, actually, it's also about tech and craftsmanship. The industry is crying out for construction workers, caterers, joiners and lighting technicians, for example, and the opportunities for supply chain companies are massive.”

You might be wondering how, or where, this woman on a mission finds the drive to reach her ambitions, to tick every box, to cram every goal in. The path to success, Alison tells us, doesn't actually come from powering through 50-hour weeks – it comes from within and having a great team of staff and partners who share the ambition for growth.

“Yes, you have to be really ambitious. But you also have to really care. You have to care about the human beings involved, you have to care about their careers and what the work you're doing means for the next 20 years of their lives.

“And for someone like me, in my position, you have to believe that you really can make a difference – and encourage others to work together and believe the same thing.

And the key to her own personal success?

“There's no real secret to it,” she says. “I'm just an old woman who doesn't take no for an answer. “I have two posters on my wall in my office. One says ‘shy bairns get nowt’ and the other says ‘work proper hard and be extra canny to people’. “And you know what? If you live by them, everything will be ok. Keep pushing, be nice and the good stuff will come.”

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



# Framing the future – multiple wins for North East civil and structural engineering consultancy

Leading Gateshead-based civil and structural engineering consultancy, Portland Consulting Engineers, announces several key frameworks wins with leading regional social housing landlords.





The success was celebrated by Portland on securing places on frameworks, covering the new build and refurbishment of thousands of new affordable homes across its respective regions and will help to boost the business' ever-growing portfolio of social housing schemes.

Frameworks play an important role in the continuing success of Portland. With each new agreement to which the company is appointed comes the chance to further relationships with existing clients and project partners. These appointments also provide an opportunity for the company to establish connections and relationships within the sector.

Through the company's people and values-led approach, many important and long-lasting business relationships have been forged. Through these latest framework appointments, it is hoped that there will be significant opportunities to build new relationships within the company's native North East and beyond.

#### **Prosper framework**

Established in 2008 by North East-based Residential Social Landlords, Prosper is a not-for-profit company that provides procurement solutions for public sector frameworks. Portland will be providing design and consultancy services, which members can benefit from. It is open to members of Prosper and includes registered social landlords, local authorities, educational establishments, NHS bodies, police, fire and rescue services and registered charities. The business was successfully appointed to cover the North East, the North West and Yorkshire.

#### **Beyond Housing Broadacres Housing Association and North Star Housing Group – Consultancy framework**

Portland was also successful in its bid to join the Consultants framework, operated by Beyond Housing, Broadacres Housing Association and North Star Housing Group. It will be providing civil and structural engineering services in the planned construction of newbuild homes across urban and rural locations over the framework's four-year lifetime.

#### **Thirteen Housing Group's Civil & Structural Engineers framework**

Portland was appointed to the Thirteen Housing Group's Civil & Structural Engineers panel to provide civil and structural engineering design services for homes in the North East and Yorkshire over the period of the framework. The opportunity is set to last three years with the option to extend. During the lifetime of this framework, the company will assist Thirteen in the delivery of new homes, either using traditional build or modern methods of construction.

#### **South Yorkshire Housing Associations Structural Engineering Services framework**

The business won a place on the South Yorkshire Housing Associations Structural Engineering Services framework, servicing the design and development of newbuild homes in the South Yorkshire region, alongside the renovation and refurbishment of existing properties. The framework is expected to last for two years, with a two-year optional extension.

In addition to the housing sector, Portland achieved a significant first in 2022 when it secured a place on the public sector NEPO 212: Support Services for the Built Environment framework. This provides an opportunity to further expand on the consultancy's growing portfolio of work in the civic, education and healthcare sectors. Portland has already been successfully appointed to new projects with Northumberland County Council, Sunderland County Council and Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council.

In recent years, social value activity has gained increased significance in the bidding process. Portland's increased success in applying to these frameworks can be attributed to the work that has been done in this area during the business development processes.

In the most recent company business plan, the business committed to spending 1% of annual turnover on social value activity. This spending has taken the form of charitable donations, sponsorship of local cultural events, support of grassroots sport and through developing the civil and structural engineers of the future.

Portland takes its responsibilities to the environment seriously. The consultancy is one of the signatories of the UK Structural Engineers Declare a Climate Emergency. It appreciates the responsibility it has as consultants to impact the carbon impact of construction and remain committed to a series of green design policies.

In recent times, the business has partnered with an external consultant to develop a carbon reporting and reduction plan, with the aim of becoming a Net-Zero Carbon consultancy.

Portland managing director, Lee Barr, said: "It's great to see Portland appointed on some significant frameworks, helping to expand our remit even further into these regions. These framework appointments allow us to further well-established business relationships and provides opportunities to collaborate with new clients, project partners and design team members.

"The last 12 months has been an especially successful period for framework appointments and includes securing a place on NEPO 212 framework for the first time - proving that our recent strategy focus on business development and implementation of improvements to our service has been recognised.

"As social value activity and decarbonisation become increasingly influential within the tender process, these framework successes are testament to our development approach. We have increased our social value activity while work is underway with an external partner, to record, report and reduce carbon emissions."

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

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# Lifestyle

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



# A new lease of life

A photograph of two women standing in a field of tall, dry grass at sunset. The woman on the left is wearing a dark coat and a black knit hat with a pom-pom. The woman on the right is wearing a dark coat with a fur collar and a pink knit hat with a pom-pom. They are both looking at each other and smiling. The sky is filled with soft, orange and pink clouds.

**Under new ownership and following an impressive makeover, one of Northumberland's most iconic fashion stores – Jobsons of Alnwick – is set to reopen its doors in March 2024.**

Jobsons of Alnwick is looking towards a bright future and an exciting phase of growth – under the watchful eye of its new owner. The store, which has been trading for over 100 years, began life as master saddlery business, but has since evolved into one of Alnwick's most reputable and much-loved landmarks for shopping.

Synonymous with luxury country fashion and footwear, it has stocked a variety of leading brands such as Barbour, Birkenstock, Dubarry and Seasalt, along with the finest equestrian goods and expert saddle fitting and repair services.

Previous owners, Chris and Alison Todd, were at the helm for 23 years, until

they decided to retire from the business and sell it to Rachel Wilson in December last year.

On a mission to breathe new life into the business and reach a wider customer demographic, Rachel enlisted the help of Bradley Hall – one of the North East's leading chartered surveyors and estate agents – who were instructed to sell the two-storey property.

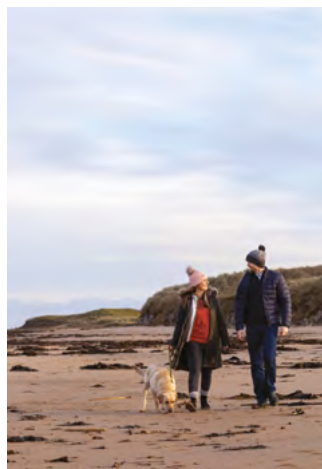
Following a successful completion, Jobsons of Alnwick officially closed its doors on December of last year and Rachel took ownership from January. It will remain temporarily closed until mid-March, during which time it will undergo

an extensive refurbishment to reflect Rachel's vision for the store's future.

Eager to continue its luxury offering, Rachel will continue to offer popular, big-name labels like Barbour, Seasalt Cornwall, Aigle and Le Chateau on the ground floor, alongside a new selection of fashion-forward brands, which will sell at a lower and more accessible price point.

Names such as Sugarhill Brighton, Nomads Clothing and Blundstone are expected to make the stock, along with revered British footwear designer, Penelope Chilvers, who's boots are worn by Kate Middleton, the Princess of Wales, and fashion moguls worldwide.





The building's upper floor, meanwhile, will be transformed into a dedicated space for children's and ladies clothing, giving parents living in, or visiting, Alnwick a place to shop much-loved brands like Ducky Zebra, Me & Henry and George W. Davies Fashion.

Essential basics, including underwear, school tights, vests and shoes, will also be on offer, alongside a variety of toys and games – most at pocket money prices.

The store's existing equestrian goods will cease to be sold when it reopens and its long-established saddlery business – led by former employee John Bailey – will move to different premises. Chris Todd will continue to operate his saddle fitting business to customers on a remote basis.

"I'm delighted to be taking over the reigns at Jobsons of Alnwick," said Rachel. "I've lived in Alnwick for 13 years and have seen first-hand how much the store means to visitors – including returning holidaymakers who come back year after year.

"Renowned for its impeccable customer service and traditional values and charm, it's become somewhat of an institution – and I'm thrilled to be continuing its legacy, while expanding its offering.

"Many people – including locals – think of Jobsons of Alnwick only as somewhere to buy equestrian goods and country labels, but my aim is to change that. I want to shift perceptions and open the store up to a larger and more varied demographic – including locals, parents and children."

"My hope is that by offering a mix of different price points for different types of customers, Jobsons of Alnwick will become more accessible – an all-rounder – for both locals and visitors to the area.

"As a parent living in Alnwick, I know how difficult it is to find children's clothes on my doorstep – there are no dedicated children's clothing stores in town – so I'm really looking forward to filling that gap and welcoming families through our doors.

"Our new fashion-forward womenswear collection, meanwhile, will include dresses, tops and more – and the average price per garment will be around £25 to £30. Perfect for those on a budget, or shopping with convenience in mind."

In addition, Rachel plans to keep the store's dog-friendly policy intact, as well as extend its opening hours at certain points of the year – including Sundays and Bank Holidays during the summer months.

Plans to revamp the store's existing website are underway, with a re-launch also planned for early 2024. This will allow customers to buy online, while having access to the same brands and customer service that people experience when they visit the store.

Commenting on the sale of Jobsons of Alnwick, Group CEO at Bradley Hall, Neil Hart, said: "It was a pleasure to work with Rachel and assist her in purchasing this fantastic property.

"Her plans for the future are very exciting and we look forward to watching them come to life over the coming weeks and months."

Rachel added: "I'd like to thank Neil and the team at Bradley Hall for all their help. The customer service I received was second-to-none and they went above and beyond to make the whole process as smooth and as seamless as possible. I'd highly recommend their services to anyone looking to buy or sell a property."

[www.jobsonsofalnwick.co.uk](http://www.jobsonsofalnwick.co.uk)  
[@jobsonsofalnwick](https://www.instagram.com/jobsonsofalnwick)



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Bretby gilet  
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Barbour Caley small backpack  
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Barbour Classic Beadnell Rustic wax jacket  
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# Step into spring



Barbour Dunford beanie  
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Birkenstock Boston  
Oiled Leather sandals  
£130



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Dark Brown sandals  
£80



Blundstone men's boots  
#519  
£170



Dubarry Galway boots  
£379



Le Chameau Vierzonord  
Neoprene Lined boots  
£200



Birkenstock Vegan  
Rose sandals  
£90





Nomads Clothing Nehru Easy Top  
£36



Nomads Clothing boxy shirt  
£39



Nomads Clothing collar t-shirt  
£30



Ducky Zebra trousers  
£24.50



Ducky Zebra tee  
£17.50



Ducky Zebra dungarees  
£26



Ducky Zebra sweater  
£22

# in style

From the finest outerwear and footwear to must-have children's clothing and accessories, Jobsons of Alnwick is your destination for the best in spring style.

[www.jobsonsofalnwick.co.uk](http://www.jobsonsofalnwick.co.uk) @jobsonsofalnwick



Ria Beige Nubuck sandals  
£65



Penelope Chilvers Cassidy  
Suede cowboy boots  
£259



Ria Terracotta Nubuck sandals  
£65



Yoshi Highland Cow Tweed Leather  
Oxford purse  
£33



Ria Leopard Print sandals  
£65



Grisport Renegade walking shoes  
£125

**NEW**

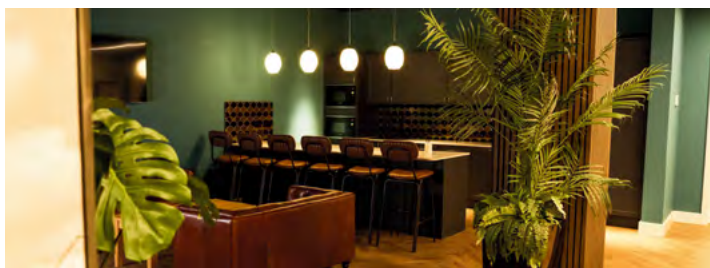
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# Watch, listen, read

From motivational TED Talks to must-read books, feel-good podcasts and thought-provoking shows, here's how we're keeping informed – and inspired – this month.

Brains Behind Brands

## Watch

### How to Create a Life Without Limits

North East-based mindset and leadership coaches and authors, Donna Elliott and Cheryl Lee, recently took to the stage to present a motivational and moving TED Talk - How to Create a Life Without Limits - at TEDxTeessideWomen.

Together, the women run Now Is Your Time – an online coaching business, aimed helping individuals find their way out of self-doubt and fear in order to create a life without limits – and their talk delivered their inspiring message loud and clear.

Full of thought-provoking takeaways, as well as warm and witty in equal measures, it's a must-watch (or listen) for anyone feeling stuck and uninspired in their current chapter of life, as well as female business-owners wanting to add more meaning to their working lives.

If you've ever wanted to know how the mind works and how you can train your brain to create any opportunity you want (yes, it's possible), then tune in.

Available to watch on [YouTube](#).

### Down to Earth

In a move away from the silver screen films he is so famous for, Hollywood A-lister, Zac Efron, sets off across the world with wellness expert and friend, Darin Olien, to explore healthy, sustainable ways to live – inspired by other cultures.

From geothermal energy in Iceland to a town where most of the residents live to over 100, Zac explores just what makes the natural world so vital to our health and wellbeing.

The most recent series sees the pair fly down under to Australia, where unique and self-sufficient communities are creating healthier living alternatives and habits, including building self-sustaining homes and enjoying cheaper, plant-based diets.

Available to watch on [Netflix](#).





## Listen

### Brains Behind Brands

From inspiring local marketer, Stuart Bramley, comes a business podcast that aims to shine a spotlight on the journeys of successful business-owners and entrepreneurs.

Exploring the origins of innovation, the series shines a light on the compelling stories of how and why various companies started, while exploring the challenges and failures that paved the way for their success.

Stuart is the founder of North East-based Mira Marketing and utilises his marketing knowledge to ask his guests insightful and thoughtful questions – the answers to which always leave listeners with food-for-thought.

Our new favourite podcast for longer drives or quiet evenings at home when some much-needed me-time is top of the agenda.

**Available to listen wherever you get your podcasts.**

### How to Own the Room

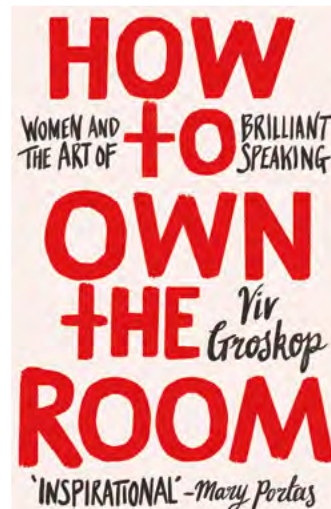
If you're looking for a new podcast to tune into while walking or gym-ing, Viv Groskop's leading business podcast – How to Own the Room – is a must-listen.

In each episode, the comedian and TV presenter speaks to an inspirational figure about the secrets behind brilliant speaking and how women can hold the attention they deserve in the workplace.

Full of great tips for boosting confidence, improving public speaking and ramping up interview etiquette, Viv's guests empower women from all different backgrounds to develop their professional persona.

Guests range from the CEO of Smart Works to Olympians and musicians, as well as the odd public figure (including the likes of Hillary Clinton) thrown in for good measure. She also offers masterclasses on a range of topics including how to cure the dreaded imposter syndrome and how to tackle and overcome nerves.

**Available to listen wherever you get your podcasts.**



## Read

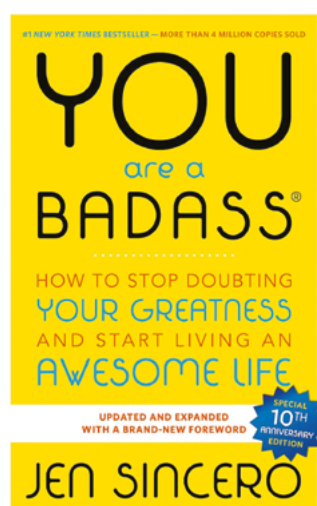
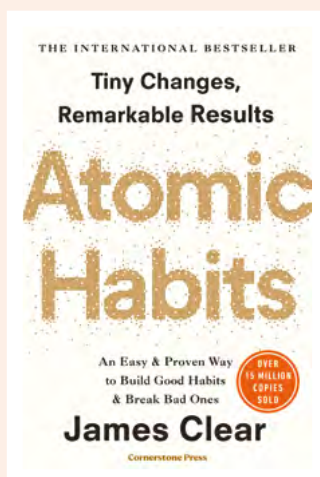
### Atomic Habits

Atomic Habits by James Clear is a comprehensive and practical guide on how to change your habits and become – as he puts it – 1% better each day.

Using a cutting-edge psychological frameworks, world-renowned habit expert, James, delves into the neuroscience of behaviour and teaches readers a simple set of rules for creating good habits and breaking bad ones – in all areas of life and work.

Beloved and utilised by professionals all over the world for its accessible and no-nonsense approach to self-development, this is one book you won't want to put down if you're looking to turn over a new leaf, ramp up motivation and productivity and invest in your self-development in 2024.

**Available to order from**  
[www.jamesclear.com](http://www.jamesclear.com)



### You are a Badass: How to Stop Doubting Your Greatness and Start Living an Awesome Life

Bestselling author and world-renowned success coach, Jen Sincero, reveals top ways to get out of your way and believe in your greatness – in an unforgettable, laugh-out-loud book that stands out as one of the most relatable, non-patronising self-help manuals we've read in years.

The aim? To help people of all ages, from all backgrounds, identify their self-sabotaging beliefs, fears and behaviours (most of which live within us without our knowledge) and change their negative, self-deprecating inner monologue forever.

Expect 27 bite-sized and easy-to-read chapters, inspired by Sincero's own life tales, brought to life with sage advice, easy exercises and the occasional swear word.

A life-changing read you'll want to pick back up again and again.

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BoConcept has stores in Leeds, York and Newcastle.  
For more information, visit [www.boconcept.com](http://www.boconcept.com)



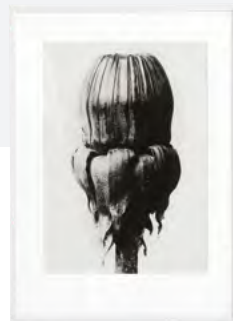
**Cancún outdoor coffee table**  
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**Cancún outdoor dining chair**  
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**Bouclé heavy cushion**  
£139



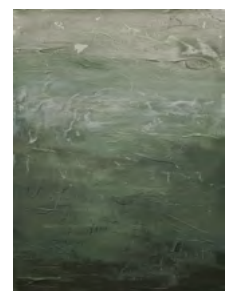
**Modena 2.5 seater sofa**  
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# Discover... Bedlington

Steeped in rich Anglo-Saxon history and perfectly positioned between some of the North East's best-loved hot spots for business and tourism, Bedlington is fast-becoming one of the region's top towns from which to work and play.

## Small town charm

Nestled in the heart of Northumberland, yet within touching distance of the region's breathtaking coastline, renowned seaside villages and some of its most exciting cities, Bedlington remains somewhat of a hidden gem, blessed with medieval good looks, bags of community spirit and all the amenities you need for a memorable and convenient stay.

Its historic Front Street – which still retains its classic sloping high street design – is home to a handful of independent shops and boutiques, cosy pubs and restaurants, along with a traditional, family-run butchers, a small bakery, a men's barber shop, a petrol station and more. And there's good news elsewhere, too.

Now, Bedlington's town centre is enjoying an influx of investment – most notably from Advanced Northumberland, which is currently leading in the delivery of a major scheme to reposition the town as a retail destination, providing locals and visitors with a bigger and better variety of stores and supermarkets.

## Well connected

Located less than half an hour away from Newcastle and Newcastle International Airport by car, a stay in Bedlington means business travellers – including those visiting from other parts of the country and the world – are well placed for meetings, training sessions, projects and more in Newcastle's bustling city centre and surrounding towns. The town will also soon become one of six new train stations on the Northumberland Line.

Bedlington also lies a 10-minute drive away from the small seaside town of Blyth – which has recently received £20.7 million in investment as part of a regeneration programme – as well as Blyth Port, a buzzing business and education hub for alternative technologies, offshore energy and green initiative companies.

Popular by-the-sea villages, including Whitley Bay, Tynemouth, Amble, Seahouses and Cresswell – where you'll find the beginning of the Northumberland Coastal Path – are also all within easy reach, giving families, friends and couples in search of adventure-packed days out, filled with great walks, fresh sea air and stunning scenery, plenty of choice.

## Did you know?

- The town's Front Street follows a ridge from the River Blyth to the A1068 roundabout. Most of the buildings you'll find here date back to the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries and still retain their original architectural features – and the archaeology beneath.
- Bedlington has its own conservation area in the centre of town.
- In the late 18th and 19th centuries, Bedlington's Dene Park was of worldwide importance in the production of railway lines and steam locomotives. Sir Daniel Gooch, the famous locomotive engineer, was born in Bedlington in 1816.
- An 18th century stone obelisk marks the site of the town's historic Market Place.
- The first recorded use of a Penny Black stamp – the world's first adhesive postage stamp – was on a letter sent to Bedlington Ironworks in 1840.
- The town has its own breed of dog – the Bedlington Terrier. It's believed that a man called Joseph Ainsley, of Bedlington, owned the first known breed.
- The town's VR red wall post box is one of the oldest in Northumberland.





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# The power of polynucleotides



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



Now and again, a skin solution comes along that ticks all the boxes: smoothing, soothing, plumping and everything in between. That's the power of polynucleotides – a pioneering new treatment that is on every skincare-lover's lips.

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

## What is it?

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

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

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

## Who can have it?

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

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

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

And because polynucleotides also have an anti-inflammatory effect and increase cell turnover, those battling with irritation and discolouration from conditions like rosacea, hyperpigmentation, acne and sun damage, are also catered for. Scars are softened over time, imperfections are reduced and redness is soothed.

## Whereabouts can you have it?

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

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

The procedure is quick, simple and relatively pain-free. The skin is thoroughly

cleansed to remove all traces of makeup, oil and debris and numbing cream is applied to the skin prior to injecting. Aftercare is minimal and most patients don't suffer with bruising or swelling.

## How often can you have it?

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

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

Lucie Royer, founder of Skin and Soul Medical, said: "We're delighted to be able to offer this exciting and innovative treatment to our clients.

"Polynucleotides are becoming more and more popular in the world of injectables, helping to improve skin health from the inside out and we can't wait to help our clients achieve long-lasting results.

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

To book your appointment, visit [www.skinandsoulmedical.com](http://www.skinandsoulmedical.com)



# Fit for success

Award-winning architectural and engineering practice, Building Design Northern, joins forces with Sunderland's first boutique gym to offer its team corporate memberships.



In a world in which mental and physical wellness is becoming more prevalent – and more important than ever before to employees everywhere – today, businesses of all types and sizes are looking at new ways to invest in the wellbeing of its team members.

Building Design Northern (BDN) is one of them. Recently, the leading architectural and engineering practice – which specialises in architecture and structural and civil engineering and has offices in Sunderland and Ulverston in the Lake District – teamed up with Sunderland-based gym, The Cell, to offer special corporate memberships to its growing workforce.

Inspired by a fun and successful team-building day in the Lakes District last summer – during which the practice celebrated 40 years in business by bringing together its departments for a range of feel-good activities – BDN's managing director, Richard Marsden, reached out to the team at The Cell to explore ways of continuing the comradery – with an all-important health and wellbeing twist.

"After receiving great feedback from our team members about our away day, I wanted to look at other ways of keeping morale high and allowing for our team members to socialise and bond outside of work, while looking after their own health and wellbeing," says Richard.

"Supporting and investing in local businesses has always been important to us at BDN, so when I discovered The Cell – which is within walking distance of our Sunderland office – was offering corporate memberships, I knew it was an avenue I wanted to go down."

The brainchild of local entrepreneurs Holly McBride-Donaldson, Jennie Moyse and Brent Gilpin, The Cell is Sunderland's first bespoke class-based gym, based in the city's former police headquarters. Here, members can enjoy over 25 expert-led fitness classes each week, including spinning, bootcamps, yoga and Pilates.

As part of its unique and flexible offering, the gym also provides express lunchtime sessions for those working in and around Sunderland, as well as convenient time slots

before and after the standard 9-5 working hours to allow employees to enjoy and factor in fitness around their working day.

Its newly-launched corporate memberships – created to support healthier workforces within the city and enable colleagues to access classes together – are growing in popularity. Something the teams at BDN can vouch for.

"The Cell is a welcoming and vibrant fitness hub, led by fantastic team, and its corporate memberships provide employees with a space to enjoy fun group classes either side of, or in the middle of, the working day," says Richard.

"I'm really pleased to offer them to our workforce as an optional wellbeing benefit and it's been great to see so many people – in a variety of departments – taking advantage of them. We've witnessed a noticeable boost in morale within the office and the feedback we've had so far has been really positive."

In addition to corporate packages – which are bespoke to businesses depending on company goals – over the coming year The Cell will be offering BDN bi-annual corporate wellness days.

Designed to connect team members and create positive relationships through exercise, they will include a mix of performance body metrics, fitness, breathwork and movement flow.

Brent Gilpin, co-founder of The Cell, said: "The benefits of exercise are well-known across the board – the difference in value is creating connection through exercise. That's where corporate wellness holds value.

"Based on my own experience working in performance sport and executive healthcare as a physiotherapist, I've seen the success teams can have from exercising in an inclusive space where they can build deeper connections, which in turn improves performance and productivity.

"Compared to your average gym, The Cell brings something different to the table. Our goal is to be integral to our community and support businesses in the epicentre of the city."



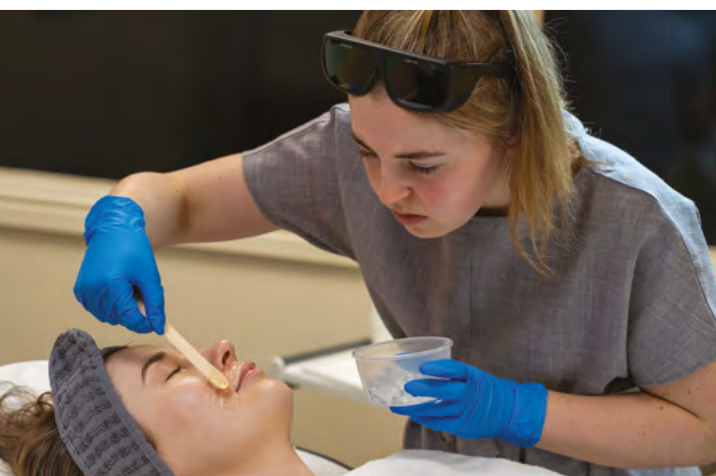
For more information about The Cell and its corporate memberships, visit [thecellfitness.com](https://thecellfitness.com)

# The path to success

Embarking on the career of your dreams and reaching your goals has never been easier, thanks to Direct Skills Group.







Armed with over 40 years' experience and a growing offering of top-class training programmes, Direct Skills Group is committed to helping people from all walks of life gain the qualifications, skills and confidence they need to travel down - and succeed in - the career path of their dreams.

Whether someone is looking to turn their passion for the gym into a day job, land a role at a leading salon or even start their own business within the realms of fitness or beauty, Direct Skills Group provides the gateway through its leading courses, which combine in-person training in both a classroom and real-life setting.

And while all graduates leave Direct Skills Group's training academies with the diplomas and practical tools needed to flourish in their chosen industries, the business is also dedicated to educating its students about - and opening their eyes to - the variety of careers that their training can lead to.

Here, the team provide an insight into some of the exciting avenues open to its graduates and how they can lead to not only enjoyable and long-lasting careers, but fulfilling lifestyles.

### So, you want to work in the fitness industry?

The business' fitness training division has expanded in recent years from its training academy in Leeds to Newcastle, Manchester, Birmingham and Nottingham, helping it become a leader in its field and a trusted, go-to provider for anyone wanting to make a living on the gym floor.

Working in fitness - which involves helping others improve their physical health and mental wellbeing - can make for an extremely rewarding career, however it's essential that people are fully-qualified for the role they want.

Through Direct Skills Group, fitness fans can gain their Level 2 & 3 Fitness Instructing and Personal Training diploma, as well as an extended diploma in Level 2 & 3 Personal Training and even a Level 3 course in Sports Massage.

Many graduates leaving with these qualifications under their belt go on to forge satisfying and sustainable careers as gym instructors, assistant instructors and personal trainers in large national gyms and small independent gyms,

but the possibilities don't end there.

Some go on to become gym managers, service managers and membership advisors, while others set up their own businesses as self-employed personal trainers and online fitness coaches, enabling them to work remotely from anywhere in the world and achieve optimum work-life balance, more flexibility and freedom.

### So, you want to work in the beauty industry?

Direct Skills Group's training offering within beauty therapy is going from strength to strength and from its national training academies - including its brand new academy in Newcastle - beauty-lovers of all ages are given the knowledge and practical skills they need to make their mark in this growing and fast-paced industry.

Spending your working week helping others to look and feel their best inside and out can make for a gratifying career - and Direct Skills Group's varied range of beauty therapy courses can open a number of doors for anyone in search of a hands-on, client-facing role in salons, spas and beyond.

Courses include Level 3 Diploma in Combined Beauty Therapy Skills, Level 3 Diploma in Nail Technology and Level 3 Diploma in Makeup Artistry, along with Level 2 & 3 advanced apprenticeships in beauty therapy, as well as Level 4 Diplomas in Advanced Skin Studies & Aesthetic Practice and International Spa Management.

Many graduates who leave Direct Skills Group secure careers at local salons - including those where their practical training took place - and spas. These include beauty, massage and skin therapist positions, as well as salon receptionist and aesthetic practitioner roles and even spa manager and spa director roles.

Others go on to become lash and brow specialists, senior nail technicians and beauty consultants - either within a salon or a spa, or in a freelance capacity.

Some go full circle and become educators themselves, specialising in salon training, assessing and lecturing, while others may leave Direct Skills Group feeling inspired to set up their own business as a self-employed clinic or spa-owner, or become a freelance make-up artist or masseuse, enabling them to work and travel freely all over the world.

For more information about how Direct Skills Group can help you to unlock your potential and lead you down the path of success, visit [www.directskillsgroup.co.uk](http://www.directskillsgroup.co.uk)

# Time to come home

**The North East's screen industry is booming – but it hasn't always been this way. In previous years, our talented crew would have to leave the region in order to find work on film and TV sets. But since the launch of North East Screen, filming in the region is up 28% (which bucks the trend from other areas in the UK) and savvy talent is starting to come home.**

Now, with the creation of the North East Screen Industries Partnership (NESIP), a group made up of combined and local authorities from across the region to facilitate the strategic development of the screen industry in the North East, business has never been better. Crew and talent are able to work in the region and then sleep in their own beds at night.

North East Screen, the body funded by NESIP to deliver the Screen Industry Development Programme, has worked with some of the country's top broadcasters to bring more productions to the region, as well as working with North East production companies to help them grow and win commissions.

With production on the up - and many more planned for this year - the talent that once had to move away from their beloved North East are now relocating back to the region.

Nicola Barnes, a self-shooting producer director from Gateshead, who left the region at the age of 18, has now returned to the region after 11 years away.

"It's great to be back in the region and working," said Nicola.

"Most recently, I self-shot, produced and directed on We Are Newcastle United for Amazon Prime Video – one of my favourite personal and professional experiences to date.

"After graduating from university, I landed my first TV job as an office runner at Betty - an award-winning television production

company in London. I then went on to work on programmes like the perception-challenging documentary series, The Undateables for Channel 4, Bear Grylls: Breaking Point for Discovery and Heston's Fantastical Food for Channel 4, before leaving Betty to work on The London Olympics in 2012.

"Living in London for eight years really helped me build and develop my career from runner right through to producer and director, working as a freelancer with award-winning companies like The Garden (24 hours in A&E, Channel 4), TwoFour (The Making of Me, Channel 4), Studio Lambert (How to Get a Council House, Channel 4) and Brinkworth (Critical Condition, Channel 5).

"However, after several years away, I realised that there was a massive part of me missing and I knew I was ready to come home to be closer to family.

"Leaving London at the time felt incredibly daunting and I thought I was going to have to leave TV. I was so lucky when Brinkworth gave me the opportunity to work with them remotely before moving on to a new series they were filming up north. I'm still so grateful to them for that because working remotely was not the norm before Covid.

"I think a silver lining to the pandemic was how industries adapted and realised that we could do things differently. It highlighted that people didn't have to just live in the TV





Kema Kay



Duncan Grey



BBC Three's Charlotte in Sunderland



Antonia Hurford-Jones



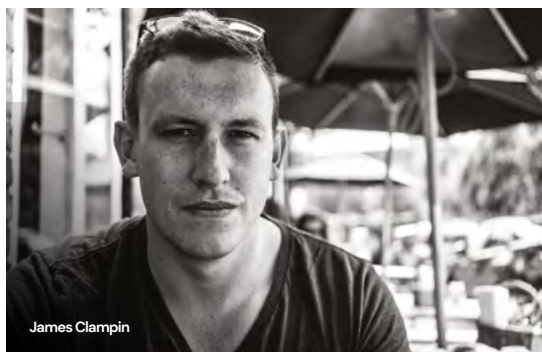
Sara Davies



Nicola Barnes



Jordan North



James Clampin

'hotspots' like London, Manchester and Leeds, for example, and in fact could live anywhere, depending on the work. It gave talented people from further afield a look-in and it became more flexible, offering remote and hybrid working.

"As Covid restrictions eased, I worked on BBC One's award-winning documentary series, Ambulance, before finding out about great local TV production companies that had moved up here too, like TwentySix 03.

"To this day, I believe I got these opportunities because of where I'm originally from and the person it has made me. We all have unique and different perspectives because of where we live and I feel so lucky to be from our wonderful region."

Another example of a high-level crew member moving back to the North East is James Clampin - a TV director and producer with over 13 years of experience.

"My work covers a wide range of genres, from scripted and unscripted to entertainment, factual and comedy. I've also spent time directing studio shows and outside broadcasts. I have just moved back to the North East with my family for the foreseeable," he said.

James recently produced/directed

Michael McIntyre's Big Show VT inserts and is currently series producing on series 2 and 3 of Game on Grandparents for CBBC.

"I recruited a whole team from the North East to everywhere from Manchester, up to the northernmost regions of Scotland," he said.

And it's not just individuals moving to the North East. Established companies and their senior staff who also view our region as the perfect place to base their businesses are too.

We have welcomed a number of production companies to our region, including TwentySix03 which is currently filming Making it (W/T) with Sara Davies for the BBC.

TwentySix 03 was founded by industry heavyweights Duncan Grey and Antonia Hurford-Jones. Prior to starting the production company, Duncan was controller of entertainment at Granada, launching ITV's flagship entertainment series including Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway and Popstars: The Rivals.

His later work as controller of entertainment at ITV saw him commission Britain's Got Talent and oversee The X Factor. Antonia is an experienced channel head, commissioner, head of department and executive producer in the world of

entertainment and factual entertainment.

When working for Sky as its commissioner for entertainment, Antonia executive produced their existing slate of programming including A League of Their Own and Got To Dance and commissioned new series including Duck Quacks Don't Echo and Portrait Artist of the Year.

Other production companies that have moved to our region include Northern Child, the northern branch of Middlechild, which is currently working on a documentary with Jordan North, Tough Talking for BBC Three in 2023 with Kema Kay, Natterbox which produces the very popular Charlotte in Sunderland and Shudder Films, whose recent feature film Kneecap starring Michael Fassbender won the audience award at the prestigious Sundance film festival.

The wider facilities and supply chain companies are also on the lookout for talent, including Run VT - an award-winning post-production facilities house - and Sensel, which provides virtual production for 20th Century Studios, episodics for Amazon Studios and Netflix, FACEIT eSports leagues, MTV music concerts and brand launches for Macallan, Nike and Virgin Media.

Visit [www.northeastscreen.org](http://www.northeastscreen.org) to learn more about the opportunities for those wanting to work in the screen industry in the North East.



# Trusted by government officials

Parkers Chauffeurs, based in Newcastle, provides nationwide superior chauffeur and asset protection services. With a reputation for excellence and a long history of serving elite clientele, the business has been playing an integral role in providing transport services to senior government officials.

The prestigious clientele of Parkers Chauffeurs demand nothing but the best in transportation services. With a fleet of top-of-the-line luxurious vehicles and a team of highly trained and experienced chauffeurs, Parkers Chauffeurs ensures a seamless travel experience for their esteemed clients.

Its dedication to customer satisfaction and its ability to cater to the unique needs of each client have set it apart as a leader in the luxury transport industry. In addition to its exemplary service, Parkers Chauffeurs is also known for its commitment to sustainability and environmental responsibility. The company's fleet of vehicles includes eco-friendly options, ensuring that clients can travel in style while also reducing their carbon footprint.

With its unmatched service, professionalism and dedication to excellence, Parkers Chauffeurs sets the standard for luxury transportation, offering convenience and peace of mind, ensuring the smooth and efficient movement of high-profile clientele.

Managing director, Laurence Beck, has personally been invited to Downing Street for exclusive events at number 10 to discuss business policies, share insights and explore future collaborations that reflect positively on the thriving business community in the North East.

By consistently providing first-class chauffeur services, the company has established itself as the leading chauffeur service provider in the North, not only serving local people, but also enhancing the city's reputation as a thriving business hub and being recognised by senior government officials for outstanding service.

With a reputation for professionalism, Parkers Chauffeurs has become the first-choice transportation provider for many North East-based VIPs, such as Sara Davies, Robson Green and Jill Scott, who regularly advocate their praise for the service the business provides.

When it comes to transporting esteemed individuals with precision and care, Parkers Chauffeurs delivers excellence at every turn.

[www.parkerschauffeurs.com](http://www.parkerschauffeurs.com)





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# Home-away-from-home

**Discover South Riggs – a luxury property in Bedlington for business travellers and leisure-seekers.**

In a place in which hotels are scarce and accommodation options outside of pubs-with-rooms are limited, South Riggs provides visitors to Bedlington and the town's surrounding areas - including Northumberland and the North East coast - with a stylish and convenient place to stay.

Created by Rachel Wellbelove - founder of FlexHomes - the two-bedroom property has been purposely designed to meet the needs of those visiting for business, or as part of a holiday getaway, and goes beyond the standard - and offering - of traditional rental accommodation.

"I'm an avid fan of Northumberland and a frequent traveller to the area for business, yet I'd always struggled to find somewhere to stay that ticked all the boxes," says Rachel.

"Taken by Bedlington's historic charm and impressed by its convenient location, I knew I wanted to create something special here and help put this hidden gem of a town on the map - and so the idea to create a stand-out property here that both business travellers and leisure guests could enjoy was born.

"Ultimately, I wanted to offer people a comfortable and relaxed base while on their travels. An inviting space that

allowed them to combine working with exploring the local area and taking time out, as they would do in their own home - and South Riggs is just that."

Perfect for those who value familiar comforts, peace and quiet, privacy and flexibility while they travel, the fully-equipped house rental is made special with high-spec features and modern interiors - including two large luxury bedrooms, secure off-road parking, a dedicated work area and outdoor space for a distinct home-away-from-home feel.

## Where it is

You'll find South Riggs tucked away on a peaceful residential street in Bedlington, just a short 300-metre walk from the town's much-loved Front Street, home to several independent shops and boutiques, cosy pubs and restaurants.

The semi-detached property's convenient location also means the seaside town of Blyth and business hot spots, such as Blyth Port, lie just 10 minutes away by car, making it the perfect choice for business travellers temporarily placed in the area on long or short-term projects, visiting for training, attending meetings and more. Holidaymakers - including couples, friends and families - are also







well placed to explore the nearby towns and cities of Newcastle, Morpeth and rural Rothbury, as well as much-loved villages along the North East's coastline, such as Cresswell, Whitley Bay and Tynemouth – all of which can be reached in under half an hour by car.

### Downstairs

South Riggs provides enough space to accommodate up to four people, complemented by contemporary, high-spec interiors, luxurious décor and quality finishing touches throughout.

At the heart of the property, guests will find a modern kitchen, fully-equipped with essential kitchen appliances and added luxuries to make cooking and dining in an easy and enjoyable experience. The space also benefits from a large window, offering views out on to the property's courtyard.

An oven/hob, fridge freezer, kettle, microwave and toaster are all included, along with quality cookware and crockery, a dishwasher, washing machine/dryer and a Nespresso coffee machine.

Elsewhere on the ground floor, guests will discover a pristine family bathroom – complete with bathtub with overhead drench shower, vanity unit and a fully-lit mirror – as well as a sumptuous living room

to unwind in. Stand-out features include plush leather sofas for lounging, a velvet armchair for curling up with a good book and a 55-inch 4K HD Smart Fire TV for entertainment – all complemented by an elegant, neutral colour scheme and soft lighting to create a relaxing ambiance.

Connected is a good-sized dining room for enjoying meals, socialising and even working. Here, guests can dine and catch up around the large oak table, or tick off tasks in the comfort of a dedicated work space, with which the room shares.

Complete with a generous 24-inch monitor, HDMI cable for easy connectivity, super-fast Wi-Fi and a comfortable chair, the specially-created area ensures guests can work efficiently and easily while enjoying their stay.

### Upstairs

On the first floor, guests can take their pick from two bedrooms – a master, which offers a king-size bed, and a second bedroom complete with a super king bed, which can be split into two single beds upon request. For maximum comfort, both beds feature premium mattresses and bed linen. Designed with comfort and functionality in mind, each room also features ample storage space – perfect for those enjoying

a longer stay at South Riggs – along with modern wall panelling, a 43-inch TV and a vanity desk.

### Outside

Opting for a private full house rental like South Riggs means guests can take advantage of perks such as ample driveway parking and a spacious garage with an electric door.

Owners of electric vehicles are catered for, too, thanks to an EV charging point at the front of the property. In an area in which such features are near non-existent, this handy addition makes South Riggs stand out from the crowd.

Guests visiting during the warmer months can take advantage of the property's private rear courtyard, which features outdoor furniture.

Perfect for alfresco dining and unwinding on warm evenings, the intimate space is made extra-special with outdoor lighting and even a canter lever washing line.

For more information, or to book a stay, visit [www.flexhomes.co.uk/staycations](http://www.flexhomes.co.uk/staycations), email [rachel@flexhomes.co.uk](mailto:rachel@flexhomes.co.uk) or call 0191 820 1455



# The anatomy of a superyacht – what's inside?

By Geoff Moore



Chartering a yacht is one of the most exclusive holidays available. Offering seven-star facilities, complete privacy for you and your guests and a dedicated crew, who will ensure your every requirement is met.







## SPONSORED CONTENT

The glamour of a superyacht can be appreciated from the outside on the water, but what do they actually look like inside?

A luxury yacht can indeed be compared to a luxury villa. They offer everything a luxury villa offers – and more.

By opting for a luxury yacht, not only are you staying in some of the finest designed spaces in the world, you're also ensured complete privacy for you and your party, alongside unparalleled access to the world's hidden gems.

While every yacht's interior design and décor varies, what they all have in common are multiple ensuite cabins, an interior dining and lounge area and lots of outdoor space throughout the decks for recreation and alfresco dining.

A yacht also features a swimming platform. Depending on the size of the yacht, the platform will vary in size and function, but all offer easy access to the ocean.

## What would it cost?

### A 20m catamaran with three cabins for up to six guests

- Prices start from approximately £20,000 per week
- Price per person, per day - £480

### A 30m motor yacht with four cabins for up to eight guests

- Prices start from approximately £50,000 per week
- Price per person, per day - £890

### A 40m motor yacht with five cabins for up to ten guests

- Prices start from approximately £125,000 per week
- Price per person, per day - £1,790

### A 50m catamaran with six cabins for up to 12 guests

- Prices start from approximately £300,000 per week
- Price per person, per day - £3,570

These prices are a guide and are inclusive of taxes, marina fees, food, beverages and Wi-Fi. All yachts are fully-crewed, including a captain and private chef. As a general rule, the larger a yacht is to charter, the more you can expect in terms of facilities, water toys and extras.

For enquiries, or more information about luxury yacht charters, email [info@westnautical.com](mailto:info@westnautical.com)

[www.westnautical.com](http://www.westnautical.com)

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# Game on – Newcastle Falcons gear up for a new chapter

## Newcastle Falcons are embarking on an exciting new era, having welcomed the vastly-experienced Steve Diamond as consultant director of rugby.

The no-nonsense Mancunian has more than two decades worth of Premiership experience following spells with Sale Sharks, Saracens and Worcester Warriors and joins the Falcons after a successful tenure at Edinburgh.

"It's a great opportunity to try and put some consistency in the building," said Diamond, whose first match in charge will be the Good Friday visit of Leicester Tigers on March 29th.

"We need to get some belief back in the squad and some consistency around what we're doing. We need a hard edge back in the building, because from watching the games that's certainly been lacking, and I'm looking forward to doing that."

The timing of Diamond's arrival at Kingston Park coincides with a break in the fixture list while the Six Nations takes centre stage, with England competing on the international stage.

As well as an opportunity to draw eyeballs towards the sport, the hiatus

in club action will enable Diamond the opportunity to lay the groundwork for what he hopes will be a strong finish to the season.

"My early impressions of the set-up at the club are actually very positive, and I think there's a great foundation here," he said.

"The guys train every day on the pitch that they play on, they've had a new state-of-the-art gym built here at the stadium by a well-respected company, they've got everything they need from a video analysis point of view and it's actually a good set-up.

"Fair enough, you can't do anything about the weather up in the North East when it's blowing a gale, but we've removed a lot of excuses from the players and staff by having the infrastructure as good as it is.

"In terms of the future, I'd expect a real positivity around the place from people who want to prove they're committed to being part of a successful

club up here. I wouldn't have got involved unless I thought I could change that, but I'm really excited about what we can do for this club, which has a really proud history and very committed owners.

"The long-term plans are all well and good, and really important, but there's also a short-term challenge here. We've got six league games between now and the end of the season and I want to see us being competitive in them all."

Newcastle Falcons are determined to create a party atmosphere for their Good Friday home game against Leicester Tigers, with the 7.45pm kick-off being marketed as the 'Big Night Oot'.

There will be a 1990s theme for the Gallagher Premiership clash with fancy dress, DJ and all manner of retro food and drink options.

Regular tickets start at just £15 for adults and £6 for under-18s, with further discounts available for group bookings.

To secure your ticket, visit [www.newcastle-falcons.co.uk](http://www.newcastle-falcons.co.uk) or email [jordan.robinson@newcastle-falcons.co.uk](mailto:jordan.robinson@newcastle-falcons.co.uk) to discuss group deals. To upgrade your match day experience with Newcastle Falcons' award-winning hospitality, email [corporatesales@newcastle-falcons.co.uk](mailto:corporatesales@newcastle-falcons.co.uk) or call 0191 214 2813. Prices start at £78 per adult and are available via the club website.



BIG  
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# Let there be light

5 feel-good benefits of Daylight Savings





# Time to make like the clocks and spring forward towards brighter days – and better wellbeing.

It's official. From March 31st, life will begin looking a little lighter again. And for many people, feeling a little lighter too.

It's true - Daylight Savings doesn't just mean bidding farewell to cold, dark mornings. Signalling the arrival of spring and summer, extra daylight means more opportunities to do the things we love outside of our 9-5, helping to boost mental and physical wellbeing.

Increased exposure to natural light also means we're given more chances to soak up the sun's rays - vital for vitamin D production and serotonin (the happy hormone) activation in the body - and become healthier, stronger (and possibly more sun-kissed) versions of ourselves.

Here, we round up a few feel-good ways to take advantage of the longer days and let the light in the best ways possible.

## Say hello to dawn

It's said that exposure to natural light early in the morning can help regulate our circadian rhythm, increasing energy levels and improving overall mood and alertness throughout the day - and what better way than watching the sunrise.

In UK springtime, dawn typically happens between 5am-6am, while in high summer it's as early as 4am - giving you plenty of time to take in the views before the working day begins. Our favourite sunrise spots in region include Tynemouth Longsands, Penshaw Monument and Roseberry Topping.

## Catch some rays

While balmy temperatures and blazing sunshine aren't always guaranteed around these parts, one thing's for sure - your chances of catching some rays begin to ramp up significantly as the days draw longer.

Studies show that 10-15 minutes of sun exposure per day during the UK's warmer months promises healthy and sufficient vitamin D absorption, helping to improve immune, bone and tissue health. Grab your precious minutes on a quick lunchtime dog walk, in the garden with your morning coffee, or on your local beach.

## Take it outside

If you've been toying with the idea of taking up a new hobby or embarking on a new fitness regime, why not take advantage of the longer days and take it outside? Outdoor activities - from running clubs, park runs and walking groups to swimming clubs and beach yoga - are firmly on the rise all over the region and warmer days (and waters - even in our beloved North East) means there's no better time than now to get involved.

Favourites of ours include the coast's Feel Good Swim Club, the Tyne Bridge Harriers running club in Newcastle and Wellness Space, which offers beach yoga, SUP and surf sessions in Sunderland.

## Eat and drink alfresco

Gone are the days and nights of curling up on the sofa, blankets in tow, with bowls of soup and mugs of hot chocolate.

Extended daylight means more time for alfresco dining and socialising with family and friends. Whether it's a BBQ at home, a picnic in the park, or a spot of lunch and a few tipples in your local beer garden, sharing food and drink outdoors with friends and family is the only way to go as the days grow longer and brighter.

## Plant for tomorrow

Increased daylight, coupled with a rise in day-to-day temperature, creates perfect conditions for gardens to bloom and thrive, meaning there's no better time than now to kick-start this year's green-fingered journey - whether you're a seasoned pruner or a complete novice.

Warmer weather (with a few spring showers thrown in for good measure) means better soil and increased pollination, making for healthier germination and faster, lush plant growth - so why not grab the spades and gloves and create the garden of your dreams while the time is ripe.





# Your ultimate early spring gardening checklist

As our gardens prepare to shake off the frost and welcome the vibrancy of spring, so begins the busiest season in a gardener's calendar.

Whether you're a gardening pro, or you're just starting your planting journey, Dobbies reveals its top tips on how you can get the most from your outdoor space - beginning in early spring and continuing through to later in the season.

## Clean and tidy

Spring cleaning your garden is an essential first step when it comes to preparing for the year ahead, and if you have been maintaining your garden throughout the winter months, this will be an easy job.

One of the simplest ways to tidy up your garden is by neatening your beds and borders for the growing season, removing weeds and applying a good layer of mulch over the surface with organic compost.

Marcus notes that not only will mulching help tidy up the appearance of your garden, but it will break down into the soil and give your plants a nutrient boost for spring.

There is a whole new range of Dobbies' own brand gardening tools landing in stores from February onwards, which will really help with those spring cleaning sessions.

Deciduous grasses that have been left over winter to protect wildlife can be cut back now to make way for new season growth and Marcus recommends raking growth of evergreen grasses to remove any dead foliage.

## Design your beds and borders

Spring is the ideal time to get your beds and borders in shape for the warmer months. In early spring, once you have removed weeds, the next step is to trim back any winter flowering plants where blooms have started to fade and prune summer flowering shrubs like buddleia, lavatera and hardy fuchsias to allow room for new growth.

In later spring, Marcus recommends pruning early spring flowering shrubs once flowering has finished. Wisteria can

be pruned to encourage strong flower buds by cutting side shoots back to just a few buds.

To give your garden structure, Marcus recommends planting deciduous shrubs. You should also tend to your evergreen trees, shrubs and hedges by feeding them with a slow-release general-purpose fertiliser.

## Plant for colour

One of the most enjoyable spring gardening jobs is planting, however, Marcus notes that the time to do so will depend on weather.

Marcus says that when soil warms up in late spring, most gardeners across the UK will be able to enjoy planting summer flowering bulbs like Dobbies' new-in dahlias, lilies and gladioli.

Early spring is the perfect time to plant new roses for a blooming summer display in June, but Marcus advises ensuring you prune existing rose bushes back before the new season leaves begin to unfurl.

In late spring, Marcus also suggests thinking about the next growing season and planting out the likes of petunias and impatiens - also known as busy lizzies.

## Grow your own

Marcus says that now is a wonderful time to plant fruit and vegetables for a summer harvest and that a lot of produce can be grown inside from seed and then planted outdoors in spring once temperatures warm up.

Dobbies' new grow your own seed range includes spinach medania, basil serrata, Chinese cabbage, spring onions and radishes can be bought now and grown indoors, in a greenhouse or on a windowsill, before being planted outside in late spring.

Marcus notes that getting your crops accustomed to outdoors, or 'hardening off', is vital to their growth. Once the risk of frost has passed, he suggests planting your seeds outside during the day in a







shades of red, orange and pink are favoured in the warmer months, but displays of yellow daffodils and blue primroses, pansies or violas can be effective in spring to welcome the new season.

#### Lawn care

Depending on the weather, early spring is the time to get your lawn ready for sowing by cultivating soil and making sure the area is level and firm.

Marcus says before you do anything you should make sure any debris is cleared from your lawn. As we get into spring and the weather heats up, you can begin to rake out moss and dead grass.

Lawn treatments should only be used in late spring once temperatures rise, as during the colder months grass is still quite tender prone to damage.

In terms of when to first mow your lawn, Marcus recommends keeping an eye on the weather. When you see the grass growing and there's no more frost, you can give it the first light cut of the season, making sure the blades are kept on their highest setting so as not to scalp the lawn.

#### Welcome wildlife

Spring is the perfect time to welcome wildlife into your garden as small animals come out of hibernation and new birds hatch into life.

To ensure your garden is a safe space for wildlife, Marcus suggests dedicating a small section of your garden to create a wildlife-friendly habitat for pollinating plants and giving small animals and insects a place to shelter. You can create a safe space for them by stacking branches in a shaded spot to help protect them from the elements.

Dobbies has a fantastic range of bird seed to welcome new birds into your garden this spring and Marcus advises in addition to this, in early spring, you should keep an eye on bird baths to make sure they have not frozen over.

#### Collect water

Marcus says that spring is a fantastic time to collect rainfall in water butts for use in the warmer months.

Any shed, greenhouse or garage can be used to collect water and conserve it for next summer, as long as it has gutters and a down pipe to a drain at ground level.

Doing this will help you reduce water usage in the event of a long dry spell in the summer and Marcus notes that rainwater is actually better for young plants and seeds as it has a low pH and no chemicals, unlike water from the mains.

[www.dobbies.com](http://www.dobbies.com)

semi-sheltered position and bringing them back indoors at night.

Keep an eye on the weather and if you think the elements might harm your plants, lay frost fleece over top creating an air pocket and peg down properly to ensure the fleece stays put during windy spells.

Frost fleece also comes in handy when planting soft fruits like apricots, peaches and nectarines as cold temperatures can cause damage to their blossom and prevent fruit from setting.

#### Refresh your pots

To enjoy instant colour in your garden this spring, Marcus recommends refreshing your pots, hanging baskets and window boxes with early season primroses, pansies and spring flowering heathers. Bluebells in pots and ribes sanguineum, or flowering currants, can also be planted in late spring for a country garden effect.

One of Marcus' favourite ways to make an impact with your containers plants is to focus on colour themes in concentrated groupings. Hot colours and

# The wonders of Wylam

Nestled in the heart of Newcastle's historic Palace of Arts in Exhibition Park, lies Wylam Brewery. A vibrant and versatile venue, home to craft beers, show-stopping weddings, a year-round events calendar for music-lovers and more.

## Live music

Wylam Brewery regularly hosts live music concerts featuring local and touring artists across a range of genres, including indie, rock, folk and electronic music.

The brewery's spacious indoor and outdoor areas provide ample room for audiences to enjoy performances in a vibrant and energetic atmosphere.

Whether it's a small acoustic set or a full-scale concert, the venue's stage and sound system can accommodate a variety of musical acts, making it a popular destination for the city's music-lovers and visitors.







## Craft beers

Wylam Brewery is a craft brewery, established in 2000 and resided on a smallholding on a farm in the village of the Northumberland village of Wylam.

Open to the public Friday to Sunday, the brewery and has gained recognition for producing a wide range of high-quality beers, including traditional styles and more experimental brews, which are a product of the brewery team's creativity and innovation.

It's best-known for its commitment to using locally-sourced ingredients and its focus on sustainability and has won numerous awards for its offering - which has helped to cement it as a prominent player in the UK craft beer scene.

Favourites include IPAs, pale ales, traditional cask ales, stouts and porters, but not forgetting the trailblazing Jakehead IPA.

## Weddings

The brewery offers a unique and memorable venue for couples looking to tie the knot in a unique and distinctive setting.

Thanks to its historic location within the Palace of Arts, it provides a stunning backdrop for weddings, blending industrial charm with contemporary style.

The venue can accommodate both ceremonies and receptions and couples have the flexibility to customise their event to suit their preferences, whether they're envisioning an intimate gathering or a larger celebration.

The brewery's experienced events team works closely with all couples to ensure that every detail is taken care of, from catering and bar service to decor and entertainment.

## Corporate events

Wylam Brewery provides a versatile space for corporate events, including conferences, team-building activities, product launches and networking receptions.

The brewery's unique ambiance and modern facilities make it an ideal choice for businesses looking to host memorable events that leave a lasting impression on clients, colleagues and guests.

The events team can assist with planning and logistics, helping to create a seamless and successful event tailored to the specific needs and objectives of each organisation.

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



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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





# Another Rioja

**You know Rioja. The sweet-scented, smooth-tasting, seductive Spanish red wine. But do you know that there is another Rioja? Next year Rioja celebrates 100 years as a regulated, quality wine region. Contributing wine editor David Harker explains why there has never been a better time to discover the diversity of wines from this small strip of Northern Spain.**

Rioja has much to offer the curious visitor. Pretty hill top villages punctuate a dramatic landscape of snow covered mountains and river valleys. There are tapas trails, museums and modern architecture. And of course wine.

Classic Rioja is made to a reliable recipe. First you take a large dollop of Tempranillo. Next a glug of Garnacha - for its sweet fruit and body. Season with a splash of spicy Mazuelo, then add structure and tannin with a twist of Graciano. Finally, age the wine in a small oak cask for a few years and allow to rest in bottle before serving.

Each wine-maker will add his personality to the classic recipe, but the simple proposition remains the same. A Spanish red wine, based on Tempranillo, usually blended and with the signature characteristic of oak ageing. This is the Rioja brand. Well understood, reliable and good value.

This classic style of Rioja emerged over 150 years ago. Encouraged by the introduction of the railway and influenced by French wine-making techniques, family wine-makers and Basque industrialists invested in new bodegas huddled around the railway station in Haro.

Wander around the Barrio de la Estación today and you can almost throw a blanket over the traditional Bodegas of López de Heredia, La Rioja Alta and Muga.

A century on and the historic region of Rioja must respond to the modern day threat of climate change. Climate change causes volatile weather patterns, extreme weather events and a warmer planet. Vintages are earlier, grapes ripen unevenly, they gain too much sugar, lose acidity and the threat of drought looms.

Relief from this natural threat could lie in the diversity of Rioja's natural landscape. Rioja is only 80 miles long and 20 miles wide. It's a small region with the geographical diversity of a small country.

At Rioja's heart is the Ebro river. In the west, on the left bank of the Ebro, is Rioja Alavesa, protected by the cloud capped Cantabrian Mountains. From here, look across the Ebro valley and Rioja Alta to the Sierra de la Demanda in the south. To the east is Rioja Oriental. A landscape of big skies, summer scorched sweeping plains and the windswept heights of the Sierra de Yerga. Into the broad plain of the Ebro valley flow seven smaller rivers. Each with varying altitudes, a mosaic of soil types and a treasury of old vines.

Rioja has one of largest areas of old vineyards in the world. These venerable vines, some over 100 years old, were once scorned for their low yields. Today, they are treasured. Old vines are drought resistant and produce grapes that are slow ripening and naturally high in acidity. Exactly the attributes needed to

produce quality wines in a hot climate.

A new wave of wine-makers is making exciting wines from these old vines. Often working in lesser-known villages, in less prestigious areas, these are wine-makers for whom the future of Rioja lies in its past. Rediscovering indigenous varieties and experimenting with ageing wines in large oak barrels and clay amphorae.

Like their grandfathers before them, the leaders of this new wave have an intimate involvement with the land. Working with small plots on a scale closer to gardening than farming. Making the most of what nature provides. Behind each wine is a personal story. This is artisanal wine making, handmade and foot trod.

Winemakers such as stout, ruddy-cheeked professor, Juan Carlos Sancha, who is rescuing native varieties from extinction in the cool upper reaches of the Najerilla Valley. The shy, talented Carlos Mazo crafting graceful Garnacha wines in Rioja Oriental. A region once dismissed as only suitable for producing large volumes of make-weight grapes for blending.

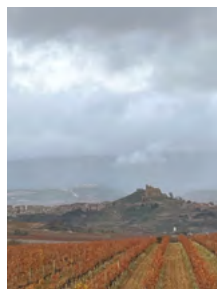
Urbane architect, Javier Arizcuren, works ancient family vineyards at altitude in the Sierra de Yerga. He then makes his wines in an urban winery in the back streets of Logroño. Diminutive José Luis Ruiz Bañares practicing traditional wine making in San Vicente De La Sonsierra (see A Portrait of Itu).

This is another Rioja. An edgy, modern Rioja in tune with contemporary concerns and respectful of its heritage. And there is yet another Rioja. The success of Rioja may rest on the reputation of its red wines, but these are exciting times for white and rosé wines too.

Oak aged Rioja whites made from the Viura grape have long been appreciated by aficionados. Today's wine-makers, with modern wine-making techniques and a palate of nine white grape varieties, can create fresh, attractive whites for the growing white wine market.

If Rioja whites have a small but dedicated following, then Rioja rosé is truly niche. Rosé currently accounts for a tiny percentage of wine production in Rioja, but is attracting the admiration of critics. In The Rosé Wine Report 2023, renowned rosé expert, Elizabeth Gaby MW, picked Rioja as the stand out region. Of the top 25 rosés, one in three were from Rioja - including the top wine.

Rioja is a region of talented, exciting, engagingly humble wine-makers. A region blessed by nature and celebrated in history. Whatever your Rioja - still or sparkling, red, white or rosé, oak aged or new wave - raise another glass and salud to another 100 years.







# A portrait of Itu

**Our contributing wine editor, David Harker, paints a portrait of wine-maker, José Luis Ruiz Bañares.**

Itu bounds down the cellar, steps like an anxious flyweight entering the ring. A little more than five feet tall, compact, athletic, dressed in a faded blue hoodie, grey sweatpants and dusty green trainers, he pants his apologies. He is sorry for being late, for his limited English and for his small working cellar. I like Itu already.

José Luis Ruiz Bañares (Itu) is the fourth generation custodian of Bodega Teodoro Ruiz Monge, tending ten hectares of old vines in San Vicente De La Sonsierra, Rioja. Vines his great-grandparents first worked in the years before phylloxera.

Itu would not have followed in his family's footsteps had he followed his father's advice. Teodoro Ruiz Monge was a pioneer in Rioja. 50 years ago, he was one of the first growers to make wines under his own name. A time when it was more lucrative for farmers to sell their grapes to a large winery than to produce their own wines.

Teodoro knows how hard is the labour and how difficult the business of the small family bodega. He advised his son to follow a different path. Get a formal education and forget the sacrifices necessary of the independent wine maker. But this is the life that Itu knows. Rather than abandon his family's heritage, he has embarked upon a personal project. To produce artisanal, single vineyard wines using the traditional winemaking techniques of Rioja.

The process begins in the small, low yielding parcels of vines he watched his family work as a boy. Hand harvested whole bunches of grapes are foot trod in 150 years old deep stone troughs. Stalks and pressed grapes turned by hand with a pitchfork as juice trickles to the bottom of the vat. The must is then transferred to old concrete tanks to settle and then to oak barrels. At the end of the process the back breaking work of emptying the vats.

Faded photographs on the cellar wall show generations of the family climbing into deep tanks to dig out the grape matter by hand. Itu bent double with a short handled shovel like a fireman on the footplate of a steam locomotive. Artisanal winemaking isn't easy.

So why would a young man choose the hard road? What drives Itu? Tasting his wines in the cellar. Nibbling on generous portions of chorizo prepared by his mother. I want to understand what motivates the man.

Itu talks with a deep reverence of his love for this land. He is a farmer who believes that good wine is nurtured in the vineyard. There is also a deep affection for his people. To love, honour and respect the efforts of his family before him.

Itu has a passionate belief that traditional wine-making makes interesting wine.

Authentic wines, alive with fruit, tempered by taut tannins. He sees it as his responsibility to preserve these traditional methods. His mission is to make it relevant to the modern wine-lover. His black eyes soften with sadness at the thought that this traditional way of wine-making could disappear.

Time doesn't allow for a walk in his treasured vineyards. Or to visit the caves he has restored in the Castillo de San Vicente. I have to leave.

It's late autumn and a cold, persistent wind blows down through the foothills of the Sierra de Cantabria and rushes across the russet and gold vineyards in the plain below. The end of a year in which Rioja has suffered another hot and dry vintage. Our world is changing.

In the midst of this insecurity Itu represents hope. Learning from the land. Unconcerned by what is popular. Not tempted by what is easy. Itu is true to his beliefs; loyal, hardworking, passionate and humble. Itu is an inspiration.



# 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.

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



# Spaghetti with prawns, peppers, chilli and basil

**Tiziano Guercio,**  
head chef at  
**Café 21, Fenwick  
Newcastle,**  
shares one of his  
favourite pasta  
dishes – perfect  
for four people.

By Terry Laybourne



## Serves 4

21 Hospitality is a diverse collection of some of the North East's favourite restaurants including 21 Quayside, Café 21 in Fenwick, The Broad Chare, St. Vincent, Porterhouse Grill and Saltwater Fish Company.

[21hospitality.co.uk](http://21hospitality.co.uk)

## Method

- Bring a large pan of salted water to a boil and add the spaghetti. Stir gently to ensure the pasta doesn't stick together. Set a kitchen timer for 11 minutes
- Sauté the prawns in olive oil with peppers and a pinch of salt
- Add the garlic and continue cooking until prawns are just about cooked
- Add the chilli sauce, pour in the double cream and cook until slightly thickened
- Check the spaghetti after 11 minutes - it should be just tender with a slight resistance (if you prefer your pasta a little softer, cook for another minute or so)
- Drain in a colander and then tip the spaghetti into the pan with the sauce - toss briefly to coat the pasta
- Remove from the heat and shower in the shredded basil
- Season to taste and divide between four warm bowls

## Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon of olive oil
- 340g small king prawns, shelled and de-veined
- ½ red pepper, de-seeded and finely-sliced
- ½ yellow pepper, de-seeded and finely-sliced
- A pinch of Maldon sea salt
- 2 garlic cloves, finely-chopped
- 1 tablespoon Sriracha or hot chilli sauce
- 150ml double cream
- 340g spaghetti
- 1 small bunch basil, shredded
- Milled black pepper





# ST. VINCENT

## Just the pair-ing

Home to a carefully-chosen collection of bottles from around the globe, St Vincent remains one of Newcastle's top destinations for wine-tasting – paired with big-flavoured food to keep all palates happy. Our editor stops by...

It's been a year since St Vincent re-opened its doors after a three-year hiatus. Back in 2020, at the beginning of the pandemic, owner and renowned North East chef and restaurateur, Terry Laybourne, decided to shut up shop – sending Newcastle's vino-drinkers into a tizzy.

Fortunately, the closure wasn't to last – and for the last year, the part wine bar, part restaurant has returned to doing what it does best – showcasing incredible wines, paired with superb small and large plates.

During that time, many wine-lovers I know have walked through its doors and spoken oh-so-fondly of its current offering (not to mention its impressive and pleasing new makeover) and so I was delighted to be invited to finally make my post-Covid return – this time to enjoy one of its renowned wine tasting experiences.

St Vincent takes wine seriously – though, thankfully, without an ounce of pretension. Here, everyone is welcome – from the experienced sippers to the novices and even the teetotal – and, as I found, guaranteed to learn a thing or two, thanks to the venue's sommeliers and in-the-know servers.

Bottle-wise, you'll discover a mix of classics that we all know and love, along with a regularly-changing selection of labels from independent producers from around the globe – each one with their own distinct flavour and characteristics and many organic, too.

Joined by my colleagues and clients, I was taken on a journey of discovery

through red, white, dessert and non-alcoholic, during which our personal wine connoisseur taught us everything there was to know about their profiles, origins and start in life.

Like everyone who partakes in a St Vincent wine tasting event, we were encouraged to sip and smell at our own pace, getting acquainted with each glass' aroma and tasting notes, as well as picking out any particular favourites.

For fun, we were also encouraged to observe how the wines' flavours transformed by eating a pinch of salt, sugar, even a grape or a suck of a lemon, before sips – proving how the right food pairings can enhance and alter.

I'm no expert when it comes to wine and, admittedly, given the choice, spirits are my go-to. That said, the bottles we were introduced to did leave their mark – so much so that some of us are still talking about (and salivating over) them today.

Stand-outs on the evening included Domaine Guy Allion Sauvignon – a crisp and zingy white from the French province of Touraine. Fresh and zippy, it paired beautifully with the citrusy seabass carpaccio and roasted beetroot salad that we were served alongside – and, interestingly, came to life on the palate after a bite of lemon.

The Akemi Oaked Viura Rioja Blanco – a Japanese white wine, known for its warm and creamy flavour, infused with notes of tropical fruit – was also a winner. We drank ours on its own and then after a pinch of sugar, which only awakened its

sweetness even further – but without any sickly aftertaste.

In the end, though, red stole the show. Renosu Rosso Dettori – a medium-bodied bottle from the Mediterranean – was loved around the table for its herby and spicy profile. The perfect accompaniment to the night's charcuterie boards of Italian meats and pillowy homemade focaccia.

The smooth, ruby-coloured Finca Antigua Tempranillo Crianza 2020 – with aromas of black cherry, raspberry jam and spice – meanwhile, went down a storm in equal measures. Not a glass was empty as the night drew to a close.

We rounded off the evening with dessert wine – this time Chateau Petit Vedrines Sauternes. Rich and golden with notes of honeysuckle, peach and apricot, it won just about everyone over – especially when sipped between mouthfuls of salty stilton and savoury crackers.

After scoring our favourite bottles and armed with our notes from the night, each of us left with full bellies, better bottle knowledge and a bigger appreciation of what makes great wine – things I know you will leave with too, should you be so inclined to book up for a wine adventure of your own here.

It's no secret – but St Vincent really is your best guide around these parts. How great it is to know that its doors are well and truly open once more.

[stvincentnewcastle.co.uk](http://stvincentnewcastle.co.uk)





# Upping the steaks

## Cassie Moyse heads to Tomahawk Steakhouse in Newcastle for bottomless brunch with a difference...

If you're looking for a high-quality bottomless brunch with impressive menus and delicious cocktails, set on one of the North's most picturesque riversides, then look no further than Tomahawk Steakhouse on Newcastle Quayside.

The venue has developed into a Northern institution in the past few years, following significant expansion and a great reputation for the best steak around. We were excited to see what its latest offering - bottomless brunch - had to offer.

A group of six of us organised to go along for a special occasion. The usual bottomless brunches in the UK tend to include an underwhelming menu, but the main attraction is arguably the bottomless drinks, so it's not usually a huge issue.

This time, though, with a pregnant friend coming along and unable to enjoy the main attraction of as much booze as you can drink (responsibly), we decided on Tomahawk as we knew we could rely on good food.

Fortunately, there was certainly something for everyone, with Tomahawk serving the finest Himalayan salt dry-aged steaks, wagyu and other great local meat, fish and vegetarian dishes.

Its quayside location, near the Millennium Bridge, is the perfect setting for a lovely afternoon out, with particularly impressive views of the river and the surrounding architecture at dusk on a dry winter's day. We took our seats in one of its comfortable booths, which provide a great space to relax and chat.

Our first port of call was a glass of prosecco to start off the afternoon. The team were incredibly attentive and made sure we were always topped up with our drink of choice throughout the 1.5 hour 'bottomless' time allocation. You can mix and match, so as soon as the prosecco was gone, we ordered a range of French martinis, aperol spritz and strawberry daiquiris.

I'm not exaggerating when I say that the French martini was the best cocktail I've ever had. Deliciously sweet and creamy on the top, my friends and I were instantly converted to being French martini drinkers. I've not been able to find one as good since.

The food menu offers a selection of steak and fries, wagyu beef burger with beef dripping chips, bacon jam and Tomahawk ketchup, butter chicken, which offers charred chicken marinated in yoghurt and spices, finished in a silky-smooth curry sauce and served with pilaf rice and baby naan, as well as fajitas with mixed peppers, onions, grated cheese, corn tortilla wraps, salsa, sour cream and guacamole. Between us, we ordered at least one of each - and each portion was generous and well-presented when it arrived. Again, at some venues, the food included within bottomless brunch is disappointing, but this was far from it.

We also added sides, which aren't included in the price but are reasonably-priced for those who are feeling extra hungry. A mountain of beer-battered onion rings arrived, along with mac n' cheese, creamy garlic mushrooms and bacon and cream peas. There was enough food to feed a small village with quality uncompromised with every bite.

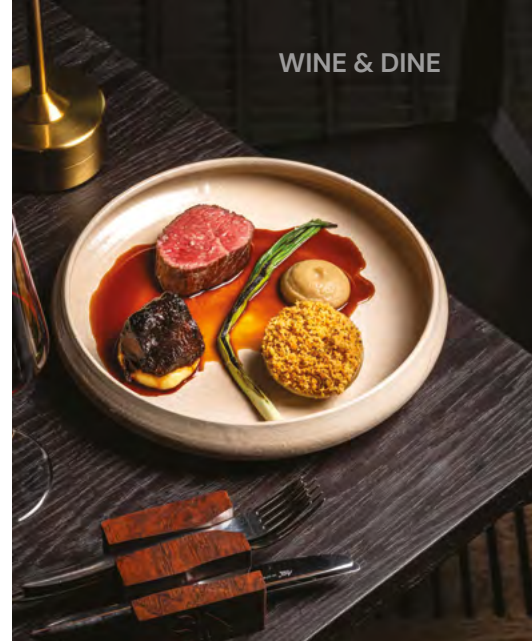
Safe to say, we couldn't finish everything, but had a very good go while sampling more of the cocktails on the menu, including pornstar martinis, Hugos and espresso martinis. There's also Amstel on offer for those who prefer a beer.

All of the cocktails were outstanding and freshly-made to the highest standard, the food was amazing and service was brilliant. At only £34.95 each, we thought that the Tomahawk Bottomless Brunch was a fantastic bargain and would certainly recommend for a cost-effective and great quality afternoon out.

[www.tomahawk-steakhouse.co.uk](http://www.tomahawk-steakhouse.co.uk)

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





# Mighty makeover

Newcastle's iconic SIX Rooftop restaurant is set to reach new heights in dining, following a luxurious refurbishment.

Serving up breathtaking panoramic views and tempting menus, SIX Rooftop has been stealing hearts and bagging rave reviews its opening back in 2009. And now, the celebrated dining spot - perched atop BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art - is preparing for a new and exciting chapter of business, following a luxurious and highly-anticipated makeover.

Blending modern aesthetics with the venue's rich history and unique architecture, the restaurant's tasteful upgrade - which was unveiled to the public on its 15th anniversary in February - includes a statement bar inside a full-service dining area, a sumptuous viewing lounge for relaxed dining, an exclusive Chef's Table for small parties and a revamped menu that pays homage to its impressive 15-year legacy.

Spearheaded by interior designer, Julie Chambers, the redesign embraces a darker colour scheme with green and grey accents, sleek wood, marble furnishings and touches of gold, creating an opulent and intimate atmosphere, complemented by improved acoustics and upgraded lighting.

For those seeking an intimate culinary journey, the restaurant's new Chef's Table accommodates parties of up to six, allowing guests to revel in the culinary magic happening in the kitchen. The state-of-the-art bar, meanwhile, is a highlight, featuring reeded glass and a bold blend of stainless steel, marble and wood - the perfect setting to indulge in variety of drinks, including wine, cocktails, beer and non-alcoholic alternatives.

Despite the significant investment, SIX Rooftop will continue to offer one of the most competitively priced tasting menus in the region, alongside a new lounge menu of small plates - most of which are under £10.

Food director, Greg Lambert, continues to lead the restaurant's culinary direction, infusing its 15-year history into a menu that defines fine dining in the North East. Diners can eclectic menu celebrating the best of British cuisine with locally sourced produce, with plenty of plant-based options too.

Roy Ng, operations director at SIX Rooftop, continues to lead the venue forward in its new chapter.

[www.sixbaltic.com](http://www.sixbaltic.com)



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