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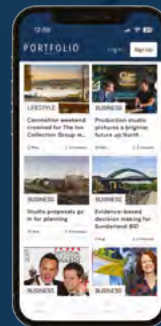
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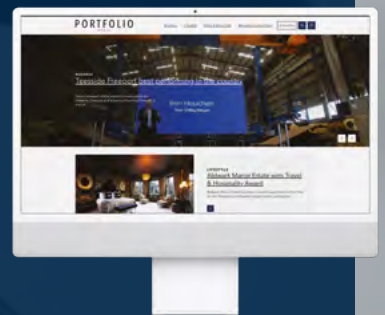
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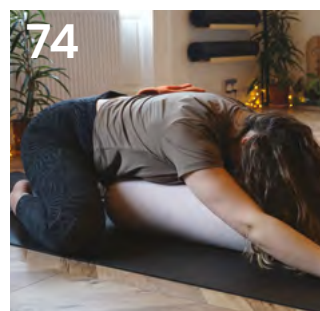
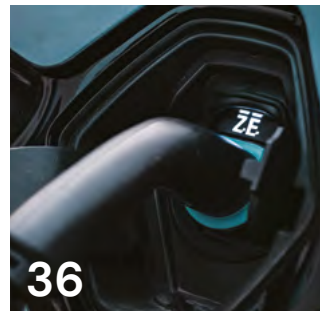
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Contributors Round up



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.

A new era

Editor's notes from
Jessica Laing



April has always stood out to me as somewhat of a turning point in the year. The clocks have sprung forward, the outside world is looking a little greener and many businesses are kick-starting their new financial year.

With that, come opportunities a-plenty to reassess, refresh and power ahead with gusto towards a bigger and better future.

There is a real buzz within the region right now and no matter how many corners I turn, or how many people I meet, one thing is for certain - there are so many feel-good, forward-looking stories to be told as we settle in to Q2.

It seems positivity is rife - and I'm delighted to be able to share and spread the good news in the pages of this issue.

Read on to enjoy spirit-raising news from the worlds of entrepreneurship and engineering to housing and hospitality, arts and culture and so much more.

Discover everything you need to know about how Crown Works Studio's arrival in Sunderland is changing the city's future, what decades of success looks like - and what the future holds for - Portland Consulting Engineers and why, according to Entrepreneurs Forum, 83% of North East business-owners are feeling fiercely confident about business performance for the year ahead.

All this, plus your usual fix of behind-the-scenes interviews, expert advice and thought-provoking thought leadership features - including the CEO behind one of the region's most celebrated

hospitality groups, the CO of one of the UK's leading diversity and inclusion providers and an up-and-coming entrepreneur on a mission to take the region's luxury property market by storm.

In the world of lifestyle, don't miss our guide to some of the North East's "poshest" villages (as voted by The Telegraph), a first-look tour of one of the most sought-after residential developments in Durham and an exclusive chat with the founder behind the new coastal wellbeing brand that everyone's talking about.

We also reveal everything you need know about investing in art, celebrate 130 years of Barbour and get to know the brains behind some of the best-loved Instagram accounts - based right here on our doorstep.

As always, for exciting news and updates, don't forget to follow us on social media and, if you're from the world of PR, please get in touch to learn more about how you can join our brand new PR Hub, which we're so excited to have launched in the last few weeks. We'd love for you to jump onboard as we enter a new era of Portfolio North.

Happy reading.

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News from across the North East



Sunderland Restaurant Week turns into an economic feast

The opportunity to dine out at a bargain price has proved too tempting to resist, leading to another highly successful Sunderland Restaurant Week.

The week-long event ended on Sunday 24 March with more than 21,500 diners taking advantage of the special deals at dozens of restaurants, cafes and bars around the city. And according to organisers, Sunderland BID, that has led to a tasty estimated economic impact of £646,440. The twice-yearly experience has continued to go from strength to strength, bolstered by Sunderland's fast-growing restaurant scene, with both new eateries and old favourites taking part.

The three most popular venues were Rumour Has It at Green Terrace, House of Zen at Seaburn and Asiana, based at the Echo 24 building.

Ian Wong, owner of Asiana, which has just undergone a major refurbishment prior to Sunderland Restaurant Week, said it had once again been a huge success.

"This can be traditionally a quiet time of year - after Mother's Day and in the run-up to Easter - so restaurant week is a real boost," he said.

"It was another really successful event and we were delighted to welcome so many diners into Asiana, many of whom were getting their first opportunity to see its new look."

Miller Homes North East makes new appointment



One of the North East's most experienced sales figures has joined the team at Miller Homes North East. Lauren Angus, whose career in the house building industry spans more than 18 years, has been appointed sales director. And among her key strengths is her knowledge of the new build market, which began when she joined the industry in 2006. Lauren, from Sunderland, joined the business - which currently has 10 live developments and a further four due to launch this year - from Taylor Wimpey North Yorkshire, where she held the position of sales and marketing director.

Miller, one of the North East's leading housing developers, has announced plans to construct more than 500 homes this year as far afield as Bedlington, Durham and Seaham. And, in the coming months, will not only bring current developments to completion, but also embark on new schemes - including the opening of five new show homes designed to appeal to a variety of buyers and budgets.

Lauren's appointment follows the announcement that Miller Homes' regional operations director for the North East, Ryan Lincoln, will lead the company forward and Ryan said Lauren's experience would be an "asset" to the business.

He said: "New build homes - which can save buyers, on average, £2,200 a year on utilities alone - have never been more attractive to buyers and Lauren has a wealth of new build knowledge and understanding.

"I am sure that her experience, allied to the superb quality of our builds and the exceptional locations of our developments, will be a real benefit to Miller and, of course, to our buyers."



Teesside Airport secures FedEx for freight flights

FedEx, the world's largest transportation company, has signed a five-year deal for an airfreight handling facility at Teesside Airport to meeting growing import and export demand.

FedEx is to relocate its cargo operation from Newcastle Airport to Teesside - bringing eight additional inbound and outbound flights a week.

The company has also recommitted to its existing road operation, currently

based in Hangar 1 at the airport, by signing a separate new five-year lease. The new cargo operation is scheduled to begin in June and will be based out of Hangar 3.

The operation will provide capacity for 196,000 lbs of cargo to be transported through the airport each week and will provide increased access to key markets. Alun Cornish, managing director of Ramp and Gateways Operations for Northern

Europe for FedEx, said: "Teesside Airport has excellent connections and transport links to the North of England, making it the perfect location for us to better serve our customers in the North East and Yorkshire regions.

"At FedEx, we are seeing increasing import and export demand to and from the region, so our presence here will enable us to get goods to our customers faster."

Newcastle Gateshead Quayside celebrates the opening of Baltic open submission exhibition in association with Fenwick

Newcastle Gateshead's iconic Quayside illuminated with an exclusive artwork projection on the side of Baltic last month, while its famous Gateshead Millennium Bridge turned Fenwick's signature green as Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art celebrated its Open Submission in association with Fenwick.

Fenwick is partnering with Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art to support the second iteration of Baltic's Open Submission exhibition, which presents over 100 artworks from incredibly talented North East-based hobbyists and self-taught creatives, alongside works by established artists, drawn from over 1,400 submissions.

Artwork commissioned for projection on to Baltic's North face was produced by Newcastle-born, internationally-acclaimed graphic artist and video director, Jimmy Turrell, depicting an animated collage of both Fenwick and Baltic logos.

Fenwick has long been a supporter of artists and visual Arts in the region and by partnering with one of Europe's largest contemporary art galleries, the brand hopes to support emerging talent and further connect with the community.



Speaking on the partnership, Leo Fenwick, strategic partnerships director at Fenwick, said: "Art and cultural landmarks, like Baltic, play a very important role in our community and we really need them in our towns and cities to bring people

together to inspire people and for people to really connect through art.

"This exhibition is a celebration and testimony to the sheer breadth of creative talent in the region and we are so honoured to be partnering with Baltic."

Major plans to revamp Newcastle's iconic Eldon Square given the green light

City Council planners have given proposals to expand and revive the city's flagship shopping centre a thumbs up, with hopes of attracting thousands of visitors, creating hundreds of jobs and boosting the local economy by millions.

The £65 million plans are said to bring new leisure, culture, entertainment and dining facilities to the city centre – including an indoor “amusement centre” and motorised electric go-karting aimed at families across part of the centre, including the vacant former Eldon Leisure Centre.

Elsewhere – on the vacant floor of the city's former Debenhams department store – visitors can expect a new crop of venues promising food, socialising and entertainment, live music performances and more.

Director of Growth and Investment, Michelle Percy, said: “The council's vision for Newcastle city centre is a place that is economically strong, inclusive and sustainable in which residents can be proud.

“Since the pandemic and changes to retail, city centres have been on a journey of evolution. To survive they have had to adapt to changing consumer trends and offer more than retail to remain relevant to residents and visitors.

“This £65m of new investment in Eldon Square is proof of the diversification of the city centre providing a boost to culture, leisure and entertainment offering live music, dance, and performances.

“It's the fruit of effective public/private partnerships which are emerging in a range of other improvement schemes in the

city centre such as Grainger Market, Grey Street and Northumberland Street that are creating a sense of place where everyone can feel welcome and included.”

Councillors voted unanimously to approve the proposals at a planning meeting earlier this month and work is expected to start on the scheme “immediately”.



A new season unveiled in The Orchard, in association with Veuve Clicquot



Grantley Hall has unveiled its updated spring and summer concept in The Orchard, in association with Veuve

Clicquot. This season, guests can anticipate leisurely lunches or delightful dinners in The Orchard, as it unveils its

participation in Veuve Clicquot's Road to the Sun campaign, taking guests “on a journey to experience the ideal of a life under the sun, where the energy is positive, everything more audacious, more dazzling, more luminous.”

For the spring and summer months, The Orchard is the go-to destination in North Yorkshire for drinking and dining. With a newly-imagined Mediterranean-inspired menu that features dishes such as crisp salads, light fish dishes and succulent steaks, along with indulgent desserts such as the Mediterranean Orange dessert that celebrates the Road to the Sun campaign and pairs perfectly with a glass of Veuve Clicquot Yellow Label. The Orchard – Grantley Hall's outlet that changes with the seasons – is located at the heart of the hotel and is one of five restaurants that the five-star property boasts.

The hotel is also home to the Michelin-starred Shaun Rankin at Grantley Hall, Asian-fusion Bar & Restaurant EightyEight, modern British cuisine at Fletchers Restaurant and Norton Bar & Courtyard, which is an outdoor dining location in the warmer months on its sun-filled terrace.

Newcastle University Dean appointed chair of UK manufacturing network

Newcastle University Dean of Innovation and Business, Professor Mike Capaldi, has been appointed as Chair of Driving the Electric Revolution Industrialisation Centres (DER-IC).

Professor Mike Capaldi, Dean of Innovation and Business at Newcastle University, has been announced as the new Chair of DER-IC, a UK-wide power electronics, machines and drives (PEMD) manufacturing network. The strategic appointment is aligned with DER-IC's drive to support the commercialisation and innovation of the PEMD manufacturing supply chain.

The UK-wide DER-IC network, funded by Innovate UK, offers open-access equipment, facilities, and expertise to the PEMD manufacturing supply chain. PEMD are underpinning technologies that support electrification and will in turn enable Net Zero and boost the UK economy.

Professor Mike Capaldi is returning to DER-IC having taken a leading role in the initial funding application and development of the DER-IC project in 2019, alongside its former Chair, Professor Matt Boyle OBE. Since then, he has been actively engaged in various projects, including the Electrification Process Innovation Centre (EPIC), Zero Carbon Futures, the North East Battery Alliance, and Newcastle University's Institute of Electrification and Sustainable Advanced Manufacturing (IESAM), which

will shortly launch its first PEMD-related BEng Product Design and Development Engineer Degree Apprenticeship programme.

Prior to assuming his role at Newcastle University, Professor Capaldi gained over three decades of invaluable experience in the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industry in multi-national organisations holding pivotal roles with a strong commercial focus. He transitioned into education in 2010 as Director of Innovation at the University of Edinburgh. Professor Capaldi commented: "I'm proud to be taking on this role at a pivotal point in DER-IC's timeline of activity in supporting the PEMD manufacturing sector.

"Having been involved in shaping the team which developed the strategic direction to align academia and industry to expedite commercialisation, I've remained close to the sector and provided consultative support to the project. Since its inception, DER-IC has supported industry address PEMD product and manufacturing process development challenges."

"It's now more pertinent than ever that we ensure the highest levels of resilience within our supply chains and seek out new growth opportunities. This necessitates harnessing new Professor Mike Capaldi's key focuses in his new role align with the three key industry challenges of innovation and technology



development, manufacturing scale-up and commercialisation and skills and workforce development addressed through the DER-IC network and its capabilities.

Landmark bomb returns with a bang to The Tynemouth Castle Inn

A relic of the Second World War has returned to stand sentinel over the North East coast at The Tynemouth Castle Inn this March and is set to act as a force for good following an extensive restoration by a local specialist engineering firm.

Dropped on the town in April 1941, an unexploded and deactivated 2000 lb bomb had long been a local landmark above Longsands Beach, but had become weather-worn after more than 83 years of exposure to the elements.

As part of the renovation of the new pub with rooms on the Grand Parade, The Inn Collection Group picked up an idea from local resident Paul Allison and resolved to improve the appearance of the old ordinance and return it to functioning as a fundraising tool for the public good.

Needing a restoration that would preserve the revered piece of local history for the long term, industry leaders Monitor Coatings, a Castolin Eutectic company, were approached to carry out the work. With over 90 years of experience providing



engineering and high-quality coatings across a wide range of sectors, the team was responsible for the deck coating

aboard HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales relished the challenge that they were presented.

Feel-good future

The most recent Entrepreneurs' Forum Quarterly Members Pulse Survey has revealed that entrepreneurial optimism remains high, despite reports of lengthening sales cycles.

Of the 104 North East business-owners who responded to the survey, which was conducted by Explain Market Research, 83% are optimistic or very optimistic about business performance for the year ahead.

This high level of optimism can be attributed to entrepreneurs anticipating increased turnover, with three quarters of respondents expecting their turnover to increase over the next 12 months. While all growth is positive, the survey identified a slow down in the rate of projected growth.

We asked how the entrepreneurs expected to achieve their growth ambitions and over 80% believe there is untapped potential in their existing markets. Innovation remains central to growth plans with 55% planning to introduce new products and services over the next 12 months. Nearly one fifth of respondents plan to acquire as part of their growth strategies.

In order to grow, over half (59%) of entrepreneurs responding to the survey intend to hire in the next year. This is good news for the North East economy, although this represents a reduction in hiring plans compared to our previous survey findings. Getting the right people into entrepreneurial businesses remains a significant business challenge, with entrepreneurs finding recruitment difficult, particularly for skilled, well experienced and positive people.

Factors which are contributing to slower business growth include the elongation of the sales cycle, with members stating that deals are taking longer to close due to complex processes and slower decision making by customers. An entrepreneur in the engineering sector said: "Our clients are busy, but the procurement process has become increasingly complex and slow year on year."

Other members highlighted increased competition in their sector, especially from companies outside the UK, resulting in a squeeze on prices. As well as this, some identified wider economic pressures leading to sales challenges, with companies being reluctant to invest and budgets reduced.

For the first time, the Pulse Survey also focused on members' equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) efforts, which revealed

over three quarters of respondents think it's important for their business to be a more inclusive employer and that they have already implemented company-wide EDI policies. Over half (54%) have taken personal action in the last 12 months to educate themselves on EDI.

Elaine Stroud, CEO of the Entrepreneurs' Forum, commented: "With our member businesses generating revenues in excess of £1.25 billion, our survey results provide a strong insight into sentiment across the North East.

"The results shown in our latest survey confirm entrepreneurs remain optimistic about the year ahead, despite challenges

around the sales cycle and recruitment.

"Yet amidst these hurdles, the commitment from our members to fostering equality, diversity and inclusion stands out, reflecting not just a dedication to business success, but to creating organisations that the North East can be proud of."

The Entrepreneurs' Forum was founded in 2002 and represents over 340 North East entrepreneurs. Its partners include Agilico, Blu Sky, Hilton Newcastle Gateshead, LDC, Northumbria University, RBC Brewin Dolphin and Ward Hadaway.

entrepreneursforum.net



Portland Consulting Engineers Easter Reception 2024

Clients, colleagues, project partners and staff of leading Gateshead-based civil and structural engineering consultancy, Portland Consulting Engineers, gathered together last month to mark its 20th year of trading at its annual Easter Reception celebration.

Taking place at Newcastle's Manahatta bar and restaurant, guests were given an opportunity to catch up, network and celebrate a successful two decades of business for the consultancy.

Held every year on Maundy Thursday, Portland's Easter Reception is now a prominent date in the diary for the regions construction industry social calendar - one to which invitations are highly sought. The event provides a fantastic opportunity for Portland to express its gratitude to all involved for their continued support throughout the year, alongside being the very best way to enter the long Easter weekend.



Sharon Shaw, Lee Barr, Adam Perkins & Thomas Wallace



Sophie Gooch, Matt Alexander, Steve Bell & Mick Taylor



David Niland, Simon Scurfield & Darran Milne



Scott Robinson, Abbi Hunton, Karen Read & Mick Taylor



Mark Grant, Craig Davidson & John Harvey



Phillippa Webb, Alli Donnelly & Sophie Redhead



Ellen Hagan, Gary Barr, Lee Barr, Phil Jones & Alan Maskell



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Samuel Knight International celebrates 10 years of business

Renewable energy talent solutions firm, Samuel Knight International, marked its 10-year anniversary at Above in Newcastle last month. Filled with great food and views of the city's glittering skyline, the black-tie event was attended by members of staff, friends, family and clients, who gathered together to celebrate the firm's hard work and success over the last decade.



Sophie Milliken(Moja), Elaine Stroud(Entrepreneurs Forum) & Friends



Dan Kerr (Managing Director of Energy) & Partner



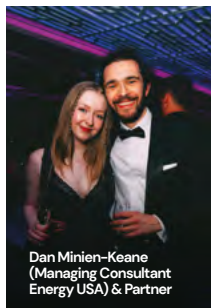
Nataasha Dodds (Finance Officer) & Partner



Deyin Turna (Head of Delivery, Energy) & Partner



Deyin Turna (Head of Delivery, Energy), Ben Simpson (Account Manager), Dan Kerr (Managing Director of Energy)



Dan Minien-Keane (Managing Consultant Energy USA) & Partner



Steven Rawlinsong (CEO)



Steven Rawlinsong (CEO) & Family



Dan Kerr (Managing Director of Energy) & Partner



Jorel Bautista (Group Business Development Director), Nazidil Da Costa (Recruitment Consultant), Dan Minien-Keane (Managing Consultant Energy USA)



Jack Roberts (Vice President USA), Steve Rawlinsong (CEO)



Lisa Whitwell (Group Finance & HR Director) & Friends



Dylan Christie (COO) & Partner



Deyin Turna (Head of Delivery, Energy), Dan Novell (Managing Consultant) & Partner, Joel Rawlinsong (Recruitment Consultant), Liam Carrick (Recruitment Consultant)



Katelyn Young (Group Marketing & Communications Manager) & Steven Rawlinsong (CEO)

Dan James Giles Photography

Marketing driven by stories

Partnering with leading brand agency, B7, sees businesses big and small embark on a transformative journey. Blending creativity with analytical precision to ensure messages not only reach, but captivate, an audience, its team strives to deliver exceptional results through bespoke strategies that resonate with businesses' unique stories.

The North East is steeped in history and culture - but it's the people of the region who make it such an important and vibrant place to live, work and play. And, perhaps above all else, those people cherish and celebrate one thing: the power of storytelling.

Here, David Broom, founder of B7, reveals why the agency's deep-rooted love for narratives makes it an ideal partner in brand marketing.

A journey of transformation

Our evolution from a management consultancy to a leading marketing agency was driven by a passion for storytelling. This wasn't merely a change in the services we offered; it was a shift towards what we truly believe marketing should be - a medium to tell stories that resonate, engage and inspire.

At B7, we go way beyond the conventional, to transform the narrative around what marketing can achieve. Today, we're doing just that, by intertwining strategic insight with creative storytelling.

Why we do it

What drives us? It's simple: the belief in the power of authentic stories to connect brands with their audiences on a profound level. Our mission is to leverage these narratives to not only highlight what brands offer but to delve deeper into the 'why' behind them. This approach doesn't just capture attention; it captures hearts. And, where we come from, that's pretty important. We're so passionate about crafting stories that embody the values, dreams and journeys of the brands we work with - and sharing these stories in a way that actually matters.

Our services - weaving stories into every aspect of marketing

With a team passionate about sparking change, B7 delivers a spectrum of marketing services designed to elevate your brand. Our strategic development lays the important groundwork, ensuring every marketing move is aligned with your brand's core values.

Through social content creation and social media management, we engage your audience where they are most active, weaving your story into their daily lives.

Our videography and photography services bring your narrative to life, ensuring it's not just heard, but felt. With every customer acquisition strategy and branding design, we're not just promoting your services - we're telling your story.

Looking forward

The unveiling of our new brand identity and website marks the beginning of a new, exciting chapter. These changes reflect our commitment to leading the charge in the marketing industry, showcasing the depth and breadth of our services from right here in the North East. They're a real testament to our belief in storytelling as the future of marketing - a future we're ready to shape.

An invitation

Reflecting on our journey and the importance of the North East - its vibrant history, culture and the intrinsic value we place on storytelling - I'm reminded that, at B7, we're more than just marketers; we're story weavers, connecting threads of narrative that resonate with the heartbeat of our region. Our transition to a leading marketing agency underlines a commitment not just to tell stories, but to live them, alongside the businesses and communities we serve.

Your story deserves to be told. Reach out to us and let us tell it with you. For more information, visit weareb7.com

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A new era for the North East

The North East will become a major destination for film and high-end TV production, thanks to a trailblazing devolution deal agreed between the government and the North East. The deal will equip the region with the tools to enable the creation of one of Europe's largest filmmaking complexes – Crown Works Studios – in Sunderland.



Crown Works Studios will transform the economy of the North East - spurring a creative industrial revolution in one of the UK's most exciting sectors and generating £336 million a year for the regional economy. It will enhance the UK's offer to the global film and high-end TV industry and enable the North East to play a far greater role in future growth.

The devolution deal announced in the Spring Budget will provide the new NEMCA (to be formed in May of this year) and Sunderland City Council with the tools they need to make Crown Works a reality and level up the region. Sunderland City Council and NEMCA confirmed that they intend to invest up to £120 million towards the project using the tools provided by the deal.

This represents a significant contribution towards Crown Works Studios that will kick start the creation of one of Europe's largest studio complexes - and is a huge step towards realising the full ambition of 20 soundstages in the heart of Sunderland.

The budget announcement leverages £450 million of private funding, which will enable the North East to achieve its full creative potential and become a major hub for big budget productions, capitalising on the productive, loyal workforce the region boasts.

Creating another major film and high-end TV production cluster outside of the South East, Crown Works Studios will be a catalyst for regeneration, creating thousands of jobs and skills opportunities at all levels for people living across the North East and beyond.

The North East's beautiful scenic locations have for a long time been used in major feature films including Indiana Jones, Harry Potter and Transformers, but until now the lack of studio infrastructure in the region has meant that productions come and go and the North East has been prevented from capturing the full value of this activity.

The project has been described as the most economically significant development for the North East since the arrival of Nissan in the 1980s. Alongside specialist skills for the UK film industry, those who will benefit from the development being on their doorstep include carpenters, engineers, designers, drivers, electricians, hair and make-up artists and medics, among others.

Pending planning permission, the project could see ground broken as early as this summer with the construction of the first six stages as part of phase one. It's anticipated that further phases - taking the project to 20 stages - will be completed by 2028.

The full site will attract global productions worth £644 million a year. At this point, it's expected that Crown Works Studios will be responsible for the creation of over 8,450 new jobs in the region and £336 million of economic growth (GVA) per year at full capacity and on completion of all phases of construction.

Leo Pearlman, managing partner Fulwell 73, said: "This is a historic moment for Sunderland, the North East and the UK's screen industries. Crown Works Studios will help transform the city we love into a global hub for big budget film and TV production.

"Britain's creative sector is at its best when the industry and the public sector share the same vision and work together to deliver it - so I'm hugely



grateful for the backing of the new North East Mayoral Combined Authority and for the partnership between them, Fulwell 73 and Sunderland City Council.

"Our screen industries are world-leading and with this backing, the UK, with the North East in its arsenal, can grow its capacity for the production of film and high-end TV."

He continued: "At the centre of our plan is a pioneering training strategy that will transform lives and create new opportunities throughout the North East, kick-starting a creative revolution that enables the region to play a leading role in our most exciting sector."

Councillor Graeme Miller, leader of Sunderland City Council, commented: "This is monumental for Crown Works Studios, Fulwell 73, Sunderland and the North East, unlocking jobs and opportunities for our people and businesses that will bring about benefits for generations to come.

"We have worked hand in glove with Fulwell 73, the government and our regional partners to ensure that this scheme - which is game-changing for the whole of the North East - will move from vision to reality."

Councillor Amanda Hopgood, interim portfolio holder for culture, creative, tourism and sport ahead of the formation of a new North East Mayoral Combined Authority in May and leader of Durham County Council, said: "Devolution brings with it the opportunity for local leaders to back projects that are regionally significant, directing trailblazer funding directly into the North East's priorities.

"The government's confirmation of our trailblazer paves the way for Fulwell 73 to push ahead with this ambitious project, unlocking £450 million of private sector investment to turn this exciting vision into a reality.

"We are proud to back Crown Works Studios - a project that brings the promise of thousands of new jobs and the opportunity to build a local supply chain that will support generations of people in this brilliant region."



20 years of success

Portland Consulting Engineers reflects on a successful two decades – and reveals what’s in store as it looks towards a new and exciting era of business.

Business growth and development

As the practice looks to the future, it does so with a strategic business plan that focuses on improvement and becoming more efficient.

The overarching aim is to continue providing engineering services to existing and new clients to allow sustainable growth of the business.

Key objectives include reducing over reliance on projects within the primary business sectors to limit the risk of sector downturn and increasing the number and value of projects in other sectors through active engagement with existing clients along with new opportunities through introductions to others.

In addition, the practice aims to increase the average value of commissions over the business plan period, as well as increasing the profitability of commissions through more robust management of fee proposals and job costing.

Finally, exploring opportunities to provide new services to existing clients when appropriate will remain a priority as the practice looks to the future.

Long-standing relationships, repeat business and friendships

Throughout the last 20 years, Portland has enjoyed long-standing relationships with a number of leading North East companies. These cover a wide spectrum of disciplines within the construction industry including architects, quality surveyors, registered social landlords and private developers. The longevity of these relationships is testament to the company’s values led service, which encourages the formation of close bonds on projects, fostering life-long relationships.

Social value

Portland’s focus on providing additional social value remains as strong as ever and has seen it support a number of cultural events and grassroots sports over the years.

It has been a regular sponsor of the Gateshead Beer Festival since 2019 and has witnessed the festival expand and grow year on year to become one of the key events in the region.

In the world of sport, the practice has provided sponsorship to Sunderland County Council for friendly cricket matches with local community groups and continues to sponsor local boxing gyms to help them

cover the cost of putting on local exhibitions and shows. It has also sponsored kits for junior sports clubs – most recently the winter coats for Westerhope Under 8’s football team – and has previously sponsored shirts for Rockcliffe RFC. Portland remains supportive of local charitable causes, enjoying a long-standing relationship with the Lord’s Taverners and undertaking a sponsored ‘Hike up Helvellyn’ to support North East charitable trust, Daft as a Brush Cancer Care.

Portland is passionate about developing the next generation of civil & structural engineers. The company works closely with Education Partnership North East and has attended various careers events at college campuses within the group, such as Sunderland and Hartlepool Sixth Form College.

The consultancy works as part of the Housing Innovation Construction Skills Academy Employers Forum, which aims to provide young people with the necessary skills needed in the modern day construction industry.

Net-Zero carbon plan for 2035

As we look to the future, many businesses are aiming to improve their efforts in, and strengthen their commitment to, creating a more eco-conscious working environment - and Portland is no exception.

Developed in collaboration with Smartcarbon, its Net-Zero pathway will see the practice phase out the use of natural gas to heat its office and move to the newly-installed electric air conditioning/climate control system.

It will also look to transition to a renewable electricity tariff and is exploring the possibility of installing a solar panel at the office - which already utilises energy-efficient LED lighting - to generate up to 10% of its electricity use.

Keen to involve team members in its plans, Portland company policy specifies that all company vehicles are to be, at minimum, a hybrid vehicle. The company's fleet comprises a mixture of hybrid and fully electric vehicles.

In addition to these changes made to the office, Portland continues to examine methods to reduce the environmental impact of the projects it works on. The company bases this from its 'Green Design Principles'. The consultancy has done extensive work in the repurposing of disused buildings, which produces reduced emissions.

Portland is keen to embrace lower carbon materials and methods of construction, with staff undertaking CPD seminars on topics such as net-zero design and low carbon concrete. The company is experienced in working with lower carbon Modern Methods of Construction.

Rebrand

Reaching 20 years in business is a significant milestone and in doing so has provided Portland with an opportunity to not only celebrate its achievements so far, but to also look to the future, developing strategies to help steer the business forward and take the steps in its journey.

Its recent rebrand, which included a brand new logo, a new and improved website and a new suite of technical and marketing documents, reflects a considered refresh of the practice's overall look, with a focus on its strength and solidity.

Its new avatar reflects its status as a progressive, forward-thinking company and a one that is always looking to the future to consistently progress, develop and grow.

New management structure

Portland moves forward with a desire to strengthen its management team and, to do so, has introduced a new structure to not only create a more efficient business model, but to also encourage existing staff to progress in their careers. In the future, it hopes to welcome new additions to its team, which will ultimately allow for a clear path of succession for all at Portland.

Turnover and project value figures

In each of the past two years, Portland has turned over £1.5 million, indicating a solid base, though it is looking to increase that figure this year - and continue improving in the future. In the realms of project values, the practice is now working on schemes of up to £30 million project value.



Awards

Portland is proud to have won numerous awards over the last two decades - all of which are in recognition of its innovative schemes, the quality and delivery of its services and its reputation as one of the region's leading civil and structuring engineering consultancies.

Among many others, highlights include winning the Innovation & Collaborative Working award for the Day Treatment Centre at Newcastle's Freeman Hospital at the 2023 Constructing Excellence Awards, the Small Project Award for High Urpeth at the 2022 IStructE Structural Awards and the Commercial Development of the Year award for Tees Advanced Manufacturing Park, Middlesbrough, at the 2021 Insider Property Awards. Most recently, the company has been shortlisted in the 2024 Constructing Excellence in the North-East Awards in the category of 'SME of the Year'.

Sector involvement changes

In the beginning, Portland's roots were in the social housing and industrial/manufacturing sectors, which the company became well known for. As the years have gone by, the company has evolved and diversified its portfolio of work, expanding into the commercial, health, leisure and retail sectors.

The changes have come about through an expansion in the internal technical expertise within the team along with client introductions. Throughout this process, Portland has always taken great care to remember where it started from and appreciate those who have supported the business on its journey so far. The company recognises the importance of those clients, reflected in the fact that Portland continues to enjoy successful working relationships with several of them to this day.

For more information, visit portlandconsulting.co.uk



Selling a business – what do owners need to know?



Alex Molyneux, adviser at Lowes Financial Management, delves into the intricate process of selling a business, offering insights tailored specifically for business-owners navigating this potentially complex transaction.

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.

Like so many things in life, selling a business is relatively straightforward in theory, but in practice, there are numerous issues to consider. In many cases, especially when considering the tax situation, preparation for a sale can begin years in advance. In this article, we'll examine the various subjects to consider, where we can help and the value of working closely with third parties such as accountants and solicitors.

Transparency, visibility and communication

Before we examine the process of selling a business, it's essential to understand that we regularly work with client accountants and solicitors. This is because personal and business taxes must be aligned to protect wealth and cash flow, while maintaining the company's value. Transparency, visibility and communication among all parties are vital.

As financial advisers, it is important that we are fully aware of our clients' broad financial landscape from day one. There will be areas that may appear detached from our core services and advice, but these can and regularly do influence the advice that we provide.

During our annual reviews, we also consider changes in circumstances from both a personal and business standpoint, as there may be actions we can take to protect overall wealth.

The role of financial advisers in business sales

Lowes provide a range of financial services, all pieces of your long-term financial jigsaw, considered both in isolation and as part of a broader financial strategy. Our core services include:

- Investment strategies
- Retirement planning
- Wealth protection
- Wealth transfer

While our focus is typically on personal finances, our team has a wealth of knowledge about business finances, which is useful when implementing future strategies and maximising sale proceeds. This ensures that when we deal with accountants and solicitors, we have a broad understanding of the topics discussed - even if the finer details are left to the specialists.

The importance of early engagement

As a business-owner, your focus will likely be on the day-to-day running of your operations, giving you more than enough to think about.

Even though you may plan to sell your business in the future, making preparations potentially years in advance may not be top of your to-do list.

However, engaging your financial adviser at the earliest opportunity in the sales process is important, as it gives you more time to prepare. In theory, the process is relatively simple:

- Identify the reasons for a potential sale
- Prepare up-to-date audited financial accounts
- Value the business
- Identify potential improvements or weaknesses in your business
- Review the legal affairs of your company
- Prepare an information memorandum for potential buyers
- Plan the timing and how you plan to exit the business
- Market your business to potential buyers
- Negotiate the sale

In addition to introducing a structured approach to the potential sale of your business, the earlier you engage your financial adviser, accountant and solicitor, the better prepared you will be for the eventual transaction. Due to the often complex tax system in the UK, what may seem like a relatively simple sale could turn into a personal taxation nightmare.

The sooner potential issues are identified, the sooner they can be addressed, such as Business Asset Disposal Relief (formerly Entrepreneur's Relief) and other forms of assistance.

A collaborative approach

Financial advisers, accountants and solicitors regularly collaborate on a range of topics, with business sales perhaps the most common. Appreciative of our respective skills, close collaboration ensures no stone is left unturned regarding maximising value and reducing tax obligations while also supporting a structured timetable. What may look like a seamless process on the surface will have many moving parts and, in some scenarios, the sale of a business may be time-critical due to ill health or the death of a founder. While each case is different, the broad roles of each participant can be summarised as follows:

Financial adviser - as financial advisers, we would look at the tax implications of the sale, estate planning and tax-efficient reinvestment, in summary, maximising income and minimising tax liabilities. For example, there may be ways to mitigate any significant capital gains using Business Asset Rollover and mitigate inheritance tax that would otherwise arise on the sale proceeds.

Accountants - the company accountant focuses on the business's financial health, also considering the tax implications of a sale while ensuring that all the required financial information is available for potential buyers.

Solicitors - aside from the financials, significant legal issues could be involved when selling a business. These could include sale contracts, a potential handover period, regulatory compliance and assistance with what can often be prolonged negotiations. Legal advice also introduces a degree of protection for both the buyer and the seller.

Critical considerations for business owners

Even though the content in this article is skewed towards those looking at the potential sale of a business, many of these critical considerations will apply to ongoing businesses. If you put yourself in the shoes of a potential buyer, depending on your plans, you would be encouraged by the following characteristics of a business:

- Diverse customer base
- Strong management team
- Consistent revenue and profitability
- Clear growth strategy
- Operational efficiency
- Strong brand and reputation
- No outstanding legal issues
- Adaptable business model
- Multiple sales channels

One issue that needs to be addressed in isolation is the potential impact on your employees if you are considering or have agreed to sell your business. While you may be the driving force behind the business, employees will have different skills and varied

roles, and while all of them are important to the business, some may be critical. So, when looking to sell a business, it's crucial to consider:

- Communication with employees
- Employee retention plans
- Employee involvement in the sale process
- The cultural fit of a potential buyer
- Ongoing training and development
- Legal employment obligations
- Severance and transition support
- Appreciation of their role

There is a fine balancing act between keeping employees onside, retaining long-term value for the potential buyer and divulging private and confidential information. Your financial adviser can be very useful in this situation, giving views, opinions, and unbiased advice from a distance.

Timing and planning

As with any financial transaction, the timing and planning of a potential business sale are critical and can have a knock-on effect on various areas of your life. There will be occasions where the sale timing is out of your hands, while other scenarios may allow you to wait for an improvement in market conditions. Unfortunately, the only certain value of an asset is today the potential change in a month, six months, or a year can be difficult, if not impossible, to forecast. We excel at planning, with a particular focus on investment, tax planning and retirement, but the exact timing of a transaction can significantly impact net sale proceeds.

For example, it may suit your situation to have staggered payments across different tax years; there may be the option to backdate tax benefits and allowances, or incoming regulatory changes might limit the options available going forward. Our team of experts has many years of experience advising clients on personal taxation and the potential impact of a business sale. Regular client reviews give us an in-depth understanding of personal finances and business interests.

So, when the time comes for a potential sale, we already have a broad understanding, which allows us to work closely with accountants and solicitors to secure the best possible outcome. If you are considering selling your business, you will find there are many issues to consider, both from a business perspective and personal taxation. Audited company accounts and financial statements are the foundations upon which the sales process is built, with legal guidance critical in protecting your interests and supporting the smooth running of the process.

Our role is much broader, focusing on investment, tax planning and retirement. While we are a vital cog in the sale process, it's essential we work closely with third parties such as accountants and solicitors.

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

Wander Films: making its mark in the world of TV

Middlesbrough-based Wander Films is a female led, multi-award winning content marketing agency that is dipping a toe or two into broadcast TV – and making a bit of a splash.



2024 has already seen Wander win a slate of wins, including its first BBC documentary commission. This comes hot on the heels of them delivering a BBC Daytime commission of short videos for BBC's Morning Live and a Channel 4 digital development commission which saw them supported by Newcastle-based Northern Child (Jordan North: The Truth About Vaping, BBC), who are the northern base of factual company Middlechild.

Wander's recent successes haven't 'just' happened. Winning business in the current climate takes more than just good ideas. Delivering commissions well and ensuring duty of care for contributors are not skills that you gain over night.

Their unrivalled appetite, determination and passion for working in collaboration with a range of brilliant and experienced TV industry people, grabbing every opportunity that has come their way, has helped them learn the ropes and grow in this industry slowly but surely.

Without a doubt, once the agency has a few commissions under its belt, Wander will be shaking up the industry and making it their own.

North East Screen first supported Wander Films around five years ago as part of the Tees Valley Screen Pilot initiative Getting into Business, ran in partnership with Pact, the UK's screen sector trade body supporting independent production and distribution companies.

Wander received six months of free access to global business insights from world-class industry leaders, winning the hearts and minds of every person who they met along the way.

Following this, Wander won a coveted place on the Pact Future 30 scheme, being identified as one of 30 of the UK's most exciting emerging production and distribution indies.



This scheme led them to be contracted to produce Pact's 30th Anniversary film, for which they met and interviewed some of the big players in the screen industries, including Steven Moffat of Hartswood Films (Wolf - BBC, Sherlock - BBC, The Devil's Hour - Amazon Prime), Nicola Shindler of Quay Street Productions (Fool me once - Netflix, After the Flood - ITV, The Red King - UKTV) and Jimmy Mulville of Hat Trick Productions (Derry Girls - Channel 4, Mastermind - BBC, Have I Got News For You - BBC).

Wander's trajectory in the industry continued and they won an opportunity to pitch to BBC England as part of the BBC and North East Screen initiative, NE Voices. Despite not being successful, their idea, access to onscreen talent and fresh approach really impressed the commissioning panel.

Feedback from the pitch enabled North East Screen to support Wander with a REACH award to recruit an experienced head of development and development researcher, who supported the team to develop a broad slate of ideas to pitch to a range of TV commissioners.

A year later, Wander was announced as a recipient of the BBC Small Indie Fund, providing them with considerably more time with BBC Commissioners.

Lisa Laws, North East Screen's development director, has witnessed Wander's journey and been by their side every step of the way.

"Wander brings real joy to every pitch they make and it's great to see this already successful and thriving business, pivot and bring its experience of digital to the screen sector," she says.

"Rejections are inevitable in this industry. Wander has taken these well and used the feedback to tackle the challenges head on. They've taken our advice, guidance and funding to bring expertise to bolster their credibility, formed collaborations with indies with more experience, and taken the time to build solid commissioner relationships."

In the last four years, Wander has developed its knowledge of markets, grown one idea on its slate into over

30 pitch-able ideas and has gone from winning opportunities to pitch for paid development to delivering commissionable programmes. Wander's growth and success is testament to the Tees Valley Screen pilot project and investment in the team. Something Lisa is very proud of.

She says: "What has been so rewarding is to witness how Wander are navigating pitching and winning contracts while finding their true tone and voice. They bring a fresh perspective on how to do and win business, on the North East region as a whole, and the types of stories and characters they want to see more of on our screen. We at North East Screen are thrilled to have been part of their journey so far and can't wait to see what's next."

What's the ambition for the future for Wander? Chief operating officer, Lou Tonner, explains:

"We want to keep the momentum going. We're excited for the future and want to place Wander at the forefront of innovative content for TV, digital and social. We want to grow the TV side of our business, so it becomes as successful as our content marketing side."

On the support and guidance they've received from North East Screen, Lou continued:

"We've been working with the team at North East Screen for around four years - their support has been invaluable. They've commissioned us to create content for them and found opportunities for us. They introduced us to Pact, helped us attend the Creative Cities Convention when it was in Newcastle, introduced us to TV commissioners and provided funding through the REACH programme. We definitely wouldn't be where we are without their support and backing."

North East Screen is the North East's screen industries development agency, working with businesses and professionals specialising in film, TV and screen-based arts primarily through its talent and business development programme, events addressing the skills gaps in the industry and its experienced Film Office supporting incoming and indigenous TV, film and commercial production in the North East.

For more information, visit www.northeastscreen.org or email hello@northeastscreen.org to find out how you can get involved in the region's ever growing screen industry.



North East software specialist secures first major US contract



North East-based global attraction experience software specialists, n-gage.io, has secured its first major US contract with the Living Desert Zoo and Gardens in California, which has launched a new mobile app aimed at enhancing their visitor experience.

The top US visitor attraction, which welcomes over 600,000 visitors annually, has just unveiled a new experience platform to improve communication, navigation, conservation education and accessibility at the 1200-acre site.

The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens, which is dedicated to the preservation of world deserts and wildlife, is ranked one of California's best-loved wildlife attractions and as one of the 26 best zoos in the US by the US News & World Report.

The attraction is renowned not just for its 150+ animal species, but also its 52 gardens that contain over 1,200 plant species, making it a day out to remember for both animal and plant-lovers alike.

Given The Living Desert's reputation for conservation education, working with over 70 partners worldwide, it comes as no surprise to find it innovating with technology to drive conservation education messaging, while also introducing a host of interactive features in its new mobile app to enhance the visitor experience.

Keeping pace with an audience's ever-evolving technology expectations led The Living Desert to turn to the UK-based attraction experience experts at n-gage.io for a solution. Led by entrepreneur, Bryan Hoare, and incubated in County Durham

by GCV Labs, n-gage.io aims to transform audience experiences through a highly customisable, data insight-driven SaaS platform with an integrated mobile-web application.

"We're delighted to secure our first US contract with The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens who chose our powerful attraction management software and highly customisable mobile app following a rigorous selection process," said Bryan Hoare, CEO of n-gage.io.

"The Zoo and Gardens are renowned for its work around the world, contributing to wildlife conservation for over half a century. We're proud to build on this legacy and provide its visitors with a digital mobile pocket guide that enhances their visit and experiences and we're actively looking to help more zoos, wildlife parks and other attractions across the US to transform their approach to digital engagement."

The n-gage.io solution pairs the SaaS platform's highly customisable mobile app with its powerful attraction management software to deliver The Living Desert both the tools and data insights it needs to enhance the visitor experience and communicate with them in real-time.

The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens now uses the app as a focal point for

visitors to provide more rich content and media on their habitats and surroundings. Visitors are also feeling the impact of improved navigation, finding their way around habitats, gardens and other points of interest using n-gage.io's innovative wayfinding solution, which is optimised for both on and offline use.

"We're excited to launch this new app and offer our visitors an enhanced experience," said Allison Krupp, vice president of marketing & communications at The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens.

"We're always looking for new ways to innovate and enhance our visitor experience. In n-gage.io we found a UK team of dedicated and innovative professionals who have developed a software platform and highly customisable mobile visitor app, packed with features that we believe is a game changer for our industry.

"The app is now playing a major role in helping us to achieve our goal of continuing to inspire current and future generations around the importance of conservation. Additionally, we appreciate the multi-lingual features for our global tourism visitors."

For more information, visit www.n-gage.io

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Northern magazine pledges support for local children's charity

Portfolio North has partnered with Yorkshire Children's Charity to support the organisation in promoting its services across the region and expansion across the North East and Yorkshire.

The leading publication will support the charity with regular editorial features and promotion of its events, helping to raise its profile across Yorkshire and the North East and encourage vital donations to help boost its support of families in need.

Yorkshire Children's Charity is committed to raising and donating millions of pounds each year to help improve the lives of disadvantaged children and young people across Yorkshire and the North East.

Through its project and campaign work, grant giving programmes, volunteer networks and partnerships with schools and local communities, the charity works hard to help children live an inclusive life, full of opportunities and fair chances, regardless of health issues, disabilities or financial circumstances.

The charity also runs a range of fundraising and social events throughout the year, including 'The Yorkshires'; their flagship awards events which Portfolio North will sponsor in 2024, and 'A Night Under The Stars' at Grantley Hall.

Cassie Moyse, director at Portfolio North, said: "Myself and the Portfolio North team are delighted to welcome Yorkshire Children's Charity as our Yorkshire charity partner.

"Supporting local charities and shining a light on the life-changing work they do is incredibly important to us. We've been supporting charities in the North East for seven years now and are looking forward to doing the same with our new Yorkshire publication."

"We've worked with our clients in raising over £365,000 for local charities, community action projects and grassroots sports clubs in the North East over the years, and are now dedicated to supporting children's charities."

"Our most recent fundraising event raised vital funds for a range of children's charities, including Heel & Toe Children's Charity, which supports children with cerebral palsy and other physical disabilities, as well as Great North Children's Hospital, NE Youth and Bravehearts of the North East."

"We are very proud to be partnering with Yorkshire Children's Charity, which is such an important organisation within Yorkshire, and are thrilled to be sponsoring The Yorkshires this year."

Speaking on the partnership, Charlotte Farrington, CEO of Yorkshire Children's Charity, said: "We are really pleased to be partnering with Portfolio North. Through exciting editorial features and dedicated promotional support, the publication will help us raise awareness for our cause amongst a wider audience and, in turn, help us raise more funds to transform the lives of children and young people in need across Yorkshire."

"We look forward to having Portfolio North at The Yorkshires this year as one of our key sponsors and are excited to see what the future holds for our partnership in the coming months."

The event, which will take place on May 9th at Rudding Park in Harrogate, celebrates

excellence within Yorkshire's commercial property sector. In a fun and relaxed setting, businesses, clients and friends are invited to celebrate the industry's successes and network with up to 1,000 peers, all while raising much-needed funds for the charity's Great Yorkshire Build initiative which transforms provisions within special educational needs schools.

Yorkshire Children's Charity will be a key charity partner of Portfolio North in 2024, alongside other organisations such as The Great North Children's Hospital Foundation, Heel & Toe Children's Charity, NE Youth and Brave Hearts of the North East.

The North East-based publication is published on a bi-monthly basis and reaches 35,000 readers per print edition. Last year, it reached 49 million impressions across its growing social media platforms and website, which are updated daily with news, updates and exclusive content from across the region.

Its Yorkshire edition, which launched in September last year, is distributed to homes, businesses and hospitality venues across the region, reaching over 15,000 readers. Each edition features news, updates and exclusive business and lifestyle content from businesses across Yorkshire.

Each year, Portfolio North continues to help its clients achieve their fundraising goals. Most recently, the publication played a key role in supporting leading property expert, Bradley Hall, in raising £360,000 for local charities in the North East via its annual Festive Fundraiser.

Answer me this...

Michael Hall
Chief Executive of
eQuality Solutions



How can businesses strengthen their commitment to diversity and inclusion in the workplace in 2024?

Since the turn of the year, I have attended and spoken at a number of business events in the North East on the subject of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and been encouraged by the discussions. Business leaders see it as both the right thing to do and also the gateway to untapped talent pools. We don't have people arriving into the region in great numbers, so we need strategies to attract people from wider groups that are already based here.

Research has shown that diverse teams perform at a higher level than those that are not, so the benefits to employers and the region would be significant. A strong DEI culture can be decisive in the battle to both attract and retain staff.

So, here are some opportunities for businesses and business-owners to consider during 2024. Generational expectation is huge. Young people entering the workplace are not exclusively looking at salary as the ultimate deciding factor. For many, work-life balance and flexible hours are factors, as are the culture and ethics of the employer.

They want to understand what your company stands for and how those values are brought to life via actions and behaviours - within this, sits DEI. Businesses must continually communicate via website, social media, advertising and recruitment materials what they represent - and DEI should be central to this. Plus, it could well give them the critical advantage as an employer of choice.

Neurodiversity is becoming more and more important. Consider what reasonable adjustments you could make to your workplace that would support potential recruits or existing neurodivergent staff.

Even the most subtle of changes or adjustments could be the deciding factor as to whether a member of your team stays with you long-term. Things to consider include allowing

extra breaks, reducing sensory stimuli by having quiet areas in offices or providing noise-cancelling headphones, providing clear and logical guides on goals, processes, meeting agendas and work tasks and providing dedicated desks or workspaces.

Discussing an individual's needs and providing appropriate resources will help them to not only thrive in their role but to feel included. Diversity at board level should be another consideration. The development of diversity at board level should be representative, meaningful and part of a long-term plan.

One of the initial steps organisations can take is to bring in non-executive board members with diverse skills and cultural backgrounds. A more diverse board will be better placed to examine fundamental questions such as, is the working environment equitable for everyone? What are the working arrangements for new parents? Do women have a space to grow?

It goes without saying, but recruitment shouldn't be overlooked. Job listings often include subtle, gender coded language, which can be due to the unconscious bias of the person writing the advert and can discourage applicants that it doesn't resonate with. Gender decoder tools can be easily accessed and applied to adverts to help remove gender bias. Prominently stating the organisation's commitment to diversity in job applications can signal that underrepresented groups are encouraged to apply. This can be further reinforced by ensuring salary transparency is fully evident.

Consider how you could reach communities that don't look in the usual places you advertise. For instance, using social media instead of the commonly used platforms like jobs boards. Diverse interview panels that are representative of the candidate pool, can also help mitigate biases in the hiring process.

eQuality Solutions Group (eQS) is a leading, global provider of diversity, equity & inclusion (DEI) services and products including consultancy, assistive technology (AT), training, e-learning and specialist mentoring support - across workplaces and educational settings. Headquartered in Hebburn, it aims to create a more inclusive world by empowering individuals and organisations with DEI programmes and solutions that create actionable, lasting change for today and the future of our society. eQS currently supports 45,500 people annually with bespoke DEI solutions and by 2028 it aims to support five times as many people - to positively impact the lives of 200,000 people annually.



Bradley Hall celebrates a hat-trick of deals at Sunderland's Keel Square

The north's largest full-service property firm, Bradley Hall, has secured three new tenants at Sunderland's flagship hospitality development in its city centre.

Bradley Hall, which has offices across the North East - including Sunderland - and Yorkshire, has secured tenants Keel Tavern, The Botanist and The Muddler - with a fourth to follow on the new Keel Square Development.

The openings have directly created over 100 jobs for locals and is reported to have driven significant footfall to the city centre.

Helen Wall, director of Bradley Hall Sunderland, said: "It has been a real pleasure to be involved with the regeneration of Keel Square and see the venues come to life over the past few months.

"There is lots of redevelopment happening around the Riverside area and we are pleased to be able to play our part in the exciting changes happening in the city."

The new square, which is situated between the new Holiday Inn and The Yard, which was the former Gilbridge Police station, has benefitted from significant redevelopment and investment as part of the multi-billion-pound regeneration of Sunderland.

The project is part of the Riverside Sunderland development, which has already seen the development of a new

award-winning City Hall, The Beam and office blocks Maker and Faber that are ready to complete soon.

The new hospitality hub in the city centre is also supported by new transport infrastructure in the way of a £26 million new train station.

Riverside Sunderland has been hailed as one of the UK's most ambitious regeneration projects. The multi-phase mixed use development is transforming the Sunderland City Centre skyline, led by significant commercial, leisure, public sector and residential developments.

Historically a centre of industry and justice, Keel Square was home to Sunderland's police station, law courts and other government buildings. Following the site's redevelopment, there are now homages to the city's maritime history within its architecture.

The Keel Tavern is located under the Holiday Inn at Keel Square and has created 30 jobs for local people since it opened its doors at the end of last year.

Serving up a range of quality craft beers and food, the venue is the latest in a string of openings by leading North East hospitality firm the Vaulkhard Group, which has been operating in the North East for over 30 years and owns venues such as

Barluga, The Bridge Tavern and Redhouse. The Keel Tavern marks the group's first venue in Sunderland.

Award-winning national chain, The Botanist, sits next door and boasts an outdoor seating area and frequently hosts live music nights. The Sunderland venue is the fourth northern branch for the chain. North East favourite, The Muddler, serves up pan-Asian cuisine and offers a pre-theatre menu for visitors to the Sunderland Empire. The business has enjoyed great success at its Newcastle branch and has seen the same popularity since opening in Sunderland.

Neil Hart, chief executive at Bradley Hall said: "The quality of new tenants at Keel Square has attracted a lot of attention and new footfall to Sunderland city centre. As its new offices fill up, this will become a bustling and vibrant destination for locals, workers and visitors.

"The transformation of Sunderland city centre is incredibly impressive. We are proud to have introduced the tenants to this opportunity and look forward to seeing them thrive."

Bradley Hall is currently marketing commercial spaces on Sunderland's High Street West for those wishing to be part of the redevelopment of the city.

For more information, contact Helen Wall on 0191 563 4242 or sunderland@bradleyhall.co.uk



Bradley Hall markets one-of-a-kind property in Teesside

A palatial, luxurious mansion located on The Beaumont in Wynyard is now on the market with Northern property specialist, Bradley Hall, for £1.6 million.

The property, which was completed in 2022, is finished to show home standard and boasts six bedrooms, a triple garage and a spacious driveway with central water feature.

The Beaumont opens to a vast galleried entryway with a solid oak and glass staircase. The home boasts four reception rooms and a generous open-plan kitchen and family room, fitted with contemporary systems including a Quooker hot water tap and Bora induction hob.

Joseph l'Anson, director of Bradley Hall Teesside, commented: "This home is a truly one-of-a-kind property. The cinema room, six bedrooms and balcony create a luxurious experience that really has to be seen to be fully appreciated.

"The home has been finished to an incredibly high standard and makes the ideal property for families wishing to blend functionality with true elegance.

"Set within a private estate and with easy access the Tees Valley and Teesside Airport, this is a stunning property with lots of potential to create a forever home."

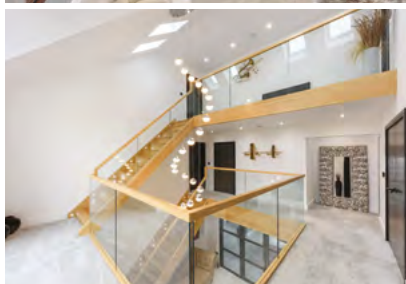
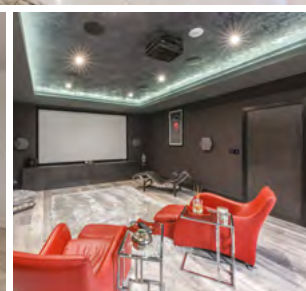
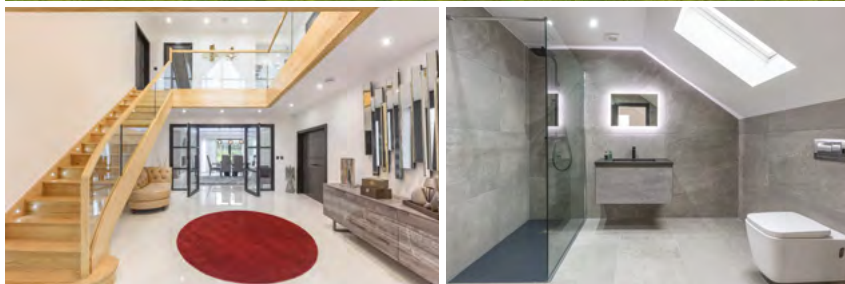
A state-of-the-art soundproof cinema room provides an immersive experience to rival even the largest of cinemas and has been designed with plush sound-absorbing wall panels and specialised acoustic treatments. The first floor is the epitome of luxury living with a lavish principal suite featuring a double-sided fire, snug area and a spa-like ensuite with a Japanese style toilet, double open shower, bath and his and hers sinks. A balcony overlooks the expansive rear garden.

Three additional bedrooms on this floor all play host to high-quality ensembles and could be transformed into a home office or gym. The second floor is home to two of the bedrooms, both with ensembles, and one with a separate kitchen area, ideal for extended family or guests.

The home has been designed with technology in mind, including a fingerprint secure entry system and an integrated speaker system throughout the property.

The property is set within a private gated community and offers close links to the A19, Teesside Airport and the cities of Middlesbrough, Hartlepool and Darlington. Sunderland and Newcastle are also both a short distance away. The historic coast of Durham and Teesside is a short drive away, and the surrounding countryside offers plentiful places for walking.

For more information, visit www.bradleyhall.co.uk/residential-properties/beaumont-wynyard/



Creo appoints strategic communications director to support client growth

Creo Comms has appointed Sheena Griffiths as Director of Strategic Communications to help boost ambitious growth plans and further strengthen the specialist expertise it offers to clients.

The Sunderland-based creative marketing agency is currently supporting some of the largest and most significant investment, urban regeneration and development projects coming out of the North East of England and represents regional, national and global clients across multiple sectors.

Sheena brings more than 25 years' experience working on both sides of the client-agency divide, for and on behalf of companies spanning energy, power and renewables/net zero, construction, housing and commercial development, manufacturing and more.

Her expertise supporting clients with stakeholder engagement, public affairs, crisis management, strategic PR and B2B marketing is seen as a key asset to help Creo further expand its portfolio and widen its reach across the North East and further afield.

Sheena commented: "Creo has established a very well-respected and reputable name within the creative and PR industries and is flying high providing meaningful strategic communications

support to businesses of all sizes. This ranges from SMEs driving growth and innovation, to major organisations delivering significant, high-worth projects on an international level.

"Often work is carried out behind the scenes and this is seen as critical to the on-going success that clients are witnessing. Therefore, the potential going forward for Creo and its customer base to make that next level step change is huge, so I'm delighted to join the company at this exciting time."

Creo Comms works with clients including Sunderland City, South Tyneside and Durham Councils, Square One Law, Transport North East, UK Land Estates, Komastu and NHS England.

Managing director, Louise Bradford, added: "We're delighted to welcome Sheena to the team at Creo.

"She brings a wealth of experience that complements the brilliant skills and expertise of the existing Creo team and I am really looking forward to working with her as we continue to grow the business."

More company details can be found at www.creocomms.co.uk

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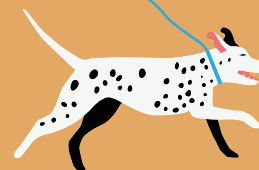
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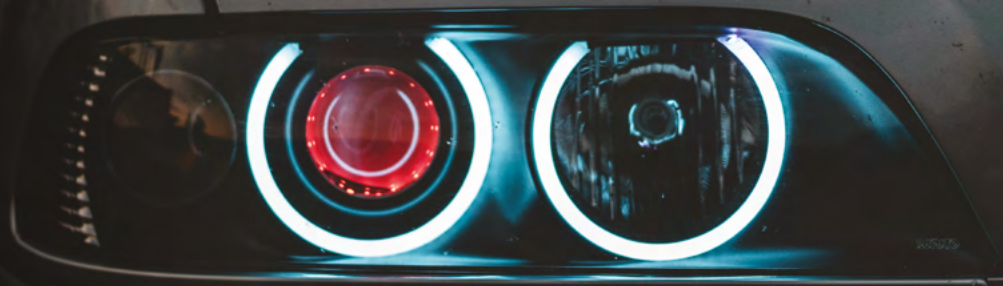


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of high-quality
workspace



**Surrounded by
places to eat,
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Getting from A to B... autonomously

Jon Leighton, managing director at Land Digital, explores the future of autonomous travel, revealing what could be in store when the worlds of technology and motors finally collide.

At one point in time, self-driving cars were just another cool sci-fi concept reserved for our imaginations (unless you were a young, sleek, crime-fighting David Hasselhoff, of course).

Yet, as technological advancements have evolved rapidly over the years, there has been a whole lot of talk and predictions about autonomous vehicles in the real world - how would they work and what benefits would they bring?

To date (and to the best of my knowledge), none of these predictions have come to pass just yet - at least not in the way they were envisioned. It's been over 40 years since the first episode of Knight Rider and I still haven't had a cohesive conversation with my car.

But, that's not to say the dawn of autonomous travel isn't almost upon us. San Francisco, for example, already has a fleet of self-driven vehicles that can take you from A to B within a specific area, completely autonomously. Think of them like the JohnnyCabs from Total Recall, but without the creepy robot driver in the front.

Don't be fooled into thinking this is just another hip new addition to Silicon Valley, either. Sunderland recently unveiled a pilot programme trialling autonomous shuttle buses that will provide an additional service between the city centre and university by following a specific travel corridor containing a large number of 5G cells along the route to support its navigation system. How cool is that?

With these developments in mind, it's safe to say that the wheels are definitely in motion for autonomous travel (and yes, that pun was very much intended). As a result, manufacturers are all rushing to create the first vehicle to achieve the highest level (5) of autonomy and, subsequently, be the first out on the roads. Yet despite Tesla and Google leading the way, it still isn't clear who will be first past the line.

When this major breakthrough is made it will mark a huge technical step forward, but we must also keep in mind that the regulations and governance will almost certainly be trailing behind. So, when this time inevitably comes, what will the future of our roads look like and how will autonomous travel change the experience of travelling from A to B?

Man vs machine

Both human-driven and self-driven vehicles will be on the road at the same time and while the autonomous vehicle will likely come at a higher upfront cost, significantly lower insurance premiums will make these vehicles the more cost-effective option. Insurance is a rather efficient method of nudging us to change our behaviour because, to steal a song title from AC/DC, money talks.

So why would autonomous vehicles have cheaper premiums? Well, while accidents will inevitably occur regardless of whether or not a human is behind the wheel, the total number of accidents is

likely to be greatly reduced. This is because the decision making in self-driving cars will always be consistent, compared to the unpredictability of a human behind the wheel. Let's be honest, who hasn't hit the lights on - um - amber, or forgotten to indicate when changing lanes?

But while we may think of this as simple human nature, the insurance companies consider it a payout waiting to happen. So, when this human decision making is replaced by a consistent set of rules for all scenarios - and not to mention the ability to improve on these rules based on experiences - this alternative will inevitably be seen as the safer (and therefore cheaper) option.

Of course, the other interesting implication of this is that driving a car yourself could become an activity exclusive to those who can afford to pay the higher insurance premiums. I don't think the privilege of starting your own car engine is quite what ABBA had in mind when imagining all the things they could do with some money, money, money. (Is that the first time someone has referenced an AC/DC and ABBA song in the same article?)

Ownership

I mentioned that self-driving cars may come at a higher price point than their manual counterparts, but this raises an even bigger question: is ownership of an autonomous vehicle even required? If you're not driving and you can be taken to your destination

on demand, is there any need to actually own the car you hop in?

Now I know what you're thinking: isn't this just like Uber nowadays? But while the choice of whether you owned an autonomous car would reflect your own circumstances and requirements, if availability was consistent, this would likely cause a major shift in buying habits.

That's because, without the requirement for a consistent supply of drivers, all we need is enough cars on the road. If autonomous vehicles are readily available as and when you need them, there are no busy periods, long waits, or struggles connecting to a driver like currently experienced with Uber.

As a result, having access to the ultimate pool car not only means that your vehicle spends a lot of time doing nothing, but also has the potential to bring huge economies of scale to the cost of being mobile.

Time

You'd be surprised at just how long we actually spend in a car travelling. For example, take a moment to think about how much time you spend driving, fuelling and parking each week. Now multiply that over an entire lifetime - we're not talking days or months, but years!

With the introduction of autonomous vehicles, this is how much time that would suddenly be available to you. Imagine that. It's the equivalent of finishing work a couple of hours early each day, or getting a three-day weekend at the end of each week.

Consider how stress-free travelling becomes in the process, too. Commuting to work? Just be outside at the correct time and hop in - easy as that. Travelling away for a break? Your holiday starts when the car pulls away, leaving you to kick back and relax - something that isn't possible when faced with many hours on the M1.

Traffic management

Since I've mentioned stress, let's take a second to imagine the impact autonomous travel would have on traffic management, too.

We've all been in this scenario: you're

stuck in traffic for ages and when it finally starts to disperse, you realise that there was nothing to cause the hold up. Instead, there had been an incident on the opposite side of the road, yet this caused the traffic flow to come grinding to a halt on both sides.

Or take filtering as another example. This dark art of the roads can bring even the most free-flowing roads to a complete halt, for what is often just mere metres of actual interruption. With autonomous vehicles, these instances would no longer occur. While these common traffic issues can cause us all sorts of problems, with self-driving cars, vehicles would be able to seamlessly adapt to the flow of traffic without ever having to come to a standstill.

Speed

Providing your autonomous vehicle isn't Herbie The Love Bug, speeding would no longer be an issue. After all, you're not in control. The good news is that means no new points on your licence (if you even needed a licence anymore) and no more speed awareness courses to attend. Result.

The bad news? I'd expect a new fine to be introduced in order to make up for that lost revenue - and judging by some of the drivers on my commute to the office this morning, there would be a lot of lost revenue to recover.

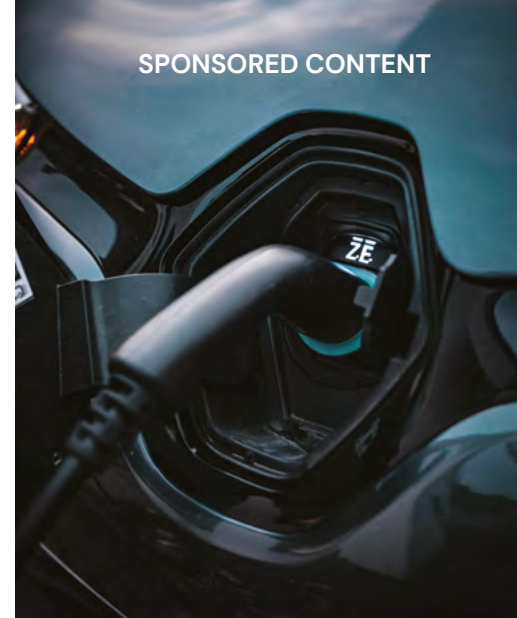
This fine would likely be something that reflected our changing road habits and laws, like the need to keep your car cameras clean, for example.

Breakdowns

What happens when an autonomous vehicle breaks down? Will it still be as simple as checking under the hood, or will you require a degree in code to get you back on your way?

Well, the most likely scenario (particularly if you don't own the car) is that a replacement service would be available to you very quickly, especially if you were part of a car club.

Picture this: an autonomous breakdown vehicle comes to take away the car with no human intervention, while the other cars on the road have all been made aware of the incident and have adjusted their trip accordingly, meaning that for all other



travellers, the breakdown was not even noticed and barely slowed them down.

This would be very cool to see, and almost sounds like something out of a sci-fi film - granted, not a very exciting one, but you get my point.

Punctuality

OK, so we have more time, less traffic and fewer breakdowns all contributing to a far greater efficiency when travelling. So, what's the downside?

Well, it all depends on how punctual you are right now. Transport and traffic have become a staple excuse for being late and while this is often the truth, these reasons can also sometimes be abused. But with autonomous vehicles, the validity of this excuse would quickly come into question - bad news for anyone guilty of hitting that snooze button one too many times.

That's because, with autonomous cars, your vehicle could be connected to your calendar and even communicate with you via your phone (hey, turns out we aren't too far away from KITT after all!)

With traffic flows now predictable, you could receive the specific timeframe needed to reach your destination, meaning that blaming the traffic for your poor punctuality would become about as effective as blaming the dog for eating your homework in the digital age.

The Beatles famously once sang, 'baby, you can drive my car', but it's clear that in the coming years, it's technology that's 'gonna be the star'.

While we can't be sure exactly when the breakthrough will come and at what point the associated governance will enable mainstream global adoption, the dawn of autonomous travel is almost here.

And while, like any new tech, it likely won't come without its hiccups, autonomous vehicles promise to completely re-imagine the way we travel and, as a result, revolutionise the way we live and work.*

*This is of course assuming that we won't just be able to teleport everywhere by that point... now that would be cool.





Portfolio North launches specialist PR Hub

Portfolio North has launched a new digital platform for PR professionals, agencies and business owners, which will share their news to an audience of up to 140,000 views per story every month.

The Portfolio North PR Hub will offer its members an exclusive opportunity to run stories on the Portfolio North website under various authors and include backlinks to their own websites.

Premium members will have unlimited stories, articles shared on the Portfolio North website, included in its e-newsletter, website homepage features, consideration for its print edition as well as a print magazine subscription.

The platform will provide users with three options, a standard package, premium membership and the ability to post a single story.

Cassie Moyse, founder and director of Portfolio North said: "I am delighted to be launching a dedicated platform to allow PR professionals and local businesses to share their news in a cost-effective way.

"Our website has grown month-on-month since its launch and in total we are now reaching 100,000 views every month, which is set to grow further with the recent appointment of our dedicated and experienced senior digital executive Charlotte Cooper.

"This is certainly the next stage in our evolution - and will allow us to invest in further developing our website and digital

presence as well as in quality independent journalism which is free for our readers.

"This content will be used to attract higher audience figures of relevant readers for the businesses which use the platform and their clients, driving more traffic their way, building their brands and creating new business opportunities for all.

"I've spent almost 15 years in the PR and marketing industry and I know what my clients and I need to reach our goals. And this is it!"

Speaking about maintaining its integrity and quality, Cassie continued: "We have very clear editorial guidelines which all members have to read and agree to before joining. Articles will still be vetted by our editorial team before uploading, which will maintain the quality of our content."

While Portfolio North has been running as a print magazine for seven years in the North East, the business and lifestyle publication for aspirational professionals across the North East launched online in 2022 and has committed to maintaining its print presence and growing its digital reach since.

The publication also launched its Yorkshire edition in 2023 along with a dedicated social media presence,

e-newsletter and section on its website for business and lifestyle news from Yorkshire businesses.

As well as its website, the publication also operates a twice weekly e-newsletter, social media accounts, a free app and is set to launch an app subscription which will include exclusive content and offers from local businesses.

The multi-platform magazine has collaborated with over 70 PR professionals since its launch, sharing over 2,500 positive news stories about the North East which have been submitted to the platform since its launch.

North East creative marketing agency, Creo Comms, is one of the agency's which regularly contributes to Portfolio North.

Founder and managing director, Louise Bradford, said: "We have always found the Portfolio North upload process to be quick and easy, providing our team with a great way of self-uploading content and securing back-links.

"Given the current media landscape, it has proven really useful being able to self-upload content that is relevant for its readership and so we are looking forward to seeing how the PR Hub helps us deliver even more results for our clients."

PORTFOLIO NORTH

Do you have a great story to tell on behalf of a client or your own business?

Do you want your news to reach aspirational professionals and the business community across the North East and Yorkshire?

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www.portfolionorth.co.uk

Lessons in life and business

Sean Donkin,
CEO,
The Inn Collection Group







Sean Donkin

The best piece of business advice I've ever been given is to think like the other person.

It sounds like a bit of a cliché, but whatever task you are undertaking, whether it's from a customer, an employee, a competitor or a vendor's perspective, it's so important to put yourself in their shoes if you have any hope in satisfying their demands.

My dad has been my biggest teacher in life.

He's a great bloke, who is much more of a friend than a father. From a pretty young age, I was taught that everything has a value - and very rarely a cash value. Family, friendship and loyalty are massive drivers for me and things which I treasure dearly. Dad had a pretty firm belief in listening more than speaking - he used to say you have two ears and one mouth for a reason - and I think that holds pretty true, which is why a lot of people probably find me quite quiet when they meet me.

One of the most significant things I've learned about succeeding in business is to surround yourself with people who inspire you, or provoke private thinking.

Our team has been incredible through our journey at Inn Collection Group. It's amazing how many good ideas come from those closest to you, so having the right people by your side is pretty high on the list of what it takes to succeed.

As I reflect on my life so far, one thing I've learned about myself is that I'm pretty resilient, caring and tend to put others interests ahead of my own.

Sometimes that can be seen as a weakness, but I'm a pretty big believer in getting out of life what you put in.

When I think about who has been one of my biggest teachers in business, my thoughts turn to our founder, Keith Liddell, who was instrumental in guiding me through my early career and believing in me to take the business forward.

Working under him for over a decade gave me a solid foundation in how to conduct myself in the wider world, specifically following the mantra of "when you're wrong admit it, but when you're right, fight".

When it comes to life lessons, I've learned that my wife is always right and there is zero point in fighting that.

It's always nice to go home after a busy period and see the family and no matter how many 'important' decisions are needed to be made every day at work, my wife will always find a way of putting me back in my place. Oh, and nothing good ever happens after 2am - that's another good lesson I've learned along the way.



One of the hardest lessons I've learned in business is to accept that no matter how good you think you are, you can't do it all on your own.

Everyone needs a sounding board and support system to get them through the ups and downs that we all encounter. The trick is to find people who you trust and believe in and be there for them in return.

Life tests you sometimes – but you always learn something from it.

Being a parent has its challenges. As much as I love my kids, they can be testing and certainly don't follow the two ears belief of their grandfather. Trying to make the right decisions for them are possibly the most important ones I will ever make and those are more often than not pretty unpopular. I think that follows through into business; having a guiding hand on direction is so important, even if, in the moment, those who it immediately affects can't see the reasons just yet.

When I think about what it takes to succeed in life and business, I realise that the requirements are exactly the same.

Ask yourself what success looks like to you – try to define it – and measure yourself by that and not what others tell you it is, or should be.

When it comes to progressing in business, I've learned that thinking you have a ladder to climb is probably the wrong way to look at it.

It's more about learning each and every day so each rung is a lesson learned or experience gained. The idea that you must climb a ladder to get somewhere tends to lead to short termism. Focus on the overall goal, or your own definition of success, and each step you take will eventually get you there.

You learn a lot about people and how they operate throughout your life and your work. One of the biggest takeaways I've discovered is that it's ok to not get on with everyone you cross paths with.

I've learned that it's best not to talk poorly of people you don't care for or respect and just do your best to avoid them.

One life lesson I wish I'd learned sooner is no number sixes allowed.

If you know, you know!

If I could give my 35-year-old self some advice, knowing what I know now, it'd be to maybe start to look a bit further ahead.

Looking back, I think I tended to have a narrow vision, whereas now I tend to look long and wide.

www.inncollectiongroup.com



Smart Vision: leading the charge in revolutionary LED screen technology

In the vibrant landscape of big screen technology, Smart Vision stands tall as a beacon of innovation and excellence. Based just outside the city of Newcastle, this pioneering company has gone from strength to strength in the industry with its cutting-edge LED screen technology, development prowess and seamless installation services.

Over the years, the company has not only cemented its presence in the North East, but has also made significant strides across the wider landscape of the UK. Smart Vision's journey is one of relentless innovation and unwavering dedication to excellence. Born out of the growing demand for large, high-quality LED screens, the company emerged as a natural extension of its Sister Company, Smart Outdoor. As the North East's premier outdoor media giant, Smart Outdoor recognised the need to evolve beyond traditional billboards and embrace the digital revolution. Thus, Smart Vision was born, with a singular mission: to push the boundaries of outdoor advertising through pixel-perfect precision and unparalleled visual impact.

What sets Smart Vision apart is its unmatched expertise in crafting and deploying large-scale LED screens that defy the elements. Their installations are built to withstand the harshest of British weather conditions while delivering stunning visuals that captivate audiences. Each screen is meticulously engineered to ensure optimal performance even in the brightest sunlight, ensuring maximum visibility and engagement.

While Smart Vision's roots may lie in outdoor advertising, its influence extends far beyond traditional billboards. The company has successfully ventured into diverse

industries, including bars, food halls, sports clubs, and even private residences. Imagine savouring the thrill of live sports events on a massive outdoor screen or transforming your backyard into a cinematic oasis with a state-of-the-art LED display. Smart Vision makes these dreams a reality, leveraging its expertise to create immersive experiences that leave a lasting impression.

Smart Vision's commitment to excellence extends beyond mere installation services. The company takes a considered approach to every project, meticulously analysing venue specifications, audience demographics, and client objectives to deliver tailor-made solutions that exceed expectations. Whether you're a sports club seeking to enhance fan engagement or a venue owner looking to attract new customers, Smart Vision offers a strategic advantage that sets you apart from the competition.

The success stories speak volumes about Smart Vision's impact across various industries. Take, for instance, the collaboration with Durham Cricket Club, where Smart Vision created a monumental scoreboard integrated seamlessly into the stadium architecture. Not only does it provide real-time updates and thrilling replays, but it also enhances the spectator experience, elevating the game to new heights.

Maximise your investment with Smart Vision

Gain a return on your investment in a Smart Vision Screen by leveraging a revenue stream back into your business, from selling ad space at your venue. The installation at Stack Seaburn showcases how effectively this can be done. The seaside food hall promotes local businesses throughout each day, as well as inbetween the key sporting fixtures, while the venue is busy and all eyes are on that impressive screen.

As we look to the future, the possibilities with Smart Vision are endless. The company remains at the forefront of technological innovation, constantly exploring new frontiers and pushing the boundaries of what's possible with LED screen technology. From advancements in resolution and interactivity to the integration of augmented reality and artificial intelligence, Smart Vision is poised to shape the future of outdoor media.

Elevate your business with Smart Vision

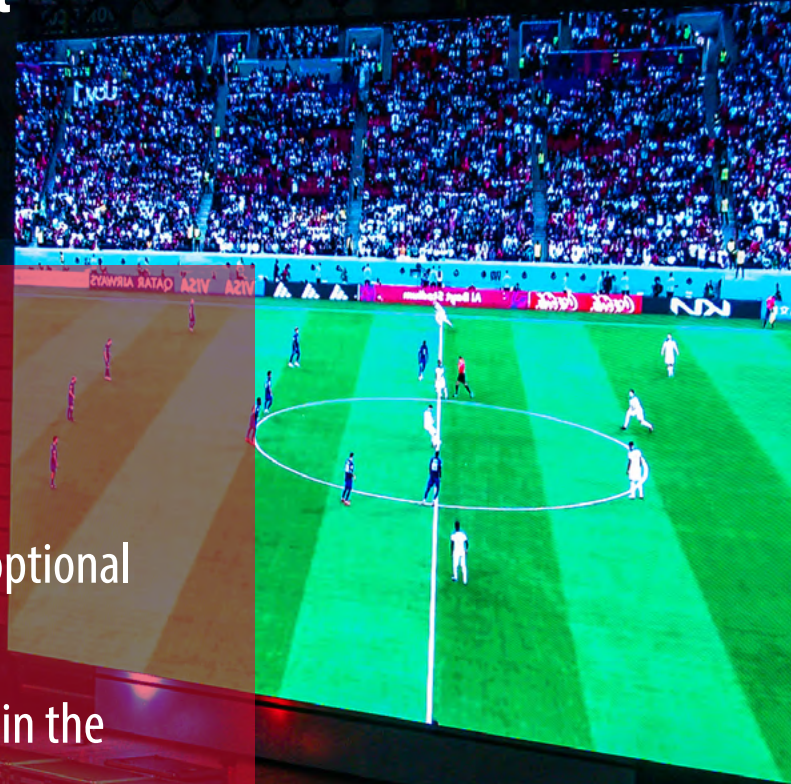
Smart Vision isn't just about LED screens—it's about transforming ordinary spaces into extraordinary experiences. Whether you're a business owner, event organiser, or visionary entrepreneur, Smart Vision offers the tools, expertise, and creativity to bring your vision to life.

www.smartvisionscreens.co.uk

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An introduction to Mincoffs' family team

Mincoffs' family department is acclaimed for going the extra mile for its clients.

There are several situations in life when someone can anticipate that they may need to instruct a solicitor, from selling a business to drafting a will. Family law cases, however, are a little different as no one enters a marriage or relationship expecting it to end.

And, while some legal matters can be relatively straightforward to deal with, family cases are often the opposite. This is where the role of a family solicitor comes in and Mincoffs boasts an expert team, led by partner Emily Cannell.

Having joined Mincoffs as a solicitor 10 years ago, Emily quickly climbed the ranks to become an associate just a few years later, before being promoted to partner in 2021.

Now, Emily works closely with associate solicitor Rachel Smith, solicitor Jessica Nicholson and consultant Lyn Rutherford, with more than 85 years' of combined experience across the team.

Based in Newcastle, but taking instructions from clients located all over the UK and overseas, the team has seen more than their fair share of complex and unusual cases over the years.

"No two family matters are ever the

same," said Emily. "We take care to get to know each of our clients individually in order to provide a tailored service for their particular needs."

One of the ways the team achieves this is through a free initial consultation, ensuring that clients can describe their situation and voice any concerns or worries in depth, without having to worry about the clock.

It's not unheard of for the team to go above and beyond for their clients, such as being at the other end of the phone on a weekend or evening if an emergency situation strikes out of hours.

While each member of the team represents cases across the entire spectrum of family law, Emily has extensive experience dealing with matters involving high net worth individuals, which often encompass complex business structures.

This is also when the department benefits from being part of a full-service firm, with the ability to draw on experts in estate planning, corporate and employment law - to name just a few - all under one roof when necessary.

Elsewhere in the family department, associate Rachel Smith has expertise and

a keen interest in private law children matters - especially those with more complex elements such as fact finding and applications to relocate overseas.

In fact, the whole team are never one to stray away from complicated cases, with a recent testimonial given to global legal directory, Legal 500, describing them as "a highly skilled team of individuals, often specialising in the obscure and unusual cases no other family department would touch. This is the true definition of an expert."

The same directory, along with leading legal research company Chambers and Partners, consistently highlights Mincoffs' family team in its annual rankings and has done so for a number of years.

"We've built an incredibly strong team over the last decade and we're continuing to grow, with Jessica joining us last year to assist with an increased workload and take the lead on her own cases," said Emily.

"Due to the nature of our work, we are often instructed by clients during what can be an incredibly distressing time, so we pride ourselves on providing not only a high quality service, but delivering it with compassion and sensitivity too."

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

Mincoffs Solicitors



TESTIMONIAL

“Comprehensive overall management of lettings, finance and maintenance. An excellent staff team.”

Trevor – holiday home owner



Your property – Host & Stay's priority

As property-owners seek to capitalise on the growing holiday rental market, the need for efficient management solutions has never been greater. Host & Stay – the fastest growing, family-owned holiday home management business in the UK right now – is on hand to help, with a focus on helping owners maximise their income while removing the stress of self-management.



TESTIMONIAL

"Staff are always professional, polite and helpful. Guided us through the early stages of setting up our holiday let. Offer a full range of services to support your holiday let business if you need it, including cleaning, maintenance and regulatory checks, giving total peace of mind."

Karen – holiday home owner



New methods for new times

Whether you already own an existing holiday home or you're looking to enter the short-term holiday let market, Host & Stay offers the most comprehensive, fully-managed service in the North of England. Host & Stay's success lies in its commitment to exceptional service, meticulous property management and strategic marketing initiatives. Recognising that each property is unique, its experienced team works closely with property owners to tailor management solutions that suit their individual needs.

Whether it's completing changeovers, coordinating maintenance jobs, or communicating with guests, Host & Stay provides peace of mind so property owners can enjoy the benefits of their investment hassle-free.

Central to Host & Stay's modern approach is the utilisation of professional, editorial photography, 3D tours and compelling property descriptions. In an increasingly competitive market, visual imagery and captivating descriptions are essential for attracting potential guests. Host & Stay's team of skilled photographers and copywriters ensure that the holiday homes they manage stand out from the crowd.

Unrivalled visibility

By partnering with leading holiday rental websites and employing targeted marketing campaigns, Host & Stay effectively reach a wide audience of potential guests to drive bookings and optimise occupancy rates throughout the year. Its extensive network includes 60 global platforms to ensure maximum visibility.

As well as digital marketing, Host & Stay strategically leverages partnerships with local businesses to support the local area. Whether it's securing exclusive discounts for guests or promoting nearby activities and events, Host & Stay goes the extra mile to create memorable experiences, fostering positive reviews and repeat bookings.

Putting Northumberland on the map

With its striking scenery, stunning coastline and historical attractions, it's no surprise that Northumberland is a popular tourist destination attracting guests all year-round. Northumberland's popularity as a tourist destination translates into robust rental yields for holiday let properties. With rental yields ranging from 10% to 15%, investors can stand to reap significant financial rewards.

Unlike traditional buy-to-let properties, which often experience periods of vacancy, holiday lets in Northumberland have the potential to generate steady income throughout the year.

In addition to attractive rental yields, investors can also benefit from the potential for capital appreciation. The value of property in Northumberland has been steadily increasing in recent years, making it an appealing option for those looking to build wealth over the long term.

Investing in a holiday let in Northumberland can offer tax advantages compared to traditional buy-to-let properties. One such advantage is the availability of embedded capital allowances, which can result in significant tax savings for property owners. It's essential to seek professional advice to fully understand and maximise these tax benefits.

For more information, visit hostandstay.co.uk/host

With a growing portfolio and more than prosperous plans in the pipeline, Aykley Group is making its mark – and standing out from the crowd – in the region’s property landscape.

Man with a plan

We speak to the man behind the brand and Durham native – Imad Ali – about entrepreneurship, family values and his ambition to set a new bar in the North East in both new build homes and construction.





Imad Ali

As the saying goes, great things come from humble beginnings – especially in the world of business – and a number of today’s most successful entrepreneurs started small before making it large.

Imad Ali is no exception. Inspired by his parents’ determination to create a fruitful future for their family and powered by a natural desire to make it on his own two feet and propel what they had built to the next level, his journey has taken him from the shop floor to the top of the region’s property world.

Today, he is director of Aykley Group – a burgeoning property business, with roots in his home town of Durham. Under its umbrella lies an impressive portfolio of businesses, stretching property, retail, construction, new build homes and, soon, leisure.

He is no stranger to reaching his ambitions – and reaping the lucrative rewards in return – and yet he remains humble and refreshingly aware of what and who helped him arrive at where he is today.

“I grew up around entrepreneurship in its purest form, learning every day from mum and dad,” he says.

“My parents immigrated to this country in the early 1980s without a pound in their pocket – they literally didn’t have two pennies to rub together and nowhere to stay.

“And yet, through sheer hard work and perseverance, they opened a retail shop in Durham, before moving into the private rental and student accommodation sectors and, eventually, making a name for themselves in the property game. Their portfolio now is breathtaking when you look at where they started.

“Their success meant they were able to send me to Durham School – one of the UK’s most prestigious private boarding schools – where I was taught alongside children and grandchildren of some of the region’s biggest names in business. It felt like a prestigious life education in and out of the classroom and I was really fortunate to have that kind of start in life.

“It goes without saying, but my parents are my biggest inspiration. They set the foundation for my life and their work ethic is hard-wired in me. Their ethos was, and still is, all about staying hungry and never being comfortable – because it can all fall apart tomorrow if you let it.

“My mum, in particular, remains a driving force in my life. She keeps me grounded, reminding me of my potential and to keep working hard.”

After leaving school, Imad cut his teeth in retail within the four walls of his parents’ shop. Soon after, he began growing the family’s portfolio of properties and student lettings, before setting his sights on residential and commercial ventures and

corporate acquisitions and disposals up and down the country.

Eventually, his path led him to construction and new build housing in which Pimlico Homes and Aykley Construction – which are a part of Aykley Group – are now frontrunners.

“There isn’t an area of the property industry I didn’t have a hand in. I studied the game as much as I worked in it – and that’s an attitude I’ll have for life.

“I’ve seen property developments from spades in the ground, to the handing over of the keys. Overseeing those processes front to back has given me a real competitive advantage. To know your industry and also you need to know what can go wrong operationally, is just as crucial as knowing the market from an opportunity perspective.

“I guess that’s what given me such a clear vision on how to tear up the manual for new builds with our Pimlico Homes project and the reason Aykley Group is becoming so diverse.”

2024 marks the first chapter for Pimlico Homes – the Group’s first venture within the new build market.

Buyers from all over the UK fell and fought for the first in its signature series – Pimlico Court – and the site sold off plan almost instantaneously.

Promising luxury living in the heart of Durham – moments away from its bustling shops and nightlife – the exclusive courtyard development plays host to four individually-designed executive homes.

The site is perfectly positioned on one of the city’s most exclusive and desirable streets, surrounded by a peaceful riverside landscape, and each home offers unrivalled views of the city’s iconic cathedral and castle.

“Pimlico Court’s arrival saw us set an all-time record for pound per square foot in the new build market in Durham City – quite literally setting a new bar,” says Imad.

“We wanted to re-define luxury living, re-shape the new build market and make our mark in the UK, starting right here on our own doorstep in the North East – and that’s what we’ve achieved.

“The development was carefully built by the construction arm of the business – Aykley Construction – and is a striking example of what our team is capable of doing. The results speak for themselves, complemented by signature Pimlico interiors and architectural design by award-winning architects JDDK.

“It’s the start of something really exciting for the construction side of things. We have some huge projects coming





Shoukat Ali - group chairman of Aykley Group
 Imad Ali - CEO of Aykley Group
 Muminah Ali - chief operating officer of Aykley Group
 Sakhi Sultana Ali - honorary chairwoman of Aykley Group

up in the next 12 months and a pipeline of up to £65 million worth of developments that will turn more than a few heads."

Included in that line-up is an exclusive development in Ponteland's grand and sought-after Darras Hall estate, which the Group believe will be in high demand based on location alone.

Imad and his team have enlisted the help of Sarah Rahal, a world-renowned interior designer and founder of popular design company, Haute Interiors, to execute the homes' modern good looks, along with an award-winning architect, who will be announced in due course.

"It's going to be one of my favourite projects to date and I'm itching to get going," says Imad.

Elsewhere, the Aykley Group continues to go from strength to strength.

Its property arm, which has been around for 30 years, continues to pave the way in HMOs, residential lettings and commercial lettings throughout the region and beyond.

And it's set for another prosperous year as Imad and his team prepare to not only grow its existing services ahead of the market, but also reveal a number of purpose-built student accommodation sites over the coming months, under the arm of Aykley Developments as well as the results of a restoration project that will see the Group transform a Durham landmark into something special, both to be constructed by sister Aykley Construction.

"We're thrilled to be adding Court Inn in Durham city centre to our portfolio of work. It is a prestigious free house with a fantastic history behind it, set in an incredible location, and we're really looking forward to breathing new life into it," says Imad.

"We plan on building a new bar and restaurant in the heart of the

building, crowned by extraordinary short term let apartments, which will fall under our short-term accommodation lettings brand STÁ, Luxury STA your way - our interpretation of luxury short term stays.

"The interiors will be really unique and we'll be taking bookings at the end of June."

Looking to the future, it seems this young entrepreneur is in no hurry to slow down or - as his mum puts it "become comfortable" - any time soon. A self-confessed go-getter and self-motivator, for Imad, it seems the only way is up.

"We've more than doubled our turnover already. We will be doing the same again next year and will be on course to reach £150 million in the next three years. People say it's ambitious, but doubling every year has to be the goal," he says.

"But this doesn't just happen overnight - we have had steady growth in all our other companies, which has set the foundation to be able to be so ambitious.

"Defining - and redefining - our standards will continue to be key to our growth and development. Watching our competitors grow is a huge driver for me - it's infectious to watch. Studying the way they operate challenges my thought process around how I can be better and be different - I find it inspiring.

"For me, it's all about striving forward and being better than I was before. I always saw myself in property, but never that alone. There are so many different aspects of culture I want to have an impact on and, in my eyes, there really is no limit.

"I'll never be satisfied with just one thing. Carrying the torch for our family was a given, but to do things my way was always the goal."

www.aykleygroup.com



New season, new business

With the blossom of spring, longer days and a glimpse of warmer weather comes the blank slate of a new financial year. This is the time where businesses flesh out fresh ideas for the coming months, exploring additional opportunities for revenue streams and reflecting on what company-wide change they want to see by the following April.

Demonstrating commitment to net zero and making business operations more sustainable are increasingly high on every board's agenda. But what if you could achieve all this, while generating an additional revenue stream of passive income?

Partnering with the Green Energy Advice Bureau (GEAB) makes that proposition a reality. Our editor spoke to Louisa Brimacombe-Wiard, partnerships manager at GEAB, to learn more about its partnerships programme.

Can you give us an overview of what a partnership looks like with The Green Energy Advice Bureau?

GEAB offers energy procurement and sustainability solutions to businesses. While many of our customers work with us directly, a great deal of clients actually come through a business referral or recommendation. The recommending party is a commercial partner of GEAB.

Partners recommend our service either via their website, via email communications, newsletters, over the phone or even face to face. We can provide marketing collateral, product information and tailored packages for their customer base.

There is no blueprint for a partnership with GEAB and that's because each business has different requirements and customer journeys. We make sure that a partnership is about working together to find the smoothest, most natural way to make customer referrals.

Can any business partner with GEAB?

As long as your company works with other businesses, GEAB is interested in exploring a partnership. The great news for the energy and sustainability proposition is that every business can benefit from cutting costs and consumption, while becoming more sustainable. That means that it's highly likely that your customers would be interested in having a conversation with one of our consultants.

We have a wide panel of partners and services. In fact, one of our key sustainability products is offered through a partner - Pulse. Pulse provides a market-leading Energy Monitoring System (EMS), which gives businesses unparalleled insight into their energy consumption at circuit level.

Through a mutual referral system, both GEAB and Pulse benefit by boosting our product offering and revenue streams. What's more, our customers are happy to have so many of their needs taken care of through one contact point.

Another partner, Flotilla, has launched with GEAB as a key supplier for its clients. Flotilla's goal is to map out a 'journey to net zero' for each customer, providing a tailored action plan to help customers reduce their emissions and gain insight into their energy consumption. It is recommending our consultancy services under its sustainability offering.

We have CapEx free solutions for all our sustainability products and extend this unique offer to any clients recommended by partners - that means you can offer this service to your customers too.

Another example of a partner whose goal is to help customers 'go greener' is Optimise Your Energy, which is working with GEAB to boost its product offering. Optimise Your Energy specialise in voltage optimisation (VO), which complements our energy consultation and sustainability products. We have found such strong synergy between our services that GEAB also refers customers to them for a VO consultation.

If you think your clients or members could benefit from GEAB's services, contact Louisa Brimacombe-Wiard to discuss a partnership opportunity at partnerships@geab.com

If you are a business who's interested in a free energy and sustainability consultation, please call 0191 821 0049 or visit www.geab.com/portfolio-north

What about partners who aren't working in energy or sustainability?

GEAB's commercial relationships go far beyond the sustainability sector. We work with companies of all shapes and sizes whose customers could benefit from expert advice on energy procurement and efficiency (and really, who couldn't benefit from a free consultation?)

Some partners are industry-specific membership associations, some are financial advisors helping businesses cut costs, some are real estate companies, sports clubs and so on. The possibilities are endless.

We tailor our proposition to each partner and their membership or client base. Every business needs energy and the majority are looking to reduce emissions and source greener energy products.

Therefore, if you work with businesses, there is no reason why you can't recommend customers to GEAB and generate both customer satisfaction and an extra revenue stream to your company.

How do the commercials work?

In return for any recommendations, GEAB will pay a referral fee to the partner. The commercial arrangements vary based on the client base and promotional activity carried out, so this is something that will be agreed on by both parties at the point of signature.

How do we know we can trust GEAB with our customers?

GEAB has just been awarded the Service Excellence Award by the North East Federation of Small Businesses. We are a customer-focused consultancy service, which is why we have such a high renewal rate.

We consistently reach above 90% month on month and you can check out our reviews on Trustpilot (www.uk.trustpilot.com/review/geab.com) What's more, we can work with businesses of any shape or size - our expertise spans the market and we are determined to find the right deal for each customer.





Berwick

135 Main Street, Spittal,
Berwick-upon-Tweed. TD15 1RP
01289 306 784

Newcastle

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Two design-led studios displaying a range of living spaces created to inspire you. Our friendly designers are here to offer their wealth of experience, knowledge and design intelligence to your project. With a history of quality products, prestigious service and boundless design, trust us to help you find your perfect kitchen, bedroom & living space.





Lifestyle

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

Beauty standards



Nicola Roberts, head of quality at Direct Skills Group, reveals what she loves most about her role – and why budding beauticians should consider learning their craft with the leading training provider.



What inspired you to embark on a career in beauty therapy?

After graduating, I continued to work at the salon where I had completed my apprenticeship and took on a more senior role. Later down the line, I decided to embark on a teaching degree at university, with the aim of becoming a beauty therapy tutor. Half way through my degree, Direct Skills Group was recruiting for a full-time tutor and offered me the position.

I guess you could say the rest is history - I left the salon, joined the teaching team at college and I've been here ever since. This summer, I will have been working in the industry, in both salon and college for 20 years, which I can't quite believe.

Tell us about your role at Direct Skills Group...

After many years working as a tutor in Level 3 advanced apprenticeships in beauty therapy, I've now moved into the role of Head of Quality, which I'm really enjoying.

It's my job to oversee the delivery of our training courses within beauty therapy and ensure that the quality is kept and remains as high as possible across the business - even as it grows and expands into new cities.

It's a busy and varied role - and I'm still learning every day - but I feel my experience as a student, a working beauty therapist and a tutor helps to give me the tools and knowledge I need.

What does a typical week at work look like for you?

No two days are the same - which I really like. But on an average week, I spend my time between timetabling exams and classes, overseeing all our beauty tutors, apprenticeships and adult learners - for whom we're steadily growing our course options - while ensuring the quality is maintained and our delivery is to the highest of standards.

I'm also in the classroom as a tutor one day a week, teaching our slightly older students who are in their second year of training. I'll always have a love for teaching, so it's wonderful to be able to incorporate it into my working week. I also work closely with the ESFA (Education and Skills Funding Agency), as well as Ofsted, to ensure Direct Skills Group is doing everything it can to obtain fantastic grades from an educational perspective.

Why should those in search of a career in beauty therapy choose to train with Direct Skills Group?

Our commitment to delivering courses of the highest standard possible and the quality of the training we deliver. The fact that our tutors still work in the industry helps us set the bar high.

Not only are they well-versed in delivering exceptional, up-to-date courses, they're also highly-experienced individuals who know how salons operate today, what employers are looking for, what the biggest trends in the industry are, and so on.

This first-hand experience is a huge benefit to our students and ensures they're as prepared and as confident as they can be when it's time to enter the world of work.

What are your favourite aspects of your job?

Being able to pass on the knowledge I've gained over the years and sharing my experience with future therapists is a great feeling.

I'd like to think that because I was once a student here myself, they can look at my story and see which areas of work are open to them. Whether that's a therapist, a tutor or another role within the industry.

I also really enjoy the fact that I get to touch base with so many different people across the business - from our managing director, Lewis, and training director, Rebecca, to the governing boards and our tutors on the front line. It's a fantastic, fulfilling and varied role that keeps me on my toes.

For more information about Direct Skills Group and the range of training courses it offers, visit www.directskillsgroup.co.uk

DIRECTSKILLS
GROUP

Brick by brick, Pimlico Homes is stacking up its fort in the new build market

The first edition in the Pimlico Homes series, Pimlico Court, sold out off plan almost instantaneously from its inception earlier this year.

Well-placed in an iconic location and showcasing innovative design, Pimlico Court tugged at Durham's heartstrings. But the chords didn't just resonate locally, with buyers and interest coming from the capital to battle for the exclusive development.

2024 marks the first chapter for Pimlico Homes, however any talk of being a new kid on the block would be off brand. The Ali family, including director, Imad Ali, have 30 years of experience in the property game under their belt - and Imad's vision was to "redefine luxury living" with a statement site in the new build market.

Being described as a 'once in a lifetime opportunity' was not an exaggeration in Pimlico's case. Nestled next door to Durham School, with an unobstructed view of the city's historic cathedral, this was a site unimaginable to host a new development. It took the ambitious local group to spot the gap in the market.

Director, Imad Ali, says: "Being a Durham native, I have always understood the importance of our city's history, as well as its beauty. It was my vision to introduce a fresh look at modern living that managed to co-exist among the stunning historic features of the area."

Paying tribute to the city, Pimlico directed an incredible drone video to showcase the location, which is gathering steam on YouTube in the hundreds of thousands of views. The video can be viewed directly via the QR code at the bottom of this article.

The drone visuals also provide an insight into how central the location is; Durham's riverside on the doorstep and the site is within a minute's walk into the bustle of the city centre.



Aykley
Group

PIMLICO COURT





"Location is going to be an extraordinary feature of all future developments. We're selling lifestyles, not just homes," says Imad.

All the co-ordinates point to Pimlico planting pins on the UK map in many of its major cities. Imad's sights, we learn, are on the north - not just the North East - fuelled by a no limits attitude.

"The next 18 months plans are already nailed on in-house and will soon be announced. We will definitely be turning a few heads," he says.

The build was carried out by Aykley Construction - owned by Imad - which certainly understood and met the brief - with modern living at the forefront. After all, one of Pimlico's core values is "future-proofing your home".

Energy-efficient air-sourced heat pumps and electronic vehicle charging points in the driveways feature, along with distinctive textures throughout the exterior which stand out from the crowd in the new build sector and promise to cut an unmistakable figure in the central skyline.

Interiors-wise, the brand's tagline - 'The Pimlico Difference' - really comes to life. Enlisting LUSSO sanitary, Quooker taps, Elica Nikola Tesla Hobs, Dekton surfaces, Bosch Home kitchenware, the fixtures feel like a 'who's who' hit List.

"We wanted the process to be seamless for clients to move in and to be able to hit standards we aspire to in our own life," says Imad.

"Pimlico Court was the first in a signature series, setting our standards from the off. The tagline "building your dream home" sounds ambitious, but that fits everything about this project."

So, if we are to judge Pimlico Homes on merit with its entry into the housing market, then we have to take a breath; the first development has set a new record in the city of Durham for pound per square foot.

Raising eyebrows and glasses alike, awards are surely in the offing for this milestone as we move through 2024.

Quite literally "setting the standard for new builds", Imad said: "These things don't happen by chance. Late nights, early mornings, calling on every contact, calling up on every bit of knowledge we have gained over the years - it all amounted to this. Recruitment and procurement were everything.

"If we hadn't had experience in all the different areas of the property market, then we would have never known the ingredients for a recipe like Pimlico Court."

"It takes award-winning interior designers, out-of-the-box architects, incredible brands and immaculate builders. We took an all-star approach to quite literally build dream homes.

"Life is short - we wanted to make something unique come to life. Now we have the bug for that, we will be putting our foot on the pedal with everything we have for our future sites."

For more information or to register your interest in future developments visit www.pimlico.homes
For regular updates, follow Pimlico Homes on social media at @pimlicohomes



Village appeal

Three villages in the North East have placed on The Telegraph's list of the 48 "poshest" villages in the UK.

Since the pandemic, thousands of people have chosen to leave the rat race of the cities and move to the peace and tranquility of the countryside.

Three villages in our region - Brancepeth, Mitford and Dinnington - made The Telegraph's recent list of go-to UK villages, thanks to their pretty good looks, easy transport links, good schools and affordable house prices as key reasons for those looking to move in.

Mitford

Located on the outskirts of the market town of Morpeth, Mitford has community at its heart, with the village hall hosting a multitude of events to get involved with, from a historical society to Pilates and everything in between.

The village is located on the banks of the river Wansbeck and there are plenty of walks to be enjoyed starting in the village. Picturesque cottages, including one of the North East's only thatched cottages, line the riverbank.

For dining, The Plough Inn is the village's pub and restaurant and is dog-friendly, boasting outdoor dining for the summer months and live music year-round. The food is fresh and local and is popular with visitors from across Northumberland. The village church offers weekly worship as well as a café to meet with neighbours.

Just a short drive away is the popular town of Morpeth, with multiple primary and secondary schools, supermarkets, independent shops and a growing restaurants and nightlife scene. The train station at Morpeth provides access to London, Edinburgh and beyond and the A1 is a short drive away to connect to the rest of the UK.

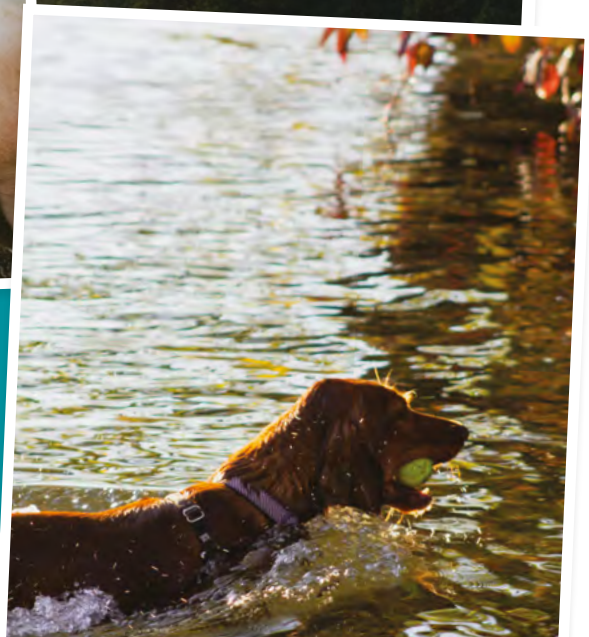


Our top picks...

Visit here...
Whitehouse Farm

Eat here...
The Plough Inn

Stroll here...
Mitford Castle



Dinnington

Sitting just outside Newcastle, Dinnington is home to some of the best restaurants in the North East, including The White Swan Inn and The Last Days of the Raj.

With a first school that feeds into the Gosforth Middle School system, a library, church and shops, the village has everything needed for day-to-day living. Situated close to both Newcastle Airport and the larger leafy village of Ponteland, with its transport links and shops, are close at hand.

The Metro at the airport provides direct access into Newcastle and beyond and Ponteland is home to plenty of pubs, supermarkets and shops. Cramlington and Kingston Park are also just a short drive away. Walks are readily available, with bridleways surrounding the village, which is home to plenty of stables for riding lessons. Blagdon Farm Shop is just a short drive away, offering a fantastic array of local produce and homeware.

The famous Northumberlandia sculpture is also close by and is the ideal spot for a dog walk or to point out famous landmarks in Newcastle.

For those wishing to move to Dinnington, Persimmon Homes' Augusta Park offers high-quality homes in the heart of the village. Traditional properties are also available in the area, including the former village school.



Our top picks...

Visit here...
Blagdon Farm Shop

Eat here...
The White Swan Inn

Stroll here...
Big Waters
Nature Reserve



Our top picks...

Visit here...
Brancepeth Castle

Eat here...
Café BurgSchneider

Stroll here...
Oakenshaw Wildlife
Reserve



Brancepeth

Nestled in County Durham, Brancepeth features some of the most sought-after properties in the North East.

Modern housing is designed to blend in with the traditional buildings in the village, along with its popular ivy-covered cottages which create a whimsical atmosphere.

The local golf course was designed by a Wentworth architect, Harry Colt, on land surrounding Brancepeth Castle and offers residents a place to dine, relax and enjoy a round of golf.

Brancepeth Castle itself offers a day of history as well as a highly-favoured café. Previous Grand National winners were raised and trained at nearby Brancepeth Manor Farm, which has recently been sympathetically renovated into luxurious family homes.

Located just five miles from the city of Durham, Brancepeth residents benefit from the amenities of the city, including multiple retail parks and shopping centres, cinemas and shops and, of course, Durham Cathedral - one of the region's most historic landmarks.

Previously a mining village, Brancepeth is now a much-desired village and has featured on The Telegraph's list several times over the years. Surrounded by rolling countryside and close to the Durham Coast, the village is in a prime location for those wishing to explore the great outdoors.

Luxury living

Durham City's most luxurious new home – Symeon Manor – is arriving on the market as the creation of the North East's most exclusive residential development continues.



Symeon Manor is a unique detached six-bedroom, six-bathroom property that sits independently within the landscaped grounds and woodlands at the centre of the historic Mount Oswald estate, just to the south of Durham City.

The £2.25 million landmark property comes with a substantial private landscaped garden, a spacious three car garage, an open plan kitchen and dining area, a study and a home cinema space.

The substantial living room features French doors on two sides, allowing light to flood into the room, while there is also a utility room and cloakroom off the generous entrance hallway.

Five of the six bedrooms offer contemporary en-suite bathrooms, while the master bedroom has a walk-in dressing room and a large south-facing terrace.

Symeon Manor features underfloor heating throughout the ground floor, as well as a beautifully designed kitchen which includes Silestone worktops, high quality appliances and oak finished doors and which will be finished to the buyer's specifications.

The property also includes a range of environmental design features, including an energy efficient air source heat pump, solar panels, LED bathroom lighting and an electric vehicle charging point.

Symeon Manor is currently being built by Banks Homes and is part of the family firm's wider Symeon Court development at the Mount Oswald estate, which also includes four four-bedroom and four five-bedroom homes that are located nearby.

Durham City property firm, Urban BASE, is acting sales agent for Symeon Manor and Symeon Court, where the first of the new properties are expected to be ready for occupation later this year.

The Mount Oswald estate was built at the turn of the 19th century and features a Grade Two-listed Manor House that is set to reopen later this year after a substantial refurbishment as The Story, County Durham's exciting new local history centre and cultural venue.



Aisling Ramshaw, head of sales and marketing at Banks Homes, says: "Symeon Manor is a one-of-a-kind property in a magnificent location and represents the absolute pinnacle of luxury living.

"It has been designed to provide an exquisite combination of style, design and functionality and includes all the features you need to live, work and play in complete comfort.

"Mount Oswald is a dream location for families, commuters and countryside lovers alike and, as well as offering excellent transport links, it sits just a short walk away from one of the UK's most beautiful and best-loved cities.

"We're so excited to be creating this unique property and can't wait to welcome the family that will call it their forever home."

For further information on Symeon Manor, visit www.bankshomes.co.uk/symeon-manor

To register your interest in Symeon Manor and Symeon Court, contact Jan Dale at Urban BASE on 0845 643 1186 or via info@urban-base.com

Uncovering the art of investment

Enhance your investment portfolio with artistic flair, with expert insights from Newcastle's Hancock Gallery.



Until recently, art investment was seen as reserved for the privileged few. Yet, modern day art investment and collections are no longer out of reach. With the right mixture of knowledge, support and energy, securing a fruitful and rewarding return is possible for anyone when it comes to investing in art.

Investing in an individual piece is often the initial attraction to purchasing art, offering the opportunity to proudly own something unique that stands out from mass-produced prints found on the high street. However, owning art also presents substantial opportunities beyond mere aesthetic appeal, as it can serve as a viable investment avenue.

With a multi-million pound global marketplace, art is a profitable investment that consistently outperforms other assets classes. It is stable and resilient to economic shifts, maintaining strong sales even during challenging times, while assets like gold

and oil have faltered.

Thinking about investing in art? Hancock Gallery reveals benefits of - and top tips for - starting your search.

Exploring emotional and financial value

"Art is a passion asset. Just like fine wine, high-end time pieces and classic cars, art has the power to captivate your imagination and provide tangible returns such as excitement and enjoyment, as well as provide great investment opportunity," says Chris Morgan, gallery manager at Hancock Gallery.

Purchasing art as an asset can be a rare opportunity for anyone and having the ability to physically enjoy art presents itself as a huge secondary benefit to your investment.

Some investors may seek out artwork that solely poses a financial gain - purchasing pieces that can promise a hefty

return in coming years with little care for aesthetic or concept - while other collectors make their investment decisions by seeking out work they enjoy, either for a specific aesthetic, artist they support and so on. They are then ready to make an informed decision based on the current market value and expected increase in value.

Should you choose to invest in something you love? Or should you aim to be profit-savvy and chase the numbers? Both motives are equally valid in their own respects and this is something worth considering when you're looking to purchase.

Continuous market growth

Many first time art investors may ask - is this really worth it? The simple answer to that is, yes. The global art market poses consistency and a continuous level of growth to give you the right assurances

Art investment essentials – what you need to know

about your investment, with 90% of wealth managers recommending including art in a balanced investment portfolio - an increase from 80% in 2023.

This could be down to the fact that an artist's work can significantly increase once they are deceased or retire from their creative practice, making art one of the most sound investments for those expecting a return.

You may also want to consider where exactly in the market you want to enter. For example, beginning with a limited edition piece could be an excellent way to dip your toes in, as this can accommodate a range of budgets and become rewarding in time.

L.S. Lowry is an excellent example here. The late Manchester artist's work has recently sold for millions, which does appeal only, perhaps, to the unlimited budget. However, signed limited edition prints of the same work offer a fantastic starting point to a well-considered collection.

These signed limited edition prints, if looked after well, present a fantastic opportunity for an almost guaranteed increase in value. Let's say 50 limited editions exist worldwide. Over time, those pieces may be lost or damaged in some way, rarifying your own edition and therefore increasing its value significantly. Not to mention the ability to purchase a representation of a famed work at just a fraction of the original's price.

Research, research and more research

Research is key - especially if you haven't invested in art before. Before making any purchases, you need to do your research. Think about what kind of art you want and the space you're going to hang it and look around for the best places to find it. Most importantly - don't rush into your decision. Take the time to browse and learn about your ideal piece before making the purchase.

The internet is fraught with inaccuracies and misleading information, so be sure to talk to a specialist who can advise you on your purchase. Hancock Gallery's gallery manager and advisory team have nearly 15 years' experience in guiding art-lovers and can provide insights tailored to art investors, your preferences and your investment goals.

Consider your budget

Falling in love at first sight with a piece of artwork can make you forget all about the budget you set, but you **MUST** remember your budget. If you are looking to make a return on your initial investment this is a major part of the decision making process. This is another reason why talking to a specialist is beneficial - they can advise you on pieces within your budget and know the market inside out.

Keep your space in mind

When you're buying art, it's imperative to factor in the dimensions and aesthetics of the space you are looking to add to. The last thing you want is a monster of a piece arriving that won't fit through your door,

never mind fit the wall! Measure these dimensions and think about how your piece will fit in with your interior design. If you're unsure of how a piece will fit in with your space and need to see it before buying, get in touch with the gallery to see if you can arrange a try-before-you-buy fitting with your chosen piece.

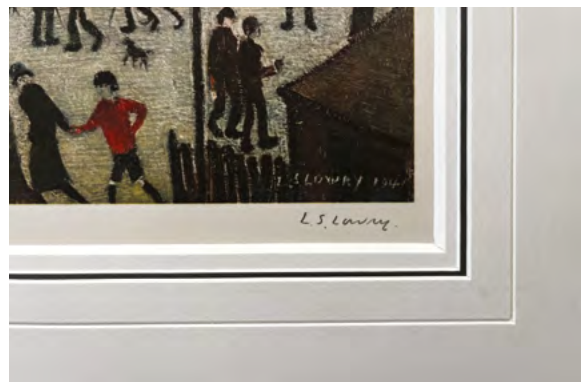
Ensure authenticity

So you've done your research and found the perfect piece that fits your budget and your home, but don't rush into buying just yet!

This is an important step - just before you make your purchase, ensure that the artwork comes with a Certificate of Authenticity. This is an official, signed document that ensures your artwork is legitimate, and it's just as important as the artwork itself.

Whether you're purchasing as a first timer, as an art lover or adding to your art investment portfolio, the authenticity certificate is always an essential part of your purchase. Additionally, you can find our carefully curated and informative guide on our website to help you navigate the world of art investment with confidence.

At Hancock Gallery we are proud to employ a team of seasoned experts in the art world. Whether you're a first time buyer or looking to add to an existing collection, our specialists are happy to provide you with guidance, no obligation home approvals and information on finances. Book your consultation today.



Sunderland's next big leap: The Cell champions a cause with Wings for Life World Run

In an exciting blend of athleticism and philanthropy, Sunderland city centre is poised to host an extraordinary global event that stands out for its unique format and noble cause – the Wings for Life World Run.

The spotlight is not just on the runners, but also on the remarkable collaboration that has made this possible - the synergy between a bespoke class-based gym, The Cell, located in the heart of Sunderland's Keel Square, Wings for Life charity and the energizing partnership with Red Bull.

Brent Gilpin, co-director of The Cell, is playing a pivotal role in bringing this innovative event to Sunderland, connecting businesses, clubs, athletes and charities in order to support an amazing cause.

The Cell, known for its tailored workout sessions and community spirit, is extending its ethos of personal empowerment and teamwork to a global platform, reflecting its commitment to not just physical fitness but also social responsibility.

A race like no other

What sets the Wings for Life World Run apart from the myriad of races around the globe? It's a race where the finish line catches you. Uniting participants across the globe, whether professional athletes, casual joggers, or enthusiastic beginners, the event starts synchronously worldwide.

Thirty minutes into the race, the Catcher Car, a moving finish line, begins its quest to overtake the participants one by one, adding an exhilarating twist to this global run.

It's not just about speed or endurance; it's about running for those who can't, making every step count.

Supporting a cause that moves us forward

Beyond the unique challenge and the thrill of a global community coming together, the Wings for Life World Run stands as a beacon of hope for those affected by spinal cord injuries.

Remarkably, 100% of all entry fees and donations go directly towards funding research for finding a cure for spinal cord injuries. By participating, sponsors and supporters are contributing to a world where paralysis is no longer a lifelong sentence.

Bringing it home to Sunderland

The Cell, in association with Red Bull and the Wings for Life charity, is not just hosting an event - it's championing a cause that transcends borders and redefines what it means to be part of a global community.

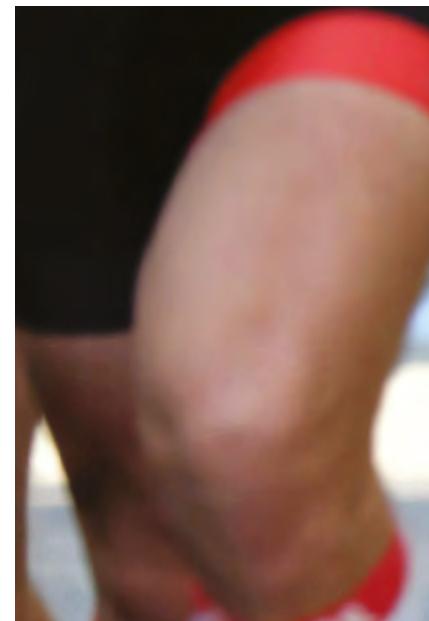
Bringing the Wings for Life World Run to Sunderland for the first time is a testament to the spirit of collaboration and the shared aspiration to make a significant impact.

For Sunderland and its residents, this is more than a running event; it's a celebration of human spirit, resilience and the collective pursuit of a world free from spinal cord injuries.

The Cell invites everyone to be a part of this remarkable journey, to run, to support and to make every step count, right in the heart of Sunderland.

As we gear up for this monumental event, let's embrace the opportunity to blend our passion for fitness with our commitment to making a difference.

Together, in the streets of Sunderland city centre, we'll be part of a worldwide movement that runs for those who can't, powered by every heartbeat, every stride and every drop of sweat.



JOIN US THIS MAY

Join us and be a part of a story that's running towards a cure, step by step, together, and get your own exclusive free Wings for Life shirt by adidas to show your part of this amazing event.

The Wings for Life World Run starts 10am at Mowbray Park, Sunderland.

Visit www.wingsforlifeworldrun.com/en/locations and search and choose Sunderland to secure your place.





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Heal and glow with IPL

Designed to minimise – and in some cases entirely remove – thread veins and a host of other skin concerns, IPL remains one of the most sought-after non-surgical treatments for anyone in search of clearer, calmer and healthier-looking skin.

Skin & Soul Medical, a holistic private clinic with sites in Sunderland and Newcastle, is a destination in the North East for IPL, which can be enjoyed as a standalone treatment or as part of the clinic's rejuvenating illumifacial®.



What is it?

IPL - which stands for intense pulsed light - remains a frontrunner in the world of thread vein removal, hair removal, brown spot removal, skin tightening and more.

Though suitable for a range of skin concerns, it is a particularly effective solution for anyone suffering from thread veins - also known as broken capillaries or spider veins.

Using a non-invasive IPL device, the treatment uses waves of light energy to penetrate the skin dermis and target excess redness and flushing.

The light is absorbed by the skin in short and concentrated pulses and in doing so heats the blood vessels, causing them to break down, collapse and, eventually, be destroyed. Over time, the body naturally absorbs the collapsed vessels, leaving little to no trace of the original vein.

Skin & Soul Medical utilises medical-grade IPL technology from the UK's number one manufacturer, Lynton, within its all of its IPL treatments, ensuring every client receives the best possible care and results.

Unlike lasers, Lynton IPL devices submit a range of different wavelengths to treat different skin conditions and severities and can be filtered to suit individual clients' needs.

IPL treatments at Skin & Soul Medical provide a safe, precise and effective way of treating thread veins and various other skin conditions, with minimal discomfort and downtime and no damage to the surrounding skin areas.

Who can have it?

The revolutionary treatment is suitable for all skin types - though particularly fair skin - and is an ideal solution for those suffering from rosacea - a common skin condition that causes persistent red flushing in the face due to enlarged blood vessels.

Many people choose to harness IPL's powers as part of Skin & Soul Medical's renowned and rejuvenating illumifacial®, which combines a unique fruit peel and Lynton IPL technology to gently resurface the skin and dramatically improve skin tone, texture and clarity.

The quick and fuss-free treatment works hard to ease a number of common skin concerns alongside thread veins, from acne scarring to age spots, pigmentation and vascular breakouts.

Whereabouts can you have it?

Because thread veins most commonly appear on the face - particularly on the cheeks, on and around the nose and the forehead - IPL treatments typically target these specific areas the most.

Following a successful consultation and patch test prior to the treatment, the skin is thoroughly cleansed and sometimes treated to a cooling gel to help guide the light into the skin and encourage the IPL device to glide comfortably over the target area. Aftercare is minimal - though strong sunlight should be avoided initially - and most patients don't suffer from swelling or excess redness post-treatment.

Sensations during the treatment vary, but most describe the discomfort as a very quick hot pin prick.

How often can you have it?

For best results, most patients are recommended a minimum of three to six IPL treatments over the course of six months, with at least six weeks in between each treatment.

In many cases, significant visual results can be seen after three treatments.

The clinic's illumifacial® can be enjoyed as a single treatment, or as part of a course of four or six treatments.

Lucie Royer, founder of Skin and Soul Medical, said: "We're delighted to be able to offer IPL to our clients, using award-winning Lynton IPL technology, which is recommended by the UK's leading aestheticians and dermatologists.

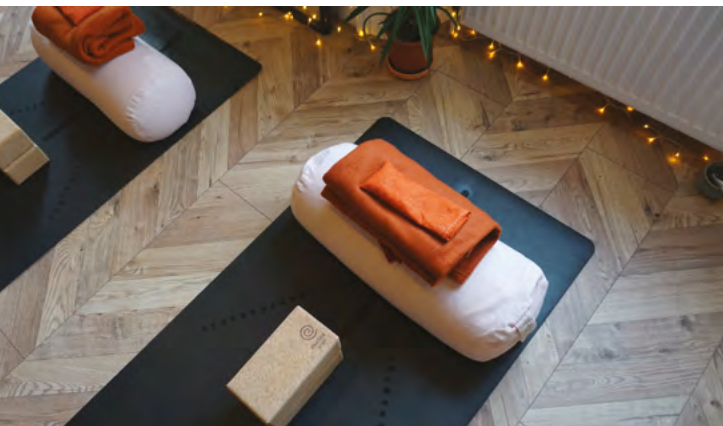
"IPL is growing in popularity for its remarkable ability to ease and, in most cases, remove stubborn thread veins, as well as improve overall skin tone, texture and other common skin concerns that many of us have.

"Whether you choose to treat yourself to a standalone treatment or our fantastic illumifacial®, an IPL treatment is the perfect solution for anyone wanting to beat the flush, heal redness and get their glow back in time for spring and summer."

To book your appointment, visit www.skinandsoulmedical.com

Finding calm at Cove

A place in which creativity and fitness combine, Cove Lifestyle Studios is making waves within the coast's growing wellness community.



Our editor chats with founder, Rachel Bambrough, about the story behind the small, Tynemouth-based business and discovers why the region's yogis, paddleboarders and runners are making it their go-to for a fresh, feel-good take on wellbeing.



How did Cove Lifestyle Studios begin?

It all started about five years ago - just before the pandemic. I had just been made redundant and I used my last wage packet to buy enough kit and a rundown car to set up my own paddleboarding business, SUP4. I was living in London at the time and began teaching people of all ages and abilities on the River Thames.

Then Covid hit and I decided to study remotely to become a yoga instructor. Once qualified, I began to offer my own take on SUP yoga out on the river, before finding a space that allowed me to teach traditional yoga on the mat - the floor of a beautiful, holistic hairdressing salon in South West London.

I also decided to start a running club, as I'm a keen runner, but didn't fancy running alone and wanted to meet new people - especially during winter and at a time when socialising was really hard. All avenues really took off and soon I was running a small business that combined all my passions into one - and the rest is history.

How has the business evolved since then?

The cost of living gave me a nudge to move back to the North East - where I'm originally from - last summer and I officially opened Cove Lifestyle Studios in February. You'll find us on Tynemouth Front Street and we are a hybrid space - both a yoga studio and a store, inspired by the great outdoors.

Here, we offer a variety of yoga types for all abilities and tastes - from gentle and restorative classes, like Hatha and Nidra, to energetic and fast-paced sessions using weights, props and dynamic movement to help you work up a sweat. Between classes, the space transforms into a lifestyle store, where people can browse books, homeware, plants and more.

What does your new location mean to you?

Running a business at the coast is fantastic - I feel really fortunate to be based in such a beautiful part of the world.

There is a big, vibrant and growing wellness community here. The people are really connected to nature; they love being in the water, they love being outdoors in the fresh sea air and they love movement. Paddleboarding is huge, as is beach yoga and running, so it's the perfect place for a business like mine. It aligns perfectly.

The studio is an honest reflection of myself and my own personal space. I come from a creative design background and I put a lot of care into things like lighting, sound, music, colours and smell, both at work and at home. I also suffer from tinnitus, which has made me sensitive to sound and space, but also really aware of other people's sensory needs and own personal space. It was important to me to create a calm, comfortable and relaxed environment, inspired by the elements, that didn't feel contrived, overstimulating or intimidating - and that's exactly what Cove provides.



What makes your approach to yoga teaching unique?

I use a 'hands-off' approach when it comes to yoga. In other words, you won't find me walking around a class, inspecting people's poses or trying to move them into certain positions. Instead, I'm on the mat and participating alongside them, encouraging them to move their bodies in a way and at a speed that feels comfortable to them. It's not about structure - it's about feeling free and finding enjoyment in what you're doing.

Inclusivity is a huge part of our ethos, as is a big appreciation for neurodiversity - especially in an intimate setting like ours. After all, we're all built differently, we all move differently and we all respond and adapt differently to the world around us. That's why every class is a judgement and expectation-free zone and everyone is encouraged to arrive just as they are. It's not about fitting the stereotypical yoga mould. It doesn't matter what you look like, how old you are, what you're wearing, how flexible you are or how much experience you have - everyone is welcome.

Do you still offer SUP lessons and running?

SUP4 - our sister brand - is still going strong and those seeking adventure and exploration are invited to grab a board and join us out on the water between Tynemouth and nearby Cullercoats Bay. We're constantly evolving and our offering will change as we head into summer, so it's a really exciting time to get involved.

Our running club - also known as the Friendly Running Club - still operates down in London and here in the North East. We've built a strong community of 100 runners in London and 150 in Tynemouth, which still blows me away. We meet on Tuesday evenings and everyone is welcome to join - it's a great opportunity to meet new people, take advantage of the beautiful views on our doorstep and do your body and mind some good.

What's next for Cove Lifestyle Studios?

It's important to me to create a space in which everyone feels like they belong, so eventually, I'd like for the studio to be on ground level and more accessible to everyone. I'm also looking into adaptive paddleboarding to make the sport more accessible to those with limited mobility.

As we head towards the summer months, I'm looking forward to offering more SUP classes, as well as more creative workshops at the studio. In the past, we've offered candle painting sessions and denim embroidery classes, but soon we'll be experimenting with movie nights and lots more.

For me, the overall goal is to create a flexible and dynamic space that helps people to build communities and friendships, improve self-development, spark creativity and boost mental and physical wellbeing - and I'm really excited for what's to come.

For more information, or to book a session, visit covelifestylestudios.com or search @covelifestylestudios on Instagram.





130 years of Barbour

As Barbour ushers in its 130th anniversary, Jobsons of Alnwick reveals its top picks from its growing collection for the new season.

Founded in 1894 by John Barbour in South Shields, Barbour has evolved from humble beginnings to a global symbol of quality craftsmanship, outdoor elegance and British heritage.

Today, it is one of the world's most iconic fashion labels, renowned for its timeless style and unparalleled durability. Rooted in functionality, Barbour's journey began with its commitment to crafting durable outerwear for sailors, fishermen and dockworkers braving the harsh North Sea elements.

Drawing inspiration from the rugged coastal landscape, John Barbour developed waxed cotton jackets that were both waterproof and resilient, earning the brand a reputation for practicality and reliability.

In the 1930s, the introduction of the iconic Bedale and Beaufort jackets - which are still sought-after pieces within today's world of fashion - solidified Barbour's position as a leader in outdoor attire.



Barbour Otterburn Stripe T-shirt
£34.95



Barbour Essential Slim Jeans
£79.95



SPONSORED CONTENT

Barbour Men's Sports Polo
£46.95



Barbour Ladies Banbury Wellington Boots
£64.95



Barbour Men's TF Merryton Shirt
£64.95



Barbour Lavender Jacket
£249



Barbour Cascade Sports Cap
£21.95



Barbour City Neuston Shorts
£74.95



Barbour Leather Medium Travel Explorer Bag
£299

These classic designs, characterised by their distinctive waxed finish and functional features, quickly became staples among countryside enthusiasts and urbanites alike. Barbour's commitment to innovation has remained steadfast throughout its history. Under the stewardship of the fifth generation of the Barbour family, the brand continues to thrive, blending tradition with modernity and contemporary trends to create outerwear that transcends generations.

Jobsons of Alnwick is a destination for anyone looking to update their wardrobe with a touch of Barbour flair - from both its renowned menswear and womenswear collections.

The store's varied collection stretches classic staples including the Beaufort Jacket - which celebrates 40 years this year - to spring and summer essentials, such as t-shirts, jeans, shorts and more.

www.jobsonsofalnwick.co.uk
@jobsonsofalnwick



Barbour Classic Beaufort Wax Jacket
£299



Barbour Beachfront Shirt in Chambray Stripe
£69.95



Going for growth

Karpet Mills, the North East's leading carpet and flooring retailer, has had a promising start to 2024 across all sectors, but has seen substantial growth from its commercial flooring offerings.

Clients in recent projects include Nixon Hire, Bradley Hall, Gateshead Council, North East Autism Society, Matten Hall and Durham Cathedral to name just a few, covering a wide range of commercial flooring schemes across all sectors, including office space, hospitality and education.

With several commercial developments already completed this year, including 5,500 square foot of carpet tiles at Cobalt Business Park, luxury Hugh Mackay wool twist carpet fitted throughout Lumley Castle Hotel and specialist safety flooring installed at iPac Packaging Solutions in Tanfield, it has helped reinforce that the sixth generation family-run business is more than just a residential flooring specialist.

Whether moving to a new premises, planning a full office refresh, or just a small meeting room replacement, Karpet Mills has flooring options to suit all projects.

"Commercial flooring can be a complex sector and we have learned it is as important for our clients to get help with specifying the right products, not just hitting the right budget," says director, Joel Dickinson.

"Having sold flooring for over 140 years, we have built up a bank of priceless experience to be able to help our

commercial customers to navigate the process of their project.

"A lot of our clients are moving premises and we can help with both sides of the process. We can help them to return the property they are vacating back to its original condition at the lowest possible cost, which is normally a requirement as part of the dilapidations works within a commercial lease. Then, naturally, we can help to design and undertake the fitout and refurbishment of the facility they are taking occupation of."

With a dedicated team to handle the commercial projects from inception to fitting, Karpet Mills offers everything from carpet tiles to safety flooring, bespoke contract carpets to LVT, subfloor preparations to specialist staircase products.

And, just as with its residential carpet and flooring projects, Karpet Mills' expert team of flooring advisors can provide a free planning and design service that includes measuring, floor inspections, laying patterns and much more.

Established in 1878, the Karpet Mills Group now boasts eight showrooms across the North East, including its premier division, Designer Flooring. All branches are open seven days a week.



To find out more about commercial flooring, or to speak to someone today about your flooring project, contact Karpet Mills' marketing and commercial flooring manager via email at declan.clark@karpetmills.co.uk or on 07399584687

Behind the grid

As social media continues to grow at a rapid pace, we take an exclusive look behind the accounts of some of the region's most influential Instagrammers.

@geordie_hiker

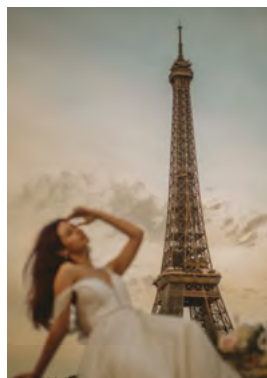
Steph Robinson, otherwise known by her 128,000 followers as Geordie Hiker, started her hiking journey just before the pandemic hit. At the time she was living and working in Cumbria, surrounded by the beautiful countryside and the Lakeland Wainwrights, which she started to explore and post on social media.

People can expect to find all things outdoor related on my account; from hiking and camping to paddle boarding in the summer months. I like to give my followers inspiration of places to visit, whether that's local in Northumberland and the Lakes, or further afield on my travels abroad. I'd say my content is quite positive and motivational and I guess it naturally developed this way as I find giving your audience a reason to follow you with informative and educational content helps to grow your social platform.

I remember originally only posting pictures, but since reels and short form video have taken over there's a lot more thought that goes into my content. Whether that's scrolling to find a trending song to create a reel with or thinking of a hook and caption that will engage my following and new audiences, the process has certainly developed. My content is definitely quality over quantity.

Since starting my Instagram account I've been given lots of opportunities and there have been some fantastic highlights, however my peak was meeting my fiancé through Instagram. We both have hiking pages and were invited to a store opening event at Team Valley - and let's just say the rest is history. I love connecting with likeminded people and having the privilege of working with some epic brands and visiting new countries through my account.

It's hard to pick a specific spot where I love to hike most, but Lake District will always be special to me - and I'm always drawn back there when I'm in need of a big hiking day out. However, I recently moved to Northumberland so I've spent the last couple of months exploring the National Park - can you believe it's one of the least visited in the country? There are so many hidden gems here and I've only scratched the surface, and the Northumberland coastline can't be beaten.



@thisisjules

Wife and mum of two, Jules Williams, lives in North Shields and is in her third year of business as a wedding, family and lifestyle photographer. She started her Instagram page - which has accumulated 54,000 followers - back in 2011 after she downloaded the app by mistake.

I thought Instagram was simply an app to add retro filters to your photos. Over the years my account has taken on many different forms - from somewhere I posted iPhone snaps of landscapes and the place I documented motherhood, to working with brands and doing content creation. Now, my account is the main space for my photography business.

I share my work on both a professional and personal level, so you'll see client shoots in one post and then what I've been up to over the weekend with my family in another. Many of my followers followed my account before I was a photographer, so I like to keep that personal aspect of myself in there too. Hopefully the main consistency is storytelling photography and I do love to photograph our beautiful coastline.

Trends change all the time in photography and while I enjoy seeing them and trying some of them out for fun, I don't follow them. I am, however, always learning and investing in photography education and equipment.

In terms of weddings, it's interesting to see that content creators are becoming a popular addition. Now, many couples will hire a creator to take content on the day that is shareable on social media in addition to a

photographer and a videographer - rather than in place of. I think it's great; creators bring something different and as a wedding supplier and I can appreciate why a couple would want that fun, instant content.

As for family photography, I believe it's something that is becoming more popular and more and more people appreciate the value in having professional photos of their loved ones. Often, once a family has had a session, they will book in again in the future and carry on that tradition and documentation.

Photography is my job, but I'd still be posting photos that I take even if it was simply a hobby. It's my passion and I love to share that. It'll never not be an honour that people ask me to capture their most precious moments. I also love it because I know how important photographs are, and in some cases, they can be all you have left to tie you to a memory, a person, or a place. My own childhood photos (and my adulthood photos) are everything to me.

I've met some of my best friends in the world on Instagram - friends who are now a part of my real life and who I travel and spend time with. The best thing about starting my Instagram journey has been making those special connections.

@stephfoxblogs

Steph Fox set up her blog in 2016 when she was starting her career as a social media executive to help her learn more about wider digital marketing, content and blogging. She also wanted to share her photos and experiences as her job involved a lot of travel.

My Instagram account is still the very first account I ever created and although it's grown, I really try to post the things I'm genuinely doing every day. It was very travel-focused at first because of all the things I was doing with work, but I did, naturally, share regional places to go and experiences too. It became much more focused on the North East when we couldn't travel during the pandemic and I love sharing all things Newcastle and life at the coast.

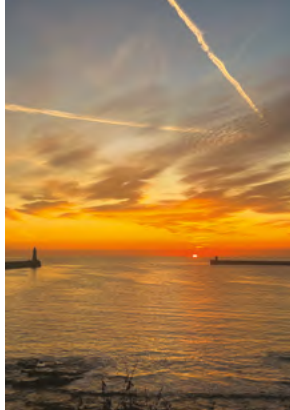
I now share a balance of life in the North East - especially Newcastle and the North Tyneside coast where I live. Dog-friendly adventures in the UK feature too, as well as my favourite places in Northumberland and the Lake District and snapshots of my wider travels.

Thanks to reels, my content is definitely more video-focused today. It took some getting used to as I've always loved still photos, but I'm now embracing video and really enjoying it. My blog content has changed from personal posts and

experiences to content that my followers want to see and ask for.

Across the board, I'm a creature of habit and usually go for the same types of restaurants, hotels, things to do and places to go. People tend to know what sort of thing I'm going to share. I definitely try to focus a lot more on local experiences and businesses. I'm always mindful of dog-friendly content, too, as that's huge right now and one of the first things I'm asked about.

There have been a lot of highlights since starting my account, but it's often the things that people don't actually see that mean the most to me, such as the lovely DMs I receive when people have gone somewhere I've recommended and had a lovely time. Travel-wise, a highlight would be my trip to Rome last year, but I've also enjoyed some really unique stays locally, including Rest at Nest, Chester's Stables and a few places in Northumberland and the Lakes, where I'd naturally choose to stay and visit anyway.



@nooksofnewcastle

Finding the beauty in the seemingly ordinary moments, Beth Watson-Wilkes showcases the North East in her carefully curated Instagram content. Romanticising being from the North East is Beth's niche and she started her account after returning to the region following a semester of study in New York.

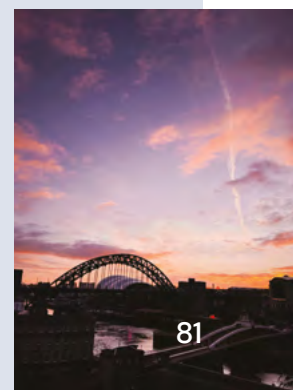
My camera roll was already leaking at the seams with bridge photos and my favourite Sunday morning coffee spots, so combining my creative writing degree with my adoration for life, I posted my first picture in April 2022. Since then, Nooks has almost 21,000 followers and has been liked, commented on and shared by people all over the world. I've never cared about numbers, however, if it means one more person is waking up grateful to be northern, I'll take it.

Anyone who stumbles upon my account can expect to find every little inch of our canny little northern corner. From restaurants and bars, local street artists and events to match days, accommodation and sunrises. Two things you can always count on me for is championing small, local businesses until I'm blue in the face and my daily 'morninggggg' stories from different parts of Newcastle as an everyday reminder it's time to get up and love living life.

I struggle to talk about my 'Humans being Humans' reels without sobbing

because I realised I was accidentally, yet naturally, capturing what I loved most about life - ordinary strangers doing ordinary things. Soon, I decided to do more of it and put all my clips together in a handful of videos - and now they have more than 1.4M collective views. This is my absolute favourite kind of content to make and post on my page; humanity isn't just a northern thing, but to see life being lived in the place where you grew up, live, work or study, is something pretty special.

My content has and has not evolved in equal measures since starting my page. I've met hundreds of new people, forged relationships with local business owners who I now consider friends and most definitely had the opportunity to delve deeper into the inner workings of the city I live in. However, its purpose is still the same. My overly-sarcastic, northern-lingo-littered, borderline inappropriate, creative captions are still the same and I'm still the same Beth who wants people to know they mean as much to Newcastle as it does to them.





Maximise your space for the new season

With warmer days on the horizon, the experts at Dobbies reveal their top tips on how people can make the most of their outdoor spaces – no matter the size. From sleek chairs and foldable bistro sets for city balconies, to compact barbecues and pizza ovens for small spaces and home gardens, there's something for everyone.



GARDEN FEATURE



Alternative seating

Comfortable seating is a must when it comes to making the most of your small space and this year there are a number of fantastic options at Dobbies to create a cosy reading nook or spot to enjoy your morning coffee.

"Hanging egg chairs have risen in popularity over the past few years thanks to their playful design and ability to add instant charm to any outdoor space", says Lynsey Abbott, head of buying (home & seasonal) at Dobbies.

"Perfect for curling up with a book on a sunny day, egg chairs allow you to hang out in a cosy cocoon soaking up the rays - and they come in a variety of styles and sizes. If you're looking for a focal piece to elevate your patio, our Double Folding Egg Chair is a great choice to make an impact and can be folded away for easy storage during the colder months.

"For smaller spaces, a single statement chair is all you need to create a relaxing spot. Wicker is a huge trend for spring/summer 2024 thanks to its versatility and timeless style. Our green wicker Cashbah chair, new for 2024, is a great investment piece that will last for years to come and is perfect for small gardens and city balconies."

Compact furniture

If you've got limited space to play with, Lynsey suggests looking for a colourful bistro set to brighten up your chosen area.

"Foldable bistro sets are fantastic space-savers and work especially well to dress up empty city balconies and create your very own stylish alfresco dining spot. Typically, a lot less expensive than larger sofa sets, bistro sets are great value, meaning you don't need to spend a fortune

to get your balcony looking its best for summer."

Dobbies' range for spring/summer 2024 includes seasonal new colourways - including a sunshine yellow Betty bistro set - that will allow you to inject vibrancy and personality into your outdoor space and give it a new lease of life.

Alfresco dining

When it comes to eating outdoors, Lynsey believes that you don't need a huge amount of space to cook up a delicious feast.

"This year, Dobbies has introduced some innovative new cooking options to allow everyone to enjoy a spot of alfresco dining in the summer months," she says.

"Great value kettle BBQs make a great addition to small patios and courtyards and prove you don't need a huge garden to grill up a storm.

"In response to an increased demand for innovative outdoor cooking options, we've introduced an expansive range of portable pizza ovens that demonstrate the potential of small gardens. From great value Ooni models and the super sleek Gozney Rocbox to the award-winning Witt ETNA Rotante rotating pizza oven, there's something for all budgets."

Plant for impact

You don't need a huge garden to welcome colour and fragrance with seasonal plants - Dobbies' new outdoor accessories will inspire gardeners to get in touch with nature.

"Plants bring outdoor spaces to life, and there's no reason small gardens can't reap the benefits," says Lynsey.

"In our spring/summer 2024 collection, we have balcony planters, which are ideal

for hooking on to fences and railings to save space, along with a collection of outdoor pots that will jazz up any plant.

"For maximum effect, group varying pot sizes together to create a mini jungle effect and colour-coordinate to your outdoor furniture for a cohesive look and feel. Alternatively, if you like a classic vibe, terracotta pots never go out of style - and we have a wide selection to choose from."

It's all in the detail

Lynsey's top tip for making the most of your small space is to pay special attention to the accessories.

"Small touches make the biggest difference in compact gardens and they're a good cost effective way to transform the overall look of a space," says Lynsey.

"You'll be surprised at the difference a few decorative throw cushions can make - and even better if they double up as seating when entertaining guests. Decorative accessories like this are also a great way to get creative and let your personality shine through and Dobbies has a wide selection of colours and designs to choose from.

"To create a country garden feel in your small space, mini hanging bird houses will help you welcome wildlife and add natural charm. Pair these with pollinating plants in pots to create a real buzz and embrace nature without sacrificing lots of space.

"If you're fortunate enough to have the space for plants, make the most of these and create beautiful seasonal displays with your cut flowers. A great way to bring your dining table to life for summer soirees and a simple addition that will make a noticeable difference to your outdoor space."

A hole in one golf and yacht holiday... in the stunning South of France

By Geoff Moore 

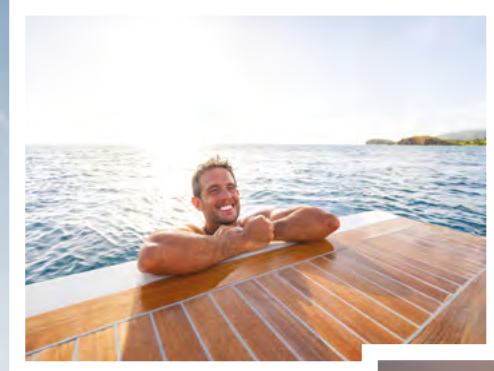
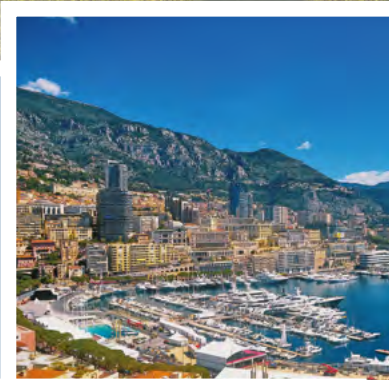
With summer on the horizon, golfers throughout the UK are itching with excitement to hit their local courses. Many will be heading to Europe and beyond for golf holidays with their family and friends, but did you know, that for less than you might think, you can combine a luxury yacht holiday with your favourite sport?

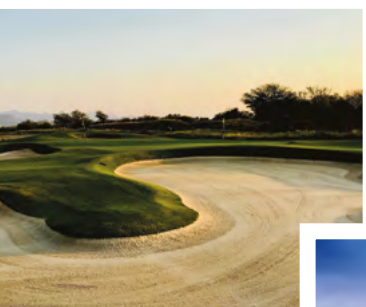
Starting from £890 per person, per day, a group of up to 12 guests can cruise the coastlines of Europe's golfing hotspots, from the Balearics and Portugal's Algarve to Turkey and the South of France, holiday in style, stopping at a variety of the best golf courses along the way.

In addition to chartering a yacht with facilities that would rival that of a five-

star hotel, you will also have a dedicated captain, crew and chef who will ensure an unforgettable holiday for you and your closest friends and family.

What would a luxury golf and yacht charter look like? Read on to discover the stops you could make in the South of France.





Day 1: Pampelonne Bay

Arrive at Nice Airport and be whisked away to St Tropez to embark on your yacht. Cruise to the famous Pampelonne Bay - a St Tropez highlight. Savour a gourmet meal prepared by your onboard chef, personalised to your tastes, amidst the beauty of Pampelonne beach. Afterwards, enjoy thrilling water sports such as jet skis, fly-boards, seabobs, windsurfing and kiteboarding, creating lasting memories on the Mediterranean waters. Settle in for the night at anchor or in the port of St Tropez.

Day 2: Golf Clube de Saint-Tropez

Start your day with a delicious onboard breakfast, priming you for a refreshing Mediterranean swim. Enjoy a round of golf at the renowned Golf Club Saint-Tropez. This 18-hole course, designed by Gary Player, is in the picturesque medieval village of Gassin on Provence's iconic peninsula, boasting stunning views of the Saint-Tropez port.

Day 3: Lerins Islands

Wake up to glistening rays of sunshine dancing on the ocean. After breakfast onboard, you will commence your cruise to Lerins Islands. Located just off the coast of Cannes, the islands make for an exceptional location where nature, culture and relaxation join in total harmony. After your visit, sit back and enjoy aperitifs as you cruise back to Cannes for dinner.

Day 4: Royal Mougins Golf Club

Designed by Robert von Hagge, this par 71, 18-hole course extends for 6,004 metres through a lush, wooded vale. The course is located in the Mougins area, just a 10-minute drive from Cannes. The course meanders through Vallon de L'Oeuf, surrounded by serene countryside with olive trees and ancient terracing, maintaining Provençal charm. After golfing, sip an aperitif on board en-route to Monaco. Then, dine in the port, enjoying exceptional views over the city.

Day 5: Saint Cap Ferrat

Cruise to the fishing village of Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat after breakfast. Discover the tranquil beaches, where panoramic views of the sea, Beaulieu-sur-Mer bay, Eze cliffs and the iconic Villefranche-sur-Mer harbour await. Indulge in a day of relaxation at its prestigious beach clubs or make the most of the yacht's water toys, jet skiing and paddle boarding amidst the breathtaking bay scenery. As the day draws to a close, return to Monaco.

Day 6: Monte Carlo Golf Club

Crafted by renowned architect, Willie Park Jr, Monte Carlo Golf Club offers an idyllic 18-hole course nestled between the sea and mountains. Located in La Turbie, atop the heights of Nice, the course boasts rolling terrain demanding precision. Once you're back from the golf course, it's time to enjoy your final night on board, taking in the breath-taking views and spectacular setting one more time.

Day 7: Monaco

Enjoy another gourmet breakfast on board before you disembark in Monaco.

To discuss your bespoke golf and yacht charter holiday, get in touch at info@westnautical.com





Homegrown talent

Newcastle Falcons' commitment to building around a homegrown core is already showing early signs of fruition, with four of its players shining on the international stage.



Ben Redshaw, Oliver Spencer, Ben Douglas and Jacob Oliver were all part of the England Under-20s Six Nations squad, which recently won the Six Nations title in the most dramatic of fashions.

Going unbeaten throughout the entire competition, England had the daunting prospect of having to win away against France in the decisive game – a challenge which they more than lived up to.

Falcons' flyer, Redshaw, wasted no time in demonstrating the attacking instinct, which has marked him out as a special talent from an early age, running the length of the field to score a spectacular try in the very first minute of the game.

Club-mate, Spencer, came on to replace him just before half-time, with Douglas and Oliver among the replacements for a game which England closed out 41-35 in the Basque town of Pau to seal the Six Nations crown.

The tournament had started with England winning 36-11 away in Italy, going on to enjoy a comfortable 28-7 victory at home to Wales.

The English defeated Scotland 30-17 in Edinburgh to set up a crucial home tie with fellow unbeaten side Ireland, with a see-saw contest in Bath ending in a 32-32 draw as Ireland levelled with the very last play of the game.

That all teed up the crucial final test in France - which England passed with flying colours - and there was further international representation among the squad.

Lock-forward, Luke Coulston, made his Scotland Under-20s debut during the Six Nations and there were England Under-18s honours for Falcons' pair Patrick Hogg and Joe Davis.

Which all points towards a bright homegrown future for the North East's only Gallagher Premiership rugby club, which continues to build under new consultant director Steve Diamond.

Season ticket sales are well up on the same time last year, with the buzz already starting to build ahead of the 2024-25 campaign.

You can even watch all the action in the unrivalled comfort of the club's award-winning hospitality, with a whole range of packages now on sale.

Watch true north icons Adam Radwan, Callum Chick and Jamie Blamire take to the field, alongside the club's rising stars.

Enjoy the best of our Rugby World Cup heroes, too, with our Argentinian contingent adding some South American flair to Kingston Park match days.

Explore the club's range of award-winning hospitality packages, including exclusive executive boxes, premium balcony level suites and a more relaxed Street Food package.

There truly is something for everyone and with new payment plans introduced it's never been easier to watch the Falcons in style.

For further information, contact the club's commercial team via email at corporatesales@newcastle-falcons.co.uk

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corporatesales@newcastle-falcons.co.uk

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.

Watch

Workin' Moms

Netflix's *Workin' Moms* is a truth-telling comedy that finds the humour amid the stress of trying to maintain a work-life balance.

The series depicts a group of friends coping with the challenges of being working mothers and dealing with difficult situations in fast-paced and competitive workplaces.

Pushing the stereotypes of working parents seen in many sitcoms, the show is a genuine portrayal of working parents trying to balance it all.

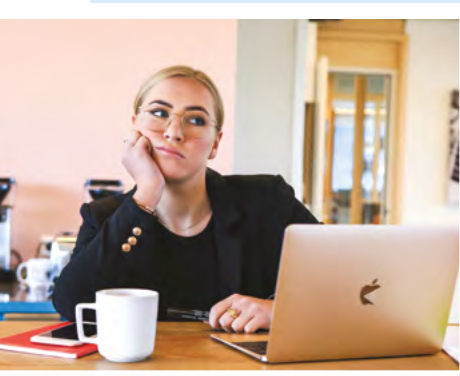
The full series is available to watch on [Netflix](#).

Here's the real reason you procrastinate

For many of us, procrastination is a common problem and can be difficult to overcome. In an appearance at *TedxNewcastle*, Dr Fuschia Sirois - a professor in Health and Social Psychology at Durham University - explains why we procrastinate, the toll it can take and what you can do to reduce procrastination.

For those in business, procrastination can reduce output and the quality of work. Using psychological tools, Dr Sirois helps to navigate and reduce the effects of procrastination which can in turn help to improve your working life.

Available to watch on [YouTube](#).



Listen

Beyond the Bio

North East businesswoman, Sophie Milliken, hosts the popular Beyond the Bio podcast - a business podcast that helps you to raise your own business profile.

As the Founder and CEO of successful social media company, Moja, Sophie is well-versed in PR and social media.

In each episode, Sophie and industry expert guests cover topics such as award entries, PR, public speaking and social media. Aimed to support everyone in business from the start-ups to fully-fledged business people, the podcasts helps you raise your profile in your industry.

Available to listen wherever you get your podcasts.

The Today Podcast

With so much fake news to wade through, trying to navigate the news in the current climate can be difficult. BBC Radio 4's podcast, The Today Podcast, helps listeners navigate the latest big news stories and get to the truth of the stories.

Hosted by Amol Rajan and Nick Robinson, the weekly podcast explores a variety of news stories from politics to culture and everything in between.

With special guests such as Alistair Campbell, Stephen Fry and Esther Rantzen, it promises an insightful listen and gets to the root of the biggest stories each week.

Available to listen wherever you get your podcasts.

Read

Slow Productivity: The Lost Art of Accomplishment Without Burnout

Cal Newport - New York Times bestselling author - unveils his latest book, detailing a philosophy for pursuing meaningful accomplishment while avoiding overload. In a busy modern world, it can be easy to fall into the trap of overworking, with lengthy task lists and endless meetings.

With many in business on the edge of a burnout, Cal's new book explores how to reduce the risk of burnout using the method of slow productivity, a more sustainable alternative that can boost companies' workflow by reprioritising just what is important in business and helping to find meaningful accomplishment for directors and staff alike.

Available to order from www.amazon.co.uk

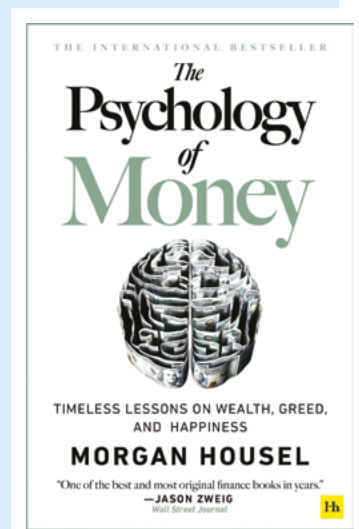
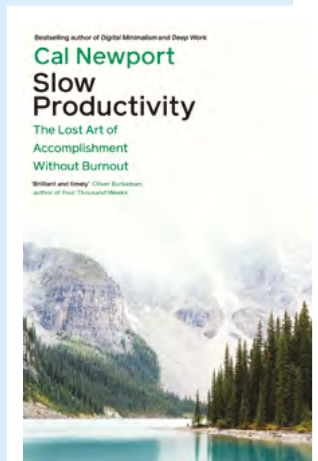
The Psychology of Money: Timeless lessons on wealth, greed, and happiness

Morgan Housel's bestseller is a collection of 19 stories exploring the strange ways people think about money. Personal finance can be complicated but Housel's accessible guide to managing your money helps readers to navigate their finances.

Investments, business decisions and taxes are typically thought of as a maths-based subject, but in the real world, financial decisions aren't made on spreadsheets, but rather at the kitchen table, in boardrooms and in meetings.

Multiple external factors such as pride, ego, marketing and emotions can affect how you manage your money and Housel's guide helps you to better understand why financial management is so vital.

Available to order from www.waterstones.com





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Wine & Dine

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That's Amphorae

Contributing wine editor, David Harker, travels to Castilla-La Mancha to learn how a renewed interest in traditional wine making could rescue an ancient craft.

The hot sun on his back and sea spray stinging his eyes, an intrepid Greek mariner gives up a nervous prayer to Poseidon. He is setting sail towards the Pillars of Hercules carrying a precious cargo of wine in amphorae. An amphora is a two handled earthenware container. Pointed at the bottom for leverage and lifting. Broad shouldered, narrow at the neck and a mouth small enough to seal.

Amphorae were the bulk containers of their day. They enabled the spread of wine culture to all corners of the Mediterranean. From Crete to Cairo, Carthage to Cartagena. Today, broken amphorae litter the bed of the Mediterranean. Evidence of a lost trade that lasted from the Bronze Age to the middle of the twentieth century.

To make amphorae you need clay. High quality, yellow clay. In Spain they call clay jars tinajas and in La Mancha there is a small town rich in tinajero clay. Clay is to



Villarrobledo, what coal was to Newcastle. At the height of tinaja manufacturing Villarrobledo was the largest producer of tinajas in Spain.

Tinajeros, miners, transporters and muleteers. Men, women and children. All employed in an industry perfected by the Moors and little changed since. At its peak one barrio boasted 70 kilns producing 7,000 tinajas a year from small, family workshops.

And so it was for 500 years. The hot air thick with dust, the noise of a thriving industry, of men shouting, mules braying and stones grinding.

Villarrobledo today is a sleepy Spanish town. In the empty backstreets, behind an anonymous door, hides one of the few remaining tinaja workshops.

Tinajas Orozco is a pottery workshop passed down through at least six generations. From father to son and now father to daughter.

Tomas Gomez grew up among clay jars. Playing as a child in the clay, watching his father, José Gómez Orozco in his workshop. Tomas was around 10 years old when José introduced him to the craft of tinajero. 80 years later you will still find the sprightly Tomas around the workshop. He greets visitors and keeps an eye on his effervescent daughter Maribel.

Maribel Gomez runs the business. She works by hand, without the use of lathes or moulds. Just as her father taught her.

First she grinds down the clay. Milling the clay like flour and mixing with water. She then spreads the clay evenly on the floor to dry. This cake of mud is then broken into pellets and kneaded by foot until malleable. The clay is now ready to be made into a tinaja.

Each jar is assembled in stages, piece by piece, allowed to dry and another piece added. Building the height of the jar by adding ring upon ring of clay.

Villarrobledo was famous for making the largest clay jars in history. Tinajas four

metres tall, two metres wide and weighing 2.5 tonnes. The Tinajero, bent under the weight of clay slung over one shoulder, would need to climb to a platform to reach the top the jar. He would then work at height, sculpting the jar by hand.

Once built, the tinaja is fired for strength. The heat increasing gradually in a large, wood fired oven. When the temperature reaches 900 degrees centigrade the heat is maintained for 12 hours of firing. The fired tinaja must then cool for 10 days.

The process is long, laborious and requires great skill. It is not scaleable, there is no production line. From beginning to end the process takes three or four months in winter, or two months in the warmer, drier summer.

Little wonder that the introduction of concrete all but killed off this ancient craft. By the start of the new millennium only a handful of kilns remained in production. The skill of the tinajero a dying art.

The turn of the new millennium was also the dawn of a new winemaking philosophy. A philosophy born out of a concern for the planet and a respect for heritage. A philosophy of organic agriculture in the vineyard and minimal intervention in the winery. A philosophy of wine made on a human scale. To use amphorae, each piece hand made from natural materials, was the natural choice for the new trend.

Despite his hipster pony tail and full black beard Carlos Cerdán is no follower of fashion. Working alongside his brother Juanjo and sister Lucia he says: "We haven't invented anything, we do what our grandparents did."

Carlos and his siblings exemplify an exciting new generation of wine-makers. Their family values rooted in time, place, people and sharing. The team at Bodega Cerrón are passionate about their unique landscape. Pursuing projects such as the recovery of abandoned old vineyards.

Carlos uses a wide range of vessels in his winemaking. Oak barrels of different sizes, concrete, steel and tinajas. Carlos can point to older tinajas made by Tomas and newer vessels made by Maribel. The benefit of clay is that it allows gentle oxygen ingress without adding oak flavours. Essential qualities that allow his wonderful white wine - "El Cerrico" - to vividly express a sense of place.

Daniel Medina, of Bodegas Las Calzadas, is another champion of tinajas. Danny returned to his family owned bodega after spells working in Rioja, Australia and New Zealand. Like Bodega Cerrón, his family had always sold their grapes to the local cooperative for bulk wine production. Danny believed there was a better way.

He took the risky step of going it alone. Determined to make high quality, amphora aged wines from the family's 100-year-old vineyards. In the past, the La Mancha farmer would keep an amphora in his cellar. Fermenting a little wine for his family's consumption. Danny has been able to rescue antique tinajas, as well as becoming Maribel's very first customer for new wine jars.

The Bodegas Las Calzadas "Tinacula" range includes a white wine from the rare Pardilla grape variety. The wine spends three months on lees in large, 2,200-litre antique tinajas. While a red wine from the Bobal grape is aged for five months in new, smaller, 500-litre tinajas.

I hope that the popularity of low intervention winemaking will revive the ancient trade of the tinajero. There is a natural synergy between artisanal wine-maker and master craftsman. An understanding as vital as the relationship between a living wine and the vessel that it rests in. The ancient Greeks believed that all matter consists of the four elements: earth, water, air and fire. And that is all that you need to craft amphorae.



Cheese soufflé

Chris Dobson, head chef at 21 restaurant, Newcastle Quayside, shares a 21 Hospitality classic that's been on the menu for more than 30 years – and remains a favourite of diners old and new.

By Terry Laybourne



Method

- Prepare four oven-proof ramekins by brushing with softened butter and dusting with a little of the grated parmesan cheese. Refrigerate.
- Bring milk to a boil together with the onion, bay leaf and clove. Remove from the heat, cover and set aside to infuse.
- Make a roux by melting 30g butter over a gentle heat and then add the flour, stir gently for five minutes over a low heat.
- Allow the roux to cool a little before adding the infused milk, a little at a time, stirring until smooth between each addition. Simmer for five minutes.
- Remove from the heat and stir in the grated cheddar cheese, followed by the English mustard, egg yolks and spinach.
- Cover with buttered paper and keep warm.
- Whisk the egg whites with a tiny pinch of salt until quite firm.
- Beat 1/3 of the whipped egg whites into the cheese sauce using a whisk.
- Fold in the remainder very carefully with a rubber spatula.
- Divide the mixture between the pre-prepared ramekins.
- Sit in an oven-proof tray and add boiling water to come halfway up the ramekins.
- Transfer to the oven at 135C for 28 mins.
- Remove from the oven, increase the oven temp to 200C.
- Turn the soufflés out into individual oven proof dishes.
- Pour over a generous amount of double cream, followed by a good dusting of grated parmesan cheese.
- Return to the oven until well risen and golden (around 12 - 15 mins).
- Serve immediately.

Serves 1

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

Ingredients

- 180ml milk
- 1 bay leaf
- 100g parmesan cheese, grated
- 1/4 small onion
- 1 clove
- 30g softened butter, plus a little extra for preparing the moulds
- 30g plain flour
- 100g grated mature cheddar cheese
- 3 egg yolks
- 3 egg whites
- 1 tsp English mustard
- 60g chopped sautéed spinach
- 300ml double cream
- A pinch of salt



Taste tour

Nestled on the outskirts of Newcastle, **Heaton** has transformed into a delicious hot spot for food and drink from some of the region's best-loved independents. Discover a diverse mix of cool coffee stops and cafes, fine dining restaurants, unbeatable brunch destinations and more.



For breakfast...

It's been around for years, but there's a reason why the region's foodies still queue around the corner to bag a table at **Butterfly Cabinet**. Its all-day breakfasts - which stretch from inventive variations of the full English, eggs every which way, French toast and towering pancake stacks - are legendary.

www.butterflycabinet.com

Home to fabulous flowers and breakfast to match, **Fork in the Rose** is a weekend must-visit. Baked eggs and feta, avocado toast, Turkish eggs and breakfast stotties are all on offer after you've picked out your blooms.

www.forkintherose.co.uk



For lunch and brunch...

The always-busy **Smoke & Sear** favours live fire cooking - over wood and charcoal - to take its brunch and lunch options to the next level. Enjoy fire-roasted red pepper shakshuka, flat iron steak and eggs, loaded burgers, surf and turf and more - all showcasing quality produce from local butchers, bakeries, fishmongers, farm and coffee-makers.

www.smokeandsear.co.uk

For brunchtime carbs, look no further than **Dot Bagels**. Handmade and inspired by the kind you find in New York, its much-loved bagels are filled with unique flavour combos taken from around the globe.

www.dotbagels.com

For grab-and-go comfort food, **Redheads Mac 'n' Cheese** is a winner. Served street food style, expect gourmet spins on the iconic pasta dish, with toppings such as Philly cheese steak, carbonara, chilli beef and more.

www.redheadsmacncheese.com

When nothing but a sandwich will do, head for **Zees**. Think deep-filled baps and toasties stuffed with fresher-than-fresh fillings, complemented by freshly-brewed coffee.

www.instagram.com/zees_heaton

Plant-based goodness can be found at **Veganatomy**, which opened earlier this year. In only a few short months, it's become a destination for vegan sushi, authentic bento box lunches and mouth-watering banh mi.

www.veganatomy.co.uk

For coffee...

For speciality beans that even the pickiest of coffee-drinkers will enjoy, head over to **Neighbourhood**. This no-frills corner caffeine stop is always busy thanks to its good-priced and varied drinks menu, joined by plenty of freshly-made sandwiches, bread and sweet treats.

www.neighbourhoodcoffeeheaton.com

A visit to **Heaton Park** is guaranteed to put a smile on your face. The personality-packed, dog-friendly café has been around for nearly 20 years and provides the perfect, feel-good backdrop for coffee-drinkers. Think vibrant vintage interiors, great music and drinks made with love.

www.instagram.com/heatonperkcoffeeshop

You'll be hard-pushed to find anyone with a bad word to say about **The Canny Goat** - and for good reason. Here, sustainability and locally-sourced produce are the focus, with a commitment to serving up traceable and superb quality coffee, alongside Insta-worthy traybakes, toasties and more.

www.instagram.com/thecannygoat



For drinks...



Flight Bar is still in its infancy and yet has already earned itself a reputation as one of the best date night spots in the Newcastle area. The brainchild of the owners of nearby fine dining restaurant, Nest, this intimate-yet-buzzy bar is a go-to quality wines, cocktails and a variety of beers in an elegant, non-rowdy environment that only holds 31 people. Expect table service and unbelievably-good bar snacks.

www.instagram.com/flightbar_heaton

Ro is proof that good things come in small packages. Passionate about locality, quality and community, this welcoming little bar and kitchen serves up inventive signature cocktails (all made in-house with locally-sourced ingredients), alongside craft beers and specially-selected wine from all corners of the globe.

www.roheaton.co.uk

Inspired by the beer and bars over in Germany and Belgium, **Elder Beer** is a favourite for international bottles and lagers. Sit back and enjoy inside, head to its heated beer garden (furry friends are welcome) or take your favourite picks home with you.

www.elderbeer.co.uk

For evening meals...

Head to **Boquerones** for an authentic taste of Spain. Expect traditional tapas - with a few modern twists here and there - done right, made with fresher-than-fresh ingredients every time. Dinner is served Tuesday to Saturday and includes meat, fish and veggie options, along with generous sharing boards.

www.boquerones.uk

Discover hand-stretched, wood-fired Neapolitan pizzas at **Flint Pizza**. The small-but-mighty restaurant is known and loved for its authentic flavours and pillowy dough, as well as its mouthwatering, made-to-order side dishes and desserts.

www.flintpizza.co.uk

Punto Italian Kitchen has been dishing out quality Italian cuisine for over 40 years.

The family-owned restaurant is a destination for fresh pasta, handmade Italian breads, traditional desserts made from scratch (even the gelato) and more.

www.puntoitalian.co.uk

Do like the Spanish do and kick back with a glass of vino, pintxo or even a few sharing boards post-siesta at **Sobremesa**. This small, deliciously laid-back bar excels in authentic Spanish meats, cheeses and other tapas dishes and makes for the perfect date night and after work spot.

www.instagram.com/sobremesa.ncl

Fancy going Greek? **Paros** is your answer. Named after the beautiful Cycladic island, the young restaurant is well-connected to a number of Greek suppliers and promises traditional dishes, made completely from scratch and inspired by generational recipes. Promising bold flavours and warm Greek hospitality, it's an all-round winner that transports you to warmer climes in minutes.

www.parosrestaurant.co.uk



For fine dining...

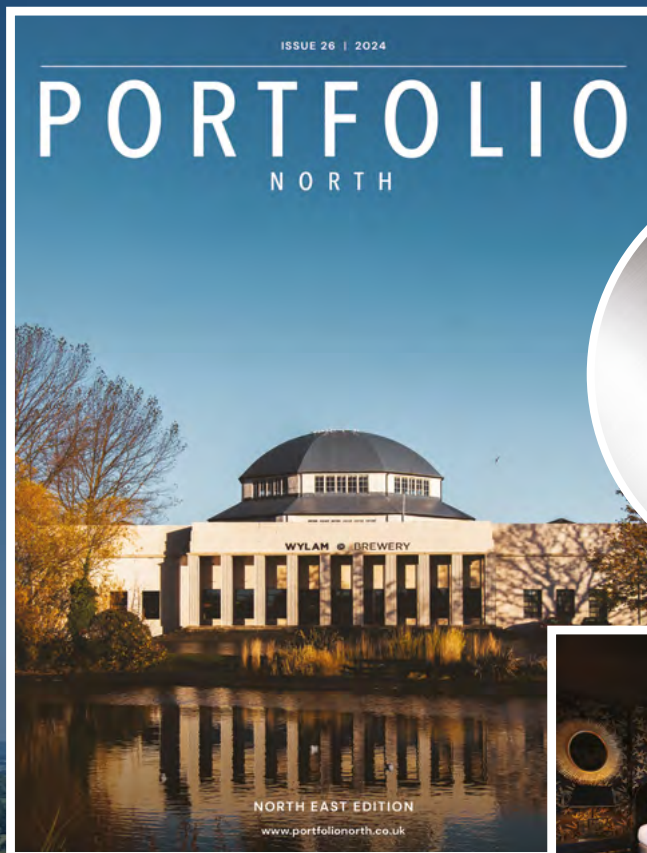
Nest is a neighbourhood restaurant that manages to find the sweet spot between serving up fine dining plates of food without a single slice of pretension or fussiness. Perfect for all occasions, its creative (and non-daunting) tasting menus, Sunday lunch options and vegetarian dishes favour local produce and hit the spot every time.

www.nestinthnorth.com

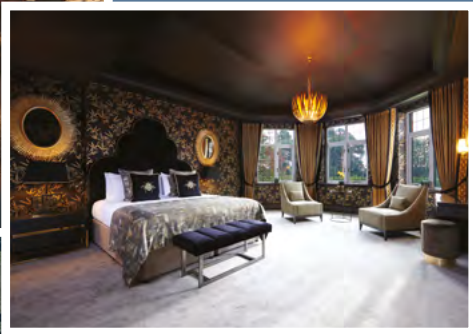
For a meal to remember, it has to be **Rebel**. Its bold and ever-changing tasting menu, which has earned it a Michelin star, celebrates the very best in local, seasonal ingredients and lucky guests can even pull up a chair at the chef's table to make their visit extra-special. Opt for five or 10 courses, or indulge in the a la carte menu on selected mid-week evenings.

www.restaurantrebel.co.uk





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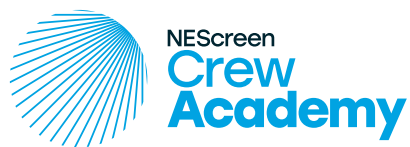
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