



BUSINESSWORK

Spring 2024 North East

TAKING THE FEAR OUT OF CYBER CRIME

Debra Cairns on how
Net-Defence is keeping
SMEs safe online

FAMILY VALUES DRIVING BLUELINE

How the 3rd generation
family-run taxi firm is
moving with the times

SEA, SAND & SAUNA

Why Maggie Guneyogullari is
blowing hot and cold when it
comes to Steam and Salt

THE NICEST MAN IN CINEMA?

Jam Jar Cinema's Dan Ellis shares his award-winning stage-to-screen story

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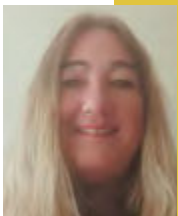


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WELCOME

Welcome to the spring issue of BusinessWorks North East, which celebrates entrepreneurship while bringing you news and views from around the region.

It's nice to think that some more sunshine is on its way and with it, some warmer news from the North East Chamber of Commerce's latest Quarterly Economic Survey, which reported improved confidence in economic health and fewer recruitment difficulties compared to last quarter.

But there were still some chilly concerns around business rates, staff costs and energy costs, too - so we can't break out the sunglasses and Calippos just yet!

This issue brings another collection of entrepreneur stories, who have built and grown their businesses in cinema, transport, cybersecurity and beach saunas.

You can read how Dan Ellis, Maggie Guneyogullari, Ben Bell and Debra Cairns have developed their enterprises and their different reasons for doing so – whether its future-proofing a 3rd generation family business, keeping our technology safe, celebrating local communities or promoting wellbeing and rejuvenation. I hope you feel inspired!

Alison Cowie,
BW Editor



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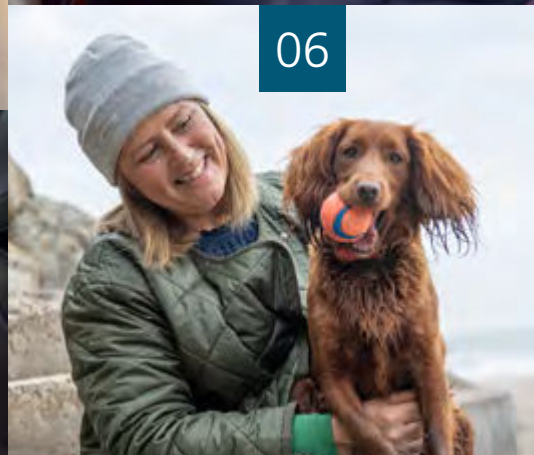
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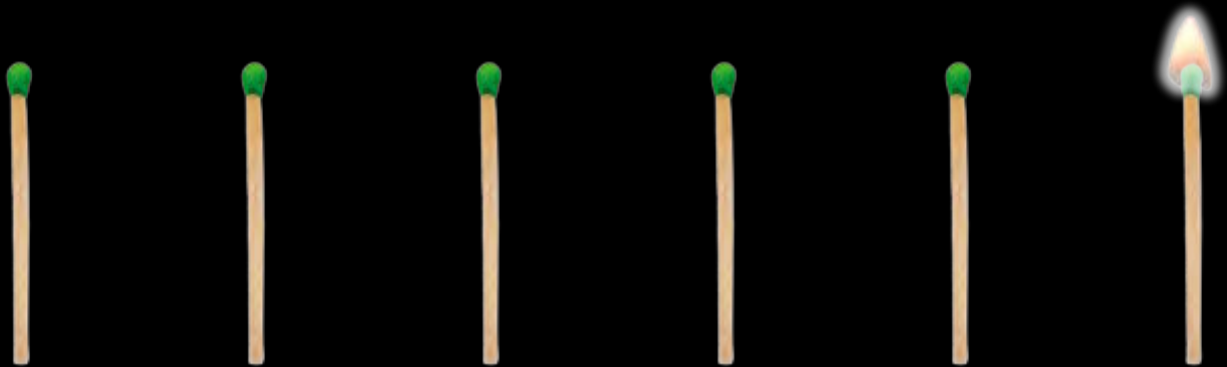
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LS LIFESTYLE

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SEA, SAND, SAUNA AND SOUL SEARCHING

Maggie Guneyogullari used sea swimming to heal after suffering devastating family bereavements. And when she discovered that the combination of heat and cold therapy could boost her physical and mental well-being further, she decided to start her own beachside sauna to help others. She talks to *Alison Cowie*...

Maggie Guneyogullari worked in social research for North Tyneside local authority before leaving to start a family. After this, she helped her husband run his business while looking after their three children.

Then one day tragedy struck when her beloved sister died suddenly. Just one year later, her mum also died.

Maggie reflects: "My sister was such a gorgeous, amazing person who went to sleep one night and never woke up. We couldn't get our heads around it. There was so much grief and trauma that when my mum then died, I'm convinced it was of a broken heart."

The deaths of her sister and mum months apart caused Maggie to sink into a difficult place.

"The whole bottom of my world fell out and I was in a really dark place," she says. "It took all my strength to put one foot in front of the other. All I could do was get up, take the children to school and then come home and collapse."

Friends rallied but nothing seemed to lift Maggie. Then a friend suggested going for a swim.

Maggie reluctantly agreed and suggested they meet at the City Baths. It was then she realised her friend meant a swim in the North Sea. This was her first introduction to cold water swimming.

Maggie wasn't sure she could wade into the freezing water but agreed to go with her friend to the local beach – King Edward's Bay in Tynemouth.

She describes: "I sat and watched for a bit. There were a few groups going into the sea. They looked so cold but everyone was coming out with joy on their faces."

Maggie decided to give it a go but the freezing water quickly took hold and she retreated back to land. The brief experience, however, had set her on a transformative path.

"I told myself that if other people could do it, then I could do it too," she explains.

Maggie started visiting King Edward's Bay every day. Each time she spent a little longer among the waves. Before she knew it, she began to feel better but didn't understand why. ►

Maggie did some research and found out about the benefits cold water therapy could have on a person's physical and mental well-being.

"I discovered that by entering the cold water every day, I was putting my body under such stress that I had to focus on my breathing. By repeatedly doing it, I was being forced into the present, and leaving my brain to have a rest - it was allowing me the space I needed to heal."

Maggie describes her sea dips as "saving her life" as she was hit with yet another brutal blow when her beloved dad also died unexpectedly.

"The consistent sea dipping and cold water therapy once again supported me through my grief," she says.

Maggie signed up for The Chatter Challenge – a national winter swim challenge - to keep her motivated to enter

the bracing water time after time as a way of coping with bereavement.

Then someone asked her if she'd watched a television programme where local actor Robson Green had tried a beach sauna. Intrigued, she sought it out and decided she'd like to give it a go. Around the same time another beach sauna had started up on Londgsands beach in Tynemouth called Earthbond, which Maggie went to visit and was instantly sold.

After more research she found out about the added benefits of combining cold with heat therapy.

While most people would have settled for regular visits to their local beach sauna, this was not enough for Maggie whose altruistic nature drove her to establish a beach sauna of her own.

"I knew the benefits of heat and cold therapy. I felt it in my body. My central

nervous system had reset and it excited me to be able to deliver the same experience to others," she explains.

There was only one place Maggie wanted to start her beach sauna - King Edward's Bay.

"The location was so important to me. I had a connection there. A part of me will always be in that water. I feel rooted in its sand and sea."

Maggie found the only UK's supplier of portable sauna kits with traditional Finnish log burning stoves, and invested in two of their tents seating six people each.

She also contacted her local authority that advised her on the documentation she needed to start her beachside sauna, which she named 'Steam and Salt'.

"The council was really supportive," Maggie reflects. "They wanted to know all about my plans and pointed me in the right direction as to what insurance I needed and the boxes I needed to tick."

Maggie worked with a business owner friend, known as The Cullercoats Fish Lass, who helped design Steam and Salt's logo and develop the 'ultimate destination for self-care' ethos behind the brand.

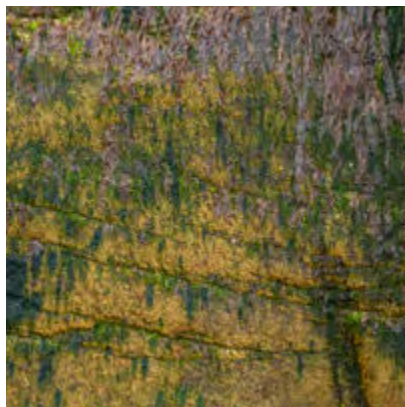
She also recruited a local digital designer to create a website, which featured an intuitive booking system for people to buy hour sessions on Friday, Saturday or Sunday mornings. During that time, people could move between the sauna and the sea (or outdoors) as many times as they liked, while indulging in a home-made Himalayan salt scrub to help detox the skin.

With everything in place, the next step was to attract customers to Steam and Salt. Maggie was told social media would be the best way to do this.

"It was something I felt a bit uncomfortable with at first," Maggie admits. "I'm of that generation for which social media wasn't a natural thing. Younger people are totally okay with it but it was something I needed to learn."

Maggie again sought the help of The Cullercoats Fish Lass who helped her to set up a dedicated Facebook page. Maggie began tagging all her family and friends, which included many ardent sea swimmers, who began tagging their friends too. ►

“I knew the benefits of heat and cold therapy. I felt it in my body. My central nervous system had reset and it excited me to be able to deliver the same experience to others.”





Word soon spread.

"The first two or three months were slow-ish but from then, interest grew and grew. Word of mouth is such a powerful tool," Maggie reveals.

Steam and Salt celebrated its first anniversary in February and has become hugely popular with sessions booking out weeks in advance.

It's an early start for Maggie and her husband who need to get up at 4am to transport the tents and equipment down to King Edward's Bay, pitch them and get the traditional wood-burning stoves to temperature before the first customers arrive at 7am (7.30am on a Sunday).

"Sometimes you're really challenged by high tides and enormous swells," Maggie adds. "Very occasionally, this has meant we've had to cancel but we're lucky that King Edward's Bay is quite sheltered from the wind."

Maggie says the early starts and hard graft are worth it to be able to share the rejuvenating benefits of heat and cold therapy with others.

"The business is growing and its rewarding not only from a business growth perspective but from seeing first-hand the

benefits everyone gets from experiencing it," she says.

"We run sessions at the weekend until 1pm and then we have to pack everything back up. "They're long days but running the sauna is extremely rewarding. It makes me feel wonderful and I feel humbled and very grateful to be able to do it."

Maggie has also seen a change in customer demographics over the past 12 months.

"At the start, it was mainly family and friends who wanted to support me. But that's changed as word has spread.

"We often get younger people come to the earlier sessions; those in their 20s and 30s who are more focused on being fit and healthy.

"Yes, we get people who are regular sea swimmers and lots of sports people who use the sauna for their post workout recovery, but then there are all the people in between.

"They come in couples or with groups of friends, and we get customers coming on their own, too."

Maggie continues: "When people first come, they can be a bit nervous. They'll dip their toe in the sea and then get in a sauna. But by round two, they're exuding happiness. They get it, they feel the benefits and they go away feeling wonderful."

Due to the ever-increasing demand, Maggie has recently started holding her Steam and Salt saunas on Wednesday and Thursday mornings – and the set-up is also available for one-off hires.

But Maggie says she has no intention of starting beach saunas in other locations as she's too attached to King Edward's Bay – a place that means so much to her and whose beauty can still take her breath away, as she explains:

"Last Sunday, I was on the beach extra early as a family had asked if I could fit them in because their daughter was moving to America.

"I'd put up a tent for them and was setting up the other one when I turned around to see the most beautiful bloodred sunrise I'd ever seen.

"I shouted to my friend, who was helping me that day, to get the family out of the tent. I didn't want them to miss it. When they saw it, they were in tears.

"I've seen many sunrises at King Edward's Bay but I'll never forget the one that morning." ●

For more information visit
www.steamandsalt.co.uk



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In a world inundated with digital noise, your online footprint should make your audience not just see you, but remember you.

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Invest Stockton-on-Tees tells BusinessWorks of proposals to develop a Care and Health Innovation Zone, which has the potential to reduce health inequalities, address skills shortages, and generate thousands of jobs

A once in a generation opportunity for the Tees Valley



Ambitious proposals to develop a Care and Health Innovation Zone in Stockton-on-Tees are ready to transform central Stockton into a nationally significant cluster of social care and health provision. The vision outlines how Teesdale Business Park and the nearby Tees Marshalling Yards will be home to social care and health services, sector-specific businesses, research, teaching and learning facilities, and housing to meet local needs.

A partnership board with representatives from Teesside University, Tees Esk and Wear Valley NHS Trust, North Tees NHS Trust, the Education Training Collective (Stockton Riverside College) and the Tees Valley Combined Authority has been set up to drive the project forward.

This will be a once in a generation opportunity which could deliver a nationally significant zone bringing a host of benefits to the Borough and the whole of the Tees Valley.

Working with partners will help to grow all aspects of the health and social care sectors, and their supply chains, in Teesdale and the Marshalling Yards to make Stockton a recognised UK cluster.

The zone will help to reduce health inequalities within the Tees Valley, with the site pioneering modern health provision to better

meet residents' needs. Not only that, but it will also help to address skills shortages, delivering thousands of jobs in a well sought-after sector.

It is all part of a wider masterplan for the central Stockton and North Thornaby area which will improve public transport, cycling and walking links.

A great place for business

This is just the latest development for a thriving Borough where 5,500 businesses are already making the most of what Stockton-on-Tees has to offer.

With a working population of 121,500, increasing to over 400,000 across the Tees Valley region, there's a vast pool of labour and talent to tap into too – all within an hour's drive. The people here have a real pride in the Borough and a desire for it to succeed.

Over a third of residents currently work in high value professions, and almost a third are qualified to degree level or above.

Whether you're a business looking for ready-made premises or intending to build a new site, Stockton-on-Tees should be at the top of your list. ●

Find out what Stockton-on-Tees can do for you. Visit www.investstocktonontees.co.uk and get in touch.



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FAMILY VALUES DRIVING FORWARD A THRIVING BUSINESS

For six decades, Blueline Group has built a reputation as a leader in its field in the North East, with a fleet of hundreds of taxis helping people get where they need to be every day. Here operations director and grandson of the founders, **Ben Bell**, reveals more about the growth, the challenges the company has overcome and continues to face, and how its longstanding investment in technology sets it apart in an increasingly tech-led marketplace

Sixty-six years after being created by Colin and Audrey Shanks, using their one Austin Morris to carry passengers around Tyneside, Blueline Group has become a household name for its role as a taxi provider, and is more of a family business than ever.

In its third generation of family ownership and management, the company has gone from that single

car in 1958 to now operating a fleet of hundreds of taxis, becoming one of the most recognisable names in North East transport over the decades they have served the region.

With market-leading technology underpinning its operation, and ongoing investment to ensure it remains at the top of its game, Blueline continues to grow in what remains a challenging marketplace.

Successfully rebuilding after the huge challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, Blueline – a significant creator of employment in the region for decades – is also looking to create more roles for taxi drivers across the region, building its 800-strong fleet even further.

And with family values remaining at the heart of the business – with Colin and Audrey's children Ian, Jane and ►



Paul now making up the board of directors, and grandchildren Ben, Cody, Jack, Pippa and Tom also having roles within Blueline – the team are committed to continuing to develop in the responsible and measured way they always have done.

Grandson, Ben Bell, who is operations director at Blueline Group says: “We’re really proud of our reputation and what we have built. We are a family business in every sense, with several members of our family working here, doing everything from director roles to admin and working as a mechanic. We love what we do.

“The most recent analysis of our customer feedback data shows that we are consistently achieving 99.99 per cent customer satisfaction, which considering how many thousands of journeys we make, is very good but we always want to be better. I really think that’s because we’re a family business and we care. We’ve done this for a long time, and we are now looking to the future with confidence.”

The growth of Blueline – which took its name from the single blue line that ran along the side of Colin and Audrey’s Austin Morris – is a true North East success story.

From humble beginnings has grown a huge name in transport, with the business increasing its geographical reach and fleet

size over the decades to at its pre-COVID height operating around 1,200 taxis.

But despite the fact it runs a vital service – or, in some cases, an essential service, such as when it became the main provider of taxis to two COVID vaccination sites during the pandemic – it receives no public funding.

“We run an on-demand, door-to-door, 24/7 service, 365 days a year, supporting passengers across the region, and we do it well. But we don’t usually get funding from anyone,” says Ben.

“Buses, the Metro, they’re given millions of pounds in subsidies and grants every year to provide their service, but we get nothing. We have to do it all on our own.

“And with the challenges we face as a local operator and family business doing our best for the local economy, and what we’ve had to deal with in recent years, that does seem unfair. We need to see better levels of support from local government and the Department for Transport, as many disabled people refer to the taxi industry as the fourth emergency service.”

In addition to the COVID pandemic, which had a devastating impact on passenger numbers and driver retention – with many opting to move to plentiful sources of work such as supermarket and courier home delivery services – the

threat now comes from ride hailing app companies, who Ben says may have acted anti-competitively to secure market share so that they can exploit drivers and passengers.

“These global competitors aren’t playing by the same rules as we have to,” says Ben. “We don’t mind competition and get on with our local rivals, but we do feel we’ve been let down by the Department for Transport and the Competition and Markets Authority in allowing them to operate as they are.

“This poses a massive challenge for companies like Blueline, who are competing against global international companies with their bottomless pots of money. It affects us massively.

“The taxi industry is regulated because public protection is of paramount importance. But the exploitative practices of ride hailing apps that use dynamic pricing, meaning they charge customers more when demand for taxis is high, leads to self-employed drivers working for multiple companies at once, which can result in rogue drivers refusing to pick-up a customer booked with us because they will be paid more by a ride hailing app company. Drivers are not allowed to do that, but many do so as they think they will get away with it. All local authorities need ►

“We have separate apps for both the drivers and passengers, then we have website bookings, telephone bookings, button presses, QR codes – we need to always be on top of the technology.”



to do more to ensure drivers comply with their licence conditions.”

But while competition from multi-billion-pound, tech-led ventures will no doubt be a thorn in Blueline's side for years to come, the business is continuing to develop, with Blueline's own investment in software enabling it to stay at the forefront of innovation.

“That is our biggest expense as a business, it's so important to have that infrastructure,” says Ben.

“There is a huge amount goes into our software. We have separate apps for both the drivers and passengers, then we have website bookings, telephone bookings, button presses, QR codes – we need to always be on top of the technology so all of these work together simultaneously.

“Then we've got the automated dispatch service which takes information from all of these different platforms, which is a really complex system. And then there is all the security in place behind everything across our operating centres in Durham, Gateshead, Hartlepool, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland, South Tyneside, and Sunderland – there's a lot of work for our IT department.

“It's an ongoing process to keep on improving what we do and to become the most efficient we can be. We want to make sure our customers can book a taxi and it'll be there within five to ten minutes. We're always doing everything we can to get every customer booking covered sooner by a driver.

“We also want our drivers to be able to pick-up their next customer as close as possible to where they drop off their current passenger because that is more efficient for the driver and customers, but because it reduces mileage and emissions. It's about creating this really efficient network, and we'll keep on working to make that the best it can be for the benefit of drivers, customers and the planet.”

With its investment in infrastructure and significant presence on social media helping to raise its profile further, Blueline is looking at growth and diversification.

Its executive fleet is one area of potential growth, with the firm looking to build on key prestigious contracts – such as the Emirates contract at

Newcastle International Airport – through building its high-end operation.

“I think that's an area that is not quite fulfilled in the North East, there are a couple of solely executive operators but they don't have many cars, so we are looking to add more drivers in that area of work,” says Ben.

“But more generally, we're looking at growth across the business, and to do that we need more drivers. We cover a really big area - Durham, Gateshead, Hartlepool, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland, South Tyneside, and Sunderland - so there is a big patch to cover. We want to make sure that a taxi is there when people need one, and to be able to meet their need.

“A taxi journey is a specific need. It's not like fancying a pizza so you decide to order one, you order a taxi because you have somewhere to be. For over 60 years we've been there to meet that need, and we want to continue to do that every time someone needs us.” ●

For more information about Blueline Group, including driver opportunities, visit www.bluelinetaxis.com







Q&A

with Suzanne
Jovanovic from SETA

Tell us about your background?

I've worked in and around apprentices for over 20 years, with many years in employer and learner engagement, careers advice and guidance and until joining SETA this year, I taught level 3 business and project management apprenticeship standards. I have lots of experience working with employers, schools and other external agencies promoting the many benefits of apprenticeships!

What attracted you to work for SETA?

Seta are established and experts in their field. We are a small training provider, but we understand our sector and know exactly who we are, so we specialise in engineering and we deliver quality and bespoke training consistently and year after year, and we get excellent results. I knew that joining such a reputable organisation, I would be able to work with high quality employers and applicants and continue to raise the profile and the existing high standards.

What do you most enjoy about your role?

I love the diversity of the day to day - I could be interviewing, judging a STEM competition or delivering an assembly, or I could be in strategy meetings discussing budgets!

Why are you passionate about apprenticeships?

I feel if there is a relevant apprenticeship pathway to qualify in your area of interest, why would you chose to do it any other way? Apprentices - given the right employer and training provider - will learn from the bottom up, in a working organisation, contributing from day one. They get paid to learn and develop their skills. They can progress to higher and degree apprenticeships and carve a career for life if they choose.

What do you look for in the 'ideal' apprentice?

A positive attitude, someone isn't opposed to hard work and knows what they want. Confident, but not overly so. They must have good preparation for their interview, have good knowledge on their chosen sector and ask questions. If applicants have additional extras such as relevant hobbies, work experience, team activities such as sports etc, this is always impressive.

Why would a business come to SETA to train its apprentices?

We are experts in our field, many of our staff are ex-SETA apprentices and understand the journey and the sector. Our foundation training block is bespoke to the standard and employer requirements. We offer additional specialist modules and our foundation training equips apprentices in workplace behaviours and skills

How exciting is it for you to play such a key role in creating future workforces?

Extremely so, I am a huge fan of apprenticeships and I know they are on par, if not more meaningful, than the traditional academic route. I have already met many ex-SETA apprentices, many of whom are engineering managers, directors and CEOs, so I am confident our apprentices leave us and continue on a progressive and exciting career path, with skills and experience embedded through their time here.

B Corp status for EMG Solicitors



Directors and Senior leadership team at EMG Solicitors

The Northern law firm is celebrating the prestigious certification, which follows its inclusion in The Times' 100 Best Places to Work 2024.

EMG Solicitors, which has offices in Durham, Newcastle, Darlington, Penrith and Manchester, is delighted to have been awarded the prestigious B Corp status, an accreditation that reflects the firm's ongoing commitment to their people and local communities and their positive impact on the environment and society.

To become B Corp (the 'B' standing for Benefit), a business must commit to meet high standards of social and environmental performance, transparency and accountability, balancing profit with purpose. The certification process covers five elements - governance, workers, community, environment, and customers.

The award also comes closely on the back of the firm's recent listing in The Times and Sunday Times UK 100 Best Places to Work 2024.

Emma Gaudern, Managing Director of EMG Solicitors, said: "Since founding EMG Solicitors, we have always held strong values that centre on delivering excellence in all we do. Looking after our people and customers in the very best way we can, supporting our local community and being environmentally conscious are the foundation stones of who we are and what we do.

Ian Burke, Head of People and Culture at EMG Solicitors added: "The achievement of B Corp status demonstrates our commitment to not only what we do but in how we do it. It demonstrates our approach to supporting our colleagues, our communities and the environment whilst delivering exceptional legal services for our clients. Whilst this is a great achievement, it is also just a stepping stone to build on as we continue to commit to excellence." ●

For more information visit www.emgsolicitors.com

Euro 2024: HR Survival Guide

Get ready for the beautiful game! Euro 2024 kicks off in Germany on June 14th, bringing excitement and maybe some friendly office rivalry. **Sapphire HR** is here to help you navigate potential HR challenges during the tournament

Managing Leave and Attendance

With the Euros approaching, some employees may be scrambling for time off. Here's how to handle leave and attendance:

- Remind your team of your leave policy: Explain procedures for requesting time off and any deadlines involved.
- Prepare for overlapping requests: Consider a "first-come, first-served" system, but be mindful of statutory leave rights like caring responsibilities.
- Have a clear procedure for unauthorised absences: This includes potential disciplinary action, but remember to be fair and consider specific circumstances. Seek HR Advice if disciplinary action is required.

Dealing with Sickness Absence

Here's how to manage potential Euros absences fairly:

- Maintain a clear and accessible sickness policy: Follow established procedures for addressing any potential absence concerns.

- Be fair! Treat absences as genuine unless you have concrete evidence otherwise. This includes paying Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) if eligible and upholding any contractual sick pay rights.
- If suspicion arises, handle it politely: Ask the employee for details about their illness and whether they sought medical advice. Upon their return, a back-to-work interview, even for short absences, allows you to discuss any inconsistencies.

Avoiding Unintentional Discrimination

When considering flexible work arrangements or leave requests, remember to be fair and inclusive. Here's how to ensure a level playing field:

- Apply your existing leave policy and flexible work options consistently. Don't base decisions on nationality, as race is a protected characteristic.
- Encourage open communication. Finding solutions that work for everyone might involve scheduling adjustments or flexible work arrangements. By being transparent and adhering to fair practices, you can help your team enjoy the Euros without compromising on inclusivity.



Off-Site Behaviour

Remember, serious off-site incidents can have workplace consequences. Employers have the right to set clear standards of conduct, and serious offenses might be subject to internal disciplinary procedures. In some cases, such behaviours could even constitute criminal offenses.

Conclusion

By following these tips and fostering open communication with your team, you can ensure a smooth and productive month. Sapphire HR is here to support you! If you have any questions regarding flexible work arrangements, leave policies, or managing potential Euros-related issues, don't hesitate to reach out. ●



THE NICEST MAN IN CINEMA?

From *The Karate Kid* to *Kung Fu Panda*, *Legally Blonde* to *Erin Brockovich* and *Cool Runnings* to *Eddie the Eagle*, cinema loves an underdog. And for **Dan Ellis**, his unlikely journey to take on the likes of Odeon and Cineworld to build a community cinema in his hometown – aged just 22 – could be straight from the silver screen. Here, he talks to *Alison Cowie* about his award-winning, stage-to-screen story

At 16, Dan Ellis was intimidated by the hulking 35mm projector at the Playhouse theatre in his home town of Whitley Bay which, at the time, operated as a second-run cinema. But when the projectionist fell ill one night, the schoolboy on work experience, had to step in.

"It was the most terrifying machine I'd ever seen and I didn't want to touch it," Dan remembers. "I'd only been shown how to wind on the film and align the sound once, but there I was, having to show a screening of *The Adventures of Sharkboy and Lavagirl* in 3D."

Dan may have snatched *Sharkboy* and *Lavagirl* from the jaws of defeat that night, but at that time, he was more interested in the live productions happening at the theatre.

After finishing Sixth Form at Whitley Bay High School, Dan studied Applied Theatre at The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in London.

After drama school, he returned to his native North East and enrolled in a Masters in Arts, Business and Creativity at Newcastle University.

To sustain himself, Dan got back in touch with the Playhouse to ask if there were any jobs.

As a part-time usher, Dan was disappointed to find the theatre no longer played films.

"Digital cinema had happened and the big scary projector had been taken out," Dan explains. "The cost to replace it with digital equipment was through the roof!"

Dan dedicated his MA dissertation to exploring the benefits of starting a small-scale cinema in a provincial town.

The more he researched, the more convinced he became that Whitley Bay needed a community cinema to rejuvenate the town. After graduating from Newcastle University, he set about making his idea a reality. ►



"I just felt a bit sad about my hometown. It was around 2010 and Whitley Bay was in a desperate state. All the former nighttime economy had died and there was a high population of at-risk people being dumped there without any Social Services support. I wanted to try and do one good thing for the town."

The budding entrepreneur won a couple of new business competitions, including a regional Blueprint Award, with his community cinema idea – then called Film Central. With the £5,000 prize money he decided to pay himself £500 for 10 weeks to see if he could make it work.

He looked at a few venues before stumbling across an empty first-floor retail unit on Park Avenue in Whitley Bay's town centre.

"There was a graffitied phone number on the door, so I just called it one day and arranged a viewing," Dan adds.

To secure the long-term lease, the 22-year-old needed additional support. He took his two best friends, Stephen Fairley and William Smith, out for a curry and asked if they would join his cinema's board and help with the project. Both agreed.

This was the first of many obstacles Dan overcame to make his cinema – which he established as a Community Interest Company (CIC) – a reality.

The next barrier was finance. Dan secured a £10,000 Indoor Activities Grant from North Tyneside Council and matched it with a £10,000 start-up loan.

"We thought that would be enough to build a cinema but we were wrong," he adds.

According to Dan, he "begged, stole and borrowed" to make his dream come true, and with the help of Stephen, William and a host of other friends and volunteers, renovated

the former unemployment office to accommodate a one-screen 'cinema cell'.

"The husband of the café owner from downstairs did the rewriting and I got the Playhouse to donate some flooring that had been used in a production," he continues.

Dan began running local film festival events and off-date films at his newly named Jam Jar Cinema. The new name was coined after his dad told him about cinemas that ran in the 50s and 60s where kids could get in free or at a discounted rate if they brought a glass jar with them.

"It was at a time when you could get money back for glassware so the cinema owners would collect the jars and get the deposits back from them," Dan explains.

"These types of cinemas were in Manchester, Sheffield, Liverpool, and in Glasgow they were called J'eely Jar

“*At first, people didn't quite get [pay as you please]. They thought they'd get a worse seat if they paid less but that wasn't the case. We were just asking people to pay what they could afford.”*



Cinemas. The earliest record we found of them was in North Tyneside, where they were known as 'Jam Jar Cinemas'."

Dan's cinema began to attract a small and dedicated customer base of cinephiles but to become sustainable, it needed to show the latest films - the cost of which couldn't be justified with just one screen. Jam Jar Cinema needed to grow.

Dan reveals the start of this expansion came after a couple of drinks when he decided to see what was behind a cupboard and was astonished to find a vast empty retail space.

"I noticed some loose mortar and thought, 'I should take a hammer to that'. I did and found another half of the building that was completely derelict."

After negotiating another lease, raising finance and project managing a major capital build - the Jam Jar Cinema reopened with three screens - seating 47, 38 and 29 - in autumn 2019.

Dan was finally able to show the new film releases and the popularity of his social enterprise cinema soared.

But despite bringing the latest blockbusters to Whitley Bay, Dan knew in order to make his cinema truly community based, he needed to make it accessible.

Installing a lift in February 2020 made the cinema accessible to those with frailty and with disabilities, but Dan wanted his cinema to be financially accessible, too.

"Going to the cinema had become an expensive night out," Dan explains. "There was the travel to get to the big multiplexes and then there were the high costs of the tickets and food once you were inside."

Dan and his board decided to bring in 'pay as you please' ticketing, which allowed people to choose between three pricing tiers.

"At first, people didn't quite understand it," Dan explains. "They thought they'd get a worse seat if they paid less but that wasn't the case. We were just asking people to pay what they could afford."

The cinema owner continues: "We get some people who come here once

a week who may pay the lower price. But we also get people who pay more because they want to support us or they book on the day a film comes out and they're so excited.

"People will pay more for an adult and less for a child, or someone will pay more than their friend because they've got a better pension. It just works!"

Dan's efforts to bring a truly accessible cinema to his local community have not gone unnoticed and the Jam Jar's founder and managing director has been awarded several prestigious accolades, including the Prime Minister's Points of Light Awards in 2015.

His community work was also recognised in 2019 by the British Academy of Film and Television Awards and Dan took his mum to the prestigious Bafta awards night in London to collect his 'For the Love of Film' honour.

During the pandemic - a particularly challenging time for the team who worked tirelessly to keep the cinema open and safe by adopting increased ►

JAM JAR

CINEMA & LOUNGE BAR



cleaning protocols and running at a reduced capacity – Jam Jar Cinema won the top award in The Small Awards 2020, which celebrates smaller enterprises across the UK.

Most recently, Dan was awarded a British Empire Medal for services to cinema.

"It was a real shock and surprise but great to see that cinema is back on the agenda with Central Government," Dan adds.

With the Jam Jar Cinema in Whitley Bay celebrating its 10th anniversary last year, Dan has now set his sights on creating his second venture – this time in the neighbouring coastal town of Blyth in partnership with Northumberland County Council.

Dan sees many of the same challenges Whitley Bay was facing 10 years ago in Blyth, and wants to develop a community cinema in the town to boost the economy and support local residents.

As lead operator of the new cultural hub on Market Place, Dan plans to open a three-screen cinema and an events space to host small music gigs, stand-up comedy, children's theatre and more.

Building work on the new Blyth development began in February this year and while the name for the development is still under wraps, excitement levels are high.

"Blyth is the biggest town in Northumberland and there are so many people passionate about their patch. The town just needs one of two good things to happen to it to help it thrive.

"This development will be one of those good things. It's going to be a hard slog but we're up for it."

Dan expects his workforce will grow from 11 to more than 30 after his second cinema opens, and he says he will most likely recruit a managing director for the Blyth cinema while he oversees both operations.

Building the business in a responsible way is very important to Dan, who describes himself on his LinkedIn page as 'aiming to be the nicest guy in cinema.'

Asked why being nice is important to him, the business owner replies:

"If you can do one thing in life, it's be nice to people. So, it really matters to me to be honest, frank and truthful.

"It's easy to forget that this industry isn't 'life and death'. No one's dying in the cinema industry. We're not heart surgeons.

"At Jam Jar Cinema, we're proud that we're a social enterprise. Our attitude is that the business and the money we make isn't ours. We're just custodians of it for the time being.

"Jam Jar Cinema is very egalitarian in its decision-making and we're always looking at ways to invest in ethical and sustainable ways. It's also important that we're a Real Living Wage employer and we treat people fairly."

Dan's dedication to run a principled, community-focussed business is admirable. The fact he's doing it against the odds, in an industry known for its high stakes and cut-throat attitudes, even more so.

Perhaps one day we'll be sitting down in a Jam Jar Cinema to watch a biopic of its owner's life.

The film's name? You wouldn't bet against 'The Nicest Man in Cinema'. ●

For more information visit www.jamjarcinema.com







Tel. 0191 416 2860

Email. enquiries@seta.co.uk

www.seta.co.uk

BW Magazine
learns more about
SETA's longstanding
commitment
to supporting
young people
and the business
community, and
its track record of
success in doing so

Creating the workforces of the future



Through apprenticeships, SETA is equipping young people from the North East with the skills they need to enjoy successful careers in engineering, working closely with businesses to create the workforces which will enable them to thrive.

For over 50 years, SETA has been at the forefront of training in the North East's engineering sector. Supporting young people to achieve their potential and career dreams, while also enabling businesses to grow through the addition of specially trained and highly skilled employees, SETA continues to be vital to the creation of workforces of the future throughout the region.

Working closely with multi-national names including Siemens and Liebherr, alongside a host of businesses in the Nissan supply chain, every year SETA helps in the recruitment and development of the next generation of talent to join their teams.

From its centre in Washington - which has both workshop and classroom facilities, to enable the development of knowledge and practical skills – SETA works with employers to create bespoke apprenticeship programmes to ensure the employees they are training meet the exact needs of the business. Industry-leading training is





delivered by mentors who themselves have a wealth of skills and experience of working in engineering.

And its track record is impressive indeed. Over the years, SETA has contributed many hundreds of apprentices to the region's workforce, many of whom have progressed to enjoy long and successful careers with multi-national employers.

With an end point assessment pass rate of 100 per cent for its apprenticeship programmes, this year it will take on another (approx. 100) apprentices, who begin their fully-funded programmes in September. In addition to the core four-year apprenticeship programmes, HNC and degree-level apprenticeships are also delivered.

Supporting young people and businesses alike over the course of over 50 years, SETA's reputation now speaks for itself, with more businesses choosing the training provider to oversee its apprenticeship provision each year, and increasing numbers of students opting to join SETA rather than go to college.

"I was chatting with someone just the other day and I mentioned I work at SETA. It turned out their brother was a SETA apprentice many years ago, he is now a senior manager with a global energy company and flies around the world through his job," says Suzanne Jovanovic, head of apprenticeship engagement at SETA.

"That is just one example of someone who has trained with us who has gone on to great things. We have many CEOs, MDs and really senior people as SETA Alumni, who started out as apprentices with us.

"And that is what an apprenticeship can

give you – massive potential, opportunities to travel, progress, develop and thrive. Brilliant careers are built here and we are always excited to see what our apprentices will go on to achieve."

Each year, SETA recruits widely for apprentices, with hundreds of applications being received and a final 96 being chosen after a stringent selection process. Employers, should they wish, can recruit apprentices directly and then have them trained by the SETA team, or else SETA will work with businesses to place the young people found through their extensive recruitment.

In a unique delivery model, following their first year spent in the SETA training centre, apprentices will then be placed with their employer, supported by regular visits from their mentors at SETA. The close support continues throughout their time as an apprentice.

"We teach the highest standards in knowledge, skills and behaviours," says Suzanne.

"We offer real experience of life and work, with hands-on training from day one, and of course the ability to learn. But while they may initially be learning in our centre, from the day they start their apprenticeship, they are treated as employees.

"We monitor their attendance and time keeping, and their employers are told if they are late. They are expected to clean up after themselves in the workshop. They take responsibility for themselves. We're teaching life skills, as well as the skills they need to actually do the job. We help them make it into a career."

The quality of training SETA is known for delivering makes it an appealing choice for apprentices and businesses alike, with its reach extending well beyond its Wearside base. Suzanne tells how apprentices from Egger in Hexham travel past several other apprenticeship providers each day to get to Washington, on a bus provided by their employer.

"Apprenticeships with us are such a brilliant opportunity for young people, there is a huge amount to learn, but we have shown over many years that there is a very successful alternative route into a senior engineering career than the traditional T-levels, college courses or university," says Suzanne.

"We know colleges have their in-house gyms and Starbucks, and there can be the temptation for young people to follow their friends when they leave school – but SETA has been doing this for over 50 years, and there is nowhere better to be trained than here.

"An apprenticeship is hard work and takes a lot of commitment, and it is a big decision for a young person to take on a role with a typical five weeks' holiday a year when your friends at college will still be enjoying six weeks off in the summer alone. But it's a hugely rewarding opportunity with massive potential for a really exciting career ahead." ●

To learn more about apprenticeships at SETA, either as a potential applicant or an employer, visit: www.seta.co.uk/apprentice



Taking the fear out of cyber with customer-centric solutions

Online attacks have become a common occurrence but that doesn't lessen the severity. For many businesses purchasing the appropriate security is a difficult decision to make fuelled by a market which over the years has sold on fear and not customer-centric solutions - **Debra Cairns**, MD of Net-Defence, is keen to redefine the approach. Here, she tells BW Magazine how educating SMEs is at the root of everyone's success, and why ringing the changes since she joined Net-Defence is now paying dividends in their growth

Too often when we as an industry talk about cyber security and risk, it's a conversation geared around fear and I hate it," says Debra Cairns.

"We need to be selling solutions, not selling fear. And that's an approach we are proud to take."

As the managing director of Net-Defence, a provider of specialist cyber security, IT, and telephony solutions, Debra is committed to changing the narrative around the need for businesses to improve their online presence and security.

In a day and age where businesses of all sizes are liable to be targeted by cyber attacks, the need to invest in protecting

their operations has never been greater - but this should not be motivated by fear and disaster scenarios, says Debra.

"We're about helping SMEs to be secure, we want to educate them, not terrify them," she says.

"Everyone is a target, whether you're a one-man band or a multi-national, criminals have no ethics and will go for the easiest target, whoever that may be. But there can be so much jargon around cyber security, that businesses often don't understand what they need.

"It need not be a hugely expensive purchase, it's more about analysing their business, minimising risk and looking

practically at what they can do. Small investments can bring the biggest impact.

"I often use the analogy of a row of houses, where door number one leaves their doors and windows open and has no security at all. At the other end is Fort Knox, which has hugely expensive security and is very safe. An SME doesn't want to be number one - but doesn't need to be Fort Knox either.

"We'll help them to be door number three - not an easy target, with the protection they need so they're not on the radar of criminals, and can be confident they'll be safe today and tomorrow." ►

Known for its solution-led approach and commitment to building trusting relationships with clients, Net-Defence - which operates from offices in Team Valley in Gateshead and Stirling, Scotland - continues to grow, with clients across the country benefitting from the specialists' bespoke solutions.

Debra's leadership has been a key part of the reason Net-Defence has such a strong position currently, with her background of two decades with Proctor and Gamble (P&G) proving a key factor in helping to guide the third-generation family-owned business into its next phase.

"I'd undertaken some fantastic projects with P&G and this gave me the foundations on which to build, but as with any career change after more than 20 years, it was still daunting," says Debra.

"I did look at other multinationals but decided I wanted to be a bit braver and try something different. But equally, it was really important to make this the right move. I didn't want to go from two decades with one company, and the progression and development I'd enjoyed during that time, to job hopping.

"It couldn't just be any job that I took, it had to be somewhere that matched the

P&G ethos and ethics that made me see what good practice looked like. A family business seemed a good fit for this."

Admittedly, Net-Defence had its challenges when Debra arrived - but by her admission, the task of turning things around was one she relished.

Her immediate impact is reflected in her rapid progression through the ranks, with her appointment as Head of Governance, Risk and Compliance (GRC) six years ago followed by becoming Head of Operations three months later, with further promotion to Director of Operations a year after that.

She became interim Managing Director in January 2020, just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, a position which was made permanent in June when lockdown was at its height.

"There was a lot to do," Debra recalls with a smile.

"Things were very ad hoc, it wasn't systemised, and this was affecting the quality of what we could deliver. During the pandemic, it became absolutely essential to support our customers through some extremely tough times where remote working and technology were critical to organisations being able to continue operationally.

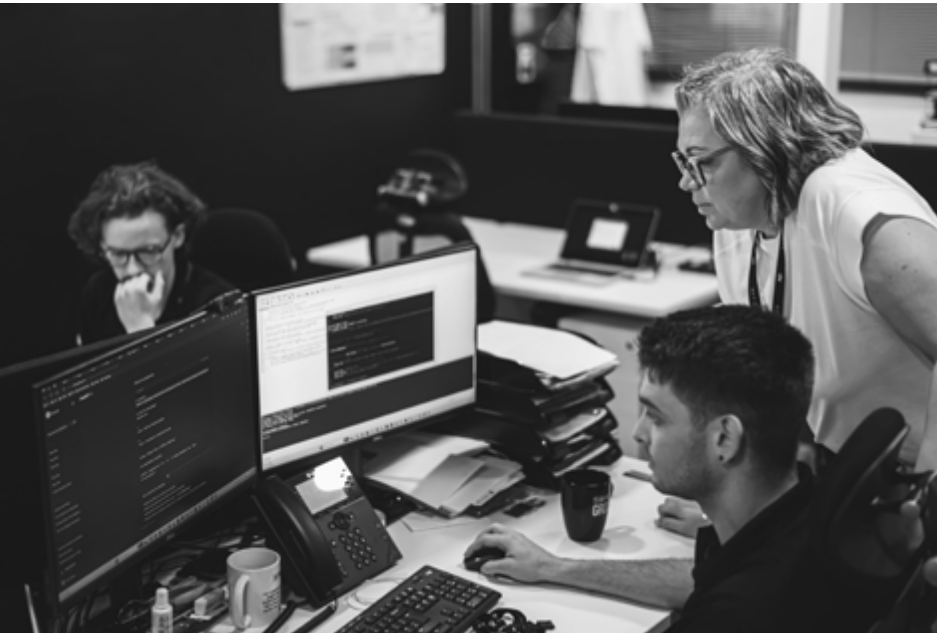
"We had our service offering and were doing well with the quality of what we provided, but we needed to ensure we were delivering outstanding service consistently.

"Getting the right team in place has been central in making this change. I work on the principles of trust and honesty, and as core business values I want us to be delivering our service with excellence and helping our sales team to sell with confidence."

These internal ongoing changes are paying dividends, with Net-Defence enjoying long-standing customer retention, having not lost a client in over two years.

"That in itself tells its own story. Our customers are central to everything we do, and we are delighted they tell us we're providing an excellent service as a partner or extension to their organisation. Taking that on board, we looked across our brand and felt that a particular key message was missing. It wasn't reflected in our website or our presence on social media.

"This took us back to basics. Tech is known for having an ego, which can make things overly complex and challenging for customers to navigate. I wanted



our services simplified, making them affordable, available, and attainable to all."

This lay at the core of Net-Defence's recent rebrand, which has made finding the solutions businesses need simpler than ever. It has also seen the launch of a new cyber resilience advisory package, to help businesses after the end of landline next year, which offers the cyber protection they need in a pay-as-you-go format.

"We went right back to basics in completing this, and looked at what our customers want and need and how we can best support them" says Debra.

"When visiting the website, we want customers to be able to identify a solution to a problem they are facing without feeling pressured, scared, or forced into a purchase. But more than anything, we want to work to educate

businesses on what they need. Informed decision-making through awareness and education is at our core.

"We are working on bringing a new product to market, a combined offering that will merge a collection of our core services. This service is designed to provide base IT, telecoms, and cyber resilience services at a fixed cost. It is focused on business resilience and keeping organisations secure, compliant and operational.

"Our customers have also told us that the digital world is so complex that they just don't know where to start. They know they have to do something, but aren't always sure what that is. To help eliminate this, our new advisory service was born. We will help guide you to the best solutions to meet your current and future needs."

In addition to the strong bonds it

builds with its customers, Net-Defence's commitment to relationship building also extends to local suppliers it works with, with its legal, marketing and recruitment support all being provided by external specialists.

"Where we can support local, we do so, because we want to support the communities we live and work in," says Debra.

"Additionally, through my role on the board of the North East Business Resilience Centre, we're helping businesses to get the help and support they need, with core membership being available free of charge.

"As business people, we must help each other to grow and thrive. We see it as our responsibility to do all we can to help others stay safe from cyber attacks. By working together, we can achieve great things." ●



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SCAN ME





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ISSUE 6

MOTORING ■ DINING

The Car of the Year: Renault Scenic E-Tech electric



With awards season in full swing, Renault is celebrating after its new **Scenic E-Tech electric** is named The Car of the Year 2024 at the Geneva Motor Show

The Scenic E-Tech electric has been voted The Car of the Year 2024. The results were announced at a ceremony at the Geneva Motor Show in February.

After the first round of voting last November, Renault's latest electric offering was chosen as one of seven finalists alongside the BMW 5-series, BYD Seal, Kia EV9, Peugeot E-3008/3008, Toyota C-HR, and Volvo EX30.

The trophy winner was chosen by a jury of 59 motoring journalists from 22 countries. Scenic came in first place with 329 points and now becomes the seventh Renault vehicle to be awarded the prestigious 'The Car of the Year' title.

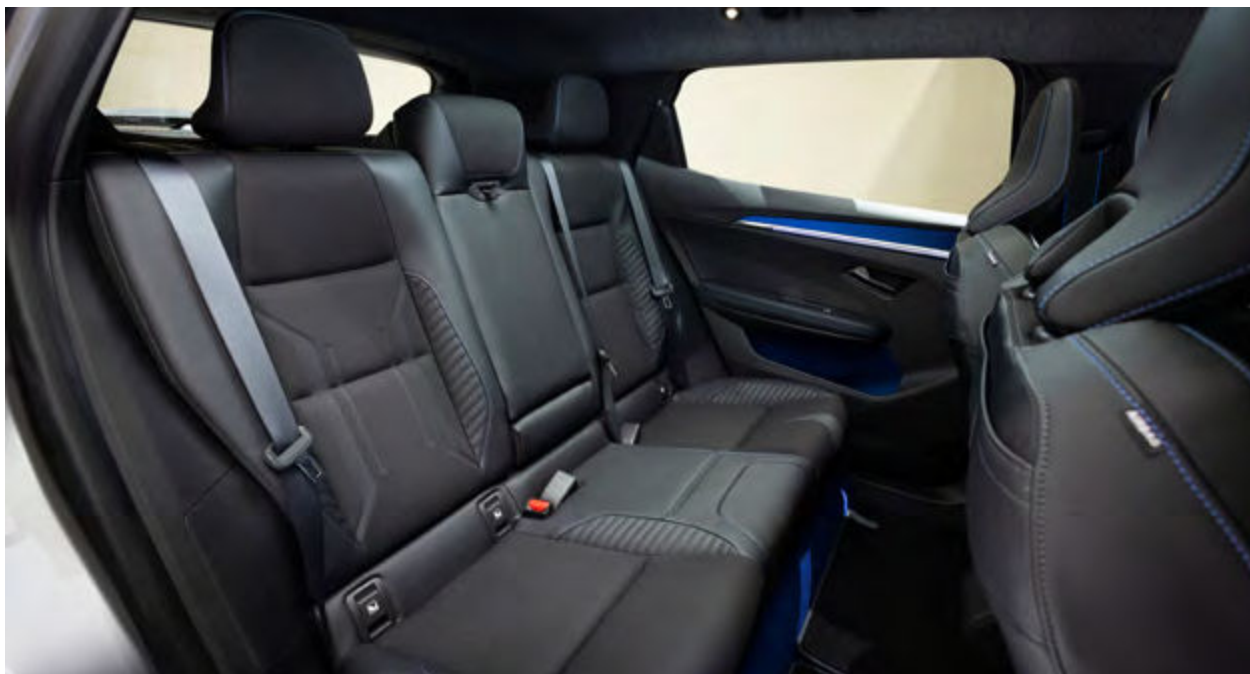
Previous winners include the Renault 16 (1966), Renault 9 (1982), Clio (1991), Scenic (1997), Megane (2003), and Clio (2006).

The Scenic E-Tech electric is a fully electric vehicle. It has been developed on the medium AmpR platform (formerly

CMF-EV) and has been designed for customers looking for versatility.

Boasting zero emissions, this agile car is light (1,890 kg) and compact (4.47 m long), and is in its element on city roads.

For longer journeys, the Scenic E-Tech electric boasts up to 379 miles of range (WLTP) and has a comfortable, spacious interior along with an impressive Solarbay panoramic glass roof with polymer dispersed



liquid crystals enabling you to change the opacity of the glass one segment at a time.

The model is also packed with tech to enhance your driving pleasure. This includes The OpenR Link multimedia system, which features a 12.3 inch horizontal screen, more than 50 apps and a choice of 48 colours for the dashboard, and an all-new Scenic E-Tech electric's signature sound sequence that has been created in collaboration with renowned composer Jean-Michel Jarre.

Renault also recently enhanced the appeal and accessibility of its Scenic E-Tech electric after it was announced the 60kWh (170hp) will be available in the UK, which lowers the starting price of this innovative, family-focused SUV to £37,495 OTR.

While the availability of the smaller battery variant significantly increases the affordability of the Scenic E-Tech electric, customers still enjoy the same high levels of equipment as the existing 87kWh, 220hp model, as well as a practical range of up to 260 miles (WLTP). The Comfort Range will

be available on the techno trim in the UK.

Orders are already open for the Scenic E-Tech range, with the first vehicles arriving on our shores in May.

After The Car of the Year was announced, Fabrice Cambolive, CEO of Renault said: "This recognition demonstrates that we have made the right choices."

Could the Scenic E-Tech electric be the right choice for you, too? ●

For more information visit
www.renault.co.uk

Spring has sprung at Hotel du Vin



Alison Cowie sets sail to **Hotel du Vin Newcastle**, located in a former shipping company's headquarters, to sample the new seasonal menu at its French-inspired bistro.

It is hard to believe that spring is here but restaurants and eateries across the country are busy launching new seasonal offerings that reflect fresher and more bountiful harvests.

Hotel du Vin is no exception with its new menu launching mid-April across the chain's bistros. ►



My friend and I were invited to sample the new menu on its first evening and while this wasn't our first time dining at Hotel du Vin Newcastle, neither of us had visited for a while.

As soon as we arrived, we were reminded of the sumptuous surroundings this hotel on the banks of the River Tyne offers.

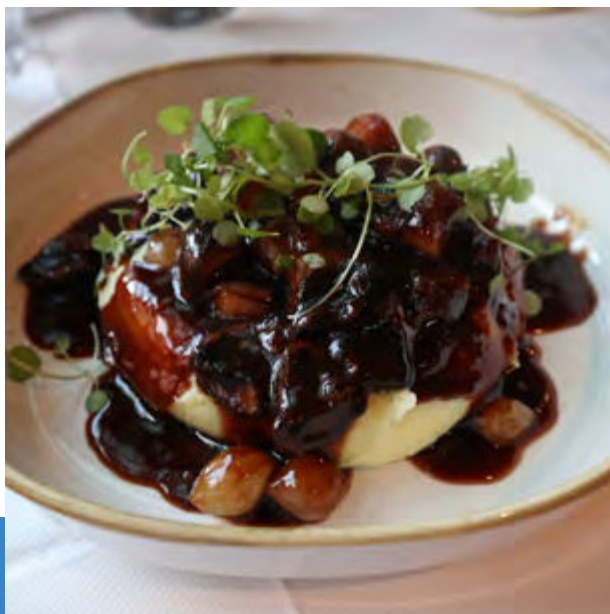
Located in the former home of Tyne Tees Steam Shipping Company, Hotel du Vin

Newcastle has always made the most of its characterful Edwardian building, with sumptuous panelling, brown leather club chairs, dark navy décor and copper detailing even more in vogue than when I last visited.

My dining companion and I made our way to the French-styled Bistro. It is a lighter and brighter space than the main reception and bar area thanks to

large windows that overlook the spacious courtyard. We perused the new a la carte menu (tasting menus are also available) and sizable wine menu – an obvious addition given the hotel's name!

My friend chose the delightful Severn & Wye smoked salmon (£11.50), which was served with slabs of treacle soda bread and a quenelle of Fromage Blanc mixed with capers and chives for a pop of colour and flavour.



I opted for the sauteed mushrooms (£8.50) on toasted sourdough, and this simple dish was truly elevated by the tasty creamy sauce with sharp mustard kick.

I'm pleased to report our winning starters were followed by equally fine mains.

My pan-fried hake (£22.50), as recommended to us by our attentive wait staff, was well cooked and served with crispy parmentier potatoes and a warm tartare sauce.

My friend's beef cheek bourguignon (£34.95) was also a treat. When it arrived we both commented on how nice it was to see such a generous serving of creamy

mashed potatoes, which was topped with a good amount of tender beef and flavoursome baby onions, mushrooms and pancetta in a rich and intense sauce.

For dessert, my companion picked the perfectly cooked apple tarte tatin (£9.95) topped with a scoop of indulgent ice cream while I toyed with ordering la profiterole (£9.95), which I was told was one giant profiterole filled with ice cream instead of the traditional cream. I decided against it, though, and chose the indulgent pot au chocolate (£9.95) instead.

I was glad I did as a diner on a neighbouring table was soon served la

profiterole, which lived up to its gigantic description! Though it looked utterly delicious, it was so huge, you may want to share this particular dessert if you've had two previous courses.

I washed my meal down with a small glass of malbec (£9.95) while my friend went for a tomato juice. Once our glasses were drained, it was time to leave.

On the way home, I reflected on a lovely meal in fine surroundings. I also wondered if my fellow diner that evening had managed to finish his giant dessert! ●

For more information and bookings, visit www.hotelduvin.com/locations/newcastle



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EVENTS DIARY



JUNE

- 17-18** 3rd Marketing, Innovation and Digital Transformation Global Conference, Durham University Business School, Durham, DH1 3LB
- 19** Ignite North East Showcase 2024, Boiler Shop, 20 South Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 3PE 2.30pm-7pm
- 20** CBI North East Business Dinner, Biscuit Factory, 16 Stoddart St, Shieldfield, Newcastle, NE2 1AN 6.30pm-11.30pm From £175pp

JULY

- 2** Tynemouth Business Networking Breakfast, Tynemouth Golf Club, King Edward Road, North Shields, NE30 2ER 7.30am-9am
- 4** Tees Valley Business Summit, Olympia Building, Teesside University, Olympia Building, Middlesbrough, TS1 3JN 9.30am-4pm
- 17** Shaping the Future of Tourism in the North East, The Catalyst, 3 Helix, Science Square, Newcastle, NE4 5TG 10am-2pm

AUGUST

- 1** Property Investors North East Monthly Meet, Royal Station Hotel, Newcastle, NE1 5DH 6.30pm-10pm
- 4** Made Up North Summer Market, Boiler Shop, 20 South Street, Newcastle, NE1 3PE 10-4pm
- 7** Business Northumberland Networking, Wansbeck Workspace, Rotary Parkway, Ashington, NE63 8QW 8.30am-10am
- 13** Newcastle City Ladies Networking, Hilton NewcastleGateshead, Bottle Bank, Gateshead, NE8 2AR 9.30am-11am

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

Please note, while we make every effort to ensure these listings are correct, we cannot be held responsible for changes or cancellations – always contact the venue beforehand to check.

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