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BUSINESSWORKS

Autumn 2023 Hull and East Yorkshire

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CONTACTS

SALES

Helen Gowland
07854 442741
helen@bw-magazine.co.uk

PRODUCTION

Steve Jessop
Production Manager
steve@bw-magazine.co.uk

DESIGN

Craig Hopson
Designer
craig@bw-magazine.co.uk

EDITORIAL

Sam Hawcroft
Editor
sam@bw-magazine.co.uk

PHOTOGRAPHY

Leo Francis
Photographer
hello@leofrancis.co.uk

bw-magazine.co.uk

@BWMagazineHEY
@BWMagazineHEY
Businessworks Magazine

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WELCOME

Planning and organisation is the key to running any business successfully. I've been running a small business for more than a decade so I must have been reasonably OK at both of these things, but lately I've come to realise that a lot of the process is in my head, and the busier you get, the more difficult it is to remember everything you have to do.

And, this year, I've been REALLY busy, probably the busiest I've ever been. I remember saying during Covid – when many people, including me, had to scale back my workload and cut my cloth accordingly – that, in some ways, being forced to stop doing a lot of things was a welcome relief from running around everywhere like a fly with blue rear, and I'd never let myself get that busy again. Ha!

During the pandemic I found more time to go out on walks, but once full-on work resumed all that started to tail off. Having never been a morning person, I always convinced myself that I'd never be able to get up early before work to go on a walk. But in January, I decided to properly put my mind to it and try to make some lasting changes – and, it turns out, going out for a walk at 7am doesn't kill you. On the contrary, it's somewhat invigorating, and allows me time to collect my thoughts and prepare for the day ahead. I don't do it every day and sometimes I do bail out and grab another couple of hours' sleep, especially if the weather's rubbish, but I try not to beat myself up about that as walking has to be enjoyable, and never a chore.

The other lasting change I'm doing fairly well at sticking to is getting my list of jobs out of my head, writing them down, and prioritising them. I'm using an app to help me with this, although sometimes I do feel that I don't have enough time to look at it, and that I need another app to remind me to use my to-do app! But as long as I find enough time of a weekend or evening to review my outstanding tasks then I can keep track of everything much better.

Among these jobs is, of course, writing for BW – and in this issue we've another diverse clutch of entrepreneurs with inspiring tales to tell. I hope you enjoy reading their stories as much as I did speaking to them!



Sam Hawcroft, BW Editor

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The aftermath of Covid-19 continues to take its financial toll on the UK both for businesses and individuals. We talk to Tony Bullock, Managing Partner at Dutton Moore Chartered Accountants & Business Advisers to give his overview of the start to 2023 and the months ahead...

Stabilisation and recovery



Inflation is proving stickier than expected and further interest rate rises are expected, hence why the banks have been pulling mortgage deals amidst the uncertainties.

Last month the Chancellor Jeremy Hunt said Britain's economy is "back", and that his strategy for growth was welcomed at the International Monetary Fund meeting in Washington. His predecessor, Kwasi Kwarteng, left the previous IMF meeting in October early, amid a barrage of criticism.

Mr Hunt said the international lending body saw he was "putting the British economy back on the right track". However, the latest figures show the UK economy failed to grow in February. More recently the IMF said it expected the UK economy to shrink by 0.3% in 2023, which would make it one of the worst performing of the world's major economies.



Britain's economy has only just recovered to the size it was prior to the pandemic, following months of industrial action, rapidly rising prices, and labour shortages.

The wave of industrial action affecting the UK in recent months has contributed to its lack of growth, the Office of National Statistics said in May. However, Mr Hunt said it was important to avoid fuelling further inflation through pay rises. He said Britain had avoided recession this year "so far", and that he hoped to see faster growth and falling inflation in the months ahead.

Measures in his March Budget to help businesses recruit more staff and to increase investment, including an increase in childcare funding, should stimulate growth, however, it is too early to see those impacts.

Investor confidence in the UK was shaken last year during the short-lived government of prime minister Liz Truss, which saw a brief economic strategy that included major tax cuts without an explanation of how they would be funded.

The outlook for the UK, which relies heavily on financial services, could be clouded by current uncertainty in the banking sector, following the collapse of three US banks and UBS's emergency takeover of Credit Suisse. However, Mr Hunt said the UK had "a very robust, resilient banking system", which was now in a much better position than it was before the 2008 financial crisis.

Further bold action is needed for growth – to try and regulate the months ahead and steady the ship for businesses and individuals. ●



AI: THE THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES

By Christina Colmer McHugh, director of CCM Universal and founder of an innovative tech platform connecting the worlds of business, education and emotional resilience

Artificial intelligence (AI) is becoming increasingly prevalent in the world of start-ups, with many entrepreneurs and investors recognizing the potential of AI to transform industries and create new opportunities. In recent years, there has been a growing body of research into the impact of AI on start-ups, and the ways in which AI can be used to drive innovation and growth. In this blog, we'll explore some of the latest research into AI and the world of start-ups. One area where AI is having a significant impact on start-ups is in the development of new products and services. According to a recent report by McKinsey, AI is enabling start-ups to develop products and services that are more personalised, efficient, and effective than ever before. By leveraging AI technologies such as machine learning and natural language processing, start-ups are able to analyse vast amounts of data and develop products and services that are tailored to the specific needs and

preferences of individual users. Additionally, AI is helping start-ups to automate and streamline their operations, reducing costs and improving efficiency. According to a report by Accenture, AI-powered automation can help start-ups to reduce operational costs by up to 60%, while also improving accuracy and reducing errors. This can be particularly beneficial for start-ups that are operating on tight budgets and need to maximise their resources.

Another area where AI is having a significant impact on start-ups is in the area of customer service and support. According to a report by Gartner, by 2025, AI-powered chatbots will be the primary way that customers interact with businesses. This presents a significant opportunity for start-ups to leverage AI to provide personalised and efficient customer support, without the need for human intervention. However, there are also

challenges associated with the use of AI in the world of start-ups.

One of the biggest challenges is the need for specialised technical expertise. According to a report by Deloitte, the shortage of AI talent is one of the biggest barriers to the adoption of AI in start-ups. This can make it difficult for start-ups to develop and implement AI-powered solutions, and can also make it difficult to attract investment from AI-focused investors. Additionally, there are concerns about the ethical implications of AI in the world of start-ups.

As AI becomes more prevalent, there is a risk that it could be used to perpetuate biases and discrimination, particularly in areas such as hiring and recruitment. It's important for start-ups to be aware of these risks and to take steps to ensure that their use of AI is ethical and responsible. Where do you sit when it comes to feeding AI into your future planning? ●



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FOUND IN TRANSLATION

Sam Hawcroft talks to **Carolyn Johnson**, the CEO of leading Hull-based interpreting company, Language is Everything...

Carolyn Johnson might be a police officer today, had a freak Outward Bound accident not forced her to reconsider her career aspirations.

Originally from Cumbria, she had moved down to London with a view to joining the Met, but when that didn't work out, she found a role as a store detective for Miss Selfridge in Oxford Street – sparking a career in retail that she says she “absolutely loved”.

One day, while working at the branch in Slough, Carolyn discovered that “virtually everyone in the shop was stealing – and they were sacked on the spot”.

She added: “I was lucky because, at the time, Miss Selfridge would only take on graduates to be managers and I was not a graduate – but they said, look, there's no one left here, how do you fancy getting into retail management? So I said yes!”

She ended up managing stores in Knightsbridge before moving into security and audit for a time – but she missed retail, and ended up back as store manager in Slough.

An Iranian man who had founded his own linguistics company would come into Carolyn's store on almost ►

daily basis and try to talk her into working for him. "In the end," she laughs, "I got so sick of him that I said yes."

Back then – nearly 30 years ago – the company was "tiny", with just four people. "I'd never used a computer before and I remember sitting at this desk and thinking, what earth am I going to do with this?" says Carolyn. "But I just love learning – that's my big thing. And to be honest, he wasn't the best person to learn about business from, because he just had his own set of rules, which really involved spending whatever money came into the company. Eventually, it got to the point where we'd grown a bit, we had more staff, and it was either him or me, really, who was going to take it forward."

He moved to Greece – which made up Carolyn's mind to buy him out. She had intended to stay in Slough – but found it difficult to secure the sort of "passionate" people she wanted to build the company around, as, she says, it was one of those "full-employment" towns where someone could leave a job on a Friday and walk into another one the following Monday.

Carolyn was to discover Hull and East Yorkshire quite by accident. Her office manager at the time revealed that she had a boyfriend in Howden, and was planning to move north and live with him. "I really didn't want to lose her," says Carolyn. "She was just the best office manager. I thought about homeworking, which wasn't really a thing then, and then in the end, I came up and had a look around, and I put an advert in the job centre in Goole for customer service people. We were just inundated with all these fantastic CVs from people who hadn't really worked much, but they had loads of qualifications. And I never looked back."

“*"We don't put the phone down until we make sure that everybody understands each other."*

So Carolyn took the plunge and moved up to Howden, initially renting what used to be a poodle parlour, before buying the building and converting it into offices. She kept the Slough office open for a time, having offered staff there the opportunity to move north, but eventually made East Yorkshire the company's sole base.

Carolyn became involved with the newly emerging World Trade Centre in Hull, and decided to set up a second Language is Everything office in the city. And in 2011, she led "what has to be the most catastrophic management buyout in history", she says.

Her two fellow directors had wanted to sell up to a large competitor. Carolyn knew that the company would be stripped of its assets, and redundancies would follow. The process was fraught, to say the least. "It went on for so long and I was naive. It was the first time I'd done something like that properly, and I was very badly advised. It nearly killed me. By now, we'd moved down the bottom of Queen Street, and I was kind of running the place thinking, well, I'm not going to have a job soon because this isn't going to happen. And then just before Christmas in 2011, I got the money. I decided that I would move the guys from Howden to Hull... and that was an even bigger mistake."

Asking people to come half an hour down the M62 was a step too far for many of them, and there followed a few "awful years, just fighting all the time to survive", Carolyn says. It was a lonely place, because "People don't want to know people that are in trouble. People like good news. They like to mix with people who are doing well. I think I just sort of got myself into a state of mind that every day when I walked in and people said, how are you? I just said, fine, thank you, instead of saying, no I'm not really fine, and I haven't slept for three weeks."



It was also around this time that Carolyn was made an MBE for services to business in Yorkshire and the Humber – which, she says, has motivated her even more towards making the company a success and putting the region on the map. “I have no idea who put me forward for it! Obviously I was very proud, as this is a place I absolutely adore and I’d always want to play my part in ensuring it gets the best deal possible.”

The past decade has been about rebuilding – and what a turnaround. The company has moved with the times, capitalising on the advances in technology to offer the very best and latest in translation services, from its origins in face-to-face interpreting and a basic hotline service.

“Telephone interpreting didn’t really start until the late 1990s,” says Carolyn, “and I can always remember in Slough we had one telephone and it was on a shelf, and if it rang, there was a bit of a scramble. And when we moved to Howden, we still had rows of phones on shelves. I think we’ve turned the tables from face-to-face interpreting being the biggest service that we offer, and telephone interpreting has certainly made life much easier.”

Now, on-demand phone interpreting means that, for example, if a GP has a patient whose first language is not English, they can call Language is Everything, and within about a minute, they will be connected to someone who can interpret. It’s a service that is of great help to not only

doctors, but solicitors and charities such as Macmillan and the Stroke Association.

Covid, of course, changed the nature of face-to-face interpreting – and also tested Carolyn’s leadership skills, but she turned the pandemic to her advantage. Because of the nature of the work relying on advanced telephony, homeworking wasn’t an option for the head office staff, so Carolyn swiftly introduced a series of measures including extra office space, installing air filtration systems and ensuring those who needed to isolate could do so on full pay.

Demand for telephone and video interpreting skyrocketed, and the company’s turnover doubled to more than £2.1 million in the 2020-21 financial year, during which it provided more than 2.2 million minutes ▶



of on-demand telephone interpreting and connected 124,000 calls.

Many of the service users are in desperate need, at “the very bottom of the tree of life”, says Carolyn, such as asylum seekers and refugees who may have escaped horrifying circumstances, or people receiving distressing news from a health professional.

“It’s really important to me that those people still get the service that everybody else should get. So we work very hard to ensure that we never put the phone down on someone saying, sorry, we can’t do it. It might be we have to call them back in a couple of hours if it’s a very rare language. And there can sometimes be people who don’t want anyone to speak their language because they might feel that they are going to be in trouble. It can be quite an interesting journey to find out what language somebody really speaks.”

Carolyn is just as passionate about her 30-strong team and as the 300 or so translators on the books – many of whom originally came to the UK as

refugees – as she is about giving a voice to the marginalised. Listed among the company’s “values” on its website is this statement: “Our customer service team are people, not agents – and our interpreting and translation teams have names, not numbers.”

And, while AI language tools have their uses, there is no cutting corners at Language is Everything. Where some competitors might use automation, there’s simply no substitute for a real-life interpreter in what are usually testing times for those who need the service, Carolyn says. “Things like Google Translate are fine and I use them on holiday to work out what I’m going to have for dinner – but the types of customers that we have, they want the personal touch. We don’t put the phone down until we make sure that everybody understands each other. A lot of the people we’re providing our services for are those who have come from war-torn countries and may have serious mental health issues – and AI is just not going to do much for them.”

Carolyn acknowledges that she’s operating in a competitive market – but this “makes you want to work harder to stay at the top of your game”. And she has no plans to go anywhere, anytime soon – quite the opposite. Her goal in the coming years is to evolve with emerging technology to future-proof the business for new generations of translators working in new markets.

“We’ve been through some tricky times, but I’m in this for the long haul,” she says. “I think it’s really important to have a team of people around you that, if something did happen to you, could take over the run of the business. I’ve tried to make it as simple as possible because I think life should be as simple as possible. Although the business sounds quite complicated because we’re dealing with things that are on demand and lots of different languages, it’s actually pretty simple to operate – and if you’ve got the right people that have the same values and the same passion to succeed, I think as long as there’s a need for what we do, we’ll always be here.” ●





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HOW HELP TO GROW CAN TAKE YOUR BUSINESS TO THE NEXT LEVEL

The Help to Grow Management programme, a collaborative effort between the Hull Business School and small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), has been highly praised by participants across a diverse range of sectors

The 12-week programme – 90% of which is funded by the Government, leaving a nominal up-front fee of £750 for participants – supports businesses to be more resilient to external challenges, empower innovation and increase productivity through the development of detailed growth plans and management strategies. It consists of online learning and face-to-face sessions, offering participants valuable insights into areas such as leadership, innovation, digital adoption, employee engagement, marketing, responsible business and financial management.

Aimed at SME business owners, leaders or senior managers from all sectors, it is facilitated by experienced experts from accredited business schools and designed to be undertaken alongside full-time work, with a time commitment of 50 hours over 12 weeks.

One local business that has taken advantage of the programme is Virtual, a Hull-based virtual reality training and education company. Jan Antons, product and business development lead at the company, shared her experience of Help to Grow.

She says: “We were incorporated in 2007 as a spin-off from the University of Hull, and we have done very well, especially in the education market for big installed systems. But as the world has changed, and even before the onset of Covid, we noticed that students wanted to learn differently. They wanted to learn in their own time, at any location, and they didn’t necessarily want to be in the classroom.”

This shift in learning preferences prompted Virtual to introduce new subscription-based products. According to Jan, participation in the Help to Grow programme was instrumental in rethinking the company’s product positioning and the value it offers to customers. “The programme itself was

incredibly useful, and the modules are split up very nicely,” she adds. “What I noticed was different modules were resonating with different people.”

The Help to Grow programme had a particular impact on Virtual’s approach to its brand personality, as Jan explains. “The idea of a brand prism really struck a chord with me. I’ve taken that from the programme and discussed it with the founders. We’ve considered how we really talk about and think about our brand, and it made me realise where our products were on the prism and how we could tailor our messaging better. It was quite a lightbulb moment.”

Through the programme, Jan and her team learned how to better interact with customers and ensure that they were satisfied. “We operate in a niche market, so we need a good reputation and to be seen as approachable. We’re very much around competence, sincerity and hard work.”

Jan also highly commended the structure of the programme, which combines online lectures with in-person sessions. “That was one of the most powerful parts, to connect with other business leaders and see what challenges they were facing,” she says.



The course’s learning materials continued to be useful even after the completion of the programme, she adds, helping the Virtual team devise a marketing plan for a new product.

Jan concludes: “The Help to Grow programme was a really helpful initiative. I would definitely recommend it to others because it helps refresh your thinking and helps you build new connections.” ●

To apply and see the full programme timetable, register at exceducation.hull.ac.uk/help-to-grow-hull.

Once you’ve registered, we’ll be in touch to confirm your enrolment.

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THE PEOPLE'S RADIO

Sam Hawcroft talks to **Pete Mills**, founder of growing community station Hull's 107FM... ►





Pete Mills had long dreamt of launching a community radio station in Hull – but it was to take him years of trying before it finally became a reality.

He had always had a passion for radio and local music, and got his own grounding in presenting at Viking FM, before a stint at KCFM, about 20 years ago. He'd spent years in other jobs before and after that, including in the RAF and at British Aerospace in Brough, nightclub DJ-ing as well as freelancing on radio stations around the UK. But the idea of starting his own station remained on the backburner.

"It's kind of a process," he says. "The idea goes back into the drawer, it comes out again and stuff is added to it. It's a bit like what prolific songwriters do – they have an idea of a song, but it might not be quite right, so they put it away, and bring it back and add the creativity, and then put it away again... Bono does it with his songs, for example – some of them were written years ago."

Pete first took the idea to Hull Kingston Rovers. "Owner Neil Hudgell sat behind me at school!" he says. "I was in the same class as him for two years, I think. I always got on with Neil. He liked the idea, but it just kind of fizzled out when it got to middle management; in hindsight, it was way off the finished product that has now come to fruition in 107FM."

A few years later, Pete decided to go the other side of the river and approach Hull City with a view to basing a community station at the KCOM Stadium, as it was then. At the time, says Pete, "everything was rosy in the garden", and he had a number of positive conversations with then CEO Nick Thompson.

But then came the Allams' controversial bid to change the name of the club. This would turn out to become a long, protracted and bitterly divisive campaign during which it was clear that engagement with the local community was hardly on the owners' list of priorities – and Pete's idea was shelved once more.

Enter one Malcolm Scott.

Malcolm, or Mally, as he was known, died last September, prompting an outpouring of tributes in the worlds of business and culture across the region. In the Winter 2022 edition of *BVW*, we posthumously named him the winner of our Top 20 Most Inspiring Businesspeople feature, and Pete told then how Mally had been responsible for "turning his life around".

Pete first encountered him when he was a presenter on an established community radio station in Hull. Mally – whose son ran a music studio – rang Pete "out of the blue" because he'd been playing some local bands on his show.

"Basically, there was only my show and Alan Raw's show on Radio Humberside that perpetually played local music and gave local artists that opportunity of airtime," says Pete. "The idea for a new station was there, but it wasn't ready to pitch."

Then, in 2013, Pete's wife, Fiona – who is now a presenter on BBC Radio Humberside – spotted a picture of Mally and Antony Langley in the local paper, as both had recently become directors of Hull KR. True to form, Mally had great plans for boosting the club's profile.

"I went for a coffee with Mally," says Pete, "told him my ideas, and the opportunities that a community station could bring to the area. He then met the community trust at Rovers and also the board, and they backed the idea. In late 2013 we applied for the Ofcom community radio licence being advertised at the time, on the premise that we would get greater exposure for Rovers. It would be another conduit for the club, because Mally's vision was to turn Rovers from the pride of east Hull into the pride of East Yorkshire."

Pete invested considerable time over the next couple of years, often working 18-hour days, into getting the station off the ground – and it was thanks to Mally's contacts and boundless energy that they secured the Ofcom licence, as well as encouraging a host of other investors to come on board, including Antony Langley.

"Part of the application was that we had to get the great and good of Hull's society and business to back what we were going to do, and Mally must have got his little black phone book out and just went through everybody he could possibly find. I mean, you're talking about the guy who tried to buy the Humber Bridge! He made things happen – he was just a legend. And that was how the station started."

Hull Kingston Radio launched on February 6, 2015, at 9am, from a small studio in the West Stand at Craven Park. Much of its original sound and aesthetics was based on the original KCFM sound – before, as Pete puts it diplomatically, Lincs FM "sanitised" it.

However, Pete was conscious that it was being seen as Rovers' radio station – which, given the divisive nature of rugby

league in Hull, wasn't something he really wanted. Despite its base at Craven Park, it had no financial connection to the rugby club and had to stand on its own two feet from day one. Despite this, and through sheer hard work by Pete and his volunteers, the station rapidly grew from its launch, and in 2017 moved to new bigger studios further down Preston Road.

By 2020, the station had a new board and investors, and Pete realised that, for the station to go to the next level, it needed another move – as well as a brand change.

He took inspiration from a commercial station in Dublin, 98FM. It actually broadcasts on 98.1FM, but everyone knows it as 98FM – so, in that vein, Hull Kingston Radio, which broadcasts on 107.4FM, was rebranded as Hull's 107FM in August 2022.

The station is now based in the largest

and most impressive studio complex it has ever had, at the One Business Village in Emily Street, having moved in early 2021. It's still just east of the river but far more centrally located – and the mainstay of the station, which is run almost entirely by volunteers, remains the provision of opportunities for local people. Hull's 107FM runs numerous broadcast media training courses, most of them free or fully funded, and aimed at the most disadvantaged in society, such as the long-term unemployed, those with low self-esteem and self-confidence, and others who have experienced barriers to learning.

"I've seen this frequently, because I oversee and deliver some of the training, that people are coming to us at their lowest ebb," says Pete. "The belief that they can achieve has been battered out of them. ►



Within a matter of a few sessions, you can see the profound change in these people. We help people raise their aspirations, and help them progress either by volunteering with us or elsewhere, into employment, further education or training."

The community training at Hull's 107FM has become renowned throughout the area, Pete says. The station has become known for being "people enablers" - and many of its volunteers have gone on to work professionally in the broadcast industry, notably Radio Humberside - although this hasn't been helped by the BBC's plans to axe large swathes of its local radio offering. "Most of our volunteers have been guests on BBC Radio Humberside, and the relationship was developing quite nicely until the announcement of these changes," says Pete. "Hopefully, when everything settles down we can pick up where we left off to help progress our volunteers."

Pete pays a heartfelt tribute to his volunteers, whom he calls "the lifeblood of the station". He adds: "Without them we wouldn't be able to function properly - 95% of 107FM's volunteers had never been near a studio or behind a mic before coming to us. It's very much a two-way street, in that we give them a platform and opportunity, and they give us their time and considerable effort."

"Testament to that training is born out of the praise the station frequently gets - that we don't sound like a community station, or when we say we are a volunteer-led community station, people can't believe it. That's down to the training and the quality of presenter we put on air."

There is also often a misconception about how community stations are funded, Pete says - they are not the same as commercial stations, which are just "cash cows for directors and shareholders". "Only 50% of our income can come from advertising and sponsorship. The other 50% has to come from a combination of volunteers' time, funding, grants, etc."

The station relies on the support of local businesses who advertise over the airwaves - and Pete is keen to highlight the quality and value of the advertising and sponsorship packages available via Hull's 107FM - the majority



of which are professionally produced by the Multi award winning Engine7, the firm run by Howard Young, whom regular readers will remember from the Autumn 2022 edition of BW.

"Howard gets the ethos of the station and what we want to do in the community," says Pete. "In essence, we're getting a commercial-standard radio advert made by a multi-award-winning production house. A lot of the time on community radio stations, the adverts are made in-house, and they can be a bit ropery. They don't do anything for the business client. The whole idea of advertising is creating brand awareness and driving business to the business, not away from it. So that's why our adverts stick out - in a good way."

Times are tough, Pete says, but he's confident that the station can continue to grow. "It's the same for every business - it's all about managing your outgoings

and maximising your incomings, and delivering a product that the communities we serve are rightly proud of. The station is continually evolving - you have to be if you want to remain the most popular volunteer-led radio station in East Yorkshire. And it belongs as much to the community as it does to me and Jon Gibbins, the station's other director - it's the people's station."

"In the not-too-distant future, there will be further inward investment in the technical infrastructure to enable us to engage our communities even more - from community-based outreach training, to whole live shows coming from community organisations and businesses we've partnered with, presented by their volunteers/employees, who we've trained to the high standards we expect on Hull's 107FM, right through to going on the DAB platform. In uncertain times, one thing is for sure - 107FM will be there!" ●

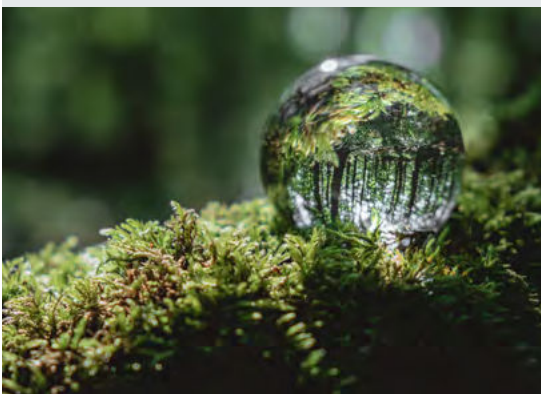
John Good Group: A Force for Good, Leading with Purpose and Sustainability

Embracing a profound sense of purpose and responsibility, this family-owned company prioritises People, Planet, and Performance, leading the way towards a brighter and more sustainable future



In a world where business success is often measured solely by profits and market dominance, the John Good Group is an inspiration to businesses who want to transform their business to deliver social and environmental good, whilst driving business performance. With a rich history spanning 190 years, this remarkable family-owned company has recently transitioned from its 5th to its 6th generation, embarking on a transformative journey to become a group of companies that prioritise People, Planet, and Performance at the heart of everything it does.

Rich Quelch, the Group CMO of John Good Group, a new era has dawned, one that embodies a profound sense of purpose and responsibility. Rich shares how the company is repositioning itself to have a lasting positive impact on the world.



Building Businesses Together

"In the new era of John Good Group, we have embraced a profound sense of purpose and responsibility, repositioning ourselves to make a lasting positive impact on the world. At the core of our mission is an unwavering commitment to the growth and development of our employees. We believe that our people are our greatest asset, and by fostering a supportive and nurturing work environment, we empower them to thrive both personally and professionally. Providing access to opportunities that unlock their full potential is central to our approach.

But John Good Group's aspiration for a brighter future extends far beyond the confines of its own organisation. With deep roots in the communities where we work and live, we actively engage in initiatives that uplift society, creating a tangible and positive social impact. Sustainability is a cornerstone of our vision, and we are proud to embark on a journey towards becoming carbon neutral. We take bold steps to minimize our environmental footprint, leaving behind a greener world for future generations.

The passion for sustainable practices also extends to the international stage, where John Good Group is actively supporting initiatives that promote environmental projects. By collaborating with partners worldwide, we aim to play a vital role in

shaping global sustainable practices, leaving a lasting legacy for generations to come.

An integral part of John Good Group's approach to enhancing performance is through their investment arm. With strategic acquisition and investment strategies, they seek out companies that share their ethos of being forces for good, companies that prioritise sustainability, and have a positive impact on the environment. By nurturing and supporting such businesses, John Good Group aims to create a network of like-minded entities working together to create a greener and more prosperous future."

John Good Group's unwavering commitment to their employees, the communities they serve, and the planet showcases their exceptional dedication to being a force for good. This unyielding pursuit of purpose-driven growth and sustainability is a testament to their leadership, setting an inspiring example for the global business community. Their resolute belief in making a positive and lasting impact on the world paves the way for a brighter future for all. ●

JOHN GOOD
GROUP

Web: www.johngoodgroup.co.uk
Email: info@johngoodgroup.co.uk



Contact our dedicated and award-winning team today on
01482 225666
or visit cobus.co.uk

Major changes in the telecoms industry have started and will affect your business communications – doing nothing is not an option!

The telecom digital switch over has started. Is your business ready?

For the last few years, telecom network providers have been making plans to move all the voice networks over to VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol). These major changes have now started, and your business needs to understand how these changes will affect your communications – doing nothing is now not an option! Seriously, it's not an option!

Most of the existing copper landlines in Hull and East Yorkshire are more than 40 years old – and in some places could be up to 100 years old! They were never designed to cope with the demands the modern world puts on them – and they were certainly never built to carry high tech broadband services!

Businesses who currently rely on ISDN and/or analogue lines for their communications, will need to upgrade or replace their current telephone system to allow the calls to route over the new internet protocol.

A key factor to consider when you're switching from ISDN to VoIP - Is your internet connection good enough to deliver a business grade VoIP service whilst still coping with the day to day running of your business's IT data demands?

In Hull and the surrounding area, we have a key advantage over the rest of the UK with KCOM, the incumbent ISP (Internet Service Provider) for Hull and East Riding, completing

the rollout of their full fibre broadband network back in 2019. The majority of businesses already have a fibre connection which makes the upgrade or replacement of telecoms systems much easier.

Here at Cobus, we have always prided ourselves on recommending the best solution to suit your business needs whilst considering the features, the infrastructure, and the price, as well ensuring we future proof your business with the chosen platform, after all we have been established for almost 32-years so we do know a thing or two about telephony, communications and technology.

Reducing the overall telecoms costs is a main priority for most businesses, and being able to increase call features and functionality means it's a win-win for organisations looking to upgrade and gain additional benefits. Most new office phone systems already support VoIP, but if yours doesn't, you can either replace your phone system with an IP system or switch from a fixed, on-premise phone system, to a Cloud-Based Hosted telephony service.

- Most of the eligible UK market has already switched over to a VoIP/SIP solution as it provides several key benefits including: -
- Reduce operational costs, typically by up to 50% or more.
- Increase the mobility and productivity of staff.
- Easy to install, configure and maintain.
- Scalable and flexible, allowing individually tailored growth.

If you want to make savings off your current telephone line rental and call costs, or your telephone system is out of date and not offering you the new features, options, or reliability that's now in the marketplace, then now is the right time to review your options and switch to VoIP, SIP or Hosted technologies.

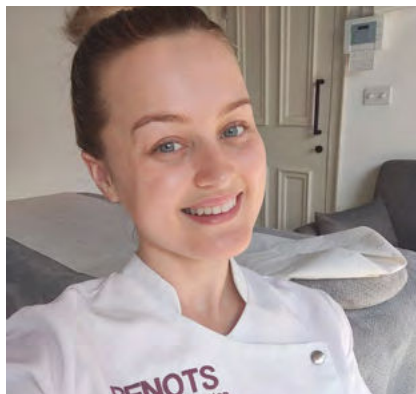
Why not make the change now (before the network is switched off!) and contact our dedicated and award-winning team today on 01482 225666. ●



On a mission to help with health and wellbeing in the workplace

Megan Stoner of Renots Injury Rehabilitation Clinic speaks to BusinessWorks

I established Renots Injury Rehabilitation Clinic in 2019 and have been working with a wide range of patients since then, to help with overall health and wellbeing and injury



management. I have found that a lot of my patients suffer from pain caused by bad posture, stress, commuting and awkward work setups. All of these issues seem to fixate around the workplace and lack of workplace wellbeing.

I have worked hard to create a holistic approach to improving these issues, using techniques such as postural assessments, work space assessments, massage, cupping and much more. Although I feel that the workplace needs to become an environment which also welcomes this approach, as it can also benefit the business as well as their employees.

Businesses will find that by having regular wellbeing assessments and treatments available to their employees, they will have

employees that feel appreciated, which boosts productivity, longevity and capability within job roles. By doing this, it also means a decrease in sickness rates due to injury and stress is managed appropriately, whereby it is less likely for employees to take sickness due to their mental health. Therefore not only is workplace wellbeing necessary, it is also critical to business success. ●

07508 483482

Email renots.clinic@gmail.com

www.renotsinjuryclinic.noterro.com



HULL4HEROES
SUPPORTING THOSE WHO HAVE SERVED

Anniversary Dinner

Saturday | 18th | November 2023
Start at 7pm - Carriages at 1am | Double Tree Hilton

Three course meal followed by an evening of entertainment and live music.

Tickets available at www.hull4heroes.org.uk

Tickets are £55 each or £500 per table of ten. Please contact helen.skinner@hull4heroes.org.uk for enquiries.



01482 971600
hello@languageiseverything.com
www.languageiseverything.com

It's a vital, but frequently overlooked or underfunded area, but high-quality translation is key to success in international markets, be it for on-message marketing or for communicating any other area of business. BW magazine discovers from Language is Everything that not all translation services are equal

'CRACKING AN INTERNATIONAL MARKET REQUIRES A CRACKING TRANSLATION TEAM'

Before beating yourself up for an embarrassing error originating from Google Translate or a cheap automated service, consider that you're not alone.

Even some of the biggest household names have made huge gaffes, like Ford failing to realise that the word Pinto is often used when referring to small genitals in Brazil and KFC's 'finger lickin' good' slogan translating to 'eat your fingers off' in China.

Language is Everything's customer service manager Reece Hanson can't stress strongly enough the importance of time and investment in translation and related services such as localisation.

"We will always bang the drum for quality. If something is worth doing, it's

worth doing well," he says. "The examples from KFC and Ford show that even an accurate translation could be entirely inappropriate or nonsensical in another market or language. This is where we would recommend localisation services using mother-tongue translators who would also consider 'tone of voice' for marketing copy and slogans."

Reece is busy with his colleagues in the translation team at Language is Everything, working for local, regional and national businesses who rely on them to get it right. From manufacturing businesses, where expert translators with sector-specific specialisms tackle highly regulated consumer product labelling, to legal



Language is Everything CEO Carolyn Johnson MBE



Language is Everything's customer service manager Reece Hanson

documents for law firms, or websites where marketing copy needs to resonate with potential customers in multiple countries and regions – it's all in a day's work.

The team understands the nature of business, with its time and cost pressures, and forms strong partnerships with customers to offer bespoke packages of support along with a highly responsive urgent translation service.

Much of the work comprises common, but business-critical, documents such as contracts and confidential correspondence, and much of this will require an extra check.

"Proofreading comes as standard, but we often employ an additional linguist for peace of mind and translate back into the original language to highlight any potential issues or misinterpretation by the original translator," says Reece.

The business based in Hull works with around 500 loyal linguists speaking more than 120 languages and has been providing translation and interpreting services for three decades. It has earned a national reputation along with a number of recent business awards, and is currently listed in the top 100 UK companies by Great Place to Work.

Language is Everything CEO Carolyn Johnson MBE says that quality is the company's cornerstone.

"If you want to establish trust and win new customers in international markets, you must ensure that you 'speak their language'," she says. "Cracking an international market requires a cracking translation team!"

"We will never take shortcuts and have a close working relationship with hand

selected linguists, which really sets us apart. We use technology to enable smooth processes and good value for customers, but we are not replacing people with it."

Carolyn's comments are backed up with more than 115 five-star Google reviews, from both linguists and customers, and they make fantastic reading!

So before choosing a translation company, consider the following:

Would you like a friendly, supportive, value-for-money service?

How would you respond to a poor English translation in a business setting?

Do you need to feel 100 per cent confident in the accuracy of a translation?

Does your project require a linguist with specialist sector knowledge?
Will you need localisation services?
Should you build in time for extra checks of your translation?
Would you prefer a company with a track record of meeting tight deadlines?
Will you need additional services such as telephone and video interpreting? ●

Translations
by Language is Everything

Get in contact with Language is Everything on 01482 976100, or hello@languageiseverything.com



An ancient elixir FOR A MODERN WORLD

Alison Leighton had long known the benefits of castor oil, but to bring the therapy to market she needed to bring it into the 21st century. She tells *Sam Hawcroft* how she did it...

If you're of a certain age, the very mention of castor oil might send a shiver down your spine as it conjures up images of your mother trying to force it down your neck as she insists "it's good for you".

The thing is, your mother was right. However, it turns out that there are other ways to use this extremely beneficial traditional elixir that don't involve ingesting it – and Alison Leighton has hit on a method that is fuss and mess-free and can relieve dozens of complaints from digestive disorders to hormone imbalances.

South African-born Alison is a qualified nutritional therapist and colonic hydrotherapist. She has been in East Yorkshire for 17 years after moving to the region "for love" – as many people do. ►

"I used to live in London," she says, "but was planning to move back to South Africa. Just before I did, I met my future husband. I didn't think then that anything was going to come out of the relationship, and I left London without any of his contact details. And then three years later I came back to England for a friend's wedding and he was there – and it was love at first sight. I was away on holiday, so we did six months long distance, and then I moved to Hull to be with him. I'd never even heard of the city before!"

Alison learned about castor oil as a therapy at various points during her studies in nutrition and colonics. It can aid liver detoxification, reduce period pains, combat constipation and boost the circulation, and has long been associated with hair strengthening and regrowth remedies. "Castor oil is an ingredient in more than 700 beauty products – and it's not a new fad. It's been around for centuries," she says.

Once Alison began practising, she often told her clients about what castor oil could do, but few bothered to investigate further because the application of it was "too much of a faff".

"It's such an old technique and the benefits are just incredible," she says, "but people are busy. So I thought, is there a way of making this easier to use? I played around with the idea. I wanted it to be completely natural, organic and toxin-free, because one of the traditional ways of doing it was wrapping yourself in cling film, and that went against any learning that I did because oil and plastic really don't work well together."

Despite this being in the middle of lockdown in 2020, Alison had the benefit of time and the fact her husband was earning meant there was no great pressure on her to find the right solution quickly – she could research and experiment at length. A chat with a friend – who said the idea had "really got legs" and

urged Alison to go for it – was motivation enough for her to seriously pursue it.

She had an idea in her mind of what the product would look like – easily applicable packs that could be applied to the body without the oil spilling – and so she began a "journey" to find the "cleanest, most organic" fabric along with a waterproof outer casing.

"One of my colonic hydrotherapy clients came to me, and she happened to be a fashion designer," says Alison. "I asked her whether she knew anyone who'd be able to make these packs, and she put me on to a woman who used to sew for her. When we first started, I made a basic template of what I wanted. And then a friend of mine's mother, who had an overlocker sewing machine, made me 10 packs and that was where we went from. It all just organically happened, and fell into place at the right time."

Sometimes you make your own luck, though, as they say. Just before Alison was ready to launch Castorvida, she received an email from a nutritional supplier she worked with. At the bottom, it read, "If you are interested in our products or want to add a new product, just message us."

"At first, I thought, I'm not ready yet – I'll wait until I am," she says. "I'd already decided not to contact potential stockists until we were ready, but then this email came in and I thought, why not message them? They came back almost immediately, saying, you won't believe this, but we are looking for castor oil packs!"

The branding and website also slotted into place nicely. Alison discovered Canva via word of mouth and "within five minutes" she had come up with a design; she later asked a friend to help her build a website. And through her nutrition business she found an "amazing photographer" who created the product images.

The product itself didn't happen overnight, though – it took many months of trial and error to get right, especially as Alison was determined to bring an age-old method bang up to date for the 21st century, using only the best materials.

"What people used to do is they took a flannel, soaked it in castor oil, and put it on the area that they needed healing. Then





you would wrap cling film around you, and cover yourself in a blanket, so you literally couldn't move and it was very messy. What I've done is I've taken organic fleece cotton on the side that you put on the body, and on the back you've got a non-toxic, eco-friendly, waterproof backing, so the oil can't seep down. And then there are organic ties that allow you to strap it into place. Ideally you want to be sitting and relaxing, but it means you can still get up and do stuff."

She also refused to compromise on the quality of the oil – which is cold-pressed, organic and hexane free and is sourced from India via a UK distributor – as well as the containers, which must be brown glass bottles so as not to spoil the contents.

As we often note in these pages, being an entrepreneur can be a lonely place, but from the outset Alison sought to make connections with people who could help, and she wasn't afraid to ask for advice, either. Local authorities often get more brickbats than bouquets, but Alison cannot speak highly enough of the support she has received from East Riding Council in setting up her business.

"Everyone at the council, from finance and business advisers to international trade, has been amazing. They've gone above and beyond. They can't always directly recommend things, but they advise you and help you in the right direction. For instance, when we were looking to get our product into Europe, they connected us to the right people and started that conversation."

Alison has similar praise for Brough Business Centre, where the business is now based after she started out from home tripping over boxes and boxes of castor oil. "It took over our lives, really," she says,

"so getting the office space was a massive step. We got the house back! It's interesting working for yourself and running your own business. It comes with all the benefits, and being your own boss is wonderful, but it never leaves you. At the business centre, they also cannot do enough for you – if you have the courage to ask for help, and you're willing to work hard, there are people who will reach out to you."

Now surrounded by a small and dedicated team, Alison has plans to further expand into the retail market – here in the UK and beyond. "We want to increase our sales and our exposure, as we're very much online at the moment," she says. "We sell online to Europe at the moment, but we'd love to be in Australia and South Africa as well."

The impact of influencers on the business has been "phenomenal", Alison says.

After Katie Brindle, a Chinese medicine practitioner with her own wellness brand, found the product towards the end of last year, "it has taken us to a whole new level," she adds. "It took us completely by surprise! The run-up to last Christmas was crazy, and we were packing boxes at midnight just to get all the orders out – but it was brilliant."

In April, Alison took Castorvida to the Natural Food Show, one of the largest trade shows in the sector, run by Natural & Organic Products Europe.

"That was interesting because you had a whole lot of shops and retailers coming to look for new products. You message people and you try certain avenues and if they don't work, you try different ones. At the moment it's organically growing and we are getting lots of people interested in stocking our products. And I'm still learning!" ●



NEW LOCAL CHARITY TO SUPPORT THOSE WITH 'HIDDEN DISABILITIES'

By Natalie Houfe & daughter *(she preferred to remain anonymous)*

A difficult experience develops a new understanding and inspires a new charity

Until physical health becomes a problem, we don't tend to think about it. You don't think about being able to stand, or worry about mobility and how to use crutches until you break your leg, do you? If you have an accident, you can re-evaluate what is important and necessary to get through the challenge, then adapt accordingly. It's inconvenient but only short-term.

But what if these health issues are chronic, and a totally different life path and journey is now on offer? That may change everything, dominate your daily routine, give you limitations and create an entirely new perspective. Through my personal experience, I have developed a deeper understanding of hidden disabilities and how they can massively impact someone's life. Both my daughter and I felt we had something to share with this new perspective.

This is how she wanted to share it:

"Before my health hit, I was very active.

At 13 I was doing 5 hours of dance a week after school, learning guitar, I was in Albemarle choir and youth theatre, I spent my lunchtimes at debate club, doing the school musical, language club and book club and in my form period I volunteered helping children learn how to read. Sure, I had a chronic headache, nosebleeds and felt dizzy a lot but I passed that off as being a teenager.

One day, when I was 14, I woke up and I couldn't move. I couldn't even lift the hair off my face. Instead of calling for help, I laid there scared and waiting. When my body started to work again, I calmed down and went to school. From there my health started deteriorating. I began struggling to walk to and from school. I would lock myself in the bathroom at breaktime and scream and cry in pain, before going back to class. I dropped out of most of my extra curriculums, and I accepted that I might be dying.

Throughout all of this, I looked healthy and young, 'pretty' one doctor even



remarked as a sign that I couldn't be ill. Over the next couple of years, I gradually got worse, no longer able to stand in the shower, occasionally going blind or passing out, I crawled to the toilet. My heart raced at the slightest movement; I would sometimes forget how to use my fork or button my clothes and found chewing food exhausting.

I still refused to admit that I was disabled. To me, the word disabled meant giving up and accepting limitations, it meant putting myself into an immovable box and closing possibilities of improvement. I had a lot of internalised ableism and very little understanding of what disability meant. I think most people are guilty of ignoring their body and trying to just push through it, but the rhetoric to 'keep fighting' can be incredibly damaging for your health. For me, disregarding my symptoms and ignoring my body caused my health to decline even further, until I was regularly collapsing.

But test results always came back fine, and the doctors did not know what was wrong. There were so many symptoms, the doctors looked at us like we were hypochondriacs. Going private for more tests, still brought no answers and doctors continued to blame hormones and anxiety. There was little support for me, and I had to do most of the work independently, including figuring out

my own condition. I was lucky to have a wonderful family and support network, but not everyone is so lucky. Although we were highly proactive it still took 7 years to finally get my diagnosis of Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (PoTS). Since receiving my diagnosis and accepting my illness, I have massively improved not only my physical health but also my mental health." We want to prevent this type of experience (which is concerningly common for people with PoTS) from repeating itself. Our charity aims to provide support for those living with hidden disabilities, initially with an emphasis on physical hidden disabilities but remaining inclusive to all. We also aim to educate and develop understanding around what disability means.

Disability within the work place

1 in 5 of the working age population were classed as disabled in a 2022 government study. It is then further estimated by the UK parliament that 70-80% of disabilities are invisible.

Therefore, it is highly likely that you work alongside, live with, know friends or family who may experience disability. Many staff members and work colleagues will have hidden disabilities, some may need support, and would perhaps appreciate developing an awareness policy or training

workshop. I have recently heard so many businesses struggling to employ staff. Well there are those not in work due to hidden disabilities, struggling to know how to get started or back to work. There are virtual opportunities now and a whole group of talented people wanting to feel valued, recognised and understand how they fit in society. We need to develop greater awareness and find alternative pathways to encourage, offer opportunities and inclusion within the workplace and higher education for those with disabilities.

Creating a community

"A large difficulty of being disabled can be isolation". She explains; "If you are too ill to work, to join clubs or to even leave the house, the loneliness can be difficult to manage. Lots of us have now experienced how it feels to be trapped in our homes during lockdown and the physical and mental toll that took. But the continued confinement from being bed-ridden or physically unable to leave your house, can be hugely damaging. We want to create online activities for those unable to get out, but also make the process of getting out and socialising much more manageable and accessible."

The charity will create, develop, and grow a friendly, safe, inclusive, social community for those affected by Hidden Disabilities in Hull and East Yorkshire. It will hold regular events, workshops, and classes. They will consist of a mixture of fun social, wellness, personal development, and expert advice events.

A monthly social event will be organised at the Lexington Rooftop bar at the Doubletree Hilton Hull, who have been exceptionally supportive. We will of course be developing our social media network across different platforms along with a website.

Misunderstandings

Another key aspect to our charity is raising awareness and developing understanding. For example, it shouldn't be a shock to see a wheelchair user stand up from their chair and it does not mean they are 'faking it'. In fact, it is estimated that 1/3 of wheelchair users in the UK are ambulatory users, meaning they can sometimes walk without support. Many chronic illnesses and invisible disabilities are inconsistent, varying from good days to intolerable flare ups. Sometimes visible aids are needed to give support, sometimes they are not. People with invisible disabilities can be prevented from using aids to help them

(like disabled seating) because they don't 'look' disabled enough. Explaining misunderstandings like these and educating people can help prevent many difficult and confrontational conversations that disabled people experience frequently. *"We are striving to create a charity that listens to disabled voices and finds the relevant ways in which we can support and fulfil those needs. We are looking to build a sub-group consisting of spokespeople from different types of hidden disabilities. This group will share ideas and opinions, considering what they want, what they feel is missing and how we can best provide for them."* Please get in touch if you are interested in getting involved.

MEET THE TEAM

Myself, Natalie Houfe: charity founder, Pool Heat director, event organiser and former Women in Business chair.

Carol Ideson: Bid Writing, Funding & Training Specialist for Education & Charity Sectors, overall winner of WiB WoA Awards 2022.

Bethany Headland: disabled student, providing insight from end user perspective.

Karen Newton: Qualified nurse, MBA, experienced Private Hospital director and National Operations Director, current WiB chair.

OUR CHARITY BALL

We are holding a ball this October 27th 2023 at the DoubleTree Hilton, Hull, to launch the charity!

Each year we will be focusing on a different hidden disability, this year we are raising awareness for PoTS. Our guest speaker is Dr Sanjay Gupta from York Cardiology, a regional expert on the subject of PoTS/dysautonomia, ground-breaking cardiologist and heart specialist. Dr Gupta explains:

"Postural Orthostatic Syndrome, or POTS as it is better known as, is an incredibly common chronic medical condition which is often invisible to the outsider but very debilitating for the sufferer. It is characterised by an imbalance of the autonomic nervous system and symptoms affect virtually every system of the body."

"Often such patients who were young and healthy beforehand, spend an average of 7 years, not uncommonly in a wheelchair, searching for professionals who believe them and who can make the diagnosis. Once the diagnosis is confirmed,



Dr Sanjay Gupta

patients can make a significant improvement with a combination of lifestyle modifications, physiotherapy and medications."

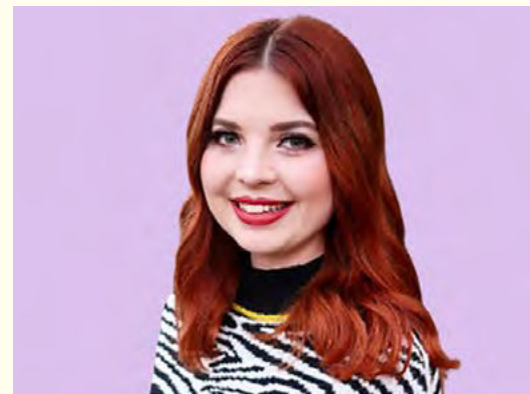
"Increased public awareness of this very disabling condition is crucial in helping the, as yet undiagnosed, get the help and care that they need to be able to reclaim their lives."

drsanjayguptacardiologist.com/POTSUK
Youtube: POTS

Our inspirational speaker, Chronically Jenni, is a 'Positive Role Model Award for Disability' finalist, from The National Diversity Awards. She will share her PoTS journey and further deepen the understanding of the condition. ●



Follow the link to book tickets or find further details on the 'Hidden Disabilities Charity Launch & Gala Dinner': Hidden_Disabilities_Launch_HEY.eventbrite.co.uk
If you would like to get involved, book a table or become a sponsor it will be greatly appreciated. Email queries to natalie@hiddendisabilities.org.uk
LinkedIn: Hidden Disabilities Charity



Chronically Jenni



01424 225345

info@coodentaxconsulting.co.uk
www.coodentaxconsulting.co.uk

Since the start of the year, the R&D Tax Credits industry has been shaken by an ultra-aggressive stance taken by HMRC when it comes to tax enquiries into R&D Claims

Are you worried about your R&D tax credits claim?



This seems to be a knee jerk reaction to the criticism levelled against them during the House of Lords debate on the 2022 Finance Bill.

In earlier years HMRC had a network of regional areas of expertise in their R&D Units. HMRC have recruited around 200 new "Case Workers". They have had 12 – 18 months of training on the R&D Tax Relief Rule book, the Corporate Intangibles and Research and Development (CIRD) Guidelines. They came from a variety of backgrounds, however from first-hand experience it doesn't seem to be Industrial, Mechanical or Technological.

This is not new, for years the Inspectors from the R&D Units had "specialized" in a particular industry, but weren't technically competent professionals. The difference is they had a number of years of training and experience, so they had a reasonably sound understanding of some of the more technical elements of their area of specialty and a sound knowledge of the CIRD guidelines.

The approach to enquiries also appears to have changed significantly. In the past it has always felt as though enquiries were a collaborative approach to ensure that the tax payer understood the eligibility criteria,

discussing the projects with the claimant's competent professionals; the financial elements; and challenging percentages and costs to determine they met the eligibility criteria. It was all rather softly, softly.

Today's approach seems to be a blanket "it's not eligible". It is also a lot more combative and it's not because HMRC are coming from a position of strength. They are often relying on a company fearing penalties to close an enquiry. It feels like they are using this fear to prove that there is extensive fraud and error in the SME scheme and use this evidence as the driving reason to harmonise the two schemes into the RDEC scheme.

If you do get an enquiry, don't panic! Answer the questions honestly and openly and if you really are worried consult a professional advisor, they might be able to help you. ●

If you would like to have a conversation about an enquiry or your R&D claim before you submit it, you can book some time to discuss your R&D projects with me by booking a free, no obligation discovery session at <https://calendly.com/cooden/bus-works>

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LET IT BE

Rhiannon Beeson is six months into her new marketing venture – and she’s loving every minute of it, she tells *Sam Hawcroft*

A lot of people in marketing start out in agencies and then move into the corporate space – but for Rhiannon Beeson, it’s been the other way around.

She’s six months into her new venture, the Be Brand, “jumping in with both feet” after leaving her role as Giacom and Digital Wholesale Solutions chief marketing officer in December 2022.

And, without really needing to do any marketing of her own yet, she’s already hit the ground running with a roster of diverse clients.

Rhiannon spent six years at KCOM as marketing executive and then manager, before joining APD Communications in 2016. Two years later she was made commercial director, in what she calls “quite a journey” under the mentorship of then-MD Mike Isherwood. “APD developed software for 999 control rooms, and I absolutely loved it,” she says.

“It was the most rewarding work, thinking that you were helping people get to someone in their time of need as quickly as possible.”

During Rhiannon’s time at APD, the company grew from £6 million to £13 million, before it was sold to the Japanese brand NEC and Mike stepped down, after which Rhiannon continued to lead the business unit. However, changes under the new owners were difficult to take, she says. “When you become part of a bigger company, obviously your systems and processes have to fall away as you move on to the central ones. It was hard to watch everything that we’d done move away because we’d ripped everything out that didn’t work, so that we could be really agile and really quick.”

So, Rhiannon moved to Giacom, initially heading up sales before being asked to lead the marketing team – which is where, she says, her ►



passion really lay. “That’s my ‘geek’ – when I go to London, for instance, I’m excited and intrigued to see what advertising campaigns are on, who’s advertising on the Tube and what PR stunts are happening.”

However, while she enjoyed her role at Giacom, she felt her remit was somewhat narrower, and she missed being able to make a difference to a wider business. After some soul searching and conversations with a few local business owners, many of whom suggested Rhiannon start up her own marketing company, she decided it was a “now or never” moment.

However, she did already own a business at this point – the children’s clothing brand, Bee Bee’s Boutique, which she launched in 2015 as a means of maintaining a creative outlet. “When you’re in a board-level role,” she says, “you don’t get to do as much creativity. There’s lots of reporting, budgeting and strategic decision-making. So that was meant to keep that at bay, but it didn’t, really... so I did a popup in Paragon Arcade for Christmas – because starting a business right before Christmas in a cost-of-living crisis didn’t feel wise! I did that to decompress from the corporate

world and figure out whether this was definitely something that I wanted to do.”

The experience inspired Rhiannon to go for it and officially launch the Be Brand in January 2023, helped by a combination of extensive experience, track record, industry contacts and the supportive culture in Hull.

“I’m quite a ‘jumping in both feet together’ person!” she says. “But quite a few people I’ve worked with, or have connections with, have their own business, so I spoke to a lot of them about the best processes and the best platforms. One of the things I love about doing business in Hull is everyone supports everybody. Even if you’re in a competitive market, the support from the business community has been amazing. And I think I’ve been quite lucky that my reputation in marketing’s been quite high. So some people have heard about me, and come to me – I got some consultancy quite early on for a few companies, for example, which was great and helped with cash flow at the start.”

A huge boost to Rhiannon was the Women in Leadership accelerator course run by the University of Hull, during which she met key people such as Elly Taylor,

operations director at the Edge Hub in Hull, Claire Chambers, learning and development specialist at Victory Leisure, Fran Lane, senior tourism and leisure officer, and Natasha Barley, the former Hull Children’s University chief executive who is now heading up the Sailors’ Children’s Society.

“It’s a really great programme, and I met some great people. It was a good confidence boost because I’d kind of lost that a little bit. It gave me a purpose and a reason to get out and share with these other amazing women what I was doing. They’re just the best cheerleaders.”

Rhiannon acknowledges, as many entrepreneurs do, that it can be lonely place if you let it, and as a “people person”, she missed her team at Giacom. Another group she soon joined was For Entrepreneurs Only, and she’s found being part of one of its “peer groups” invaluable.

Peer groups are put together and keenly watched over by FEO chief executive Jan Brumby, and they allow business owners from all sorts of sectors to get together and discuss their day-to-day challenges. The regular meetings also serve to keep people in check as the idea is that they ▶



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must come back to the next one having attempted to address a particular issue. "Joining FEO has been a really great thing to do because, again, it's useful processes and useful contacts – and in the peer group we set ourselves up to have deliverables that we answer to."

One recent project Rhiannon is proud of is her work on a new website and marketing campaign for Hymers College in Hull. "That was a brilliant project to work on," she says. "I was really trusted and empowered by them, and I felt like an extension of the team there. After we went live, within the first few hours they were getting prospectus download requests, and we implemented an online application system, as previously it was all paper-based. To see the results and the benefits to the organisation is just the biggest reward."

Rhiannon points out that outsourcing marketing is just as important as any other key service, such as HR or accounting. "I always say I take the headache out of marketing. Companies outsource their finance and legal to experts in that field, as it's easier. Outsourcing your marketing is just the same, a lot of people can do it, but they don't have time. Because of my experience, I'm a safe pair of hands. I know exactly what it's like and the pressures they're under. I spend a lot of time in the early days with clients, working with their teams, understanding what's important to them. Then we can pick it up quite easily, and that can be anything from a website build to awards entries, or full campaigns, you name it. You're not taking away anything they've done or achieved – it's just taking the headache away and letting them focus on their core business."

In the coming months Rhiannon is looking at taking on more people as well as finding a permanent base. "It's quite daunting being responsible for other people's mortgages – but I'm at the point now in the growth journey where I feel like I'm confident to do that, and I can put the time into supporting other people. So that's the next move. I think we'll be recruiting at least a couple of roles over the next few months and hopefully getting an office space. And that will free me up to work on the business. My own socials are terrible because I've been too busy to advertise myself! But I need to get some of that in, and I think when



you've got other people supporting you with the delivery of the work, you can then focus on that a bit more."

Rhiannon is passionate about the next generation of businesspeople, so much so that she's heavily involved in Young Enterprise, having joined the judging panel during the pandemic. She later became a board member and was made interim chairman in March 2023, and is regularly at the heart of events to inspire young people into entrepreneurship. Also on the board, and helping as advisers to the pupils taking part in real-world business situations – where they form their own companies and have actual bank accounts – are Rachel Constable from MKM Building Supplies, Amy Gray of Amy Gray Wealth Management, and Brendon Smurthwaite of PBS Construction.

"They come in and help coach the kids once a week or once every other week," says Rhiannon. "We're always looking for more schools and more advisers, as well as more organisations, to help with fundraising, such as John Good Shipping which supported us recently. All that money goes back into the charity to help us continue to run the programme. I wish I had done Young Enterprise when I was at school because I'm not

traditionally academic – my parents and my sisters are, but it's just not a skill that I had – and I think it gives you another route to success other than university."

Having her own business has also allowed Rhiannon more freedom to look after her young children and ensure a better work-life balance. "I've found myself going through cycles of burnout in the corporate world," she says. "One of the other reasons for starting a business was that I've always loved travelling, but I also really miss my kids. I want to be there for them, and set a good example. So this is on my terms, and it's the same when I recruit as well. I don't want people rushing to be at their desk for 8.30am – they can take their kids to school first and come in when they're ready. That's really important to me."

For Rhiannon, though, if you enjoy your work so much, it's hardly work. "I really love all of the clients that I work with," she says. "I find it really addictive and I love coming up with ideas for them and sharing ideas with them. Why did I leave a comfortable salary, the security and the private healthcare? It was to be able to be there for the kids and to build something great and to help other businesses grow. As long as I stay true to those things, then I think things will work out." ●



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Influencer marketing can be a powerful tool for small firms. Alan Gordon-Freeman of Sirius shares his tips on how they can build brand awareness and drive sales

Influence the marketing of your business

Influencer marketing can help any business get more exposure on social media. There are influencers of all kinds on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Snapchat - posting great content with a clear theme and engaging with followers as their influence grows.

Which social media platforms are best for influencer marketing?

There are influencers on all the main social media sites. Instagram is one of the most important platforms for influencers due to both its popularity and the fact that it offers a variety of content formats including posts, tags, Stories and Reels.

TikTok is also an important vehicle for influencer marketing, helping brands to access a young demographic that is actively looking for new things.

What should you look for in a small business influencer?

Look for an influencer whose interests align with your business. Start following them and engaging with them before you approach them about a collaboration.

Quality of content is key. Every influencer has their own personality, tone of voice, creative approach and visual aesthetic. Make sure their online persona is right for your brand and their content meets your standards.

Authenticity matters. Do they seem genuine or are they just cynically delivering sales pitches? Do they engage with followers in a helpful way?

Look at the level of engagement that potential influencers have with their followers. The more engagement the better. Positive signs of engagement include likes and comments and the extent to which the influencer responds to comments from their followers.

Influencers with high levels of engagement are said to have good "reach". In other words, a good proportion of their followers regularly interact with them. Engagement rates are typically between 1% and 5%.

How to get an influencer to promote your business

There are lots of ways to use influencer marketing to promote your business.

A good place to start is influencer gifting; usually, this involves sending free products to key influencers in return for a post.

Paid sponsorship is where the business pays in return for a social media post, story or reel. Influencer campaigns can also include giveaways, discount codes or affiliate codes, where influencers get a percentage for each sale made. There are also takeovers, where an influencer takes over your business social media account for a day.

Video content is incredibly popular and appears prominently on the main social media sites but it costs more to make; simple posts with tagged images and engaging captions on a site like Instagram can be very effective.

As with any marketing campaign, always set objectives, track your activity and measure the return on investment.

How much does it cost to use an influencer?

Costs vary so it's a good idea to shop around. Most payments are set fees per post but some influencers work on a commission basis where they get a cut of any products sold. Influencers with over one million followers can charge over £3,000 for a single post. Nano influencers and micro influencers charge far less.

Consider whether you want your influencer to offer you exclusivity which would increase the price. You can also negotiate package deals to lower the price per post.

Nano influencers (1k - 10k followers) typically charge between £125 and £250 per post; Micro influencers (10k - 100k followers) charge £250-£600; Macro influencers (100k - one million followers) charge £600-£1,000.

*With help from Rachel Miller
<https://sirius-hull.marketinginfohub.co.uk>

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TAKING CLEANLINESS TO NEW HEIGHTS

Operating nationally, the company is renowned for working with property and facilities management firms, major leisure and retail outlets, shop fitting companies, health centres and factories, among a diverse array of clients and across all sectors.

The core of KCS's work involves undertaking bespoke tasks to maintain the utmost cleanliness and hygiene – from exterior maintenance such as window and gutter cleaning and revitalising dirty cladding and render, to interior work such as high-level factory and atrium cleaning.

For the company – which this year is celebrating its 25th anniversary, while the family cleaning business dates back 75 years – no job is too large.

One major client is wind turbine blade manufacturer Siemens Gamesa, where KCS handles the high-level cleaning to ensure the manufacturing unit remains clean, safe and efficient. They also clean landmark buildings in Hull, Beverley, Grimsby and Northallerton, contracted by the Wykeland Group to ensure the historic frontages and new projects are treated sensitively, using a chemical-free system designed especially for conservation projects and new-builds alike.

Recently, KSC has carried out external cleans of Humberside Police's headquarters in Hull, including the cleaning of all windows and gutters to the full estate, the latest work in a partnership that goes back 20 years – as well as the magistrates' courts in Hull, Beverley and Bridlington.

The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the significance of their work, with cleaning services becoming more valued than ever. Suddenly, businesses realised the importance of deep cleaning, fogging and sanitising.

Managing director Sean Carrison says: "To some companies, cleaning is seen as a necessary evil - but then all of a sudden, Covid hit and we were doing deep cleans all over. Businesses realised then just how important our services were."

KCS's 120 staff are all from the local area and directly employed by the company, so in a sense they are flying the flag for Hull right across the country. Sean is keen to point out that they are not just transient agency staff – the company espouses strong values and there is an ethos of rewarding people for their hard work.



"All staff undergo rigorous training to ensure they can carry out their duties safely," he adds. "And we're constantly working to retain staff and show appreciation for their hard work through incentives and initiatives such as employee of the month."

"Every job poses unique challenges, with different buildings and environments requiring thorough planning and research," says Sean. "Our operations director, Jamie, and myself are both NEBOSH-qualified, so the operatives receive really detailed risk assessments before any work starts. They then go on site and do a dynamic risk assessment themselves, as all the operatives are fully trained on that as well."

From humble beginnings in Hull a quarter of a century ago, KCS is proud to now work nationally, illustrating the success of this local business in the competitive cleaning industry. ●

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People are trained, when you're a trainer...

The real connection with a product or service is made when people – not robots – are involved, says Mal Williamson



There is a plan to close train station ticket offices. Car parks long ago let their people go. Phoning any customer service is about choosing option 3... option 5... and select the first and fourth digit of your password. At Glastonbury many tweeted to harass Billy Nomates when she performed with backing tapes. No band!? Oh – and the cashiers' tills are being increasingly replaced with self-scan machines. There are protest petitions, of course, and some longer queues for a person – but really? It might work for the French town that quietly brought cash only and queued for long, long times until the supermarché reinstated the cashiers. But the UK is not like that, is it? I like to get in and get out when it comes to shopping. Preferably on a well-designed website. Although... please answer the phone with a person? HMRC is over an hour – although the tip they offered was 8am when they await the first calls. My phone company was 45 minutes today before not helping me at all. Bye-bye to them. So, I do like people to help. I love going to the antiques shop nearby

– great perusing and a laugh. And I would be lost without chatting to the hardware store geezers – can I bodge this OK or need to do it properly? Options 1-10 do not cover this real need. One supplier refused to sell me a ton of sand for my patio attempt – so I had to do it properly and get a ton of Type-1 to go with it. Without her explaining it I would have a messy garden right now – full of sand and uneven trip-hazard pavers. I did not know the word *Type-1* until she said it. I did not know the word *mattock* either. Or *whack-a-plate*. People are what we are about. Our local university researched the unnecessarily huge number of facial muscles we have – giving us a crucial evolutionary advantage in communication. With expressions of emotion and thinking we can manage to work in much more effective hunting and gathering groups, successfully bringing down larger game like woolly mammoths and woolly managerial cost-cutting initiatives. We need to talk, laugh, whinge and agree. This robotic finger-pressing does not teach me anything. AI may write me a research essay about all this – but only if I ask the app the right questions.

A trainer, however, will organise appropriate delivery of the right material for me. Because I do not know what I do not know. My aggregate saleswoman does. Alexa does not. A robot will guess a thousand times without tiring but a person will admit they don't know

what we mean – and then help properly by asking questions. We call this conversation.

The real connection with a product or service is made when people are there – explaining, suggesting, probing and thinking. And then ideally reporting back through line management, HR, staff room banter or simply putting another hat on if you are a sole trader. It is conversation and creates cultures of success and selling. Of course, I have never bought anything but am sold it. I would suggest that today I ordered stuff online – and that is the end of the conversation.

I do not know why that so-called Brazilian coffee I ordered online has a lot of robusta beans? But I do love the tiny nutty Guatemalan beans from the local café – and the fact that this guy uses a rubbish coffee maker for them himself. There's lots of selection online, of course – but I do not want to order more. I want to be *sold* more. By a human who gets me. A trained person is a trainer. She sold me a ton of stones I had never even heard of and certainly did not want. She trained me to be her customer. Online DIY megastores, sorry – you would have let me order what I wanted, not buy what I need. ●



Mal Williamson is a festival-winning freelance film director and business coach
creatorcoach.co.uk and
malwilliamson.com



LS | LIFESTYLE

ISSUE 21

MOTORING ■ DINING



All hail the new BMW 5 Series Saloon

Featuring a wealth of digital innovations and all-electric drive for the first time, the 8th generation of the world's most successful business saloon is sure to get the attention of motor enthusiasts

The latest iteration of the BMW 5 Series Saloon will be a feature on UK roads this autumn. It offers the advanced technology and elegant and sporting looks that you would expect, while an all-electric drive arrives to the range for the very first time.

The commitment to sustainability also continues with a 20 to 25 per cent reduction in the carbon footprint in the supply chain,

and up to 58 per cent across its life cycle compared to its predecessor.

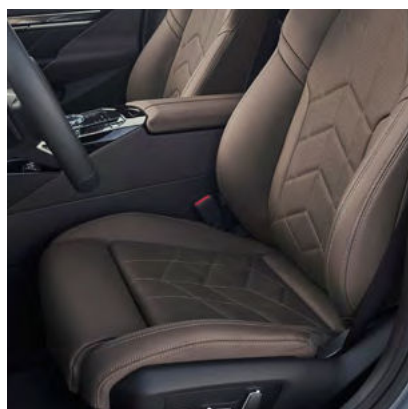
The exterior design of the latest generation reinterprets the sporty elegance of a BMW 5 Series Saloon. Its proportions make the character of the dynamic business saloon instantly recognisable.

As a performance model from BMW M GmbH, the all-electric BMW i5 M60

xDrive comes as standard with specific exterior features that visually underline its outstanding sporting potential.

The road presence of the new BMW 5 Series Saloon is enhanced by its athletic proportions and the larger exterior measurements compared to its predecessor.

The 8th generation vehicle has grown in length by 97mm to 506mm, in width



“The exterior design of the latest generation reinterprets the sporty elegance of a BMW 5 Series Saloon. Its proportions make the character of the dynamic business saloon instantly recognisable.”

by 32mm to 1900mm and in height by 36mm to 1515mm. The wheelbase has been increased by 20mm to 2995mm for improved seating comfort, especially in the rear.

In addition to a pure-electric drivetrain, the latest generation BMW 5 Series debuts several firsts for the iconic saloon. It is the first BMW in the UK to feature Veganza upholstery as standard from launch, encompassing the seats, dashboard and door panels while the striking BMW Interaction Bar first seen in the BMW 7 Series is now incorporated in the new BMW 5 Series.

Furthermore, the saloon is now available with a panoramic roof – the first time in the

model's history – and the digital experience is taken to a new high with cutting-edge additions of AI-driven servicing notifications and the introduction of in-car gaming.

Like all previous model generations, the new BMW 5 Series Saloon is manufactured at the BMW Group Plant Dingolfing. In 1973, the first vehicle manufactured at the plant was a first-generation BMW 5 Series Saloon.

Available in three well specified trim levels in the UK – M Sport, M Sport Pro and the exclusive BMW i5 M60 xDrive – the first customer deliveries are expected in October 2023.

The BMW 5 Series Saloon range will also be expanded in early 2024 with the introduction of the BMW 530e and BMW 550e xDrive plug-in hybrid models, which are expected to offer an electric range of 49-56 miles (WLTP) and 54-62 miles (WLTP) respectively. Also set to join the model family in spring 2024 is the next generation of the BMW 5 Series Touring, which will also be available with all-electric drive for the first time, as well as with plug-in hybrid drive and pure combustion engine drive. ●

The new BMW 5 Series Saloon is available to order now priced from £49,850.



GREAT FOOD, GREAT VARIETY – AND A GREAT CAUSE

The hospitality industry is struggling right now, and **Lena's** is no exception – but this authentic Ukrainian restaurant more than deserves its place on Hull's culinary map, writes *Phil Ascough*

Every restaurant is locked in a battle for survival as the fallout from Brexit, Covid and the cost-of-living crisis pushes bills up and custom down, but Lena Sutherland is literally fighting the war in Ukraine from her kitchen in Hull.

Lena moved here nearly 30 years ago, a time when the Operetta Italian restaurant

that used to occupy her premises was nearly new. She found favour with local foodies by opening a deli opposite the current BBC studios, but a couple of years ago she called it a day.

War in Ukraine changed all that. Lena came out of retirement, put on her apron and opened Lena's Ukrainian Kitchen,

raising awareness of the culture and cuisine of her homeland and generating money to support her people back home.

Some of them work for her – Ukrainian refugees who have been welcomed into the UK.

The location in the K2 building in Bond Street was a big hit as Operetta but



eventually ran out of steam. Plans to turn it into a Greek taverna didn't quite get off the ground and another venture fell victim to its operator's indecision about whether to open a bistro or all-day breakfast joint.

It's fair to file both projects as victims of the economic catastrophe that is sweeping the country. Lena has an additional, patriotic determination to succeed, but that's unlikely to be enough unless she can inspire others to recognise and reward her dedication.

The surroundings are pretty spartan – there's no money for a glitzy refurb of a place that lost its spark during the last few years of Operetta. But the food is wonderful – a mix of small plates and the more substantial. Meat, fish, vegetarian and vegan. Desserts to test the most committed dieter. Ukrainian beer and vodka. The former unique to Lena's as far as I'm aware, the latter a perfect accompaniment when chilled right down and served with the smoked salmon.

You can eat your way around most of the world in Hull and East Yorkshire, but

this is the only place you'll find authentic Ukrainian dishes.

That Lena is struggling says everything about the state of the hospitality sector. Just up the road the New Clarence – an absolutely buzzing city centre boozer pre-Covid – has closed its doors with the owners awaiting a decision on a planning application to turn it into a "house of multiple occupation".

That's small apartments and shared facilities. If you lived there you'd probably be dying to break out and go to the pub, but the more projects like this get the go-ahead, the fewer pubs there will be to meet that demand.

Nearby, Brew is trying to boost trade by staging events and exhibitions. That's the future and it's something that Lena is also trying to embrace.

We've been there twice with the supper club but even if we went there every month it wouldn't be enough, and we have to share our support around all the other struggling dining venues.

Lena has hosted east European wine

nights, Ukrainian music nights and themed menu events. There are also uncertain plans for an exhibition and sale of paintings that are the work of a former police officer who still lives in Ukraine. In truth, it's a bits and pieces collection of works showing cottages, kitchens, a castle... until you come to the chilling depiction of a fighter jet with the background of a battle zone. The collection's authenticity is its selling point, but the artist's family has not yet committed to holding an event.

A highlight was the visit to the restaurant by Hull West and Hessle MP Emma Hardy when she welcomed Chris Bryant to the city. The chairman of the House of Commons Committees on Standards and Privileges was impressed by the warmth of the welcome and the quality of the hospitality, and it's to be hoped that the 50 or so Labour Party members and supporters in the room will go again.

As for the food, it seems there's always something new to try. That smoked salmon with a chilled vodka on the side was a winner on an evening when I wasn't ►

driving. The fish cakes are a fine starter, full of flavour. Herring with potatoes and salad makes an excellent lunch.

I've only heard good reports about the borshch and I can vouch for the quality of the kachapuri – a crispy, toasted Georgian pancake filled with two types of cheese.

The deruny potato cakes are a delight. You can have a light version with sour cream or some salad but I recommend smothering them in a beef stroganoff or similar. Holubtsy is cabbage leaves stuffed with minced pork and beef, rice, onion and a few herby additions.

There's also gorshochok, a hearty pork stew, kruchenyky beef rolls stuffed with mushrooms, carrot and gherkins, and a chicken roll of breast stuffed with a variety of fillings, coated in breadcrumbs and deep-fried. One of the options, of course, is Kyiv.

The baked apples with raisins, walnuts and whipped cream are a popular dessert, and there's a cabinet full of cakes and other sweet treats. Sooner or later you'll find your way to the magnificent Napoleon layered custard cake.

And cutting across all of this is varenyky, small, dim sum-like parcels that don't

quite know their place on the menu – starter, side or dessert? Fillings include mushrooms, or potato and onion, or sour cream and sauteed onion.

So far so good, but the best I've tried is sour cherry and whipped cream. But even that can be slotted higher up the menu to freshen the palate, and to leave open the option of Napoleon cake for dessert.

Great food, great variety and a great cause. And pricewise it's a steal, which is important at a time when we all need to help each other. ●

“

The food is wonderful – a mix of small plates and the more substantial. Meat, fish, vegetarian and vegan. Desserts to test the most committed dieter. Ukrainian beer and vodka. “



Seven days of inspiration and aspiration

Attendees at this year's Humber Business Week were spoilt for choice, writes Phil Ascough...

Just like at Glastonbury, you wouldn't pitch up planning to see every single event during Humber Business Week.

But unlike Glasto you would have found an array of female headliners, from Biz Week chair Kath Lavery, who stepped down after 14 years running the show, to her successor Pat Coyle, who admitted she faces "a daunting task".

So the biggest test at Humber Business Week 2023 was avoiding clashes as the usual exhibitors returned with their events and others contributed new ideas. Everything worked, and with a vibrancy and variety that augurs well for 2024.

It helped that Paul Sewell, the founder of Biz Week, sneaked his Elevenses session into the programme a week early. Debbie Robinson, central England CEO and European vice-president of the Co-op, had to be in Dubrovnik for a big retail conference so met a live audience at Sewell Studio for a chat that was filmed for release during the big week.

You'll find it – along with all the other Elevenses videos on Paul's website – at paulsewell.co.uk and it's well worth a watch.

Here's what Paul made of it: "I found her to be a fabulous role model with a wonderful story. She stepped into a role leading a modern, forward-looking organisation employing over 8,000 people and working in food, funeral services, and property investment, with over 400 trading outlets across 16 counties.

"Debbie has driven change through her belief in co-operative ethics and values and her advocacy of all aspects of inclusion."

Women in Business celebrated its Woman of Achievement Awards with a "meet the winners" event to give others a chance to quiz female trailblazers about their journeys.

The HullBID Inspiring Women dinner, a Biz Week fixture since 2015, was back with the new theme of Inspiring People and a mixed audience at The Deep. Speakers included Tim Shaw of KCOM and Paul Matson of Hull 4 Heroes, and neither will be offended by the view that Debra Gray of Hull College stole the show with a speech that was simultaneously humble and hard-hitting.

Future Humber kicked off the week with an event at the MKM Stadium that focused on place and challenged people to think



'FABULOUS ROLE MODEL': Paul Sewell chats to the Co-op's Debbie Robinson

about what the Humber means to them.

Diana Taylor, the organisation's managing director, also led a discussion presented by Rollits at The Deep about corporate culture. Caroline Neadley from Rollits and Harry Rix from the Rix Group traced the evolving culture of their firms, which both date back to the 1800s.

Diana also made a significant contribution from the floor to the Oh Yes! Net Zero event that took place at the Aura Innovation Centre and brought together major employers and their SME suppliers for a discussion chaired by Louise Smith, director of the centre.

The Hull and Humber Chamber of Commerce staged a busy Chamber Expo with a major speech from Hull City Council leader Mike Ross followed by an update on international trade opportunities. The Chamber indicated that it hoped to add a net-zero element to next year's event.

Biz Week also brought the launch of a new company, with Martin Stead unveiling Loom, a consultancy that helps business owners to create "a strong weave" of the threads within their organisation in readiness for tackling the key questions of whether to sustain, scale or sell.

Rob Daysley, managing director of Designs Signage Solutions, featured as a live case study which worked through the Loom diagnostic toolkit to identify the drivers and distractions facing business leaders as they pursue their original entrepreneurial dream.

There was a parallel at the launch lunch

which followed, when Lisa Dawson, director of Run With It, said her charity's learning programmes are designed to help children, young people and adult learners develop employability skills.

She said: "We take children out of their everyday environment and they meet new people and they come away inspired and motivated – just like Biz Week!"

In response, Carl Leighton Pope admitting to getting his big break in the music industry after leaving school as a complete academic failure. Carl listed a catalogue of big-name bands and performers he's worked with over the years right up to Bryan Adams and Michael Buble, who are still on his books.

But it was his early career that grabbed me during a preliminary chat. As a student, one of the first gigs I ever reviewed was the Climax Blues Band in 1978. I arrived at Sheffield City Hall early because I was curious about the support band, Dire Straits.

Turns out that was one of Carl's first big tours as an agent. There's a separate piece to be written about how music used to be written off as a career option, and how a young Mark Knopfler was told by his news editor to buck up his journalism because he would never earn a living with his guitar.

You get the best out of life and business if you find out what people are interested in and what they're good at. It worked for Carl and it's part of what Lisa is pursuing. Aspiration and inspiration, and Humber Business Week has plenty of that. ●

Forward plan with our helpful

EVENTS DIARY



SEPTEMBER

- 6** Makerspace Hull – Open Evening, Hull Central Library
- 7** Lincoln Business Show, Isaac Newton Building, University of Lincoln
- 12** Hull IAG Support Open Day, HETA, Dansom Lane, Hull
- 12** Grimsby IAG Support Open Day, HETA, Newton Way, Grimsby
- 12** Business Networking Event: Aspire to Inspire, University Campus North Lincolnshire, Scunthorpe
- 12** Biz Tips, Business Hive & BaseCamp Coworking Space, Dudley Street, Grimsby
- 13** FEO Member Event – Paul Sloane, MKM Stadium, Hull
- 14** The Curiosity Partnership – Adult Social Care Research Festival 2023, DoubleTree by Hilton Hull
- 21** Innovative Thinking, Future Humber

OCTOBER

- 3** HEY LEP Skills Network Meeting, Aura Innovation Centre, Hessle
- 3** Tech Information Exchange Focus – ChatGPT: The Good, the Bad and the AI, C4DI, Hull
- 3** Hull and North Humber Bank #WiredCurry Event, Raj Pavilion, Hull
- 4** WiME (Women into Manufacturing and Engineering) Public Careers Fair, Guildhall, Hull
- 4** East Yorkshire Business Expo, Mercure Hull Grange Park Hotel, Willerby
- 4** Makerspace Hull Open Evening, Hull Central Library
- 10** Sustainability and branding: From green to great, Hull University Business School
- 16** The Sparkling Business Club Network, Warton Arms, Woodmansey
- 19** The Employment Hub Recruitment Fair, Guildhall, Hull
- 19** Foundations Live 2023, Bishop Burton College
- 25** Hub Hangout, The Edge Hub, Hull
- 31** Grimsby & North Lincolnshire #WiredCurry, Spice of Life, Grimsby

To have your event listed here, please email sam@bw-magazine.co.uk.

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