The most influential people in the North East 2015

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Welcome to the 2015 edition of The Most Influential People in the North East.

We have refreshed up this year’s list to ensure that our much-anticipated annual publication comes as near as possible to being the definitive run-down of the people who really make a difference to life in the North East.

Now clocking in at 292 names, the 2015 list includes persuasive, innovative, dynamic and pioneering leaders in their fields.

It contains heads of business, council officials, sporting icons, philanthropists, chefs, cultural chiefs, scientists, media pacesetters and politicians. After a few years’ absence, we have included the North East’s MPs again to recognise their role in speaking up for the region in Westminster (though rest assured we’ll be watching to make sure they do).

Some people are included because of their job, others because of voluntary and community work, but more than often it requires a combination of both to qualify as a real ‘mover and shaker’.

And despite the annual protests from those people who haven’t made the list, the process of arriving at our list is as robust and strenuous as we can make it.

Most Influential is compiled by an independent panel of North East-based academics and business leaders from both the public and private sectors, all of whom are specialists in their areas of expertise.

The result is a varied line-up that we hope brings together the individuals who have the desire and the scope to shape the future of this vibrant, creative and diverse area as the drive to reinvent the North East continues apace.

As ever, the list is sure to be a talking point. Some names are likely to be unpopular. And everyone will have their own thoughts on who should and shouldn’t have been included.

We don’t pretend that our list is exhaustive. Between the panel meeting and publication a number of names had to be removed as they left the area or took other jobs. Lots more, for whatever reason, will lose influence over the next 12 months while new figures will emerge and demand inclusion for Most Influential 2016.

Until then, the best we can say is that the near-300 men and women included this year are an inspiring group who are leading the way both now and for tomorrow.

New names such as Michelin-starred chefs James Close and Kenny Atkinson show the emergence of the North East’s food sector; others are reflecting how technology businesses are breaking out to become key players in the regional economy.

Key players from professional services, manufacturing and other traditional businesses are there too, but compared to our original Most Influential List of 2008, the list is more diverse than ever.

These are the figures who we are pleased and proud to say are “our” influencers.

Kenny Atkinson is one of only two Michelin-starred chefs in the North East
Skills development is key to the success of the North East

LAST year I wrote an article for this supplement titled “Skills development and collaboration will bring economic success to the North East”. With the move to devolved powers in the region, that sentiment is still very much true today and, in my view, it is even more important that we focus on skills development and collaboration.

The recently-signed devolution agreement will be a catalyst to help transform the region as it involves the transfer of significant powers for employment and skills, transport, housing, planning, business support and investment from central government to the North East. However, the devolution agreement cannot just be about local government getting more powers – it also has to recognise the important role businesses have in transforming the region.

At the core of the region’s Strategic Economic Plan is the aim to create 100,000 “more and better” jobs. However, our local authorities are having to deal with major cuts to their budgets, meaning the public sector is unlikely to create the number of jobs needed.

If we are successful in creating more and better jobs, those jobs will need to be created by the private sector.

Within our regional private-sector economy we have some really strong sectors, including automotive, manufacturing, engineering, technology, energy, offshore, process and chemical, life sciences, retail and business services. These sectors are at the core of our regional economy and for the region to be successful we need them to grow.

However, growing these sectors requires more skilled staff. The challenge is therefore to create the supply of skilled staff to match the demand that is being created.

The key to our success will be to match our training, education and skills system to the economy we have.

As a result, the section of the devolution agreement which interests me the most is around skills, as it has the potential to have the biggest transformational impact.

The “Human Capital Development” section within the agreement aims to “create an integrated employment and skills system tailored to the specific needs of the area”. The achievement of that aim is exactly what the region needs to make it more successful.

The agreement then goes on to say it will “actively stimulate, promote and champion initiatives that seek to strengthen and deepen partnerships between education
Accenture continues to grow in the region

Bob Paton of Accenture discusses his business's approach to skills delivery

ACCENTURE is one of the world's biggest employers with more than 350,000 people worldwide. We have Technology Delivery Centres at more than 60 locations. However, we only have one in the UK, at the Cobalt Business Park in North Tyneside. Our North East Delivery Centre is a key part of the company's global network of delivery centres offering technology support to clients around the world. The North East Delivery Centre has become a real success story for Accenture and continues to expand. The Delivery Centre opened in September 2010 with just over 200 staff. However, in just five years we have more than trebled in size and we now employ 650 staff – including 70 apprentices on a higher-level apprentice scheme. This growth has seen us take on a second building within the Cobalt Business Park and we expect to move there in January.

To sustain our growth it is vitally important that we support the development of technology skills in the region. This year, in the North East, we launched the Accenture Academy where we work with hundreds of school pupils to help them develop an interest in technology. Our academy starts with Coding Clubs at primary schools. Pupils then progress to one-week job placements in Years 8 and 9 as part of the Industrial Cadet programme. Then they go through to the National Qualification Framework Level 2 in IT at Years 10 and 11, culminating in work experience for Years 12 and 13. We also work closely with Newcastle College to offer week-long Digital Traineeships. In total we will expect to work with more than 400 pupils in the next 12 months.

Our apprentice scheme is a three-year programme, which leads to the award of a Foundation Degree. We get great support for our apprenticeship programme from our training providers Newcastle College, Northumbria University and the University of Sunderland. In January this year we organised the largest Technology and Girls event in the UK with 300 girls aged 11-13 from 30 schools in the North East taking part in a Technology Day at The Sage, Gateshead. It was such a huge success that we have organised a second event for January for 500 girls.

As the North East grows to become a key regional tech hub in the UK, Accenture will continue to help drive technology skill development in the region through our work with schools, colleges and universities.

and business to provide a focus upon economically-driven activity, such as vocational training, apprenticeships and traineeships, experience of work and enterprise learning. I am fully behind this aim. However, it can only be achieved if the business sector is fully engaged. We don’t need to wait until the devolution agreement is fully in place – we can do this now!

We have lots of businesses already in the region which offer these kinds of opportunities to our young people but we need more – many more. We have some very good schools, colleges, universities and training providers in the region but there is no doubt we will have more. And they will be even better if there is more business engagement.

We want more businesses to offer:
- Business leaders to become school, college or university governors.
- Career advice at schools, colleges and universities.
- Advice on course content/curriculum.
- Lectures.
- Work experience opportunities.
- Traineeships.
- Apprenticeships.
- Graduate opportunities.
- Enterprise learning.

We need to be the region that offers more of these opportunities than any other area in the UK to grow the number of skilled people working in thriving businesses. If we do that we will be successful in creating the integrated employment and skills system mentioned in the devolution agreement.

Our economy is growing and we have a demand for skilled staff. Let’s work together to ensure we can match the supply of skilled staff to the demand that is there.

There is activity being progressed in the region by key people like Peter Walls to create a North East business voice. Within that voice we need to create a movement within the business community where the provision of opportunities for our young people is part and parcel of everything we do.

If you are interested in having a talk about how you can get involved in this movement please reach out to me at bob.paton@accenture.com.
Election year that transformed the political landscape

The unexpected and outright victory of the Conservatives at May’s General Election turned the race to be 2015’s most influential on its head. That unforgettable exit poll moment heralded a transformative period, not just for Tories but Labour and Lib Dems too, and now politicians across the region are finding their feet in what is a rapidly-changing landscape.

With the rise of the SNP in Scotland, the Conservatives were left with more power on their hands than the polls, and perhaps even the party’s top brass, anticipated.

In the wake of brutal defeat, Labour elected Jeremy Corbyn, their most left-wing leader in a generation, while the Lib Dems, also facing electoral annihilation, switched Nick Clegg for Tim Farron.

Power to set the agenda rests with David Cameron’s party. The Prime Minister, now at the height of his powers and unhindered by coalition, has seen his party set out its stall as one-nation Conservatives.

His preferred successor is close ally George Osborne and, despite an avalanche of criticism over the planned tax credits cutbacks, the Chancellor remains the bookies’ favourite for next leader.

This means that unless the political weather changes dramatically, the Northern Powerhouse drive will remain at the centre of Government business as the Conservatives look to detoxify the Conservative brand in the North post-Thatcher.

Stockton South’s James Wharton, who returned to Parliament with an impressive 5,046 majority in a marginal seat, was promoted to the Department of Communities and Local Government as Northern Powerhouse Minister.

While this new role gives him political influence unrivalled in the region, the 31-year-old MP is on something of a sticky wicket as he attempts to give credence to Mr Osborne’s Northern Powerhouse claims at a time when the region is haemorrhaging heavy industry jobs.

He has, however, played a key role in brokering devolution deals with local Labour politicians. More on this later.

Hexham Conservative Guy Opperman was promoted to Assistant Whip and, beyond holding his colleagues’ feet to the fire at Westminster, expect to see him play a key role in shaping public perception of Government policy in the North.

The clarity of the Conservatives’ majority does not make the coming months any more predictable – far from it. One event is set to divide the political spectrum more than any other: the EU referendum.

Between devolution, the General Election and the looming EU referendum, 2015 has been an extraordinary year for the North’s political movers and shakers. RACHEL WEARMOUTH takes a look at who is weathering the storm.

Tevelyan is a founding member of Conservatives for Britain (and also has a role on the powerful Public Accounts Committee), a group prepared to campaign for a Brexit should the PM’s conference with other Euro leaders prove fruitless. How they interact with the leadership will be fascinating.

The referendum will see Euro-MPs and business leaders take centre stage. Labour’s two Euro-MPs Paul Brannen and Jude Kirton-Darling are already mounting a strong push for the region to vote to stay in the EU.

While the thrashing out of the region’s devolution deal saw the North East Local Enterprise Partnership’s power much diminished, influential business figures such as the NECC’s Ross Smith and the EEF’s Liz Mayes will make the pro-EU case in the region. UKIP Euro-MP Jonathan Arnott will be the cat among the pigeons but expect him to judiciously play his cards.

Knowing how to pick your battles will be at the forefront of many Labour MP’s minds given changes at the top of the party. Jeremy Corbyn, who so few of the region’s MPs wanted as their boss, could have elevated more MPs from the Labour-dominated North East when picking his shadow cabinet, but the region was by no means left out in the cold.

Newcastle North’s Catherine McKinnell was appointed as shadow attorney general, but Chi Onwurah, Newcastle Central’s MP, has a dual brief, serving as a shadow minister in both the department of Business, Innovation and Skills and that of Culture, Media and Sport.

The all-important digital economy brief sits within Ms Onwurah’s remit, placing her in a pivotal position as Labour attempts to rehabilitate its relationship with business. Gateshead MP Ian Mearns,
meanwhile, is chairman of the influential Backbench Business Committee.

Redcar’s new MP Anna Turley advanced straight to the shadow cabinet office, where she will serve under Labour’s deputy leader Tom Watson, and alongside Wansbeck MP Ian Lavery. The former NUM president will focus on fighting the Government’s trade union laws and have an influential role building bridges between the Parliamentary Labour Party and grassroots supporters after Corbyn’s divisive leadership race.

Former leader of Newcastle City Council and Labour peer Jeremy Beecham has taken up two shadow ministerial roles, one within the Justice Department alongside Darlington MP Jenny Chapman – this, as Michael Gove pushes through reforms and a programme of rebuilding prisons – and the second in the Department of Communities and Local Government holding Greg Clark to account.

Amid a cleansing of New Labour, North Durham’s Kevan Jones retained his position as shadow defence minister, despite pro-Trident views out of kilter with the leader’s. Fellow Durham MP Pat Glass also has the key housing brief within DCLG, holding the Government to account on its promise to boost housebuilding.

But, as was the case in 2014, the devolution of powers from Westminster to regional bodies means that the influence of local politicians is in the ascendency.

Now the broad brush strokes of the devolution deal have been signed off by the Chancellor, thoughts turn to the election of a mayor in 2017.

Council leaders on the North East Combined Authority (NECA) are no doubt eyeing a run for the big job and, given the political make-up of the region, the battle to become Labour’s candidate will be hard-fought. Those emerging from local government are NECA chairman Simon Henig, Newcastle’s Nick Forbes, South Tyneside’s Iain Malcolm and Sunderland’s Paul Watson.

With the Government’s clear indication that its policies focus on cities, councillors Watson and Forbes may have a head start, but Durham’s Coun Henig’s move to hold a vote on devolution in his area could give him enough profile within the Labour Party to run as an MP should a North East seat become vacant.

An empowered NECA also opens a window of opportunity for the Lib Dems to rebuild their local government credentials.

Newcastle councillor Anita Lower is one of two opposition figures to sit on NECA’s scrutiny committee. Expect to hear more from her in the coming months.

Former Minister for the North East Nick Brown, who did not make the cut for Corbyn’s shadow team, has laid the groundwork to make a mayoral run and former One North East chairman and Entrepreneurs’ Forum founder Paul Callaghan is one to watch.

With police and crime commissioner elections on the horizon, it remains to be seen whether Labour will re-select its current post-holders, such as Northumbria’s Vera Baird, or whether they too will consider a run.

Who Labour’s mayoral candidate will be may depend on the party’s response to the Treasury-led model of devolution in the era of austerity. If opposition grows, the job may be used as a platform by a Corbynite figure, for example Newcastle’s David Stockdale or Northumberland’s Laura Pidcock.

While many assume businessman Jeremy Middleton, a prominent NELEP board member, will be the Conservative candidate, party chiefs could put forward former North Tyneside Mayor Linda Arkley or sharp operator David Skelton – the Durham-based director of Renewal (a group aimed at broadening the Conservatives’ appeal among working-class voters).

Respected chief executive of the NECC James Ramsbotham is also in prime position to be the business candidate.

Who begins to manoeuvre over the next year will be revealing.

Add the in-out referendum, devolution and the Northern Powerhouse, the Government’s plans to reduce the number of North East constituencies and introduce “English votes for English laws” and 2016 promises to be every bit as fascinating as the election year that preceded it.
CHRISTOPHER AKERS-BELCHER
Leader, Hartlepool Borough Council

With more than 22 years of senior local government experience working in finance, revenues and benefits, he was elected to Hartlepool Borough Council in 2009. He now leads both the Labour Group and the council, where he has a number of roles, including chair of the finance and policy committee, Safer Hartlepool Partnership – Community Safety, Health and Wellbeing Board, Strategic Partners Group, and is a member of Leader and Mayors within the Local Enterprise Partnership. He is an active member of a number of outside bodies, including the National Association of Councillors.

DAVE ANDERSON
Labour MP for Blaydon

Elected Labour MP for Blaydon in May 2005, his early working life was spent as a miner before retraining as a social care worker. He was heavily involved in the fight during the 1980s to keep Britain’s mines open, and later became a trade union officer within Newcastle City Council. This led on to him being first regional chairman and then a member of the NEC of the public service union, Unison. In 2000 he was elected to the General Council of the TUC and in 2003 became national president of Unison. During this time he had a short spell as a local councillor and a number of years on Labour’s Policy Forum.

MIKE ASHLEY
Owner, Newcastle United, London

Having built the Sports Direct consumer brand into a success story, the billionaire retail entrepreneur bought Newcastle United in 2007. He was named the richest man in the North East in the 2015 Sunday Times Rich List with a fortune of £3.5bn, and placed 22nd nationally – despite allegedly seeing a £250m drop in his wealth. He has also supported the Magpies’ fortunes and taken it onto the list of the world’s richest football clubs.

SHIRLEY ATKINSON
Vice-chancellor and chief executive, Sunderland University

She has responsibility for the executive management and oversight of the university, including the delivery of its corporate and academic plans, its financial sustainability and the quality and success of its programmes and graduates. Currently on the board or a member of a number of regional and national organisations, including the City of Sunderland College, the National Glass Centre, Sunderland Business Group, City of Sunderland Economic Leadership Board, the Universities UK International policy advisory group, the NSPCC and the director of five university trading companies. A member of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy.

JEFF ALEXANDER
Procurement and business development, Surgo Construction, Newcastle

A Surgo employee for 26 years, he is now responsible for developing new business opportunities and bid management. He carries a wealth of broad construction experience in both public and private sectors. Through the procurement of extensive new business and in recent years, Jeff has been fundamental to the growth of Surgo and has been involved in establishing the company’s “partnering” business. He is president of the Northern Counties Builders Federation, chair of Construction Alliance North East, a board member of Constructing Excellence North East and a North East Chamber of Commerce Tyne and Wear area committee member.

TED AYRES
Chief executive, Bellway, Newcastle

Joined Bellway in January 2002 as a divisional managing director, becoming Southern regional chairman in 2006. He was appointed to the board as operations director in August 2011, and succeeded John Watson as chief executive in February 2013. Ted is chairman of the board committee on non-executive directors’ remuneration. Based firmly in the North East, Bellway has evolved into a leading player in the North East housing market, expanding its operations throughout the region. He is now responsible for developing new business opportunities and bid management. He carries a wealth of broad construction experience in both public and private sectors. Through the procurement of extensive new business and in recent years, Jeff has been fundamental to the growth of Surgo and has been involved in establishing the company’s “partnering” business. He is president of the Northern Counties Builders Federation, chair of Construction Alliance North East, a board member of Constructing Excellence North East and a North East Chamber of Commerce Tyne and Wear area committee member.

GILL ALEXANDER
Chief executive, Hartlepool Borough Council

As chief executive at Hartlepool Council she is working with the shadow Ties Valley Combined Authority and Tees Valley Unltdiae to shape a city region-wide approach to transforming education and skills outcomes. Following an early career in both higher and Further education, Gill worked in the national and international voluntary sector for 10 years developing education and skills programmes aimed at tackling child and family poverty. Over the past 20 years she has been a senior leader in local government in the North East having served as a director of education, children’s services and child and adult services.

KENNY ATKINSON
Chef/proprietor, House of Tides, Newcastle

Born and raised in Newcastle, he is the North East’s newest Michelin-starred chef, having gained a place in the 2016 guide for House of Tides just 20 months after it opened. The previous holder of Michelin stars first at the St Martin’s on the Isle restaurant on the Scilly Isles and then at Seaham Hall in County Durham, he has worked his way up from running market stalls as a teenager to being one of the UK’s top food exponents. He has twice represented the North on the BBC’s Great British Menu, is a regular on Saturday Kitchen and is a former winner of the prestigious Catey Awards Chef of the Year.

VERA BAIRD QC
Police and crime commissioner, Northumbria Police

Elected to her current role in 2012, her job is to ensure Northumbria Police delivers for the communities it serves. Highlights since being appointed include the introduction of Vulnerability Training developing the first regional strategy to tackle violence against women and girls, the adoption of the living wage for all PCC and Northumbria Police staff and the implementation of a complaints triage team. Previously she was Labour MP for Redcar from 2001-10 and served as solicitor general from 2007-10. Instrumental in the establishment of the Stern Report about how rape cases are handled by public authorities.
WILLIAM BAKER BAKER
Head of office, Brewin Dolphin, Newcastle

He spent 10 years in the 13th/18th Royal Hussars before moving to Teesside in 1989. He was chairman of the Darlington Building Society between 1998-2000 and is a chartered fellow of the Chartered Institute for Securites and Investment. He manages portfolios for private clients, trusts and charities and was promoted to regional director in 2011. In 2013 he moved to the Newcastle office and assumed the position of head of office.

ALASTAIR BALLS
Chairman, International Centre for Life Trust, Newcastle

In 1997 he was appointed chief executive of the founding organisation of the International Centre for Life, which has been at the forefront of developments in embryonic human stem cell cultivation and transfer. In 2007 he stood down from this post to become chairman of its board of trustees. His varied career has included being a senior economic adviser to the HM Treasury, director Northern Region Departments of Environment and Transport, chief executive of the Tyne and Wear Development Corporation, a non-executive director of Northumbrian Water and chairman of the Newcastle Gateshead Initiative.

GORDON BANHAM
Group chief executive, Hargreaves Services plc, Durham

His career began at the age of 19 when, following his father’s death, he took on the running of the family coal firm, F Banham Ltd. Under his guidance the company grew and he negotiated its sale to Charrington Fuels in 1994. Gordon was appointed general manager of the combined businesses. Charringtons was acquired by CPL Group in 1995 and Gordon was appointed as distribution director for the enlarged company. He joined Hargreaves Services plc in 2001 and was subsequently appointed group chief executive. He led a management buyout in 2004 and took Hargreaves to a successful flotation on the London Stock Exchange in 2005.

HARRY BANKS
Chairman and chief executive, Banks Group, Durham

Founded the surface mining firm in Tow Law in 1976. The family business has operated and restored more than 110 surface mines and employs more than 400 people across the North East and Scotland. The group added property development businesses to its mining activities in the 1980s. The development and operation of onshore wind farms was a further addition in 2005. The group’s “restoration first” mine-working ethos resulted in the Northumberlanda earth sculpture near Cramlington. Harry was appointed an OBE in 2001 for services to the UK coal industry and local communities, and deputy lieutenant of County Durham in 2002.

JAMES BARKER
Managing director, Barker and Stonehouse, Teesside

The third generation of his family to take the helm of the furniture retail group, Barker and Stonehouse, James’s retailing career started early with his first job at New York department store Macy’s, before returning to the UK to join Saatchi & Saatchi’s media buying arm, Zenith Media. He then joined Barker and Stonehouse as marketing director in 1993. Working alongside his own in-house buying and creative team, James personally oversees the buying for each of the firm’s nine stores located in London, Teesside, Newcastle, Gateshead, Leeds, Knaresborough, Darlington, Hull and Nottingham.

HELEN BARBOUR
Vice-chairman and head of Barbour Sporting, J Barbour and Sons Ltd, South Shields

The only daughter of Dame Margaret and John Barbour, she set up and ran her own online community for new and expectant mothers called UK Mums between 1997-2002. She combines being a mum of three with her responsibilities as vice-chairman of J Barbour and Sons, providing input in a host of areas from seasonal ranges to the launch of new stores globally. In 2011 she relaunched Barbour Sporting and was instrumental in developing the new Barbour country collection, which included a dog-walking coat which she designed herself and canine accessories including beds, collars and leads.

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### Dame Margaret Barbour
**Chairman, J Barbour and Sons Ltd, South Shields**

Under her 42-year stewardship, she has turned the family business into a renowned global brand selling in 40 countries worldwide. She has set up the Barbour Foundation, gifting 20% of the company shares to the trust. To date it has made upwards of £13.1m in grants, mainly to North East charities and projects. She also set up the Women’s Fund under the auspices of the Tyne and Wear Community Foundation to support organisations delivering benefit and social wellbeing to women in Tyne and Wear and Northumberland. In 2011 she opened the Barbour Academy in South Shields delivering training for people wishing to seek employment in the textile industry.

### Philip Barnes
**Group land and planning director, Barratt Developments plc, Newcastle**

One of the UK’s leading housing experts responsible for land acquisition and planning promotion at Barratt Developments. Formed in Newcastle, Barratt is the UK’s largest housebuilder with 27 divisions from Exeter to Aberdeen and invests around £1bn to secure new sites every year. Philip represents Barratt in discussions with government on housing, land and planning policy, the aim always being to increase the supply of new homes.

### Mike Barton
**Chief constable, Durham Constabulary**

Well-known for his tough stance on tackling organised crime, Durham is now recognised as a leading force in dealing with the problem. Appointed chief constable in February 2013, he first joined the police in Lancashire in 1980. He moved to Durham in 2008 as assistant chief constable. He chairs the Operational Requirement Board and is the National Policing Lead for the portfolios of intelligence and troubled families, as well as the Police National Database and Home Office Large Major Enquiry System. He has also attracted a degree of media attention through his advocacy for a ‘grown-up’ debate on drugs.

### Arnab Basu
**Chief executive, Kromek Group plc, Sedgefield, and board member NELEP**

Growing the group from a spin-out of Durham University to a global business with more than 100 employees, previously held senior management positions in his family firm Akrun Metallurgical Pvt Ltd, which manufactures material for the electronic industry. In 2009 he was awarded Ernst and Young Entrepreneur of the Year and received an MBE for services to regional development and international trade in 2014. He is also one of nine board members of the NELEP. Arnab has a PhD in physics specialising in semi-conductor sensor materials, and is the author of over 25 technical publications. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and the Institute of Physics.

### Neville Bearpark
**Partner, UNW LLP, Newcastle**

Joined UNW in 1998 after 18 years at PwC, to develop the firm’s corporate finance capability and now leads its corporate finance team. He is a fund manager most of the clearing banks and local equity funds as clients, many of which are multi-national corporations such as Nissan, Pirelli, Bosch and Huntsman, as well as local authorities, LEPs and development agencies. In recent years Neville’s team has become one of the most prolific advisers on Regional Growth Fund applications and due diligence. Neville was instrumental in the development of the North East’s Let’s Grow RGF programme and UNW is a key delivery partner on this £60m fund.

### Vinay Bedi
**Executive director, UBS Wealth Management, Newcastle**

One of the North East’s best-known and highly-regarded client advisers, he has worked in the investment industry for 29 years and joined UBS Wealth Management in 2013 from a divisional director role at Brewin Dolphin. He continues to look after charities, pension funds and high-net-worth individuals. His regional awareness and knowledge of the North East (where he supports Durham County Cricket Club, Newcastle Falcons and Middlesbrough Football Club), its economy and businesses, coupled with UBS’s global investment strengths, has enabled him to develop a strong network of contacts and clients.

### Lord Beecham
**House of Lords, London and Newcastle**

Jeremy Beecham has enjoyed a distinguished career at the top of local politics since the 1980s, including as leader of Newcastle City Council between 1977 and 1994. Created a life peer in 2010 when he took the title Sir Jeremy Beecham, Baron of Benwell and Newcastle-upon-Tyne, he is still a local Labour councillor for Benwell and Scotswood. He is a shadow spokesperson in the House of Lords for justice, housing and communities and local government. His areas of interest include crime, civil law, justice and rights, housing and planning, health services and medicine and regional policy.

### Jim Beirne
**Chief executive and chairman, Live Theatre, Newcastle**

Appointed chief executive in 2000, Live Theatre has a turnover of £2m. One of the UK’s leading new writing theatres, several of its plays have appeared in London’s West End and on Broadway. Its social enterprises include gastropub the Broad Chare and creative hub The Schoolhouse. The latest enterprise is an £11m capital project that will create a public park and a young people’s creative writing centre adjacent to the theatre. Jim is a fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts, and was awarded an honorary Doctor of Letters from Northumbria University in 2011, an MBE in 2012, and was a nominee for North East Business Executive of the year in 2014.

### Michael Bellamy
**General manager, PII Pipeline Solutions, Cramlington, and board member NELEP**

After 13 years working at ICI in sales and marketing, he spent time in Florence as general manager of marketing and communications, before accepting the role of general manager at PII Pipeline solutions. He believes the North East LEP is about pooling resources – practical, financial and experiential – and ensuring these are gifted back to further the economic development of the North East. He says strong businesses now will be the foundation for more vigorous enterprises in the future.

### Dean Benson
**Chief executive, Visualsoft, Teesside**

Involved in a number of tech firms, his main focus and time spent is at Visualsoft, a market leader specialising in producing and marketing e-commerce websites. A lover of innovation, entrepreneurship and pushing the boundaries of what people think is possible, he enjoys relaunching poorly-implemented business ideas into award-winning market-leading solutions. Dean is involved with and champions innovations such as unlimited holidays and unmonitored flexitime. He is also a shadow spokesperson in the House of Lords for justice, housing and communities and local government. His areas of interest include crime, civil law, justice and rights, housing and planning, health services and medicine and regional policy.

### Philip Bernays
**Chief executive, Theatre Royal, Newcastle**

Appointed to the top job at Newcastle’s Theatre Royal in 2005, during that time he has overseen its £3m refurbishment. Philip is also involved with a number of prestigious arts-based organisations, including as vice-president and member of the Board of Directors, UK Theatre, and chair, Industrial Relations Committee, UK Theatre. He is a member of the Finance and Strategy Committee, UK Theatre, Board of Directors, Music and Lyrics Ltd, Board of Directors, Touring Partnership Ltd, Board of Directors, FCCT Ltd (Edinburgh Festival and King’s Theatres) and Board of Directors, Dance Consortium Ltd.
Producing small parts that provide a big boost to the North East economy, Nifco is a manufacturing powerhouse that’s success shows no sign of slowing.

With two brand new facilities in Eaglescliffe, Teesside, Nifco has created hundreds of jobs over the last few years, and many more are planned long into the future.

The company produces plastic components used in the engines, interiors and exteriors of cars made by Ford, Honda, Jaguar Landrover, Nissan, Toyota and Vauxhall Opel and, with an order book that is full for the next five years, the business will continue to put North East manufacturing on the map for many years to come.

For more information about Nifco and opportunities at the company, visit www.nifcoeu.com or call 01642 672299.
STUART BIRKETT
Managing director, ncjMedia, Newcastle

■ Responsible for managing the region’s premier media brands – The Journal, The Chronicle, the Sunday Sun and ChronicleLive.co.uk – in an exciting multi-media environment. An experienced regional media executive and passionate supporter of the North East, he is a former managing director of Johnston Press Scotland, Northeast Press and Tweeddale Press. A graduate of what was Newcastle Polytechnic (now Northumbria University), he is also on the board of Northumberland Tourism and the NewcastleGateshead Initiative.

ROBERTA BLACKMAN-WOODS
Labour MP for Durham City

■ Before being elected to Parliament in 2005, she was a university professor in social policy and had previously served as a local councillor. Roberta’s interests in Parliament are universities, housing, planning and regeneration and international development. In 2011 she was appointed shadow minister for planning in the Communities and Local Government team. Previously served as shadow minister for business, innovation and skills and as PPS to the Higher Education Minister, the Secretary of State for Defence and to the Duchy of Lancaster and Cabinet Office Minister. Currently shadow minister for communities and local government (housing).

PAUL BLAKE
Owner, Newcastle Eagles

■ With a background in sports marketing, management and video analysis Paul’s successful involvement with Newcastle Falcons, Newcastle Cobras and ownership of Newcastle Eagles for nearly two decades is possibly no surprise. He has helped elevate basketball in the North East, to such an extent that its popularity and fan base has developed impressively and Newcastle Eagles has emerged as the most successful club of its kind in Britain. The Eagles’ future legacy looks certain with plans to build a facility for the club. Paul has been chairperson of the British Basketball League for eight years and is co-founder and director of the Basketball Foundation.

TOM BLENKINSOOP
Labour MP for Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland

■ Worked as a trade union official before being selected as Labour’s candidate for Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland in the 2010 general election following the death of Ashok Kumar. He has sat on various parliamentary committees, including the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select, the Standards and Privileges and the Treasury Select and he was Opposition Whip between October 2011 and September 2015. His political interests include the Teesside steel industry, public services, Sure Start, the chemical industry, higher education, further education, manufacturing, economics, business, trade, unions, employment law and health.

PAUL BOOTH
Chairman, Sabic UK Petrochemicals, Redcar

■ Born on Teeside, he started his career as an apprentice with ICI 40 years ago and is now chairman of Sabic UK Petrochemicals as well as its European director for government policy and public affairs. A member of the Chemical Industries Association Council, he is also chairman of both Tees Valley Unlimited Local Enterprise Partnership and the North East Process Industry Cluster, and a board member for Plastics Europe North. He has had a long and passionate interest in the training and development of people and, as a result, holds a number of non-executive positions outside SABIC, including sitting on Teeside University’s board of governors.

MATT BOYLE
President and chief executive, Sevcon Inc, Gateshead

■ In 1996, Glasiwegian Matt Boyle was headhunted by Sevcon, the designer and manufacturer of controls for electric vehicles, as a sales executive where he was chief executive. The company, now employing 70 staff on Team Valley, Gateshead, is one of five global operators in the electric vehicle control technology market. Sevcon has a facility in Wrekham and assembly plants in Shanghai, Mexico and Poland. Double-digit sales growth year on year has been recorded in Asia and the US and a joint venture agreement has been signed with a Chinese automotive supplier.

DR HARRY BRADBURY
Chairman and chief executive, Five Quarter, Newcastle

■ Spent a decade in the academic world, including at Yale University and as a professor in the Business School at Newcastle University. In business he led international and emerging markets teams for two of the world’s largest global management consulting firms (Booz Allen Hamilton and AT Kearney), and has led assignments for 10 government committees, including the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select, the Standards and Privileges and the Treasury Select. He was Opposition Whip between October 2011 and September 2015. His political interests include the Teesside steel industry, public services, Sure Start, the chemical industry, higher education, further education, manufacturing, economics, business, trade, unions, employment law and health.

CHARLES BRAGG
Research and development director, Procter and Gamble, Newcastle

■ Leads P&G’s two research and development sites in the UK, including Newcastle, and steers the company programme on new enzyme and other cleaning technologies. Charles joined P&G in Newcastle as a chemist in Western Europe Laundry Development. From 1997-2012 he held global director responsibilities for formulation design for all P&G’s worldwide cleaning products – a £1bn business. He is a founder member of the Northern England Science and Industry Council, is deputy chairman of the Centre for Process Innovation, a past director of the Regional Technology Centre North and is a director of P&G Technical Centres UK Ltd.

PROFESSOR CHRIS BRINK
Vice-chancellor, Newcastle University, Newcastle

■ The South African mathematician took up his post in 2007, and serves on the boards of the Russell Group, Universities UK, and the N8. He is a member of the Advisory Committee on Leadership, Governance and Management of the Higher Education Funding Council for England. Chris was rector and vice-chancellor of Stellenbosch University in South Africa where he led a transformation agenda which attracted international attention. He is a logician with a Cambridge PhD, an interdisciplinary DPhil, master’s degrees in philosophy and mathematics and a bachelor’s degree in computer science. A Fellow of the Royal Society of South Africa.

NICK BROWN
Labour MP for Newcastle East

■ First elected to Parliament in 1983, he has held his seat ever since. He was elected to Newcastle City Council in 1980 for the Walker Ward. Under Tony Blair he was appointed Government Chief Whip, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. In 2001 he was appointed the Minister for Work at the DWP. From June 2003 to June 2007 he was a backbench MP. Following the election of Gordon Brown as Labour Party leader, Nick returned to government as Deputy Chief Whip, Minister for the North East and Treasurer of the Household. In 2008 Nick was again made Government Chief Whip. He currently serves on both the Commons Liaison and Finance Committees.

THE RIGHT REVEREND MARK BRYANT
Bishop of Jarrow, Jarrow

■ Became Bishop of Jarrow in September 2007. He is the assistant Bishop of the Diocese of Durham, the fourth most senior of the dioceses of the Church of England dating back to 635. Minster to Mark’s heart. He has a special gift for teaching God’s word, and preaching the gospel in ‘unchurchy’ language. An expert on soap operas, he is skilled at making connections between the great biblical stories and those in popular culture, such as Coronation Street or Eastenders, and relating these to key issues facing society today. He loves being alongside people in the important moments of their lives.

DAVID BUDD
Mayor, Middlesbrough Council

■ A former bank manager helping and supporting local businesses to start up and grow, and Labour politician, he was elected as the party’s first Mayor of Middlesbrough in May 2015. He was previously Middlesbrough Council’s deputy mayor and was first elected as a councillor in 1991. Committed to making a fairer, safer and stronger Middlesbrough for all residents, he is passionate about closing the inequality gap between residents and creating job opportunities for all. For a decade, he has been leading the task of regenerating Middlesbrough, and has helped to deliver some of the town’s iconic spaces, such as mima and Centre Square.
Energy drives great leadership

By Patrick Harwood
CEO, Watson Burton

I have been very fortunate to work with a number of inspirational people during my career, many of whom have demonstrated tremendous depth in their leadership abilities.

One characteristic that great leaders, and many of the most influential people in the North East, share is energy. Over the years I’ve read many articles about how “thinking differently” makes for great leaders but for me it’s doing things differently that has the greater impact.

And, put simply, this ability to do things differently requires huge amounts of energy. Energy is an often under-rated concept in the corporate world but it is absolutely vital to run a progressive business.

The best leaders I have ever met have all demonstrated endless reserves of personal energy. Most business leaders have three key responsibilities where energy levels can be tested. These can loosely be divided into people, substance and risk.

PEOPLE

“It’s all about the people” is a common adage – but this over-simplifies the complexities of management. The people within your organisation are crucial, of course, but it’s how you deal with the situations that arise between people that make a difference.

Leaders can deploy endless employee engagement strategies to encourage loyalty and motivation but managing challenges that will inevitably crop up along the way requires a degree of decisiveness.

While understanding a situation is generally intuitive for a good leader, knowing how to deal with it can be learned – and can separate the good from the great.

Not going for the easy option of just being liked or disliked requires greater reserves of energy – following the path that is best for the business, not just for your internal perception.

Making an energetic investment in the people who you lead will often generate a long-term legacy of alignment and cohesion that in turn creates strength in depth within a business.

SUBSTANCE

Effective leadership requires an ability to maintain a clear focus on the essence of the business. The more a business grows and diversifies, the more challenging this becomes. Good management teams obviously play a part in keeping you informed, but the best leaders still retain some degree of involvement in the day-to-day operations. Only by understanding how people within the business think and feel can you lead them effectively.

Maintaining a level of involvement while relinquishing some control to your management team requires levels of both energy and trust that leaders often find to be one of their most difficult challenges.

RISK

Great leaders have the energy and courage to make decisions. You can be the smartest person in the world, but you will always be outdone by someone who is braver than you – courage is an essential element of leadership.

I have always admired genuine entrepreneurs who can put all their chips on black and spin the roulette wheel. There are those who are prepared to lose it all on the basis of instinct and others who take risks in a more measured way – I consider myself more of a calculated taker of risks.

There is no right or wrong when it comes to the level of risk you are prepared to take in business as long as you appreciate that, at some point, you must take some.

Younger companies generally have more freedom when it comes to risk as they are just starting out on their journey. In the North East, we have seen an impressive increase in start-ups in recent years.

At Watson Burton we work with many small and start-up companies, helping them to navigate the business landscape and manage those risks.

Larger and mature companies have more to consider – their legacy, their shareholders and their employees – so risk-taking becomes more daunting.

I have great admiration for larger companies that have stood the test of time by reinventing themselves when circumstances have dictated the need to do so. It may mean stripping the company back in order to move forward, but it demonstrates a subtle gutsiness and a strong belief that they can become great again.

Energy might not be a typical corporate buzzword, but if I had to pick one word to sum up the common characteristic that has defined many of the influential people in this year’s list, that is the word I’d choose.

It’s the ability to manage and replenish your own energy levels, even when the going gets tough, while motivating and inspiring those around you that makes people do things differently.
SEAN BULLICK
Chief executive, NE1 Ltd, Newcastle

Returns to Newcastle from France in 2006 to lead the campaign to establish NE1, the region’s first Business Improvement District (BID) company. NE1 has focused on major issues highlighted by businesses to create long-term growth and has had a transformative impact on the regeneration of the city. Notable successes since its launch have been Alive After Five, which has seen Newcastle stay open for business longer until 8pm. In addition, NE1 has been successful in securing a £5m Regional Growth Fund bid to transform the area around the Central Station, and has launched Newcastle City Marina in the heart of the city.

ADA BURNS
Chief executive, Darlington Borough Council

Her prior career includes 25 years in London, working in local government and the third sector, with leadership of housing development, regeneration and social inclusion programmes and services. A strong advocate of partnerships and collaboration within Darlington; she is an active player within the Tees Valley as a means of growing the economy, and the Association of North East Councils, which brings together the region’s 12 local authorities and seeks to influence the outcome of national policy decisions in the interests of the people of this area.

MARGARET BYRNE
Chief executive, Sunderland AFC

Joined Sunderland AFC in 2007 as club secretary and in-house lawyer, rising to the position of CEO in 2011. Margaret is a member of the Premier League Legal Advisory Group, the Professional Football Negotiating and Consultation Committee and the Football Regulatory Authority. She also holds the position of company secretary at the Foundation of Light, is a trustee of the Development Board of the University of Sunderland and holds a Doctor of Science for distinguished services to sport and business, awarded by Ulster University Business School.

PAUL BUTLER
Chief executive, North East Automotive Alliance, Sunderland

An experienced cluster practitioner, he joined the North East Automotive Alliance as its chief executive officer in March 2015. Prior to his appointment, Paul spent almost a decade on the management team of the North East Process Industry Cluster, one of Europe’s most successful clusters. He is also the only UK-based Cluster Benchmarking Expert for the European Secretariat for Cluster Analysis, which is tasked by the EU to support the creation of more world-class clusters. He holds a Master of Business Administration from the University of Durham, where his dissertation was the Role of SMEs in Clusters.

ALAN CAMPBELL
Labour MP for Tynemouth

Elected to the Tynemouth constituency in May 1997, he began his career as a history teacher. He has held many influential roles over the years including Assistant Whip to HM Treasury, Lord Commissioner to HM Treasury, Parliamentary under-secretary for the Home Office, shadow minister for home affairs, and is currently opposition deputy chief whip. His political interests include crime and policing, shipbuilding and offshore industries and fishing and he sits on the Committee of Selection.

RONNIE CAMPBELL
Labour MP for Blyth Valley

Has been MP for Blyth Valley since June 1987. Before becoming an MP Ronnie was a miner, and also sat as a local councillor for Blyth Borough Council between 1969 and 1974, and Blyth Valley Council between 1974 and 1998. He was also a lay official of the National Union of Mineworkers. Political interests include health and unemployment.

TOM CAPELING
Chief fire officer, Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service

Has served with the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service since 1988. Has worked as an operational firefighter and manager at fire stations across Tyne and Wear. He has also served as a trainer and manager at the Service Training Centre at Harton Mere, a group manager within learning and development SHQ, as well as area manager service delivery helping to move on to area manager corporate support. He previously managed the introduction of the integrated personal development system and then the Workforce Development Plan/Process, and was part of the team responsible for implementing co-terminosity within the service.

KEVIN CARR
Managing director, Go North East

Has worked at Go North East for over 35 years and been managing director since 2012. A charter member of the company as an electrical engineering apprentice. He has worked hard to ensure Go North East continues to be a market and sector leader and led the fight against the introduction of Quality Contracts - reforms that will mean a bus service outside London being taken back under council control for the first time since privatisation. The proposal now needs the approval of an independent board chaired by a traffic commissioner.

STEPHEN CATCHPOLE
Managing director, Tees Valley Unlimited

A solicitor by profession, he has a great deal of senior level experience gained in both the public and private sectors. He has a passion for economic development and the benefits that growth can bring to an area and its people. His areas of expertise include leading on growth/ regeneration projects to deliver positive change through urban development, innovative financing mechanisms including TIF, ADZ and prudential borrowing, and managing and maximising public/private partnership.

JENNY CHAPMAN
Labour MP for Darlington

Has worked at Go North East for over 35 years and been managing director since 2012. A charter member of the company as an electrical engineering apprentice. He has worked hard to ensure Go North East continues to be a market and sector leader and led the fight against the introduction of Quality Contracts - reforms that will mean a bus service outside London being taken back under council control for the first time since privatisation. The proposal now needs the approval of an independent board chaired by a traffic commissioner.
LEE CHARNLEY
Managing director, Newcastle United
Appointed to one of the most important jobs in English football at Newcastle United in 2014, he had been with the club for almost 15 years before landing the job of managing director, rising through the ranks with posts including football secretary and from 2008 director. With a turnover in 2014 of £129.7m and record post-tax profits of £18.7m, Lee is presiding over one of the world's richest football clubs.

JACQUI CHEER
Chief constable, Cleveland Police
Previously a deputy chief constable in Suffolk, she joined Cleveland Police in October 2011. She was appointed chief constable in April 2013 for a three-year term, and has led the force through an extremely challenging time. Cleveland is undertaking a major change programme in order to deliver policing services with fewer people. The particular issues facing Cleveland have necessitated a strong focus on developing good leaders and championing a culture of openness, integrity and transparency. Jacqui is currently the national policing lead for professional standards.

DENNIS CLARK
Chairman, OGN Group, Wallsend
Dennis has more than 40 years’ experience in the oil and gas sector with senior roles in a variety of engineering companies including Amec. He has vast international experience in the USA, Middle East, Australia, South Africa, Malaysia, Indonesia and China. In addition, he holds the following roles - Fellow of the Energy Institute, associate of the Institute of Gas Engineering and Management, director of Oil and Gas UK and president of NOF Energy.

TONY CLEARY
Group managing director, Lanchester Group, Greencroft
Began his career at Whitbread Brewery in Castle Eden, before moving to United Rum Merchants and in 1980 started Lanchester Wine Cellars from the front room of his home. Greencroft Bottling was added in 2003 and is the most modern wine plant in Europe capable of filling over 90,000 bottles an hour, and a gift department was launched in 2005. Energy was started in 2012 and now operates four wind turbines. The business as a whole now employs more than 380 people in north west Durham. Future plans include the building of a state-of-the-art bottling facility on land under the turbines to house an expanding Greencroft Bottling.

JAMES CLOSE
Michelin star chef/proprietor, the Raby Hunt, Darlington
He achieved his Michelin star at the Raby Hunt in 2012, and is one of only two chefs currently working in the North East to hold the prestigious dining accolade. James, who is listed in Debrett’s, is passionate about his food and has breathed every aspect of it from a young age, being brought up in an award-winning hotel run by his mother. Realising his culinary passion through trips to Europe, he has been influenced by their markets, restaurants and cultures. A proud North Easterner whose Michelin status has helped focus national attention on the region, he produces the finest modern British-style dishes using seasonal produce sourced from mainly local suppliers.

DAVID CLOUSTON
Chairman and managing director, Clouston Group, Newcastle
Chairman and managing director of the Clouston Group, the developer of the £200m-plus Stephenson Quarter in Newcastle, and the owner of the new Crowne Plaza Newcastle hotel which is managed by IHG, and the Boiler Shop. Phase one of the 10-acre mixed-use development was completed in the summer of 2015, and work is due to start on phase two in 2016. The Clouston Group, formerly Silverlink Properties, is behind some of the major landmark schemes in Newcastle and North Tyneside, including the £75m Trinity Gardens scheme off the Quayside. David was awarded an OBE in 2000 for his services to urban regeneration.

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LINDA CONLON  
Chief executive, International Centre for Life, Newcastle

- Responsible for managing the £90m science village in the heart of Newcastle. Linda is chair of the Association of Science and Technology Centres, a body representing science centres worldwide, and a member of its Executive, International Programme Committee. She is also a member of the International Programme Committee, which is charged with delivering the next Science Centre World Summit in Japan in 2017. A governor of Excelsior Academy in Newcastle, she is a mentor for small charities and voluntary groups, and an executive member of NE1, chairing its marketing task force.

BOB COOK  
Leader, Stockton Borough Council

- He worked in the chemical industry for 30 years and was first elected to the council – Teesside’s largest local authority – in 1987 for a four-year term. He took a two-year break and then stood for the 1993 Cleveland County Council elections and served the old ward of Blue Hall in Norton. When it was decided to have a unitary council for Stockton in 1995 he was elected to the Norton ward and currently represents Norton South. Elected leader of the council in 2011, he is also group leader of the local Labour Group, has been Stockton North MP Alex Cunningham’s agent/office manager since 2010 and sits on the leadership board of Trees Valley Unlimited.

BARRY COPPINGER  
Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland

- Cleveland’s first elected Police and Crime Commissioner, he took office in November 2012 following a long record of public service. He has served as a local councillor for more than 25 years and has held numerous posts including executive member for public protection, chair of a crime and disorder partnership and the Cleveland Joint Emergency Planning Committee, as well as serving as a member of the former Cleveland Police Authority. He played a central role in introducing neighbourhood policing in Cleveland, developing a wide range of public protection and anti-crime projects.

DAVID COPPOCK  
North East regional director, UK Trade and Investment

- Approaching a decade in UKTI, David has a wealth of business experience including leading LG-Philips Electronics in the UK and managing its Durham manufacturing plant. He has also worked in the oil and gas industry and for Rover, Royal Doulton, Rank Xerox and Laura Ashley in the US. As the only UK region with a positive trade balance – with most recent figures showing a total of £2.25bn worth of goods sold to foreign markets, notably Europe and USA, in the first six months of 2015 – the North East is continuing to grow its export-led economy.

PROF STUART CORBRIDGE  
Vice-chancellor and warden, Durham University

- The new vice-chancellor joined Durham University in September 2015 from the London School of Economics and Political Science. He has enjoyed a long and prestigious academic career, including Cambridge University where he was appointed to a lectureship in South Asian geography, professor of international studies at the University of Miami and later a chair in geography at the London School of Economics, moving on to be head of the institution’s Department of International Development and finally deputy director and provost. Among his achievement is that the LSE was leading work to improve systems of academic recruitment, mentoring, review and reward.

KATHERINE COWELL  
Area director, Yorkshire, Humber and North East, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills

- Appointed director for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) in the North East, Yorkshire and Humber in July 2014 from being the organisation’s deputy director, corporate effectiveness. BIS is the department for economic growth, investing in skills and education to promote trade, boost innovation and help people to start and grow a business. BIS also protects consumers and reduces the impact of regulation.

ED COX  
Director, IPPR North, Newcastle and Manchester

- The IPPR’s dedicated think-tank for the North, before joining in 2009 Ed was policy adviser to the communities and local government secretary. He was previously the director of policy and public affairs at the Local Government Information Unit, and served as a commissioner on the Government’s Commission on Integration and Cohesion. Ed’s background lies in community engagement, having worked as coordinator of the Community Pride Initiative, wrote Manchester’s first Community Engagement Strategy and was a member of the Manchester Local Strategic Partnership Board. He is chair of a multi-million-pound community regeneration partnership in his local neighbourhood.

JOHN CRAGGS  
Acting chief executive, Gentoo Group

- Has worked at Gentoo Group since its inception in March 2001 (previously Sunderland Housing Group) and prior to that was responsible for housing management services in Sunderland City Council. John has over 35 years’ experience in a variety of housing organisations across the North East. He is a fellow of the Chartered Institute of Housing and chair of the North East branch. John is also a member of the regional leadership team for Business in the Community in the North East, vice-chairman of the Northern Housing Consortium and a director of Sunderland Business Improvement District.

STEVE CRAM  
Event director, Kielder Marathon Weekend, and Chancellor, Sunderland University

- A former world, Olympic, European and Commonwealth medallist as well as a three-time world record holder during his career, he is now a respected BBC sports commentator, has been the Chancellor of Sunderland University since 2008 and is the founder of the charity COCO (Comrades of Children Overseas). He also organises the Kielder Marathon Weekend, which in 2013 was described by the Sunday Telegraph as ‘one of the most beautiful’ events in the UK, and iscoordinated the £2.2m Travel Switzerland project. The Kielder Marathon is the biggest running event in the North East.

PROF PAUL CRONEY  
Vice-chancellor and chief executive, Teesside University

- Taking up his new role on May 1, 2015, he joined Teesside from Northumbria University where he held a senior position as deputy vice-chancellor for learning and teaching, and, latterly, as deputy vice-chancellor with a focus on strategic planning and international development. An academic scholar in the field of management and business education, he holds honorary and visiting professorships from universities in Russia and China. He has joined Teesside at an exciting time with the new £30m Campus Heart development.

BOB CUFFE  
Managing director, Gazette Media Company, Middlesbrough

- Redcar-born, he started at the Gazette in 1983 as an advertising representative, before leaving the region to work at newspapers in the Midlands, returning to the North East to join News International in 1994. Came back to Teesside in 2000 as advertising director and was made managing director in 2007. He has served on local and regional boards of the North East Chamber of Commerce and the Institute of Directors. Has been a governor of Teesside University since 2009, and in 2011 joined Darlington Building Society as a non-executive director.

DARREN CUMNER  
Plant manager, Hitachi Rail Europe, Newton Aycliffe

- Darren has worked for Hitachi Rail Europe since May 2012. He has previously worked in senior roles in the transport industry in Hungary, Japan, China and Russia. He is responsible for the £20m Rail Vehicle Manufacturing Facility in Newton Aycliffe that will supply trains to the Government’s new InterCity Express Programme and AT200 commuter trains for Scotland. By 2018, trains built at Newton Aycliffe will be running along the Great Western and East Coast Main Lines. Darren is passionate about the £10m South Durham University Technical College (UTC) being built close to the facility.
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### Alex Cunningham
Labour MP for Stockton North

- Before being elected he was a communications and public relations consultant alongside several public roles all related to his role as a cabinet member for children and young people on Stockton on Tees Borough Council. He was a member of the board of One North East and a non-executive director of the North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust. He is also a former member of the Arts Council England North East. His political interests cover children’s services, education, health, leisure, culture, energy, carers and poverty, and he is currently the shadow minister for environment, food and rural affairs.

### Seamus Cunningham
Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle

- Was ordained the 13th Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle in March 2009. Born in County Mayo, Ireland, he has completed 45 years of priestly service in both the North East and London, including spells in Durham, Newcastle, Tynemouth and Cullercoats. He is currently grappling with dual dilemmas of declining congregations and the material condition of some churches.

### Helen Dalby
Editor, ncjMedia, Newcastle

- After graduating from St Andrews with a degree in English and history and a masters in creative writing, Helen started her career as an online business writer at Cobweb Information in Gateshead, before moving to ncjMedia in 2007 to manage the launch of websites for the Chronicle and Journal. Since then, Helen has had several promotions, working as multi-media manager overseeing all the North East Trinity Mirror websites, before becoming digital editor for ncjMedia in 2012. Helen was involved in the award-winning digital newsroom transformation piloted in Newcastle in 2014, and is now an editor across the Chronicle and Journal brands on mobile, social, web and print.

### Jude Kirton-Darling
Euro-MP for North East England

- Raised in Middlesbrough, she is a Labour member of the European Parliament for the North East of England and a member of both the EU Committee on International Trade and the Committee on Petitions. She is passionate about the North East, its social and industrial heritage and future. With nearly 15 years’ experience within the Labour and trade union movement, she was elected confederal secretary at the European Trade Union Congress in 2011. She has represented workers in the service and communications sector – notably fighting for rights for call centre and agency workers - manufacturing and basic industries.

### Lord Curry of Kirkharle
Agricultural expert, Northumberland

- As well as farming 440 acres of land in Northumberland, he is one of the Government’s most senior advisers on agriculture and is a non-party political member of the House of Lords. His policy interests include agriculture, animals, food and rural affairs, economy and finance, science and technology and the European Union. He is chair of a number of prominent organisations, among them the Better Regulation Executive, Royal Veterinary College, Cavendish Scientific Ltd, Leckford Estate and a trustee of Anglican International Development, Clinton Devon Estates and Lawes Trust, Rothamsted Research.

### Grant Davey
Leader, Northumberland County Council

- A former Blyth Valley councillor, following the formation of the unitary county in 2008 Grant held the position of housing and regeneration portfolio lead member, where he was part of Homes for Northumberland’s drive to improve living standards for its tenants. Led the opposition Labour Group from 2008-13 and became council leader in May 2013. Grant leads on corporate strategy and policy, budget strategy, community engagement and leadership, marketing communications and branding, connectivity and partnership development coordination. He is a board member for Arch and also the thematic lead for employment, inclusion and skills at the North East Combined Authority.

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ALAN DAWSON
Chairman, Sintons Law, Newcastle

Newcastle-born, he joined Sintons in 1980 and was made partner eight years later. Ever since qualifying, his field has been private client work, dealing with individuals and families. He was appointed chairman at the Newcastle-based firm in 2012 which has grown consistently over recent years – now with 250 employees, 30 partners and more than 120 lawyers. Alan’s key practice areas are succession and capital taxes planning, trusts, wills, powers of attorney, inheritance disputes, development property and rural property.

PAT DELLOW
Area director for business banking in Tyne Tees, HSBC

Her banking career spans more than 38 years. With extensive experience in roles covering risk, retail branch and relationship management, she was appointed to her current role in 2010. Leading the business banking team in the North East, Pat is responsible for a large team of relationship managers who provide banking support and guidance to SMEs across the region. Advising on funding solutions for ambitious businesses, she helps companies achieve their growth ambitions. She is also a non-executive director for North East Worldwide Ltd.

JOHN DICKSON
Chairman and managing director, Owen Pugh, Newcastle

He joined construction firm Owen Pugh in 2005 to organise and lead a management buyout of the companies in the group from the Pugh family. On completion he was appointed group chairman and a director of all group companies. He has brought a wide range of business administration skills, including financial management, human resources and industrial relations, commercial and contract law. In addition to his role at Owen Pugh, John is a director of CECA (NE) Ltd, a member of the CBI NE Regional Council and of the national CBI Construction Council and chairman of the Newcastle Fencing and Sports Trust.

BILL DIXON
Leader, Darlington Borough Council

First elected as a councillor for Darlington in 1979, he was deputy leader from 1991–2011 before being elected leader, and chair of both housing and social services and vice-chair of policy and resources. Between 1999–2012 he served on the Durham Police Authority. Since 1997 he has been vice-chair of both Darlington Community Safety Partnership and Darlington Youth Offending Service, and chair of Darlington Drug and Alcohol Action Team. Bill represents the council on a number of regional bodies, including the Association of North East Councils, vice-chair of Tees Valley LEP and Tees Valley Unlimited.

ROB DIXON
Dean and professor of management accounting, Durham Business School

Has been a member of staff in the business school since 1992 and is widely recognised as one of the world’s best. He was appointed dean in 2008. His research interests are broad and include investigations of the contribution of venture capitalists and the impact of regulation on business. He is a highly-regarded speaker and has held visiting professorships in Malaysia, Hong Kong, France and Finland. His current research includes corporate finance, governance and control and related accounting issues.

JOE DOCHERTY
Chief executive, Newcastle College Group

Appointed chief executive of NCG, the UK’s largest education, training and skills provider in mid-2013. With a turnover of £179m, NCG has six divisions – Newcastle College, West Lancashire College, Kidderminster College, Intraining Group, Rathbone Training and Newcastle Sixth Form College. It invested more than £9m in the new Discovery School specialising in engineering underpinned by technology, science and maths. Harvard-educated, Joe joined NCG from Home Group, the social enterprise and charity, and before that, headed Tees Valley Regeneration.

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JUDITH DOYLE
Principal and chief executive, Gateshead College

Judith was appointed principal in August 2013 having been deputy principal for curriculum and quality at Gateshead College for four years. She has more than 25 years’ experience in further education teaching, leadership and management. She left the college in its drive to deliver a destination-driven curriculum which gives students the employment edge and makes them the most highly prized in the jobs market. In 2015, Judith led the college to achieve Ofsted Grade 1 outstanding and saw it also named as the best in the region for success rates and the third best performing in the country.

KATE EDWARDS
Chief executive, Seven Stories, National Centre for Children’s Books, Newcastle

Joined the founders in 2002 to play an integral part in the successful development of the Seven Stories visitor centre and has successfully guided Seven Stories through considerable organisational development and growth – from being a new and novel visitor centre to an institution that is widely recognised for its important role in our national culture. Under Kate’s leadership, Seven Stories was formally recognised as the National Centre for Children’s Books in 2012, and received the National Lottery Award for Best Education project in 2013.

BETH FARHAT
Regional secretary, Northern TUC

She represents 58 trade unions and was a board member of Project North East for six years. She serves on the boards of the North East Cultural Partnership and the County Durham Foundation. She is a trustee of the Mary Magdalene and Holy Jesus Hospital, and the Report) published in 2008. Is currently chairman of both Access to Healthcare for People with Learning Disabilities, and a member of the Independent Inquiry into Community of Tyne and Wear. He was a knighted in the Birthday Honours List in 2008 for services to the NHS and he has sat on the Business, Innovation and Skills Committee and the European Scrutiny Committee. He has been appointed as a non-executive director for a range of local businesses, and is on the boards of the North East Cultural Partnership and Visit County Durham, and has just been appointed as a North East LEP committee member. Prior to joining Beamish, he was director of Wentworth Castle Trust. From 1999 to 2003 he was development officer at New Lanark.

KEVIN FITZPATRICK
Vice-president, UK Manufacturing, Nissan Motor Manufacturing (UK) Ltd, Sunderland

As one of the original 22 supervisors hired to launch production at Nissan, Kevin’s career has seen him rise through the ranks in line with the plant’s growth in scale and importance. As vice president for manufacturing in the UK, he is responsible for everything production-related at the Sunderland plant, the company’s biggest European factory. Sunderland produces Nissan’s Qashqai, Juke, Note, all-electric Leaf, and luxury Infiniti brand, and employs nearly 7,000 staff while supporting another 40,000 UK automotive jobs. Year-on-year to August staff lifted production levels by 244.4%, bolstering global manufacturing and sales to record highs.

SIR LEN FENWICK
Chief executive, Newcastle Upon Tyne Hospitals, NHS Foundation Trust

He celebrated 50 years’ continuous NHS service in August 2015, and is one of the region’s highest profile and most influential public servants. Sir Len was knighted in the Birthday Honours List 2008 for services to the NHS and Community of South Tyneside. He was a member of the Independent Inquiry into Access to Healthcare for People with Learning Disabilities, and a member of the Michaela’s Law (Report) published in 2008. Is currently chairman of both the Mary Magdalene and Holy Jesus Hospital, and the Freemens of the City of Newcastle, promoting the Town Moor Act 1988 and managing the 1,240-acre green space in the heart of the city.

HILARY FLOREK
Chairman, Port of Tyne

Appointed chairman in September 2014 having served as the deputy since July 2012, and a non-executive director for six years before that, Hilary is a strategic communications and marketing specialist with extensive experience in both the public and private sectors. In addition to her role as managing director of HIPPR, she has considerable experience as a non-executive director for a range of organisations. She has served on the boards of the Community Foundation for Tyne and Wear and Northumberland and the Cumbria Foundation. She is a former trustee of the Sunderland Youth Enterprise Trust and was a board member of Project North East for six years.

NICK FORBES
Leader, Newcastle City Council, and board member NELEPP

Elected leader in 2011, he is the strategic lead for transport for the North East Combined Authority, vice-chair of the Core Cities Cabinet, and leads the Public Service Reform agenda on behalf of the Core Cities network. Nationally, Nick is deputy chair of the Local Government Association, represents Labour Local Government on the City Region board, and is a member of Labour’s National Policy Forum. He chairs the city’s 10-strong cabinet, providing political accountability for the policy framework of the council and agreeing its budget. Other roles include chairing Newcastle’s Wellbeing for Life Board and FRESH, the campaign for a smoke-free North East.
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ROBERT FORRESTER
Chief executive, Vertu Motors plc, Gateshead

Vertu Motors plc is the sixth largest automotive retailer in the UK. Previously Robert was a director of Reg Vardy plc from 2001-06, appointed as finance director in 2001, and managing director in 2005, until the sale of the business to Pendragon plc in 2006. He qualified as a chartered accountant with Arthur Andersen. He is also a member of the Economic Affairs Committee of the Confederation of British Industry.

BRENDAN FOSTER
Chairman, Nova International Limited, Newcastle

Trading as the Great Run Company, Brendan started Nova in 1988. Prior to this, he was UK managing director of Nike International Ltd, going on to become the firm's European managing director and latterly vice-president marketing (worldwide) and vice-president of European affairs. A successful athlete who set world records for the two miles in 1973 and the 3000m in 1974, he is now probably best known for founding the Great North Run half-marathon in 1981, which has grown into the UK’s biggest road race with around 57,000 taking part in 2015. Brendan is also a BBC TV commentator.

COLIN FYFFE
Chief executive, Darlington Building Society

Appointed as chief executive in April 2014, he was previously director of Specialised Businesses and Operations at Clydesdale Bank plc with a £1.1bn turnover. He is a banking executive who, through national director roles, has demonstrated a consistent record of performance delivery and a natural bias towards a customer-centric approach. He donates around 150 hours of his time each year to volunteering, including mentoring young people on setting up in business, is vice-chairman of Anxiety UK and is a member of the Trees Valley Committee Institute of Directors.

JAYNE-ANNE GADHIA
Executive director and chief executive, Virgin Money, Newcastle and Edinburgh

She has significant finance and banking experience, built up over a period of more than 28 years. Jayne-Anne trained as an accountant with Ernst & Young before moving to Norwich Union. In 1995 she became one of the founders of Virgin Direct before launching the market-leading Virgin One account in 1998. That business was acquired by RBS in 2001. Jayne-Anne ultimately joined the RBS Retail Executive Board where she was responsible for the group’s mortgage business. She rejoined Virgin Money in March 2007. She is chair of Scottish Business in the Community and a trustee of Business in the Community.

GEORGE GARLICK
Chief executive, Durham County Council

Became chief executive of the then newly-created Durham County Council unitary authority in 2008. In 2014 the council was named as the Local Government Chronicle Council of the Year. Previously worked as a solicitor with various councils before becoming assistant chief executive with Cumbria County Council in 1993, and then chief executive for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council. George has been active at regional and national level for a long period, having chaired both the Association of North Eastern Councils officer grouping for a number of years, and the North East Partnership. In 2007 he was awarded an OBE for services to local government.

TONY GATES
Chair, North East Chamber of Commerce Women’s Advisory Board

Became chief executive of the then Bornemouth Borough Council in 2001. In 2004 Tony joined the CBI in January 2015. Previously, he was an executive search consultant at Nigel Wright Consultancy. Prior to joining Nigel Wright, he worked in UK and international sales and marketing roles in the manufacturing, IT and graphic arts sectors. Tony has been actively engaged in diversity and developing talent and skills throughout his career. He is involved in regional events and activities for groups in the North East supporting women and their development, specifically within the construction and property sectors, and sat on the Women’s Advisory Board of the North East Chamber of Commerce. He is also a governor of Hilton Primary Academy in Blakelaw.

STEVE GIBSON
Owner, Bulkhaul, Middlesbrough

A lifelong Middlesbrough fan, he joined the board as the club’s youngest ever director at the age of just 26. In 1986 he formed the consortium that would go on to save the club from liquidation. He is managing director of international tank container services company Bulkhaul, which he began in his early 20s by borrowing £1,000 from his father. The company specialises in transporting chemicals around the world and has grown to become one of the UK’s top private companies. Steve has a passion for the local community of Tresside and was instrumental in the launch of the Middlesbrough Football Club Foundation charity in 1996.

PAT GLASS
Labour MP for North West Durham

A member of the Labour Party since the age of 18, her passion is education, the field she spent her working life in. Before being elected as an MP, Pat was an adviser to the government on education and worked with councils across the Yorkshire and Humber region to improve their education service. During her time as an MP she has been active in local government, serving as Secretary to Maria Eagle, both when she was shadow secretary of state for transport and as shadow secretary for Defra until the 2015 General Election. Following the election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour Party leader, Pat was appointed as shadow education minister (childcare).

NICKIE GOTT
Chair, North East Chamber of Commerce Women’s Advisory Board

The multi-award-winning County Durham entrepreneur and owner of She’s Got It! Events, began representing the NECC’s female agenda in September 2012 to inspire, support and promote women business leaders in the region. Nickie, a founder of events management company She’s Got It! in 2002 and has been responsible for some of the region’s most notable events, including the opening of the new Hitachi Plant at Newton Aycliffe with guests David Cameron and George Osborne. She also works on enterprise projects with young people and acts as a business mentor, as her personal experiences have demonstrated the need to use networks and mentors to grow regional talent.

MARY GLINDON
Labour MP for North Tyneside

Educated at Sacred Heart Grammar School in Newcastle and Northumbria University, she has worked in the public, voluntary and private sectors. Prior to becoming an MP in 2010, she worked as a corporate officer in the CSA at Longbenton. Mary was a North Tyneside councillor for 15 years, representing Battle Hill Ward where she still lives. A former civic mayor, she was North Tyneside’s cabinet member for health and wellbeing and older person’s champion. Her political interests are employment, housing, health, environment and older people’s issues. She is a member of the Parliamentary Transport Committee.

HELEN GOLIGHTLY
Chief operating officer, North East Local Enterprise Partnership, Newcastle

The NELEP is a public-private partnership leading and facilitating the delivery of the North East Strategic Economic Plan. This sets out how the North East can collectively create more and better jobs to grow the regional economy. Helen is currently leading the NELEP’s strategic direction and overall operations, investments, programmes and Enterprise Zone. She began her career as a chartered town planner and prior to her role at the LEP worked in local government for more than 20 years, leading Transport and economic regeneration programmes and projects.
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BARONESS TANNI GREY-THOMPSON, DBE
Chancellor of Northumbria University, Paralympian and politician

Taking up her role at the new Chancellor of Northumbria University on July 27, 2015, she is Britain’s greatest Paralympic athlete with 11 gold medals to her name, plus six London Wheelchair Marathon wins. She was made a dame in 2005 and in 2010 was elevated to the House of Lords as a crossbench peer. Among other positions she is chair of ukactive, sits on the boards of Transport for London and London Legacy Development Corporation, is a member of the BBC Independent Diversity Action Group and president of the National Council of Voluntary Organisations. She also acts as an ambassador for Unicef, the Laureus Sport for Good Foundation and Beyond Sport.

HELEN GOODMAN
Labour MP for Bishop Auckland

The member of Bishop Auckland since 2005, she was the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State in the Department for Work and Pensions until 2010 with responsibility for childcare and child poverty issues. She was also deputy leader of the House of Commons between July 2007 and October 2008. Before becoming an MP she worked in HM Treasury as a fast-stream administrator, finally becoming head of strategy. She was also director of the Commission on the Future for Multi-Ethnic Britain, and head of strategy at the Children’s Society. She currently sits on the Treasury Committee and Joint Ecclesiastical Committee.

SIMON GOON
Managing director, Business Durham

In his current role Simon leads the agenda for job creation, business attraction, economic growth and retention throughout Durham. Following a PhD in organic chemistry, he held a number of techno-commercial roles within the fine chemical and pharmaceutical industry. After a decade, Simon moved into regional economic development as head of business Investment at One North East, leaving there to form Key Strengths Ltd, a consultancy providing strategic advice to help organisations review, develop and deliver effective change, leading to growth and greater efficiency. He is a member of the Royal Society of Chemistry and Institute of Directors.

FAROOQ HAKIM
BT regional director, North East

Working within BT Technology Service and Operations, he is responsible for large-scale business transformation and has made a key contribution in the region as the former chief operating officer of the team who made the South Tyneside partnership a successful reality. Passionate about the North East and its success, for seven years he used his industry knowledge as a visiting lecturer at Sunderland University teaching on a number of IT degree courses. As regional director, he is determined to drive forward Next Generation Broadband. He is a council member on the North East Chamber of Commerce.

ANDREW HAIGH
Chief executive, Newcastle Building Society

Appointed chief executive in May 2015, he has a track record in transforming businesses. With 30 years’ business experience over 20 years in the mutual sector, he has held leadership roles as both an executive and a non-executive director. As chief executive, he led Engage Mutual Assurance for more than 10 years, through a period of sustained growth and innovation. Andrew gained his strong customer focus throughout his early career in marketing and customer service roles with British Airways, Barclays and National & Provincial Building Society. Previously chairman of Mutus, an independent organisation which promotes the development of new and existing mutuals to government.

GILLIAN HALL
Board member, North East Local Enterprise Partnership

The first female senior partner of Watson Burton LLP, a national law firm with offices in Newcastle, Leeds and London. Gillian has extensive experience with the firm where she was national head of corporate law for many years, but is still a highly-respected contributor to private and public sector organisations across the region. She does this through angel investments and non-executive directorships, which include the Port of Blyth and Arch. Gillian is also a longstanding CBI regional councillor and a member of the Entrepreneurs’ Forum. As a board member of the NELEP she believes in helping people at the right time in the right way is integral to business growth and economic stability.

SIR JOHN HALL
Landowner and entrepreneur, Teesside

The Ashington-born former Newcastle United chairman was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2010, but remains an outspoken advocate for the North East and a hugely influential character in the region. He was knighted in 1991 for his part in the North East’s economic regeneration. In 2011, he was granted the freedom of Gateshead. David is a Lord’s Taverner and director of Visit Durham. He has had a huge impact and made an outstanding contribution to the borough, including the construction of the intu Metrocentre. This year has seen the outstanding contribution to the borough, including the Gateshead in recognition of his

DAVID HARKER
Chief executive, Durham County Cricket Club

Joining Durham CCC from Price Waterhouse in 1991 as financial controller, he became financial director in 1998 and was appointed chief executive in 2001. The club has enjoyed tremendous success on the pitch in this time, winning three County Championship titles, twice been One Day Trophy winners and hosted International games, most notably an Ashes Test in 2013, as well as several entertainment events. David has overseen the ground development of Emirates Durham ICG and has put plans in motion for further growth which will include a nursery ground and hotel development. David is a Lord’s Taverner and director of Visit Durham.

PATRICK HARWOOD
Chief executive, Watson Burton LLP law firm, Newcastle

Has worked with Watson Burton since 1993, specialising in projects that have revolutionised IT systems, improved financial planning and control techniques, and created a culture of long-term strategic thinking. Through these developments, Watson Burton has undergone significant expansion in terms of operational scale and geographical reach. Following the acquisition of NatWest by RBS in 2000, he worked in operations, continuing his role with Patersons Watson Burton in 2000, he worked in operations, becoming the group chief operations officer in 2008, leading a global team of over 40,000 people. In 2001 he became chief operations officer of transaction and international banking. In his current role Simon leads the agenda for job creation, business attraction, economic growth and retention throughout Durham. Following a PhD in organic chemistry, he held a number of techno-commercial roles within the fine chemical and pharmaceutical industry. After a decade, Simon moved into regional economic development as head of business Investment at One North East, leaving there to form Key Strengths Ltd, a consultancy providing strategic advice to help organisations review, develop and deliver effective change, leading to growth and greater efficiency. He is a member of the Royal Society of Chemistry and Institute of Directors.

MARK HATTON
Senior partner, EY, Newcastle

With over 25 years’ experience as a chartered accountant with the global finance, tax and accounting firm EY, he contributes to a number of assignments in the Newcastle office covering everything from acquisitions to disposals, restructuring, investigation, forecasting and financing. He has extensive experience working with EY’s offices around the globe and is particularly active in the clean tech/renewable market advising many clients on strategy, funding and growth.

JOHN HAYS
Managing director, Hays Travel, Sunderland

In 1980, with no industry experience and only a desk at the back of his mum’s children’s wear shop in Seaham, County Durham, he opened his first retail travel agency. He has grown the company to over 4,500 people. In his early career he had a very short spell as a merchant banker but realised it wasn’t for him. He drew up a chart with objectives on one side and career progression on the other. After crossing off various options he was left with two – travel and funeral director.

RICHARD HEMSLEY
Chief banking officer, Virgin Money, Newcastle and Edinburgh

A qualified banker with over 30 years’ experience across the industry within the UK, he joined NatWest in 1983, working across retail and corporate banking, fund management and major change programmes. After the acquisition of NatWest by RBS in 2000, he worked in operations, becoming the group chief operations officer in 2008, leading a global team of over 40,000 people. In 2001 he became chief operations officer of transaction and international banking. In his current role Simon leads the agenda for job creation, business attraction, economic growth and retention throughout Durham. Following a PhD in organic chemistry, he held a number of techno-commercial roles within the fine chemical and pharmaceutical industry. After a decade, Simon moved into regional economic development as head of business Investment at One North East, leaving there to form Key Strengths Ltd, a consultancy providing strategic advice to help organisations review, develop and deliver effective change, leading to growth and greater efficiency. He is a member of the Royal Society of Chemistry and Institute of Directors.
MARK HENDERSON
Chief executive, Home Group, Newcastle

With more than 55,000 properties and supporting 36,000 clients, Home Group is the UK’s largest care and support provider. It has a turnover of £340m per annum. Previously, Mark was Northumberland County Council chief executive, operations director at One North East and also ran his own consultancy. He has nearly 30 years of experience in regeneration and business support. He is a newly-appointed board member for the National Housing Federation. A little-known fact about Mark is that as a teenager in 1984, he raced a motorbike at the Manx Grand Prix.

SIMON HENIG
Leader, Durham County Council, and vice-chair North East Local Enterprise Partnership

Leader of Durham County Council since 2008, guiding it through its transition to unitary local government. Locally, he is chair of both the Combined Authority and the County Durham Partnership, and vice-chair of the Association of North East Councils and the NELEP. Nationally he is a lead member on the Culture, Tourism and Sport Board at the Local Government Association, a member of Labour’s National Policy Forum, and recently became chair of the Association of Labour Councillors. Simon is also principal lecturer in politics at Sunderland University and an accomplished author on the same topic.

MICK HENRY
Leader, Gateshead Council, and board member North East Local Enterprise Partnership

Leader of Gateshead Council since 2002, he has represented the inner-city ward of Saltwell since 1986. Regionally, he represents the council on the North East Combined Authority, NELEP, and the North East Leadership Board. Mick is a board member of several cultural institutions, including Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Sage Gateshead, Live Theatre and the Arts Council North Area Council. He is also a non-executive director of Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust Board, and a member of the Newcastle University Court. Before becoming leader of Gateshead Council, Mick was a senior lecturer in photography and head of digital imaging at Northumbria University.

BARRIE HENSBY
Chairman, NEL Fund Managers Ltd, Newcastle

Joined NEL in 1991 as chief executive, a role he performed until March 2015 when he took up the role of chairman. He has over 25 years’ experience of investing equity and mezzanine debt into the SME market with NEL, and as senior investment manager with Yorkshire Fund Managers Ltd. Originally set up in 1989 to provide unsecured loan funding to regional businesses, NEL is the region’s most active business investor and has since managed 15 funds with a combined value of over £90m, including the Finance for Business North East Growth Fund. Before joining NEL, Barrie was managing director of two Berisford Bristar plc companies involved in food manufacturing and packaging.

STEPHEN HEPBURN
Labour MP for Jarrow

Stephen was first elected as MP for Jarrow following Lord Don Dixon’s retirement at the 1997 general election. He has been a Labour Party member for well over three decades, and worked as a Parliamentary research assistant to Lord Dixon before entering Parliament himself. Before that he was secretary of the Jarrow Constituency Labour Party between 1986 and 1996. For 12 years he served as a Labour councillor for the Bede ward of South Tyneside Council. In Parliament he has served on numerous committees, including the Defence Select, and is currently on the Scottish Affairs and Northern Ireland Affairs Committees.

MARTIN HIBBERT
Executive director, Arriva plc

Appointed an executive director in 2011, also taking a position on the group executive committee. Arriva is one of the largest providers of passenger transport in Europe, employing over 55,000 people and delivering more than 2.2 billion passenger journeys. Martin has responsibility for the Arriva group’s finance division, which includes financial reporting, taxation and treasury operations. He also has overall responsibility for the group’s legal and company secretarial departments, and group IT function. He qualified as a chartered accountant in 1992 with Deloitte and Touche, before joining Yorkshire Electricity Group and then Arriva in 2001 as group financial control.

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STAN HIGGINS
Chief executive, Nepic, Wilton

Established Nepic in 2005 after gaining wide management experience in commodity, specialty chemicals and pharmaceuticals. He held leadership roles in groups such as Solvay, Eastman and Laporte. Nepic, now a European Gold Label Cluster, has brought £3bn of gross value add to the North East and Stan was named as European Cluster Manager of the Year 2014. The figurehead of the region’s processing and chemicals sector, with more than 1,400 companies across the supply chain, generating £26bn of annual sales from bioprocessing, chemicals, polymers and composites, pharmaceuticals, specialties and renewable energy and low-carbon materials.

ANDREW HODGSON
Chief executive, SMD, Wallsend, and vice-chair North East Local Enterprise Partnership

As chief executive officer of Soil Machine Dynamics, he is a leader in subsea engineering and in recent years has been awarded three Queen’s Awards for industry. Currently chair of Soil Machine Dynamics, a North East, a board member of Subsea UK, a trust board member for the Enterprise North East Centre for Life, and vice-chair of the NELEP. He has also been North East Business Executive of the Year. EY Entrepreneur of the Year and EEF’s UK manufacturing champion. Andrew believes the most important area either individually or for a whole economy is to ensure the best level of skills are available within required fields, and that they are available to people for the benefit of the region as a whole.

SHARON HODGSON
Labour MP for Washington and Sunderland West

Currently the shadow children’s minister, Sharon has been an MP for 10 years. She has held several key positions, including Parliamentary Private Secretary for Dawn Primarolo at the Department of Health, Liam Byrne at the Home Office, and Bob Ainsworth at the Ministry of Defence. Under Ed Miliband, Sharon was shadow minister for children and families. In 2013, she took on the women and equalities brief, campaigning for a better deal for women and other minority groups across Government departments. She currently chairs the All-Party Parliamentary groups on ovarian cancer, basketball, art, craft and design in education, and school food.

RON HOGG
Police and crime commissioner for Durham

Worked as a police officer for more than 30 years, serving in forces across the region, including Durham. He started his professional life as a teacher of history and sociology, before making the move into policing in 1978 and had a full and varied career, including spending time at HMIC, holding the national portfolio for the policing of football and becoming assistant chief constable of Durham in 1998. He finished his career as deputy chief constable of Cleveland in 2008. He then moved on to work in children’s safeguarding at Sunderland County Council.

MARK HOLLINSHEAD
Group chief executive, Great Run Company, Newcastle

Following three years as a non-executive director of the Great Run Company, latterly as deputy chairman, Mark was recently appointed group chief executive. Prior to joining the Great Run Company, Mark had spent most of his career in the media industry. Most recently he was chief operating officer, and main board director, of Trinity Mirror plc – the UK’s largest newspaper publisher. In 2008 he was appointed managing director of Mirror Group Newspapers following a 10-year period as managing director of the Scottish Daily Record and Sunday Mail Ltd.

CHARLIE HOULT
Chair of Dynamo, Hoults Yard and OpenCast Software, Newcastle

Co-founder of Dynamo, the North East IT forum. Dynamo has established an IT apprentice hub, university technical college and coordinated specialist groups to collaborate on a mission to grow the North East IT economy. He also runs Hoults Yard, a “business village” in Byker which is home to 500-plus people working in its 150 units. Charlie is an entrepreneur/investor with a combined portfolio employing some 100 staff with £16m combined turnover – OpenCast Software, delivering enterprise software consultancy to banking, government and the energy sector, Opencast Financial, personal finance advice, and, Futureheads, an award-winning specialist digital recruiter in London.

TOBYN HUGHES
Managing director for transport operations, Nexus

Became the North East Combined Authority’s first managing director for transport operations in January 2015. In this role he leads Nexus, responsible for providing high-quality integrated public transport services through the Tyne and Wear Metro system, Shields Ferry, bus, local rail, ticketing and information services. He is also responsible for bringing together transport services in Tyne and Wear, Durham and Northumberland. He recently developed a controversial proposal to franchise bus services in the area, and has just launched Pop Pay As You Go, a smartcard that can be used on the Metro and a growing number of bus services.

RICHARD HUTTON
Finance director, Greggs, Newcastle

Trained as a chartered accountant with KPMG and then worked for Procter and Gamble before joining Greggs in 1998. He was made finance director in 2006 and has responsibility for the company’s finance and strategic planning functions. Richard is also at the forefront of the firm’s corporate social responsibility work, leading the expansion of Greggs’ breakfast clubs, which ensure more than 20,000 children across the UK have a nutritious start to their day. He is a trustee of the Greggs Foundation and has chaired Business in the Community’s Regional Advisory Board, promoting the mutual benefit of business engagement with the communities in which they operate.

MARK I’ANSON
Chair of council and pro-chancellor, Newcastle University

A successful entrepreneur actively involved in the North East business community. Mark is a director of venture capital company NF Holdings Ltd and a member of Hotspur Angel Investment Group. He is also a director of several successful international companies. He is chairman of mobile technology company IBS Ltd as well as two charities, County Durham Community Foundation, and the Haydon Bridge Development Trust. Mark has been a member of Newcastle University’s council since 2004. He was appointed chair of council and pro-chancellor in 2011. Awarded an MBE in the New Year’s Honours List 2013 for services to entrepreneurship, community engagement and higher education.
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ANNE ISHERWOOD
Principal and chief executive, Sunderland College, and board member NELEP

She has always been closely linked to the sourcing, supporting and promotion of local skills with the aim of furthering the economic regeneration of the North East. Her experience ranges from the hospitality profession to principal at Sunderland College, which she joined in 2012 from Bishop Auckland College. She joined the North East LEP to further strengthen the role that colleges play in economic regeneration in the region through skills development, and believes everything starts with education and grows from there.

SUE JEFFREY
Leader, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council

Took up her role as leader of Redcar and Cleveland Council earlier in 2015. It is her second stint as a councillor where she represents the South Bank Ward. She previously served from 1997-2001. Since 2001, she has worked in the public sector as a housing professional, ending her career as executive director of the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Assembly. She also has 15 years’ experience as a non-executive director and chair of Tres Valley Housing. She began her second stint as a councillor after winning a by-election in September 2009. She is currently chair of both the cabinet and the health and wellbeing board.

PAUL JENNINGS
Joint managing director, North of England P&I Association Ltd, Newcastle

Involved in the marine insurance industry for 30 years since first obtaining his LLB in 1984. He is an executive director of both North of England P&I and Sunderland Marine, responsible for all aspects of the North Group, which was established in February 2014 following a merger of the North of England P&I Association and Sunderland Marine Mutual Insurance Company. He was recently elected chairman of the reinsurance sub-committee of the International Group of P&I Clubs, where he has responsibility for placement of the largest global marine reinsurance contract, providing limits of cover in excess of US$7bn on behalf of 95% of the world’s merchant shipping fleet.

DARREN JOBLING
Chief executive, ZeroLight/Eutechnyx, Newcastle

A games industry veteran, Darren built one of the world’s largest independent developers specialising in racing and driving games. Eutechnyx was a pioneer in embracing new business models for the western market, developing a free-to-play racing game that’s also credited with being the first officially licensed driving game released in China and other emerging territories. Darren launched ZeroLight in 2014 to create revolutionary digital experiences in dealerships and online, harnessing emerging technology for the world’s biggest car maker. Darren is a committed corporate deal maker, innovator and curator of technology talent.

CATHERINE JOHNS
Innovation and business growth director, Business Durham

Catherine leads a team at Business Durham, the economic development company for Durham County Council that also manages NETPark on its behalf. A regular speaker at the annual conferences of the International Association of Science Parks and Areas of Innovation, she was elected to its board in November 2014. She has also been on the board of the UK Science Park Association since 2010, working to ensure that science parks are at the heart of national innovation policy, given their proven economic impact.

KEVIN JONES
Labour MP for North Durham

Kevan was parliamentary assistant to Nick Brown MP for four years, then political officer for the GMB, rising to be regional organisational and senior national organiser in 1999. During his time at the GMB Kevan led the union’s campaign for compensation for the industrial victims of asbestos. He helped to re-establish the Northern Region Labour Party, and chaired it for two years. For 11 years Kevan served as a councillor on Newcastle City Council, before becoming an MP in 2001. During his time in Parliament he has served as a member of various committees and is currently on the Armed Forces Bill Committee.

CATHERINE JOHN
Managing director, Jennings Motor Group, Teesside

Nas started working for the company 30 years ago as a sales executive at the group’s Ford branch in Stockton. The following years saw a number of promotions and following the first management buyout from the third generation of the original Septimus Jennings family in 1992, he was made sales and marketing director. In 2005, the most significant management buyout took place and Nas became managing director. The franchise group now operates 12 dealerships across the North East. Employing 435 staff, profits rose 18% from £145.9m to £172.4m in 2014. Nas is also founder of the Emaan Foundation, a charity set up to help people who were affected by the floods in Pakistan in 2010.

KEVIN KERRIGAN
Executive dean, Faculty of Business and Law, Northumbria University

Alongside his executive dean role, he is also a national teaching fellow of the Higher Education Academy and a Human Rights Act consultant with experience of conducting criminal and human rights cases at all levels. His teaching and research interests are in the fields of criminal litigation, human rights and legal education. He is the former editor of the International Journal of Clinical Legal Education and has organised numerous international clinical conferences. He is a member of the Attorney General’s Pro Bono Committee. He has written articles and text books on criminal justice and legal education issues and delivered papers at conferences in Europe, America, Africa, Asia and Australia.

HERB KIM
Board director, Tech City UK, Newcastle

Best known as the founder of the long-running Thinking Digital Conference, the ninth of which will take place in May 2016. In addition, Thinking Digital is expanding to a new Manchester location. Herb is also the founder of the TEDx events series in Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield and Newcastle. As a co-producer of TEDx events at the Houses of Parliament and Doha, he is thought to be the globe’s most prolific organiser of such meetings. A board director for Tech City UK, he was previously named as executive chairman for the Tech North initiative.
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IAN KINNERY
Director, Team Massive Results, Stockton

A professional business coach specialising in developing SME leaders and their businesses, Ian has more than 20 years’ experience of running business – starting many new ones and specialising in growing and turning ailing businesses around. He is active in the Stockton Business Forum, Tees Valley Business Club, and sits on the leadership board of Tees Valley Unlimited (Local Enterprise Partnership).

NEIL KIRKBRIDGE
Managing director, BEL Valves, Newcastle

Has been the chief executive officer at BEL Valves, a division of British Engines Ltd, since 2004, and managing director since 1984. He joined Bel Valves, which celebrated its 50th anniversary last year and now employs more than 500 staff, in 1991 as general manager. Before that he worked for the wellhead equipment company McEvoy. After training at its manufacturing plant he moved to Aberdeen, installing and servicing equipment offshore before becoming a project sales engineer for Subsea Production Systems. He served as market development manager for the Oil Tool division of Cooper Industries from 1990 to 1991. He is also a director at NOF Energy.

PHIL KITE
Chair, North East Regional Advisory Board

Phil joined the Reece Group as chief executive officer in 2012. The group is a holding company for a number of innovative engineering businesses, operating in the defence, oil and gas, power generation, construction and subsea markets. He has led the group through a successful period of acquisition. Prior to this, Phil held a number of senior management roles at William Cook, the UK’s largest steel casting manufacturer. Following graduation from Newcastle University, Phil joined Arthur Young and qualified as a chartered accountant, leaving the firm in 1987 to start his career in manufacturing.

SEMORE KURDI
Chairman, Newcastle Rugby

The Jordan-born businessman is chair of Newcastle Rugby, the company that owns both both Newcastle Falcons and Newcastle Thunder, the area’s two big union and league teams respectively. He assumed control of the Falcons in 2011 having acquired a 40% stake the previous year, and what was Gateshead Thunder, prior to the side’s name change in January 2015, in May 2014. While Semore likes to keep a low profile, he has brought financial stability to both clubs through his interests in property, leisure, agriculture and equestrianism. In June 2014 Newcastle Rugby purchased the freehold for Kingston Park from Northumbria University.

IAN LAVERY
Labour MP for Wansbeck

First elected in the 2010 general election, Ian has lived his whole life in the constituency he represents. He worked at Lynemouth Colliery before transferring to Ellington and became politicised in the 1984-85 Miners’ Strike. He was the general secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers for the Northumberland area and was elected to its national executive committee in 1992, going on to succeed Arthur Scargill as the president. Within Parliament his political interests include local regeneration, employment, energy, climate change, poverty, internationalism and sport. He is a shadow minister (cabinet office).

JOHN LAWLORE
Chief executive, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust

Since June 2014 he has been at the helm of Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust, one of the largest mental health and disability trusts in England. John is an experienced NHS chief executive and has held several positions at this level. He is a member of both the NHS top leaders programme and the Executive Coaching Group that has ensured the Trust is one of two working with Time to Change, the national campaign which challenges the mental health stigma. John co-chairs the NHS Providers Mental Health Group to help increase the profile of mental health and learning disability services nationally.

DAVID LAWS
Chief executive, Newcastle International Airport

He began his career with the airport over 30 years ago as a fireman and then rose through many areas of the business, including health and safety, human resources, operations, and aeronautical and commercial development before becoming chief executive in 2007. He is passionate about the North East and maintaining connectivity links for the business community, as well as providing popular holiday destinations for nearly five million passengers per year. He was instrumental in the successful introduction of a daily scheduled route to Dubai in 2007 and brought the first scheduled flight to New York in 2015. In addition he is a member of the board at the Airport Operators Association.

MELANIE LAWS
Chief executive, Association of North East Councils

Has seen enormous change in the regional governance landscape during the 10 years in her current role, where she is responsible for making the case for local government at a time of cuts and making sure that the voice of local government across the whole of the North East is heard on a range of issues at regional, national and international level. With a portfolio covering resources for councils, collaborative procurement, health, social care, culture, research and other matters at the heart of local government, Melanie closely in touch with issues affecting communities and quality of life across the region.

MARTIN LAWLORE
Chief executive, Port of Blyth

Appointed chief executive of Blyth Harbour Commission (BHC) in 2006 having previously been deputy chief executive and commercial and operations director. Martin also acts as chairman of BHC’s subsidiary company Transped. Prior to joining the commission in 1994, he held various management roles at the port of Tees and Hartlepool. He is a former deputy chairman of the North East Chamber of Commerce (Northumberland committee) and a council member of the British Ports Association.

COLIN LAWHER
Senior vice-president, manufacturing, supply chain management and purchasing, Nissan, Sunderland

A role that touches every part of the process of building a car, with ultimate responsibility for the manufacturing and supply chain functions, he oversees 12,000 employees across the UK, Spain and Russia in production, engineering, quality, purchasing and supply chain management. Colin is driven by the success of Nissan’s European manufacturing plants and his personal ambitions include seeing the Sunderland operation continue to push production targets. He joined Nissan in 1985 as a key worker responsible for setting up the laboratory function and evaluating and localising European materials and components.
## TERRY LAYBOURNE
Chef and restaurateur, Newcastle

The chef eschews the limelight but his influence on some of the finest restaurants and fellow chefs in the North East is unquestioned. In the 90s, he brought the first Michelin star to the region and in 2005, together with partners created Jesmond Dene House. Today he focuses on developing 21 Hospitality Group which includes Café 21, Caffe Vivo and the Broad Chare on Newcastle Quayside. Most recently, he helped design and became chef consultant at the Bistro at the Distillery in Cumbria, and has expanded with two new businesses as part of Fenwick’s multi-million-pound development of the Newcastle food hall – Saltwater Fish Company and the Ko Sai noodle bar concept.

## EMMA LEWELL-BUCK
Labour MP for South Shields

First elected in a by-election in May 2013, she is both the first woman ever to represent South Shields in Parliament and the first MP to have been born in the constituency. She has deep roots in the area and is a direct descendant of local hero William Wouldhave, the inventor of the lifeboat. Born in the constituency. She has deep roots in the area and is a direct descendant of local hero William Wouldhave, the inventor of the lifeboat. Prior to her election she served for nine years on South Tyneside Council. Since becoming an MP she has campaigned on a number of issues, including opposition to the spare room subsidy, calling for action on the cost of living crisis and calling for reform of child protection. She currently sits on Parliament’s Work and Pensions Committee.

## JOHN LEE
Interim director commercial development, Newcastle City Council, and chief executive Your Homes Newcastle

The former senior manager at Newcastle City Council heads the arms-length management company that was established in 2004 to manage council homes on behalf of the city council. Today, it looks after 29,000 tenanted and 1,500 leasehold properties across the city, employing 850 members of staff. He was made an OBE in 2012 for his services to the city of Newcastle. Your Homes has warned of the severe impact that benefits changes will have on tenants of its properties. John is also currently assisting Newcastle City Council in the role of commercial director to develop income generating areas of activity.

## ZOE LEWIS
Principal and chief executive, Middlesbrough College

Teesside-born and educated, with a background in public and private sector finance, including PFI and large-scale capital developments, she has devoted her time over recent years to listening to employers in order to reposition further education to be more responsive and to play a key role in developing talent of all ages to support business growth and job creation. Middlesbrough College has grown its full-time student numbers and apprenticeships by over 75% through implementing this strategy and now occupies one of the best college campuses in the country. In 2012 Zoe was voted most inspirational female leader in the region.

## BOB LIVESEY
Commercial director, Egger (UK) Ltd, Hexham

Bob joined Egger (UK) Ltd in 1983 when it was an imports division for the Austrian family-owned Egger Group, which manufacturers laminate and wood-based panels for the furniture and construction industries. In 1984 a manufacturing site in Hexham, Northumberland, was acquired. Turnover since then has risen from £4m to in excess of £250m. Bob has been a director of the business for 20 years and has been heavily involved in the sales growth, the development of the Hexham site, which has seen over £350m invested since 1984, as well as the development of Egger as Northumberland’s largest manufacturer, employing over 700 people.

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KEITH LORAINE
Group chief executive, Isos Housing Group, Newcastle

Sunderland-born and educated, Keith took up the post of chief executive with Enterprise 5 Housing Association based in North Tyneside in 1992. He successfully built upon Enterprise 5’s growing reputation and led on the formation of the Isos Group in 2005. The group now owns and manages more than 17,000 homes across the North East. With a turnover in excess of £60m, Isos builds around 250 new homes every year. The group works alongside private developers and local authorities to provide a wide range of housing across all tenures.

ALASTAIR MACCOLL
Chief executive, BE Group, Seaham

Spent 20 years in the newspaper industry, latterly as managing director of Gazette Media Group in Teesside before setting up the BE Group in 2007. The BE Group operates across the UK and in international markets, specialising in business information, events and corporate development programmes. In 2015, for the second time, the group was named as one of the Sunday Times 100 Best Companies to Work For. Alastair is also chairman and pro-chancellor of Teesside University and a private sector board member of Tees Valley Unlimited.

PAUL MACKINGS
Chief executive, Cameron Hall Developments Ltd, Teesside

Appointed chief executive of the property company in 2011, he started his career in waste recycling before moving into nursing homes and the leisure sector. He is confident of sizeable profits for Cameron Hall in 2016 with two key developments of around £34m in Stockton and Hartlepool due to come to fruition. Conference and wedding venue Wynyard Hall is part of the group’s operations and contributed £3.9m of revenue during the last financial year. The group is currently pursuing a number of potential developments both for future sale and possible hotel operations.

BILL MCLEOD
Senior partner, PwC North East, Newcastle

Bill has led PwC’s 250-strong North East practice for the past two years. During this time he has overseen the firm’s office relocation to Central Square South, a number of senior appointments and hired a record number of graduates and higher apprentices. He is particularly interested in the development of talent and was previously the people partner for PwC’s Assurance North practice, which operates from six offices in the North. Acts as the liaison partner for the PwC-sponsored Flying start degree at Newcastle University, which has been running for more than 10 years. Over 700 graduates have successfully completed this course.

IAIN MALCOLM
Leader, South Tyneside Council, and board member NELEP

A member of South Tyneside Council since 1988 and leader since 2008. Iain chairs several boards, including the South Tyneside Partnership, South Tyneside Health and Wellbeing Board and the Board of Newcastle International Airport. He is also a key member of the NELEP Board and the North East Combined Authority. Nationally, he is a former chairman of the Local Government Association (LGA) Urban Commission and served one term as a member of the UK delegation to the European Committee of the Regions. Iain also serves as a non-executive director of the South Tyneside Foundation Trust.

MEENU MALHOTRA
Group chairman, Malhotra Group, Newcastle

Earlier this year the Malhotra Group became a plc – the latest success for this leading North East family-owned run by chairman Meenu Malhotra. He set up the company in the 1990s and it now boasts a national property portfolio, a leisure business which operates hotels, pubs and bars, and a care home division. Becoming a plc consolidated the 28 companies run by Meenu into one group and under his leadership Malhotra Group plc continues to flourish, with a five-year expansion plan which should see its 1,000 staff numbers double by 2020.

PAUL MANKIN
Partner and corporate finance leader, PwC, Newcastle

Paul is well-known in the region’s dealmaking community. He was the first full-time staff member of PwC’s Newcastle corporate finance team back in 1986, and has led that team since 2004. Recently he has worked on some of the region’s most high-profile deals, including the £230m sale of Aescia Pharmaceuticals, LDC’s investment in Express Engineering, and the sale of SMD by Zhuzhou CSR Times Electric Company.

BRIAN MANNING
Chief executive, Esh Group, Bowburn

The former managing director of construction group Lumsden and Carroll was appointed Esh Holdings group managing director on its formation in 1999 and has since built it into the expansive, multi-disciplined empire it is today. A strong set of results for the year ending December 2014 saw turnover increased by 43% to £277m with profit before tax at £5.9m. As well as being one of County Durham’s biggest employers with more than 1,000 staff, Esh is also acclaimed for its corporate social responsibility work, which includes its Esh Employability and Esh Community schemes.

GILLIAN MARSHALL
Chief executive, Entrepreneurs’ Forum, Gateshead

As chief executive, Gillian works with the Entrepreneurs’ Forum team and board to create an environment of opportunity for North East business owners. Striving to keep our region’s most aspirational entrepreneurs inspired, she creates valuable new business connections and, perhaps most importantly, gets business leaders to share their knowledge to support each other’s growth ambitions. Fiercely passionate about the North East, she previously held leading national roles in both the UKTI and Barclays, and has a comprehensive understanding of finance and business support.

JOHN MARSHALL
Vice-chairman, Bond Dickinson LLP, Newcastle

A specialist in commercial litigation and head of the insurance sector, John is a board member of Bond Dickinson LLP, a national law firm with its largest office in the region, which employs 1,250 staff across seven locations with a turnover of £107m. He is also head of the Newcastle office, and a regional council member of both the Confederation of British Industry and the North East Chamber of Commerce, a board member of NewcastleGateshead Initiative, chair of the regional development committee of the Princes Trust in the North East, a trustee of the Newcastle United Foundation and a governor of Newcastle High School for Girls.

DAVID MARTIN
Chief executive, Arriva Group

Qualified as an accountant in 1977 after graduating in business studies. He held a variety of general management positions before joining the bus industry in 1986. After leading a management buy-out of the East Midlands-based bus company, he was involved in the acquisition of National Express and subsequent management buy-outs, leading to the creation of British Bus Group Ltd. David joined the group in 1996 on the acquisition of British Bus, becoming a member of the board in February 1998. From March 2005 he was group managing director – operations and deputy chief executive, and since April 2006 chief executive.

JAMIE MARTIN
Managing partner, Ward Hadaway, Newcastle, Leeds and Manchester

Has led law firm Ward Hadaway since 1998, since when turnover has grown from £7m to £34m, and staff numbers from 160 to over 400. Ward Hadaway is now firmly established in the Top 100 of law firms nationally. Jamie is a past regional chair of the Confederation of British Industry in the North East and a current member of the CBI regional council. Since 2008 he has been chairman of Newcastle College Group. He was chairman of the NewcastleGateshead Initiative until 2013 and has just finished a term as president of the North of England Medico-Legal Society. He was awarded an OBE for services to North East business in 2008.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title/Position</th>
<th>Achievements/Contributions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GRAEME MASON</td>
<td>Planning and corporate affairs director, Newcastle International Airport</td>
<td>Joining the airport in 1993, he has since overseen the production of Newcastle’s first ever Masterplan and its subsequent review, as well as planning for all developments including a major terminal extension, hotel, control tower, fuel farm and filling station. Instrumental in the creation of the Newcastle Aviation Academy, a collaboration with Newcastle College and Kingston University. Graeme is also a member of the CBI regional council, the board of NewcastleGateshead Initiative and Northumberland Tourism, and takes part in a range of discussions on regional transport issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEVEN MASON</td>
<td>Chief executive, Northumberland County Council</td>
<td>Was appointed chief executive of Northumberland County Council in 2015, following a year and a half as the lead executive director. In the chief executive’s role Steven is overseeing the council’s key priorities which include supporting the creation of 10,000 new jobs in the county by 2031. Through rationalising the council’s property holdings it is supporting the regeneration of towns across Northumberland. Steven is also championing the council’s work on the devolution deal for the region as part of the combined authority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIKE MATTHEWS</td>
<td>Managing director and European operations officer, Nifco UK, Darlington</td>
<td>A toolmaker by trade, Mike was appointed to his current position in 2008, making him the only non-Japanese member of Nifco’s international board. During his time at the thriving automotive component business, Mike has transformed the business from one that turned over just £980,000 to what will be a £75m company by 2016. With order books full for the next five years, the company moved into a factory in Eaglescliffe in 2012, and a second facility officially opened in 2014. The company plans to employ 570 by the end of 2015. Mike also holds the positions of president of the NECC and vice-president of the North East Automotive Alliance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RICHARD MAUDSLAY</td>
<td>Chairman, National Nuclear Laboratory</td>
<td>An engineer with a wide-ranging business career, he was managing director of NEI Parsons for seven years, prior to its merger with Rolls-Royce, where for five years he was the MD of the latter’s £1.3bn Industrial Power Group, covering all the firm’s non-aero interests, military and civil, and a main board director. Before joining National Nuclear Laboratory, he held a range of non-executive chair and director roles with publicly-listed, privately-owned and government-backed businesses, including chair of the North East Science and Industry Council. He is a fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering and was appointed CBE in 2006 for services to business in the North East.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIZ MAYS</td>
<td>Regional director North East, EEF</td>
<td>Joined EEF as North East director from the CBI in August 2014 in a move which allowed the manufacturers organisation to improve its footprint in the region. Manufacturing accounts for 14% of the North East’s output – one of the highest proportions in the UK – and employs more than 125,000 across the region. The North East accounts for almost 6% of the UK’s manufactured exports, with more than 60% of these heading to Europe. A graduate of both Durham and Newcastle universities, Liz began her career at TBR Economics where she focused on research into small manufactured exports, with more than 69% of these heading to Europe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANDY MCDONALD</td>
<td>Labour MP for Middlesbrough</td>
<td>Elected in a by-election in November 2012. Before his election he was a serious injury solicitor and also served as a Middlesbrough councillor for four years as well as governor of Abingdon Primary School for 15 years until 2010. He is currently a member of the board of governors at Middlesbrough College. During his time in Parliament he has been Parliamentary Private Secretary to both the shadow secretary of state for business, industry and skills, Chuka Umunna, and the shadow attorney general. He is currently a member of the Justice Committee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAUL MCPEDON</td>
<td>Chief executive, North East Business and Innovation Centre, Sunderland</td>
<td>He has injected fresh thinking into establishing the BIC as a primary regional player in the fields of incubation, innovation and business support since his appointment in 2001. In addition to his work with the BIC, he works with several other organisations, all dedicated to shaping enterprise in the North East. Paul chairs the regional enterprise network group North East Enterprise Agencies Ltd, and was appointed chair of the National Enterprise Network in 2012, prior to which he served as deputy chair. Having also recently taken on a position as board member for Sunderland College, Paul’s new role presents the opportunity to influence education within the region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PETER MCINTYRE</td>
<td>Chief executive, Arch, Ashington</td>
<td>Heads Northumberland’s development company Arch, which operates as an investment and asset-based business with a £120m portfolio of commercial and residential property, the profits from which are reinvested in growing the asset base to deliver regeneration projects and business development across the county. He continues his work to drive capital economic development, physical regeneration, inward investment, business growth and a significant property portfolio. Arch makes a significant contribution across Northumberland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATT MCKENZIE</td>
<td>Editor, ncjMedia, Newcastle</td>
<td>An editor at ncjMedia, overseeing the Chronicle and The Journal brands in print and online. He is responsible for the news, sport and business content teams. Before being handed this wider remit, he was editor of the Sunday Sun for four years. Other roles at ncjMedia have included head of multi-media, news editor of The Journal, and an award-winning seven years as a reporter. He graduated with a degree in English from the University of Leeds and has completed a post-graduate diploma in journalism leadership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATHERINE MCKINNELL</td>
<td>Labour MP for Newcastle North</td>
<td>Currently Labour’s shadow attorney general, it was while studying politics and history at Edinburgh University that Catherine became active in various student organisations and was elected to the Student Magazine. Catherine went on to study law at Northumbria University. Before first being elected as an MP in May 2010, she worked as an employment solicitor with a large Newcastle law firm. Catherine was briefly a member of the House of Commons Political and Constitutional Reform Committee, before she was appointed to the position of shadow solicitor general by Ed Miliband as part of his first frontline team in 2010.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAN MEARS</td>
<td>Labour MP for Gateshead</td>
<td>A former Northern Gas employee, he was chair of the Campaign for a North East Assembly and was a member of the North East Constitutional Convention Steering Group. Formerly a member of the North East Assembly, he chaired its Scrutiny and Policy Development Board for almost three years. Elected as MP for Gateshead at the May 2010 general election, he has a keen interest in news, current affairs and regional politics and is currently on the Parliamentary committees for liaison, education and backbench business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PATRICK MELIA</td>
<td>Chief executive, North Tyneside Council</td>
<td>Currently leading a significant change programme to ensure North Tyneside continues to be a great place for residents, businesses and visitors to enjoy. He is utilising his extensive track record on delivering major projects, by providing leadership for the delivery of the North Tyneside Seafront Master Plan, which is investing £36m into the coastal area, and the transformation of Enterprise Zone land at Swans to a hub for the offshore, renewable energy and advanced engineering sectors, providing around 1,000 new jobs. A qualified accountant, he joined North Tyneside in 2013, having previously worked at South Tyneside Council. He is currently the vice-chair of the Career College North East.</td>
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<tr>
<td>JEREMY MIDDLETON</td>
<td>Director, Middleton Enterprises Ltd, Newcastle, and board member NELEP</td>
<td>As director of Middleton Enterprises Ltd, his work focuses on property and business angel investment across the North East in a range of sectors, including manufacturing, environmental, digital media and property trading. After a career in brand development with Procter &amp; Gamble and PwC, he co-founded HomeServe plc. He is also a board member of both Utilitywise plc and the North East LEP, and believes that the financial backing of people, projects and businesses is essential to the future growth and prosperity of the North East.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KIM MILJUS</td>
<td>Managing director, Global North East – Capital FM and Heart North East</td>
<td>Arriving at Global Radio in February 2011 as the managing director of Capital FM in the North East, she has overseen huge growth in the company since. This has included the integration of Real into the Global portfolio and overseeing its rebrand to Heart North East. While maintaining the number one commercial position with Capital FM, Kim’s guidance has seen Heart North East outperform all other new Heart stations in the past 18 months. She has been a key and influential member of the media community since joining The Journal as a sales executive in 1985, and after a period with advertising agencies found her media home in radio over 20 years ago.</td>
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<tr>
<td>JACQUI MILLER</td>
<td>Director, Miller International, Cramlington</td>
<td>Recognised worldwide as one of the trailblazers who changed the face of how machinery operated within the construction, quarrying, mining and associated industries, she joined her two brothers at the age of 17 and set about promoting the family business in a recession. After dedicating almost 20 years to developing export markets for the business, she was awarded an MBE in 2011. After 33 years in the frontline, Jacqui stepped aside from the day-to-day operational activities but continues to act in an ambassadorial role in championing Miller’s progress. She sits on the main board and continues to offer advice as and when needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIGEL MILLS</td>
<td>Chairman, Entrepreneurs’ Forum,</td>
<td>After offloading most of his convenience store business to Tesco in 2011 – which at one time had annual revenues of more than £100m from 77 stores and eight supermarkets - the accountant now spends some of his time dispensing his expertise to the region’s entrepreneurs as chair of the Entrepreneurs’ Forum. He is chairman of Lakes Distillery, England’s largest distillery, which is celebrating its one-year anniversary in December 2015. The new venture also has an award-winning bistro overseen by renowned chef Terry Laybourne. Nigel has the trout Hotel in Cockermouth in his portfolio, which was named Cumbrian Large Hotel of the Year in 2011.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANDREW MITCHELL</td>
<td>Chief executive, Finance for Business North East</td>
<td>Educated at Oxford and INSEAD Business School, he founded and ran his own business for almost a decade following an early career in the oil industry, investment banking and management consultancy. More recently he was an executive director and shareholder in one of the UK’s most successful university spin-off companies, which was sold in 1997 to a large US corporation. He also established a £25m venture capital fund, targeted at early-stage technology businesses, and has served as a non-executive director for a number of high-growth companies. Former chief executive of VC business development company NSstar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROF AMMAR MIRZA</td>
<td>Founder, Asian Business Connexions, Newcastle</td>
<td>An evaluation officer for the British Council in London, he returned to Newcastle in 1983 to manage a call centre before becoming ultimately responsible for IT service delivery at Telewest Communications. Established his own management consultancy in 2005 and launched Asian Business Connexions in 2009 as a social enterprise, funded solely by its board members. Ammar was awarded a CBE for outstanding contribution to business and the community in 2014, and is the current David Goldman Visiting Professor for Innovation and Enterprise at Newcastle University Business School.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANDREW MOFFAT</td>
<td>Chief executive, Port of Tyne</td>
<td>Appointed chief executive officer in November 2008, he is an economics graduate from Newcastle University and started his career as a trainee accountant with Northumbrian Water. He joined Port of Tyne as finance and commercial director in November 2007 from 3 UK, a telecoms subsidiary of Hong Kong-based multi-national Hutchison Whampoa. He is the director of the Newcastle Gateshead Initiative, sits on the regional council of the CBI, is chairman of the British Ports Association and is a member of a number of local partnership boards on the delivery of economic regeneration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANDREW MOORBY</td>
<td>Managing partner, Tait Walker, Newcastle</td>
<td>Andrew joined Tait Walker as taxation partner in 2001 and took over as managing partner in 2013. Andrew is a chartered accountant and a chartered tax adviser working with sole traders through to group companies and large plcs with complex tax requirements. He has a solid understanding of how corporate and personal tax can work together to ensure maximum results and advises clients on structuring and other tax mitigation strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LORNA MORAN</td>
<td>Founder and chairman, Northern Recruitment Group, Newcastle</td>
<td>The inspiration behind the Entrepreneur’s Forum, she was the first woman in the region to float a business, has been at the helm of NGF for nearly 40 years and is now its chairwoman. Lorna chaired the 1999-2001 Parliament that led the successful fundraising campaign for a new Maggie’s Cancer Care Centre in Newcastle. She was awarded the North East Businessman of the Year in 1997, an MBE in 2001 for services to employment creation and an OBE in 2014 for services to enterprise promotion in 2014. Additional to the day job, Lorna is a CBI council member, and chairman of the fundraising board for Maggie’s North East.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRAHAME MORRIS</td>
<td>Labour MP for Easington</td>
<td>Having spent his early career in the NHS, he began working with MP John Cummings in 1987 and also served as a Labour member of Easington District Council for 15 years. In 2000, Grahame was appointed Parliamentary assistant to the National Association of Councillors. His local priorities are youth issues, addressing health inequalities, driving forward economic regeneration initiatives, tackling anti-social behaviour and attending to the needs of local communities in Easington. In Parliament he has sat on the Health Committee and is currently the opposition whip.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEIDI MOTTRAM</td>
<td>Chief executive officer, Northumbrian Water Group</td>
<td>Appointed to the Northumbrian Water Group and Northumbrian Water Ltd Boards as chief executive officer in April 2010. She held a number of roles in GNER, before joining Midland Mainline in 1999 as operations director. She was commercial director for Arriva Trains Northern from January 2004, before becoming managing director of Northern Rail Ltd, the UK’s largest rail franchise. Heidi was named Rail Business Manager of the Year in 2009 for being an “inspirational” leader and was awarded an OBE in the New Year Honours List 2010, for services to the rail industry. She is a member of the CBI Board and the CBI Infrastructure Board and a council member of Newcastle University.</td>
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JOHN MOWBRAY  
Co-chairman, North East Cultural Partnership, Sunderland

- Retired from Northumbrian Water in August 2012 where he was director of corporate affairs. He was awarded an OBE for services to the water industry and charity in June 2012. He is currently deputy chairman of Sunderland University and co-chairman of the North East Cultural Partnership. Has always been in the wider community including as president of the NECC, chairman of Durham City Vision, vice-chairman of NGI and a director of Live Theatre and the Community Foundation for Tyne and Wear and Northumberland. He also chairs the Foundation of Light Development Board as well as the Percy Hedley Foundation Appeal Committee.

MARK MULLEN  
Chief executive, Atom, Durham

- Co-founded Atom, the UK’s first truly digital bank, in March 2015. Mark is a career marketer and banker, having started out in 1989 at Forward Trust Group, the finance house and leasing subsidiary of Midland Bank plc, where he worked in a number of businesses before in 2000 joined the DAB in London to help develop its internet banking platform. In 2004 he moved to the firm’s UK HQ to lead marketing of the brand on home soil. He took over as head of marketing at First Direct at the end of 2006 and from 2009-11 was the regional head of marketing, MENA for HSBC Bank Middle East, working out of Dubai. On his return to the UK he was appointed chief executive of First Direct.

SARAH MUNRO  
Director, Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead

- Joining Baltic in November 2015, she will be directing the centre’s world-class programme of international contemporary art following the departure of Godfrey Worsdale. She joins Baltic with 20 years’ experience of cultural leadership following a distinguished career in Glasgow as both artistic director of Tramway and head of arts for the city, where she led, among other initiatives, the bid to bring Turner Prize 2015 to Scotland for the first time.

CHRIS MUSGRAVE  
Chief executive, Wynyard Park Ltd, Wynyard

- Has accumulated an extensive property portfolio of substantial value across all sectors of the market. His main interest has been the redevelopment of Wynyard Park in Teesside. It is now 100% occupied, employs 2,000 people in 65 companies and has attracted £250m of private investment. Phase two of the development is under way with the construction of more than 500 homes and a masterplan for many more with a school, hospital and retail operations. Chris is also the CEO for Discovery Park in Kent (the biggest science park in the UK) and currently spearheading a project to develop the former RAF Manston Airfield in Kent.

DUCHESS OF NORTHBURLAND  
Lord lieutenant of Northumberland and businesswoman, Alnwick

- An Edinburgh stockbroker’s daughter, she has overseen a full restoration of Alnwick Castle and is the visionary behind the Alnwick Garden, which attracts more than 800,000 visitors each year. She became the first female Lord Lieutenant of Northum- berland in 2009, and is patron or president of more than 100 charities. She was awarded the Variety Club Silver Heart, its highest accolade, for her services to charity and disabled and disadvantaged children in the North East. In 2013, the duchess was awarded an honorary degree from Newcastle University and was named as one of the 100 most influential people in the North East. She has been awarded an OBE for her work with disadvantaged children and young people.

DUKE OF NORTHBURLAND  
Landowner, Northumberland Estates, Alnwick

- Ralph, 12th Duke of Northumber- land, studied history at Oxford Univer- sity and then land management at Reading University before working in the south of England for seven years. He moved back to Northumberland to manage the Alnwick estate for his elder brother Henry, the 11th Duke, inheriting the title on his death in 1995. As well as management of the more traditional estate businesses of agriculture, forestry and minerals, the duke has overseen expansion of the portfolio to include planning and development and commercial property at home and abroad. Alongside his wife Jane, he has developed Alnwick Castle as a significant visitor attraction.

CHI ONWURAH  
Labour MP for Newcastle Central

- Born in Wallsend, she grew up in Kenton and went to Kenton School before studying electrical engineering in London. She was inspired by Newcastle’s industrial past to become an engineer, and specialised in building infrastructure in new markets and standardising wholesale ethernet access, becoming head of telecoms technology at Vodafone, the communications regulator. When she was 17 she was elected Kenton School’s MP in a mock election, a route she was to follow for real when she entered Parliament in May 2010. She is currently shadow minister for both business, innovation and skills and culture, media and sport.

GUY OPPERMANN  
Conservative MP for Hexham

- First elected at the 2010 general election. Before that he spent 20 years as a barrister and also served as a director of his family engineering business until 2009. He first became interested in national politics after giving up his time as a barrister for free to lead a campaign to fight the closure of Saverneke NHS Hospital, which he credited with saving his mother’s life from cancer. His political interests include prison reform and sentencing, health, fuel poverty, tourism, apprenticeships and youth training, equal pay. Northumberland, local banking, living wage and the Falkland Islands. He is assistant whip (HM Treasury).

MIKE PARKER  
Director, Schools North East

- Appointed in July 2015 to the first and only UK regional network of schools which is a strong advocate for the region in Westminster ensuring the Government is mindful of the impact of future legislation on North East schools. A former journalist, he headed up media and external affairs at the North East Chamber of Com- merce and at one of the UK’s largest social housing providers, Home Group. He has joined the influential group at a time of dynamic change in the education sector. Schools nationwide are under immense pressure to deliver at the highest level while facing challenges on many fronts.

BOB PATON  
North East managing director, Accenture, North Tyneside

- Alongside his Accenture role, Bob is the non-executive chairman of RT ���� North, a major regional success in new products, innovation and business growth. He is chairman of the board of governors, a pioneering school aimed at bridging the gap between education and employment, and on the development board of young people’s organisation, Foundation of Light. He is also on the board of governors for Sunderland University. Bob has recently taken up board roles with both Northum- berland College and South Tyneside College. He is the chair of the project steering group for the recently approved IT and Health Care Sciences University Technical College.

CHRIS PATTISON  
Managing director, Dawson and Sanderson, Newcastle

- Has spent virtually a lifelong career running the travel business for the Dawson family, having joined in 1980. The business – one of the UK’s largest independent travel agents – now covers 25 retail outlets, the company has 157 travel agents and a number of on-site travel agencies, home offices and ancillary offices. Chris specialises in retail operations. Chris is also the CEO for Discovery Park in Ken (the biggest science park in the UK) and currently spearheading a project to develop the former RAF Manston Airfield in Kent.

ROBYN PEAT  
Managing partner, George F White, Alnwick

- Joined land and property consultancy George F White in 1989, becoming a partner in 1992. He was elected a fellow of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (Rics) in 1998. In January 2015, Robyn took over the role of managing director, and is focused on growing the business in specific sector services. Longevity in business is vital and he believes the way to achieve this is through attracting and mentoring good-quality people. His own professional specialist skills focus on arbitration (he is a member of Rics Arbitrators Panel), dispute resolution, landlord and tenant issues, minerals, estate and business management. Has expertise in option and development advice and provides tax and wealth guidance.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Nigel Perry</strong></td>
<td>Chief executive, Centre for Process Innovation, Redcar</td>
<td>He was appointed chief executive of the Centre for Process Innovation (CPI) in 2003. He has taken the company from start-up to today where it employs over 260 scientists and engineers and is recognised internationally as a world-class resource supporting the process industry in industrial biotechnology, biologics manufacture, formulation and printable electronics. He is a fellow and past technical vice-president of the Institution of Chemical Engineers, and a fellow of the Institution of Engineering and Technology. He is a member of the leadership board of the Tees Valley LEP where he is the lead on innovation. He was elected as a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering in 2010.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bridget Phillipson</strong></td>
<td>Labour MP for Houghton and Sunderland South</td>
<td>First elected to the seat in May 2010, she increased her majority at the 2015 General Election. In October 2013, Bridget was appointed an opposition whip. Prior to this she was a member of the influential cross-party Home Affairs Committee. Born and brought up in Washington, Bridget joined the Labour Party at 15. After reading modern history at Hertford College, Oxford, where she was also co-chair of the University Labour Club, Bridget returned to the North East. Before becoming an MP, she managed a refuge for women and children fleeing domestic violence. Currently serves on Parliament’s Public Accounts Committee and the Speaker’s Committee on the Electoral Commission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Abigail Pogson</strong></td>
<td>Managing director, The Sage, Gateshead</td>
<td>Taking up her post in May 2015, previously she was chief executive of Spitalfields Music, which runs the renowned Summer and Winter Festivals and year-round Learning and Participation Programme in London. Born and raised in Yorkshire, she has worked for English National Opera, Music Theatre Wales and the Society for the Promotion of New Music, and her ethos combines a commitment to developing artists and supporting them to create great work with a passion for ensuring that the arts can be accessed by as many people as possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Andy Preston</strong></td>
<td>Businessman and charity leader, Middlesbrough</td>
<td>Worked as a financial markets trader in London where he successfully built and ran a number of trading businesses for international financial organisations. He latterly created and managed a large hedge fund group for a European bank. Since returning to his native North East in 2008, Andy has been helping ambitious local technology companies to grow and prosper, providing them with mentoring, investment and contacts, and is also behind the Middlesbrough and Teesside Philanthropic Foundation. In 2013 he founded a charity called CEO Sleepout, which encourages Britain’s leaders to sleep rough for the night to help fight homelessness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gavin Prior</strong></td>
<td>General manager, Intu Metrocentre, Gateshead</td>
<td>Having recently completed a 12-month secondment to intu Merry Hill based in Birmingham, he is now back at intu Metrocentre ready to oversee the launch of the £11m redevelopment of the Qube area to bring in 11 new restaurants in spring 2016. intu Metrocentre will also turn 30 years old in 2016 and there will be lots of celebrations, which will mean another busy year for Gavin and the centre. Intu Metrocentre also continues its sponsorship of Gateshead FC after a very successful first year working together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>George Rafferty</strong></td>
<td>Chief executive, NOF Energy, Durham</td>
<td>Leads the UK’s most proactive business development organisation in the oil, gas, nuclear and offshore renewables sectors, helping to bring thousands of jobs to the region. Has built not-for-profit membership organisation NOF Energy up from 170 members to fast approaching 500. George is hugely influential in identifying global opportunities in energy-related sectors and was the driving force behind the creation of Energi Coast, which promotes the North East’s integrated supply chain for offshore renewables.</td>
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JAMES RAMSBOTHAM
Chief executive, North East Chamber of Commerce

NECC celebrates 200 years of championing business in the North East in 2015. Previously James was vice-chairman of the Esh Group – the award-winning North East construction group. Prior to that, he spent 14 years in corporate banking and had 12 years soldiering in the Royal Green Jackets. He is chairman of the Darlington Building Society, honorary colonel for The Rifles in the North East, chair of trustees for the Durham Light Infantry Museum, trustee for the Foundation of Light and a deputy lieutenant for County Durham. He also gives time to Durham Cathedral, Durham University and a number of other charitable organisations.

BRENDA READMAN-BELL
Group finance and IT director, J Barbour and Sons Ltd, South Shields

As Barbour’s group finance and IT director, she has responsibility for the UK, America and Germany. She has held this position since October 2004, prior to which she was the finance director for ladies wear for Jacques Vert PLC. She has worked in accounting for over 25 years, with all her posts being held in the North East. Other accountability positions held have been outside the clothing industry with Dunlop, NSK and Thorn Lighting Ltd. As an associate member of CIMA, she has developed her career through a pragmatic approach delivering commercially sound results.

NORMA REDFEARN
Elected mayor, North Tyneside, and board member NELEP

Elected mayor of North Tyneside in May 2013, she is the authority’s principal public spokesperson, her role being to give political direction to the council and appoint the cabinet and deputy mayor, which provides the executive decision-making function for the organisation. She had a long and successful career in education before becoming a local councillor in 2004.

Most has an extensive track record in local government, having represented the Riverside Ward in North Shields and served as cabinet member for children, young people and learning. A former award-winning head teacher, she regularly speaks at leadership forums and associations.

JOHN REECE
Chairman, Reece Group Ltd, Newcastle

A holding group for a range of innovative engineering companies operating in the defence, oil and gas, power generation, construction and subsea markets – Pearson Engineering, Responsible Engineering, Velocity UK, Pipe Coil Technology and Reece Innovation – it started out in the 1980s as a breakout business from Newcastle University. The Reece Innovation Centre develops new products for new markets. In September 2015 the group and its 500 employees moved into its new headquarters in the iconic Armstrong Works on the Scotswood Road following a £20m transformation, bolstering the region’s legacy as a world leader in innovative engineering.

MATT RIDLEY
Scientist, author and journalist, Blagdon

A weekly columnist in The Times, and regular writer in the Wall Street Journal, he is a deputy lieutenant of Northumberland, and president of the Entrepreneur Centre for Life in Newcastle. His books have sold over a million copies, been translated into 30 languages, been short-listed for nine major literary prizes and won several awards. As Viscount Ridley, he was elected to the House of Lords in February 2013, and as owner of the Blagdon estate, he was instrumental in the creation of the Northumberland landform sculpture. He is a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and of the Academy of Medical Sciences, and serves as honorary member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

PAT RITCHIE
Chief executive, Newcastle City Council

He is one of the North's most plugged-in business figures. He runs Recognition Marketing and PR and has been involved in projects featuring leading national figures in the world of sport, entertainment and politics, is chairman of the Institute of Directors in the North East and serves on the board of the Entrepreneurs’ Forum. He launched the group in 1980 and now employs 14 staff and works with more than 75 clients covering consumer and healthcare, the energy sector, business, enterprise and education. Recognition also supports 600 care homes with 60,000 residents with a crisis management service.

GRAHAM ROBB
Regional chairman, Institute of Directors

He is one of the North’s most plugged-in business figures. He runs Recognition Marketing and PR and has been involved in projects featuring leading national figures in the world of sport, entertainment and politics, is chairman of the Institute of Directors in the North East and serves on the board of the Entrepreneurs’ Forum. He launched the group in 1980 and now employs 14 staff and works with more than 75 clients covering consumer and healthcare, the energy sector, business, enterprise and education. Recognition also supports 600 care homes with 60,000 residents with a crisis management service.

PHIL ROBERTS
Head of region, BBC North East and Cumbria

Responsible for all the output produced regionally by the BBC in Newcastle, Teesside and Cumbria, including Look North, Inside Out, Sunday Politics and the broadcaster’s digital operation. He represents the region to the wider BBC and sits on the University of Sunderland media advisory panel. He enjoyed an extensive radio career and was voted the region’s best local radio after being appointed managing director for music and events at Emag, now Bauer Media. Phil joined the BBC in 2005 as managing editor of BBC Leeds. He moved to BBC Merseyside on attachment as acting managing editor in 2007 before becoming head of region for the North East and Cumbria.

DANIEL ROBINSON
Chairman, Gus Robinson Developments, Hartlepool

A former Royal Air Force fighter pilot, he was also the first and only non-American to fly the famed F-22 Raptor, stealth fighter for the US Air Force. After leaving the military in 2009, he completed a dual MBA before working in finance in New York. In 2011, he took over Gus Robinson Developments after the death of his father and has since turned the struggling business into one of the region’s biggest players in house building. Recently won the UK SME Director of the Year at the national Institute of Director’s business awards. Maintains a strong commitment to young people across the North East through the creation of the Gus Robinson Foundation. He is also president of Hartlepool Youth.

DAVID ROBINSON
Chief executive, PD Ports Group, Middlesbrough

Joined PD Ports in 2002, taking over as chief executive four years later. Under his direction, PD Ports has continued to invest, including a £16.7m expansion of the Teesport Container Terminal and dedicated business apprenticeship programmes. He was awarded an MBE in the 2015 New Year’s Honours List for services to international trade and the UK economy, and was appointed a regional ambassador to HRH the Prince of Wales in 2012. David’s vision and drive to raise aspirations and improve employment prospects for young people in the maritime industry led to the creation by PD Ports and Casper Shipping of the High Tide Foundation in the same year. David sits on its board of trustees.

MIKE ROBINSON
Chief executive, Middlesbrough Council

Arrived at Middlesbrough Council from Stockton in 2009 as director of environment. Mike also managed adult social care from 2010 and in 2012 took on the role of executive director of wellbeing, care and learning as part of a restructuring of the council’s corporate management team. He has also had spells with Cleveland County Council and North Yorkshire County Council. Mike was born in Middlesbrough and has lived in the town all his life. In July 2015 he joined Middlesbrough College’s governing body and is also on the standards committee.

JANE ROBINSON
Chief executive, Gateshead Council

Appointed to her current role in 2012, she is responsible for an annual turnover in excess of £500m and 5,000 employees. She joined the council as assistant chief executive in 2005, having previously worked primarily in the cultural sector. She led the establishment of the North East Combined Authority and is currently clerk to both the Police and Crime Panel and the Lord Lieutenant for Tyne and Wear. Nationally, she sits on the Advisory Board of the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives. Her non-executive appointments include the Tyne and Wear Community Foundation, North Music Trust and the Big Lottery Fund.
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- Innovation Award
- Let’s Grow Award
- Manufacturing Award
- Newcomer of the Year
- Not-for-profit Organisation of the Year
- Services Award
- Small Business Award
JONATHAN RUFFER
Chairman, Auckland Castle Trust, Bishop Auckland
- Trained as a stockbroker and barrister before moving into private client investment management in 1980. He established Ruffer Investment Management Limited in 1994, which transferred its financial interests to Ruffer LLP 10 years later. In 2012 he bought Auckland Castle and its internationally famous paintings of Jacob and his 12 sons by Francisco de Zurbaran for £25m. Now, as chair of the Auckland Castle Trust, he is overseeing the £65m revitalisation of the former home palace of England’s only Prince Bishops into a world-class tourist attraction. He is also presiding over the £25m Eleven Arches open-air night extravaganza due to open next summer.

ROY SANDBACH
Chair, Innovation Board, North East Local Enterprise Partnership
- Professor Roy Sandbach is chair of the Innovation Board for the NELEP and developed the region’s innovation strategy as part of the Strategic Economic Plan. He is also director of the National Centre for Ageing Science and Innovation, based at Newcastle University. This is a major Newcastle Pioneershouse initiative and reflects national confidence in the world-leading capability within the university. Nationally, Roy is president-elect of the Royal Society of Chemistry’s Industry Council. He chairs the North East leadership group of the Prince’s Trust and is a trustee at the Centre for Life. He is active in the creation of the North East Futures University Technical College.

CHIRS SAYERS
Chair, board of governors, Northumbria University
- Joined the university’s board of governors as an external member in November 2010, became chair in July 2012 and was reappointed for a second three-year term from November 2015. Until 2012, Chris was the BT Group regional director for the North East. He has served as a non-executive director of the Government Office for the North East. Currently he is a non-executive director of Arch, which is the Northumberland development company which has a county-wide remit to attract investment and deliver development and regeneration. With his wife, he is joint chair of a board of trustees for a charity running two orphanages in Tamil Nadu, India.

NEIL SCHNEIDER
Chief executive, Stockton Borough Council
- Has held a variety of roles in a local government career spanning 31 years. Neil became corporate director of development and regeneration services at Stockton in 2000 and was appointed chief executive in 2008. He is a member of the executive group providing an advisory role to the Association of North East Councils leadership Board. He is a member of the Executive Board of Tees Valley Unlimited and the chair of the Tees Valley Unlimited Investment Board. He also has extensive experience in the development and delivery of leadership training programmes for a wide range of private and public sector organisations.

BILL SCOTT
Chief executive, Wilton Group, Middlesbrough
- Wilton Engineering Services was set up in 1994 to provide fabrication and site support to the offshore and petrochemical sectors. In 1999, Universal Coatings was added to the group to support the application of specialist coatings. Bill was named The Journal’s Business Executive of the Year 2011 and happily continues to support the judging panel year on year. He has a passion to support young people through providing apprenticeships and further education, including degree level, mentoring small to medium enterprises and is constantly fundraising to help support North East charities.

JOHN SEAGER
Chief executive, Siglion
- Previously with regionally-based property company UK Land Estates, John was appointed chief executive of Siglion, the joint venture between Carillion Developments and Sunderland City Council, for which Igloo Regeneration provides development, asset and fund management, in January 2015. The 20-year partnership’s mission is to generate social, economic and environmental benefits by stimulating and delivering sustainable, well-designed development in Sunderland. John will oversee plans to attract in excess of £100m of private sector investment in regeneration and development projects across key sites to create a positive impact on the city.

ADAM SERFONTEIN
Managing director, Hanno Group, Newcastle
- Heads Hanno, a privately-owned East-based property investment and development group. Prior to this he spent 12 years working with Chesterton Property Consultants, gaining experience across a wide range of markets, working in Newcastle, London, and Madrill. Adam graduated from Northumbria University in 1987, where he is currently deputy chair of the university’s Business School. Adam has a passion to support young people through providing apprenticeships and further education, including degree level, mentoring small to medium enterprises and is constantly fundraising to help support North East charities.

BRUCE AND FREDDY SHEPHERD
Directors, Shepherd Offshore, Newcastle
- Perhaps best known for Freddy’s 10-year chairmanship of Newcastle United, the brothers have been influential in the development of the banks of the Tyne since the 1980s, having spotted opportunities in the North Sea oil and gas industry. The ship of Newcastle United, the Neptune Engineering Park and Offshore Technology Park, has attracted global enterprises such as GE Oil and Gas, Fraser Hydraulic Power and Bridon International. One of Europe’s largest cranes which can lift up to 800 tonnes has also recently arrived at Neptune Energy Park.

JOHN SHIPLEY
Chief executive, Siglion
- Joined the House of Lords in 2010, the latest staging post in an influential political career which saw him serve on Newcastle City Council for 36 years. He was council leader from 2006-10, and a board member of the former regional development agency One North East. He is the Liberal Democrat Lords principal spokesperson for communities, cohesion and the Northern powerhouse.

ELLIS SHORT
Owner/chairman, Sunderland AFC
- The Missouri-born businessman worked at General Electric before moving into private equity where he made his fortune. He entered the world of football when he bought an initial 30% stake in Sunderland in 2009 as part of the Drumaville consortium. He assumed full control of the club the year after. He took over as chairman from Niall Quinn in November 2011.

HARI SHUKLA
Multicultural ambassador, Newcastle
- Has devoted his life to race relations. He takes a keen interest in inter-faith relationships and has worked tirelessly to build bridges between Newcastle’s diverse communities. He has been director of Tyne and Wear Racial Equality, chair of the inter-faith sub committee of the Tyne and Wear Racial Equality Council, and has also been involved in a number of charities, including the NSPCC and St Oswald’s Hospice, and held dozens of voluntary roles. He was awarded an OBE in 2003 and became a regional director of the North East Centre for Transformative Education and Research in 2012.

AMANDA SKELTON
Chief executive, Redcar and Cleveland Council
- Has ultimate responsibility for the council delivering over 500 key services to the people of Redcar and Cleveland and managing the annual revenue budget and capital programme. Among the council’s current areas of focus are growing the economy and creating more jobs; developing great places to live, and improving residents’ quality of life. Before taking up her present role, Amanda was executive director at South Tyneside Council. Her previous background was in local government and regeneration at Sunderland, Newcastle and Salford Councils.

HARI SHUKLA
Multicultural ambassador, Newcastle
- Has devoted his life to race relations. He takes a keen interest in inter-faith relationships and has worked tirelessly to build bridges between Newcastle’s diverse communities. He has been director of Tyne and Wear Racial Equality, chair of the inter-faith sub committee of the Tyne and Wear Racial Equality Council, and has also been involved in a number of charities, including the NSPCC and St Oswald’s Hospice, and held dozens of voluntary roles. He was awarded an OBE in 2003 and became a regional director of the North East Centre for Transformative Education and Research in 2012.
ALISON SMITH
Relationship director, Lloyds Bank Commercial Banking, Newcastle
Currently manages a portfolio of large corporate customers and is the local manufacturing representative for Lloyds Bank in the North East. Starting her banking career with Lloyds Bank over a period of 20 years she has undertaken a variety of roles in the corporate sector. She joined Bank of Scotland in 2002 holding a series of jobs, including area director. This post held responsibility for driving the business in the North East. She rejoined Lloyds Bank Group in 2008 and is responsible for the risk management of the portfolio while driving growth through existing and new customers. Board member of the Byker Trust and member of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

PAUL SMITH
Co-founder and chief executive, Ignite Accelerator, Campus North and Bunker Coffee and Kitchen, Newcastle
Since launching in 2011, Ignite has become one of the UK’s top investment vehicles for early-stage technology companies, raising more than £3.3m from angel investors and VCs to invest in and incubate over 70 businesses. Campus North opened its doors in 2014, providing co-working space and offices to digital and creative businesses, as well as hosting technology meet-ups and educational workshops. Bunker Coffee and Kitchen, Newcastle’s newest coffee house and venue space, opened as part of Campus North in October 2015.

ROSS SMITH
Director of policy, North East Chamber of Commerce
Appointed to his present role in 2012 after working as head of policy and research at the NECC since May 2007. He is responsible for NECC’s relationship with its 3,000 plus members, along with overseeing the organisation’s policy and campaign work, local representation, events and public relations. Ross graduated in politics and history from Newcastle University and has worked as a political journalist in Northern Ireland and the North East. Ross is a trustee at Westgate Baptist Church in Newcastle.

MARTIN SOLOMAN
Senior partner, Hay and Kilner, Newcastle
Leads major North East law firm, Hay and Kilner. Martin’s specialist work and experience includes wide-ranging involvement in commercial and business matters. He is named as a leading individual in the commercial disputes field in Chambers & Partners and the Legal 500, both independently researched guides to the legal profession. He is experienced in conducting mediations both as mediator and participating adviser, and in advising charitable organisations. Martin has been chair of the Chronicle Sunshine Fund since 2002 and was instrumental in its relaunch in 1994 with the objectives of assisting disabled children in the North East.

GILL SOUTHERN
Director, Wessington Cryogenics, Sunderland, and board member NELEP
As well as being commercial director and co-owner of Wessington Cryogenics, a manufacturer of cryogenics pressure vessels and specialist gas storage tanks which numbers the MoD and NASA among its customers, she is also on the board of NOF Energy and a member of the NECC. In 2011, she was awarded an MBE for her services to North East industry. A proactive ambassador for the North East, she believes investing in local businesses and helping to remove barriers to growth such as access to finance, skills and promoting best practice generally leads to increased productivity and competitiveness - all of which is fantastic for both the North East and the UK economy.

RAY SPENCER
Executive director, Customs House, South Shields
The South Shields Customs House theatre, once described by the Arts Council as “of no regional significance”, has been transformed under the dynamic leadership into financial stability through vibrant programming. He has been chief executive since 2000 and in the heart of the borough’s cultural life. He was awarded an MBE in 2010 for services to North East arts and is an honorary fellow of the University of Sunderland. He acts, directs and writes too. Having retired his Tommy the Trumpeter role in the Customs House’s annual panto in 2012, he is now a force to be reckoned with as the panto dame!

PHIL STEELE
General manager, intu Eldon Square, Newcastle
Joined Newcastle’s shopping mall in 2010 from Sunderland’s Bridges Shopping Centre where he had spent a decade in charge. Began his career at BHS before moving into shopping centre management at Cameron Toll in Edinburgh. intu Eldon Square, which opened in 1976, has undergone a £170m refurbishment and is undergoing a £170m refurbishment and the decommissioning of the area on a national and international stage with a focus to live, learn, work, visit and invest since 2012, he is now a force to be reckoned with as the panto dame.

NEIL STEPHENSON
Chief executive, Onyx Group, Newcastle
Onyx Group’s longest-serving employee having been with the company since the beginning of the tech boom in 1996. Chief executive since 2007, the former Vaux Breweries marketing executive has overseen Onyx’s move from its original site to a new site and has seen the number of employees increase from 10 to 200. Neil was awarded Tees Valley Business Executive of the Year in 2010. Onyx is looking to build on the foundations laid down in recent years which has resulted in revenues leaping from £4m in 2005 to £30m in 2015. The firm’s ambitious long-term plan is to become a national, £100m revenue IT support and services business within the next five years.

PETER STEPHENSON
Executive chairman, Able UK, Billingham
Described by a national awards scheme as a master entrepreneur, Peter is a prominent figure in the Northern business community. The Able Group, with an asset base of over £400m, is a multi-faceted business. It is a market leader in the renewable energy and co-energy industry and has seen www.gazettelive.co.uk extend to over 5,000 acres including a range of strategic sites across the north of England. As a privately-owned business Able prides itself on taking a long-term view and has invested around £100m over the last six years.

PAUL STEWART
Managing director, Chirton Engineering, North Shields
Paul founded Chirton Engineering in 2003, then consisting of four men and a shed. Chirton Engineering is a precision machine shop which supports the subsea, oil and gas industry and which is making progress in the renewable energy sector, Chirton is looking to secure work within the nuclear industry in the very near future. In April 2014, agriculture, food and engineering group Carr’s Milling Industries acquired Chirton Engineering Ltd. Paul remains as managing director. In March 2015 Chirton moved to new premises and now employs 62 staff. A further investment of nearly £2m has been made on new machinery.

SARAH STEWART
Chief executive, Newcastle Gateshead Initiative
Charged with promoting Newcastle-Gateshead and the wider region as a place to live, learn, work, visit and invest since March 2011. Sarah leads a small team with a high-profile and influential role and holds board positions with both Visiting-Land and the Arts Council North Area Council. Working with its 170-plus public and private sector partners, NGI markets the area on a national and international stage with a focus on driving economic growth. Latest figures show that annual visitors to Newcastle-Gateshead contribute £1.42bn to the local economy and the organisation has helped to attract 58 new investments over the past three years, creating and safeguarding over 2,513 new jobs.

CHRIS STYLES
Editor, The Gazette and www.gazettelive.co.uk, Middlesbrough
Became editor at both the daily title and its website in January 2012, moving from ncjMedia in Newcastle. Chris oversaw the introduction of a digital-first newsroom in May 2014, and has seen www.gazettelive.co.uk become one of the fastest-growing newspaper websites in the country. With an audience increasing at an impressive rate, the Gazette brand is firmly established as the leading and most influential media voice on Teesside.
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**MARTIN SWALES**
Chief executive, South Tyneside Council

- Responsible for an annual budget turnover of £500m and 5,000 staff, Martin has overseen record improvements in schools performance, infrastructure and housing investment, jobs growth and delivered over £100m efficiencies since 2010. Martin has led key economic growth programmes both south and north of the River Tyne. Regionally, Martin is lead chief executive for both Newcastle Internatio-nal Airport and the Tyne & Wear Pensions Fund and coordinates the European Investment Programme work for the North East Combined Authority. Nationally, Martin is economic prosperity and housing spokesman for the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives.

**RICHARD SWART**
Global operation director, Berger Group, Peterlee

- Born and raised in South Africa where his father was a politician, he joined metal ring closure specialist Berger in Peterlee in 1988. The German-owned company supplies to the automotive, garden products, filtration, ventilation, ducting, domestic appliance, defence and nuclear waste sectors. Satellite antennae components are also a growth market. In 2009, the parent company was struggling and Richard was appointed chief executive, part-relocating to Germany. He returned to the County Durham base in 2012 and spearheaded entry into the lucrative Chinese market. Is on the North East Chamber of Trade council.

**ALISON THAIN**
Chair, Confederation British Industry, North East

- In group chief executive and board director of the Thirteen Group, a housing association collective of five partners formed in April 2014. The group has over 32,500 homes, a turnover of £160m, an asset base of almost £1bn and ambitious plans to improve the housing, neighbourhood facilities and life chances of its residents and customers. Awarded an OBE in 2004 for services to housing, and an honorary doctorate in business from Teesside University in 2014, she is a member of Tees Valley Unlimited, vice-chairman of Darlington Building Society and a council member of the North East Chamber of Commerce, as well as the CBI.

**GEOFF THOMPSON**
Chief executive, Utilitywise, South Shields

- Geoff is a science graduate and holds an MBA from Newcastle University. In 2006 he founded Utilitywise – an independent utility cost management consultancy offering energy procurement and energy management products and services to its business customers throughout the UK – having previously held senior posts in consultancy and in industry. He gained specific energy experience while supporting energy supply companies to acquire new customers via a range of direct marketing approaches. Utilitywise works with 27,000 small, medium and large businesses.

**MARK THOMPSON**
Managing partner, Ryder Architecture, Newcastle

- Working with the management team, he has ultimate responsibility for the strategic development of Ryder, which has included hiring for the portfolio, adopting new methods of working. He began his career at British Shipbuilders as an engineering apprentice. In recognition of his influential and inspirational role within the industry, Mark was made an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects in 2003. He is chair of blood cancer charity Bright Red, vice-chair of the NGI and a member of the Percy Hedley Foundation’s advisory council, the CBI’s regional council and the CBI’s national construction council.

**MICK THOMPSON**
Senior partner, KPMG, Newcastle

- The Durham University graduate took up the top role at the firm in 2008 and has since overseen an increase in its workforce and in the office’s influence on the overall fortunes of the financial giant. KPMG has connections in the North East stretching back a century. The first office of Peat Marwick was established in the region more than 125 years ago and following a series of mergers, became KPMG in 1987. Today, it employs more than 170 staff in Newcastle.

**BRIAN THORPE**
Head of business and corporate banking, Barclays - North East, Newcastle and Stockton

- Brian leads a team of over 100 bankers in the North East from two corporate centres. The banking giant’s corporate and business operations command a dominant market share in the region. He is responsible for the financial requirements of over 2,500 businesses from those turning over £500,000 up to a number of plc clients. Brian has been involved in the banking industry for more than 30 years and has held roles in risk management, retail banking, key client/corporate relationship banking and latterly, leadership of teams. He remains heavily involved in the bank’s burgeoning football sector, both in the UK and abroad.

**DARREN THWAITES**
Editor-in-chief, Trinity Mirror North East

- Darren has been editor-in-chief for the Trinity Mirror North East region since 2012, leading teams through a period of explosive digital growth. The company’s publishing portfolio includes the region’s two biggest news websites – ChronicleLive and GazetteLive – as well as The Journal, The Chronicle, The Gazette and the Saturday Sun. The brands now generate an average online audience of more than 300,000 a day, while still selling more than 2 million newspapers a month. Darren marked 10 years as an editor in the North East in 2015, including six years on Teesside.

**DR BERNARD TRAFFORD**
Headmaster, Royal Grammar School, Newcastle

- Became headmaster of the RGS in September 2008 and is a well-respected figure in the education sector. He regularly writes on educational themes, has published books and articles on school democracy and the student voice and has advised both the UK government and the Council of Europe on education for citizenship. He also writes a regular column in The Journal. From 2007-09 he was chairman of HMC, the organisation of some 260 UK and international British-style independent schools. Has served as a trustee of various education and/or musical charities, including - currently - Schools NorthEast. He is a Leading Thinker for the National Education Trust.

**ANNE-MARIE TREVELYAN**
Conservative MP, Berwick

- Elected member for Berwick in May 2015, following the retirement of Sir Alan Beith, who had represented the constituency for 42 years. She has been a vocal campaigner for many years on a number of issues affecting Northumberland, including the duelling of the AI, wind turbines and broadband access. She is now a member of Parliament’s influential Public Accounts Committee. She is also vice-chairman of both the All-Party Parliamentary group on forestry and the APPG on maths and numeracy. In addition she is a member of the APPGs on rural broadband, on hunger, on national parks and the armed forces.

**FERGUS TRIM**
Managing director, Broadaek Asset Management, Newcastle

- Working with New York-based Cerberus Capital Management on its assets at Quorum Business Park in Newcastle and Maxim, a 750,000sq ft office scheme near Glasgow. Over the past five years, Quorum has attracted 21 new occupiers taking over 500,000sq ft of office space, including some notable job-creating inward investment wins. It was recently announced that Greggs would move its headquarters to Quorum. Is also closely involved in Developing Consensus, the North East property sector think tank and is on the advisory board of Invest Newcastle.

**ANNA TURLEY**
Labour MP for Redcar

- Elected at the 2015 General Election Anna has worked for more than 10 years as a public servant seeking to tackle social exclusion, poverty and worklessness. Under the last Labour government, Anna was part of the team that brought in the Family Nurse Partnership scheme that supports vulnerable young mums and their children, as well as programmes for adults with severe challenges around substance abuse, homelessness and exclusion. Anna has also campaigned for more power to be devolved from London to the regions. She was a high-profile voice during the campaign in the fight to keep Redcar’s SSI steelmaking plant open. She currently serves as the shadow minister for the cabinet office.
Peter Walls: 
Let’s create a regional partnership that is capable of achieving global success

The signing the North East’s devolution deals provides us with the opportunity to move forward with greater control over our global destiny. This is essential if we are to recognise that devolution is about relative economic momentum, with other regions making their plans and aiming to outperform us.

To maximise our region’s relative economic momentum it is going to take a world class fusion between the public and private sector, to create the partnership capable of delivering outstanding achievements and fueling our business sector to generate the wealth and jobs of a revolution.

The timetable and the conditions in which the devolution deals were agreed have not encouraged the process required to do the right things to create such a partnership.

I recently read some information provided by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in its Local Economic and Employment Development (LEED) forum on partnership and local governance. The OECD provide some fundamental advice on successful partnerships which should be noted:

“A partnership is an agreement to do something together that will benefit all involved, bringing results that could not be achieved by a single partner operating alone and reducing duplication of effort.”

“A successful partnership enhances the impact and effectiveness of action, promotes innovation and is distinguished by a strong commitment from each partner.”

This seems like good advice, but how does it fit with the public and private sector partnership that is needed in the North East?

Ultimately, like so many things, I believe the answer lies in the capacity to create outstanding world class leadership. But because of the expectations of the devolution process, we have not had sufficient time to openly conduct the necessary dialogue to create this climate of partnership leadership between the partners across the region.

We might ask - do any of our leadership arrangements fulfil any of our own expectations of the engagement of those who want to contribute and encourage their best ideas and abilities?

Does our leadership model identify accessible visions with experience of transformative change and seek to engage and empower them?

Surely at this critical time we need to inspire the “troops”, engender trust and create inclusive plans.

Now that our political colleagues have created a platform of opportunity, let’s get a widely drawn inclusive conversation going which generates an open dialogue. Let’s address the fundamental expectation our Combined Authority have of the business community. If the business sector is a true partner to the region’s devolution deal, where does it fit within the governance arrangements?

Given that the devolution deal provides for the business community to match fund the public sector through an increase in business rates, as well as a significant component of the region’s Strategic Economic Plans also requiring significant engagement with the business community in order to succeed, it is vital that our public and private sector partnership is true, well founded and enduring.

Now that we have the initial devolution agreement in place, let’s turn our collective attention to creating a partnership capable of maximising the potential and passion for the region we all care about.

Let’s go for it.

Peter Walls Founder of the North East Business Voice
peter.walls@ northeastbusinessvoice.com
JOHN WATERWORTH  
Chief executive, Parkdean Holidays, Newcastle

- John has over 30 years’ experience in the leisure sector both in park management and at director level. He joined Parkdean Leisure as a general manager in 1992 and rapidly rose through the company’s management structure, becoming operations director in 1995. Parkdean Leisure was then sold to Bank plc, but was newly formed in 1999, with John rejoining as chief executive to pursue the buy-and-build strategy. In September 2015 Parkdean and Park Resorts announced a proposed merger, subject to clearance by the Competition and Markets Authority, to create the largest holiday park operator in the UK. John is also non-executive director of the Entrepreneurs’ Forum.

ANDREW WATHEY  
Vice-chancellor and chief executive, Northumbria University

- He has been vice-chancellor of Northumbria since September 2008. Previously professor of music history in the University of London, he has been involved in the digital study of medieval music manuscripts and was co-founder of the Digital Image Archive of Medieval Music. Andrew chairs the Stakeholders Forum of the Student Loans Company, and is a board member of the Quality Assurance Agency, the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, the All Party Parliamentary Universities Group and Universities UK. He is an elected member of the CBI regional council, and serves on the Newcastle Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, and the boards of Baltic and the NGL.

PAUL WATSON  
Leader, Sunderland City Council, and board member NELEP

- Became leader of Sunderland City Council in May 2008, after previously serving as deputy leader since 2006. A former member of the Oversight Board at Sunderland Shipbuilders, he has been a self-employed businessman since 1981, and has an honours degree in law awarded by Teesside University in 1998. He is chair of the Port of Sunderland board and represents the city and the council at national and regional level on a number of key organisations. He is an executive member of the Local Government Association, vice-chair of the LGiU City Regions Board and chair of both the National Key Cities Group and Association of North East Councils.

HUGH WELCH  
Senior partner, Muckle LLP, Newcastle

- Senior partner since 2007, Hugh joined the firm in 1985 and played a major role in its development as one of the region’s leading corporate firms. He works in the corporate team and has been involved in many of the largest transactions that Muckle has handled, including leading the team that advised on the sale of the Benfield Motor Group. Hugh has also co-ordinated Muckle’s corporate social responsibility activities and been instrumental in the development of its charitable fund to which the firm donates 1% of its annual profits. He is vice-president of the Community Foundation Tyne and Wear and Northumberland and chairman of the Archbishop of York’s Youth Trust.

ROGER WHITESIDE  
Chief executive, Gregg’s, Newcastle

- Appointed chief executive of one of the region’s most iconic firms in 2013, he began his career at Marks and Spencer where he ultimately became head of its food business. He went on to be one of the founding team of Ocado, serving as joint MD from 2006 to 2004. From 2004-07 Roger led a successful turnaround as chief executive of the Thresher Group of pubs before joining Punch Taverns, ultimately becoming chief executive. With more than 1,600 shops across the UK, Gregg’s beats McDonald’s to the title of Britain’s biggest takeaway chain. But despite being a national business, it remains firmly rooted in its local community.

JOHN WIDDOWSON  
Principal and chief executive, New College Durham

- Took over in August as the new president of the Association of Colleges, the first principal from a college in the North East to be elected to this highly-prestigious and influential role. He joined New College Durham as principal in 1998, having previously been vice-principal at Cambridge Regional College for a decade. He is chair of the Mixed Economy Group of Colleges and director of the University Vocational Awards Council. Made a CBE in 2010 for services to further and higher education, as principal of New College he worked to ensure it achieves and maintains the highest standards.

ROB WILLIAMSON  
Chief executive, Community Foundation Tyne and Wear and Northumberland

- Rob became chief executive of the Community Foundation Tyne and Wear and Northumberland in July 2005, having previously been director of policy and communications at the Northern Rock Foundation. He began his career working with homeless and vulnerable people and spent three years as a policy officer in local government. Rob has been a trustee of national, regional and local charities. He is currently on the board of the umbrella body UK Community Foundations and is a trustee of the Millfield House Foundation. He also sits on the BBC’s Charity Appeals Advisory Committee and is a lay member of the Court of Newcastle University.

ROB GADDAS  
British Conservative Party, Bishopsgarth

- Rob has a deep local knowledge and has been involved in the local elections for the Bishopsgarth and Elm Tree Ward in Stockton, as well as playing a key role in the campaign team of James Gaddas, the 2005 Conservative Parliamentary candidate. He is currently Parliamentarily Under-Secretary of State for the Department for Communities and Local Government (Northern Powerhouse).

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PROF JOHN WILSON  
Director, Newcastle University Business School

- Moved from the University of Liverpool in November 2012 where he was professor of strategy at the management school, overseeing a trebling in postgraduate numbers. An expert in international business history and strategy, he leads the school from its £50m headquarters in the city centre where it hosts around 3,500 students. Over the past 20 years, he has submitted research papers in the US, Asia, Europe and Latin America, and is an active contributor to conferences, workshops, and seminars in his specialist subject areas of management history, international business history and strategy.

PHIL WILSON  
Labour MP for Sedgefield

- The son of a coal miner, he worked as a civil servant with National Savings in Durham from 1978-87. He then started working for Sedgefield MP and later PM Tony Blair as his researcher, based in the constituency office, and then for the Labour Party from 1994-99. In 2007 he succeeded Tony Blair as MP for Sedgefield. His proudest political achievement has been leading the campaign to bring Hitachi Rail Europe’s Intercity Express Programme to Newton Aycliffe. In Parliament he has been Opposition Spokesperson for Transport and currently serves on several committees, defence, defence-sub and panel of chairs.

LUCY WINSKELL  
Director, Tyne and Wear Archive and Museums

- Director of Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums since November 2010 and a member of TWAM’s senior management team since 2001, following a previous 18 years’ experience in the cultural and heritage sector. Lucy is a director of Audio Visual Arts North East, a board member of the Great North Run Cultural Programme, and an external PhD examiner at Leicester University. She has written and lectured in the UK and internationally on museums and their future. Board member of the Museums Association and a member of the executive committee of the National Museum Directors’ Council. She has been regional ambassador for the 2015 Being Human Festival.

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### Iain Wright
Labour MP for Hartlepool

Elected to the Hartlepool seat in 2004, he studied history at London’s University College, going on to become a chartered accountant. His last job before entering Parliament was as an accountant for One North East. His political interests cover economics and regeneration. His parliamentary career has seen him appointed to many roles, including Parliamentary Under-Secretary for both the Department for Communities and Local Government and Department for Children, Schools and Families, and shadow minister for both education and business, innovation and skills. He currently sits on both the business, innovation and skills and liaison committees.

### Paul Woolston
Chair, North East Local Enterprise Partnership

Currently the chair of the North East Local Enterprise Partnership, he is a former senior partner at Price Waterhouse Cooper (PwC) and has extensive experience in the public sector, focusing on high-visibility issues such as health, local government and education. He continues to be closely involved with the business community and government, both in the North East and nationally and internationally. He thinks it behoves business leaders to pass on the skills they learn – something he believes the North East excels in.

### Graham Wylie
Founder TSG, Newcastle

Put the North East’s software industry on the world stage after founding technology company Sage in 1981. Under his direction it became a market leader in the accounts and payroll software sector. He didn’t rest on his laurels, however, investing in the new Technology Services Group (TSG), several commercial properties, IT companies and Close House in Northumberland. In 2012, he embarked on a new exercise machine and concept, Speedflex. Graham is a patron of the CHUF charity. His contribution to the North East has been acknowledged by the awards of honorary doctorates at both Newcastle and Northumbria Universities as well as being honoured by the Queen with a CBE.

### Joy Yates
Editorial director, Johnston Press North East, Sunderland

Group editor for daily titles the Sunderland Echo, Shields Gazette and Hartlepool Mail, Joy is also editorial director for the JP North East publishing unit, which includes the Northumberland Gazette and Berwick Advertiser. She is on the Society of Editors board of directors and is a former chair of the Society of Editors Northern Region. Joy is also a member of the National Council for the Training of Journalists accreditation board.

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**The Journal**
North East business awards 2016 — NECC
WE REVEAL THE NORTH EAST’S MOST INFLUENTIAL ON SOCIAL MEDIA

The Journal launched a search for the North East’s Most Influential People on Social Media 2015 to discover who in the region is using the world-wide web to shape the future of the North East.

The North East Twitterati (NETwitterati) has seen hundreds of visitors voting for those people, organisations or bloggers who make the greatest impact on social media channels like Twitter.

These individuals have the capacity to influence not just the decision-makers in the region, but the men and women with their mobile phones and iPads on the street.

This was the third year of NETwitterati and we’ve had hundreds of nominations and NETwitterati has been trending on Twitter. We were excited to see such a vocal and authoritative audience providing support and recommendations to businesses and people in the region.

Chris Scott, social media editor for ncJMedia, said: “Twitter is our informant, the digital equivalent for journalists of that nosy neighbour in the street who you used to go and speak to as they knew everything that was going on.

And it’s not just journalists Twitter is great for. How better to build awareness of a campaign around a good cause such as #helpameliahome if not on Twitter? What better place is there for businesses to make sure their customers are happy than by having that real-time feedback and two-way conversation through Twitter? There isn’t a better social platform for people to get a message out to the whole world and then discuss it with a global audience than by tweeting. That is why I love NETwitterati so much. The nominees are always people who are using Twitter as it was supposed to be, they occupy the idyllic, utopic digital town square sharing ideas, bringing people to market, making people aware of what is going on in the world or simply lending a hand.

These are the difference-makers. These are the people who make Twitter so enjoyable. We’ve been delighted with the response and buoyed to see that there is a thriving North East community on social media, and in particular Twitter, where people are engaging with the world and, most importantly, championing the region.

What follows in these pages is a list of the people, organisations, blogs and social media handles voted as influential on social media in the North East. A common theme emerged when interviewing candidates for North East Twitterati.

Many said it was important to inject personality into their tweets. Everyone noted that it was better to use corporate or sales tweets sparingly, if at all.

Humour and providing added value through retweets and support for others were a must.

**Politics**

Rachel Wearmouth (@REWearmouth)

As the person tasked with tracking down the North East’s political news, ncJMedia’s regional affairs reporter doesn’t go anywhere without being plugged into Twitter.

The social media platform is where our movers and shakers go to share their thoughts and Rachel is fond of sticking her nose in whenever she can. She regularly uses the site to share stories and involves herself in political events, giving followers a flavour of what is happening and why it is important.

Her feed, @REWearmouth, has earned her a place in among the North East Twitterati for the second year running.

She said: “Whether I’m breaking news, looking for tip-offs, ranting about MPs on Question Time or telling people what I’ve just been to see at the cinema, Twitter is part of everyday life for me.

“As a journalist, covering the General Election would have been near-impossible without it. Politics moves fast and when a story is breaking, Twitter is where I go to make sure what I’m writing is up to date.

“Sure, I use the site to promote my work but I’m also someone who lives in, and cares about, the North East so for me it has more value as a tool to gauge opinion and take part in debate.

“The most interesting tweeters are those that say very little but swoop in with the odd corcker. Politicians are a bit wary of the medium, probably for obvious reasons!

“A lot of people berate Twitter as a bunch of people peddling chit-chat but, in my view, they’re wrong about that.

“More often than not, Twitter brings people together. Just look at the social media show of solidarity after Paris was attacked by Isis terrorists.

“When people saw the refugee crisis unfold, they didn’t just shout at the television, they logged on and shared a wealth of ideas about what the North East could actually do. Those tweets set the agenda for a big meeting on the issue, in the real world, at Newcastle Civic Centre. Surely that kind of power is a good thing.”

**MY TOP FIVE POLITICAL TWEETERS ARE:**

- @Jude_KD, Jude Kirton-Darling, North East Labour Euro-MP
- @NECCRoss, Ross Smith, director of policy at the North East Chamber of Commerce
- @GuyOpperman, Guy Opperman, Hexham’s Conservative MP
- @KevanJonesMP, Kevan Jones, Labour MP for North Durham
- @thewillmetcalfe, Will Metcalfe, local government reporter at ncJMedia

Peter Smith (@Redpeter99)

Described as middle-aged, old-style socialist

Will Metcalfe (@thewillmetcalfe)

Local government reporter at The Chronicle, Journal, Sunday Sun and ChronicleLive

Jude Kirton (@Jude_KD)

Labour Euro-MP for North East of England. Proud to be from Middlesbrough

Phil Wilson MP (@PhilWilsonMP)

Labour MP for Sedgefield

R.Blackman-Woods (@robertabwMP)

Labour MP for the City of Durham, shadow minister for housing and planning

Nick Forbes (@nick_forbes)

Labour Leader of Newcastle City Council
Networking

Darlo Biz (@DarloBiz)

PROMOTING Darlington businesses to the people of Darlington and beyond, to create a cohesive business community. #DarloBiz is all about helping the organisations in Darlington to reach a wider audience via the internet and increase awareness of their services and products.

In October 2012, Anthony Davison approached Nicola Burt-Skinner to help him realise his vision of assisting businesses in Darlington to harness the power of the internet and, in particular, social media to promote their business.

Within 48 hours, using her advanced knowledge of social media and relevant platforms, the Twitter profile and Facebook was created and the hashtag #DarloBiz was born.

To date, they have thousands of members, tweeting, sharing and retweeting posts that contain the hashtag, so while you may think that your social media may not have a lot of impact, the collective efforts of all members is a force to be reckoned with.

We Are Sparkle (@WeAreSparkle)

Communicators in digital media, PR, business development, event management or training

North East Tweets (@NorthEastTweets)

Twitter hub for all things North East of England

Helen Armstrong/North East hour (@helenarmstrong) #NorthEast hour

AS founder of the popular Twitter-based business networking community #NorthEasthour, Helen Armstrong features in Twitterati for the third year running and remains among The Journal’s Most Influential People in Social Media.

Helen, a qualified non-practising solicitor with an MA in law from Cambridge University, launched #NorthEasthour on Twitter in August 2012, after coming up with the idea while working as a self-employed business development consultant.

Part of her work involves creating and managing social media profiles for her clients and she saw the need for a space for small businesses to shout about what they were doing.

Helen believes the premise of #NorthEasthour is simple and is dedicated to promoting and supporting local businesses, causes and events of all sizes online, primarily on Twitter, but on other social media platforms too.

Dr Donna Petch (@thenortheastHUB)

The North East HUB works 24/7 to help raise the profile of the North East with the help of a large social media followers

PR/Comms

Sarah Hall (@Hallmeister)

AS a pioneer of best practice, a Google Squared digital marketing graduate and recipient of the Chartered Institute of Public Relations’ Sir Stephen Tallent’s medal for exceptional achievement in PR practice, it’s perhaps to be expected that Sarah Hall makes full use of social media.

With well-used accounts on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Google+ and Vimeo, she likes to practice what she preaches.

Without a doubt Sarah is an advocate of the opportunities afforded by digital and it is perhaps this enthusiastic use of the tools available – and her passion for helping organisations reap the benefit from their online presence – which has won her Twitter feed, @hallmeister, a place in The Journal’s North East’s Most Influential on Social Media for the last two years running.

She said: “The Journal’s NETwitterati campaign is founded in a great purpose, which is to see who in the region are ambassadors for the North East and using social media to great effect. Using digital media is a brilliant way to engage with others and brand build. Social has certainly allowed me to grow my network and generate new leads.”

Sarah said every business needs to use online platforms to engage with their audiences and underline their purpose with relevant and timely content. She highlights the importance of businesses using the appropriate accounts to reach their customers and, crucially, making it a conversation rather than a sales pitch.

She said: “Much of our work is helping organisations understand how they can use social to listen to their customers to improve their products and services. Listening is often under-rated but it’s a brilliant way to find out how you can engage with people because when you get this right, everything else slots into place and you build a loyal group of followers who also act as brand ambassadors.”

Sarah has just launched a crowdfunded book that examines the future of her industry. The 33-chapter guide, #FutureProof, looks at the challenges and opportunities apparent in the industry and features the thoughts of well-known practitioners from across the UK and abroad.

SARAH’S TOP FIVE RECOMMENDATIONS ARE:

- @profanityswan – hilarious
- @NCairport – brilliant at passenger engagement
- @Weds – PR content extraordinaire
- @wearePRoofed – informed digital and commms feed
- @Sunshine_Fund – fundraising fabulousness

Kari Owers (@kariowers)

Owner and managing director at OPR and named North East Woman Entrepreneur of 2012

Byrn Littleton (@CreoBryn)

Account director @WeAreCreo

CEO Harvey (@hary_e_news)

CEO of PR and social media business @harveyandhugo and chief editor of Harv-e-news

April Bowden (@play_thefield)

Director of Play the Field. Digital marketing for the North East and The Guardian’s Leader of the Year 2014

Nicola Jayne Little (@NicolaJSparkles)

Director of communications business We Are Sparkle was counted among The Journal’s 2013 and 2014 Twitterati
Journal Business (@jnlbusiness)

Journal Business is the authoritative provider of business news and analysis. @jnlbusiness has 18,000 followers providing informative and intelligent articles with a focus on the North East but an outlook across the whole of the UK. Led by Business Editor Graeme Whitfield, the team aims to provide readers with the latest regional, UK and international business, finance, economic and political news, comment and analysis. Content also includes opinion pieces from prominent regional business and political leaders, regular round-ups of regional business awards ceremonies, and live coverage of The Journal’s business events – most recently the Northern Powerhouse business breakfast and the North East Business Executive of the Year awards. With insightful comment from business leaders of the North East, breaking stories and in-depth analysis @jnlbusiness informs throughout the day.

Venture Properties (@ventureprop)
One of the leading estate agents in County Durham with offices in Darlington, Chester-le-Street, Crook, Cockerton village, Bishop Auckland and Durham City

Tiana Wilson-Buys (@talkingtiana)
Business consultant, coach and speaker. Podcast host on Entrepreneur’s Power Hour

Nicola Burt-Skinner (@NBSAssist)
Business Support Provider. Helping business owners achieve a work/life balance

NECC (@NEChamber)
NECC champions, connects and develops member businesses within the North East

Coreena Ford (@scoopford)
Award-winning Coreena Ford is the chief business reporter with ncjMedia

Andrew Douglas (@thefarnes)
Andrew Douglas loves all kinds of wildlife around the Farnes and he also blogs about his daily’s adventures.
 Andrew lives in Seahouses and, with his brother Toby, runs Serenity Farne Island Boat Tours, a small family-operated business running guided wildlife tours around the Farne Island, sailing daily from Seahouses Harbour. He began his blog over five years ago, to share his love of the geography, history and wildlife of the Farne Islands.
 He also wanted to promote Northumberland as a tourist destination to the rest of the North East, UK and further afield.
 With his writing he began taking his own photographs and now his blog showcases the abundant wildlife of the Farne Islands.

ANDREW’S TOP FIVE RECOMMENDATIONS ARE:
- @NorthEastHour – I love the way it links everything good in the North East.
- @NTBirdClub – I like this Twitter feed as I get to learn about all the wildlife in the North East.
- @farneslands – You get to know everything about the diving scene around the Farnes.
- @VisitNland – This just brings everything in the North East together and shows what a wonderful place we live in.
- @NEFamilyFun – Great for families and places to go.

Love Middlesbrough (@lovembro)
Love Middlesbrough a great place to live, learn, work, invest, visit, shop and play. Tweets by @yaffa

Suzanne Whelan (@suzannewhelan)
Poular North East travel blogger

NewcastleGateshead (@altweet_pet)
NewcastleGateshead Initiative’s official visitor Twitter feed, ask us anything about Gateshead and Newcastle

Visiting NE England (@VisitingNEUK)
Interesting places to go and things to do in the North East of England

Footsteps (@PatrickNorris1)
For guided walks on the Northumberland coast, countryside and the Cheviot Hills of the Northumberland National Park. Explore, discover, never get lost
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**Retail**

**Graham Soult (@Soult)**

A passion for retail and a chirpy tweeting style has seen consultant Graham Soult again named in The Journal’s North East’s Most Influential on Social Media 2015.

Graham, best known as @soult, tweets and blogs on the relatively niche area of retail and his cheeky but insightful approach has more than 3,400 followers on Twitter from across all sectors.

A trained architect and planner, Graham runs his own retail consultancy business, CannyInsights, based in Gateshead, which sees him travelling the country to advise shops and businesses. He regularly tweets updates and pictures from the high streets he visits, often providing insightful and critical comment on what he sees.

**City Retreat (@City_Retreat)**

City Retreat is an award-winning beauty salon situated in Jesmond.

**Lynda Taylor (@NorthumberArt)**

Landscape painter/owner of Crown Studio Gallery, Rothbury Northumberland.

**Pink Boutique (@PinkBoutiqueUK)**

The North East-based online fashion retailer with more than 70,000 followers.

**Dickinsons Furnishers (@InteriorDesire)**

Home furnishings retailer established since 1878, and now a cutting-edge design-led company.

**Newcastle Pop Ups @NCLpopups**

 Creates a vibrant community of pop-up lovers, supporting small businesses and their locally-made products, cuisine and tipples.

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**Bloggers**

**Katie Vincent (@ladyfromatramp)**

Back again for the second year running, @ladyfromatramp.

The blog features posts from industry professionals and says: “Lady from a Tramp aims to guide you gracefully through the pitfalls of modern living and the buzz surrounding the latest trends, products, travel and lifestyle.

“The website is a labour of love covering topics ranging from beauty to travel.

“There is a large focus on reviews of small business and enterprises in the North East of England as well as weekly local food reviews.”

**Katy (@katytrouble)**

A bit of a geek, full-time digital marketeer and part-time blogger.

**Sandra Tang (@Sandiebeach)**

Marketing & Events. Tweets for @newcastlene1

Look Mag Street Style winner. North East and Newcastle fashion and lifestyle blogger

Runs @ndlfshnwk. #ThisGirlCan ambassador

**Pixie Tenenbaum (@PixieTenenbaum)**

Fashion features editor and fashion blogger.

**Chloe Dawson @newgirlintoon**

Blogger, cake addict. Honorary Geordie, shortlisted for the 2014 Blog North Awards, writer for @wow247

**Rachel Kershaw @rachmotormouth**

Copywriter for Bauer Media, honorary Geordie, food lover. Blogger of the year finalist #neblogger
Lee Ryder (@lee_ryder)

THE Chronicle’s chief sports writer Lee Ryder explains how social media has impacted on sports reporting. I still find it hard to believe that some journalists don’t use Twitter. It’s difficult to imagine life without it these days. When I actually started using Twitter it was to keep fans up to date at non-league and Newcastle United reserve games. For me it has turned into something quite different to a little bit of banter and a humble service to keep people up to date with the scores, how the pies are tasting or if the Bovril is hot at Whitley Bay.

Back then, there was a cosie audience of under 1,000 followers but that quickly grew. I think the interest in my site cranked up during Newcastle’s tour of the United States back in 2011. I still remember being told things like: “It’ll never catch on” or “You’re wasting your time” and “You’re giving yourself more work to do.” But the reality is Twitter is a chance to grow your audience and engage with them. These days the doom and gloom merchants will pipe up: “You get loads of stick on Twitter, don’t you?”

But every single mention is somebody acknowledging your work and it also means people are reading it. Anybody on Twitter who has a certain number of followers is going to get criticised. I did get a message from one budding journalist who asked me: “I’m going into journalism but I’m a bit worried about getting trolled.” But the truth is, you have to accept criticism. If you do, then it can’t hurt you.

Although, there are more plus points than negatives, being able to instantly share your stories to thousands while you are still in a football stadium is the greatest. Not only that but you can also get even more of a sense of the mood of fans before, during and after games. I also find Twitter great from a business point of view and it enables fellow football hacks to network on stories via the odd DM here and there. But the immediacy of Twitter is the biggest and best part of it all.

I’ve broken transfer stories on it such as the arrivals of Siem De Jong and Moussa Sissoko, before quickly directing people to our story on the Chroniclelive website.

Within minutes of a ball hitting the back of the net, the ink drying on a new player signing or a player limping off the field with an injury, the live reporting is under way. Readers are now seeing developing stories unfold as they happen and joining in by posting comments on the situation. It has vastly improved what we do these days and it’s going to get bigger.

LEE’S TOP FIVE RECOMMENDATIONS ARE:
- @FowlerAndy – senior digital sports writer for The Chronicle, Journal and Sunday Sun
- @rickquinn1089 – Chronicle’s foremost and legendary number 9 at Newcastle
- @dankingNUFC – NUFC TV presenter
- @marksmith50 – Chronicle rugby guru
- @alanheater – NUFC legend

Mark Douglas (@MsiDouglas)

PROFESSIONAL sport has been changed completely by Twitter, nowhere more than in football. Social media may not always be at its most edifying in the hours after the final whistle but you have to look beyond that to the ways it has enriched our understanding of the game, increased the accountability of those at the top and – most importantly – connected those who love the sport.

There remains a degree of scepticism and cynicism within the ranks of professional sport. Alan Pardew talked of a harshening of the debate at Newcastle that he put down to social media – and he firmly believed that when the media (mostly the local journalists at nc/Media) turned against him we were influenced by what was being written on Twitter.

“You have to be really resilient as a player, coach or manager in the Premier League at the moment because of social media,” he told Michael Calvin in Living on the Volcano, the excellent study of modern-day football management.

“I don’t think we get offered a lot of protection and it’s a sad slant on society that it’s like that. Let’s, for example, say one of my players dailies on the ball. It’s nil-nil, he gets robbed and the opposition score. You’re not just getting the press the next day saying, ‘You made an error in midfield, what were you thinking?’ ‘You get it replayed on Saturday night, Sunday afternoon, Monday maybe even through to Wednesday on Sky Sports News. You’ve got social media calling you and your family all sorts of obscenities. You can’t even police that.”

Pardew’s implication is that it is wholly negative: a view sadly shared by many in the game. That ignores the tremendous force for good that social media can be - the positive campaigns that energise supporters, such as the MH17 memorial, which gained traction and momentum through social media and did more to bring Sunderland and Newcastle fans together than any club-run project.

MARK’S TOP FIVE RECOMMENDATIONS ARE:
- @chrisDWaugh
- @lee_ryder
- @FowlerAndy
- @OptaJoe
- @LaurenJulien
Dan Milligan (@danielrmilligan)

As the go-to man for sourcing and covering breaking news across the North East, ChronicleLive’s Live Blog Editor Daniel Milligan says Twitter is a crucial part of his role.

Daniel regularly uses the site to share stories and spot breaking news before using his capacity on the ChronicleLive’s daily live breaking news blog to get that information across to the people of the North East.

Since joining ncjMedia in November 2014, Daniel’s Twitter following has trebled and he earns his place among the North East Twitterati for the first time.

He said: “Twitter is such an invaluable tool to have in your armoury, especially when you cover breaking news.

“Thanks to Twitter I’ve been able to make sure we are first at the scene to many breaking news incidents across the North East, most recently the Gosforth sinkhole, but also incidents including police stand-offs, armed raids and rush-hour crashes to ensure we can be at the forefront of people’s daily lives and that they come to us – and the live rolling news feeds – for fast, accurate and reliable information.

“Providing real-time updates from the rush-hour period has proved very popular and the @ChronicleTravel account we launched a year ago is growing – this should be everyone’s place to go for information about delays, crashes and incidents.

“I also use Twitter to help share reporters’ stories which I think are of interest to my followers and, where appropriate, I like to add some humour and puns to some of our quirky stories.

“Over the next year, I hope more people can use my Twitter account to find out about breaking news in their area and on stories which matter to them.”

DAN’S TOP FIVE BREAKING NEWS TWEETERS:

- @TyneWearTravel live traffic cameras provide updates from many of the major routes across Newcastle, Tyneside and Sunderland.
- @ChronicleTravel – using our traffic feeds and with the help of Tyne Wear Travel, this account acts as your place to check before the commute to work or home to beat the delays.
- @NorthumbriaPolice – the latest on what incidents the police are dealing with and updates on breaking news stories and incidents across the force area.
- @Tyne_Wear_FRS – regular updates and information on fires and incidents the service are attending.
- @NEWearmouth – in terms of breaking politics news, Rachel Wearmouth is on the money with the goings-on in this specialist field of journalism.

Peter Barron (@EchoPeterBarron)
Peter Barron, editor of The Northern Echo

La Di Da Magazine (@LaDiDaMag)
The North’s most stylish society magazine

Andy Dawson (@profanityswan)
Sunderland-born and bred chief tweeter

Alfie Joey (@alfiejoey)
Half of @BBCNewcastle breakfast show and comedian

Evening Chronicle (@EveningChron)
Latest North East news, sport, NUFC, weather

Anthony Vickers (@untypicalboro)
Multi-media tub-thumping tabloid rabble-rouser. Opinionated columnist and Boro writer for the Gazette

Secret Diner (@SecretDiner1)

THE enigmatic Secret Diner is the North East’s most influential and popular restaurant critic, whose candid reviews appear every Saturday in The Journal.

Since his acerbic comments first appeared in 2013 he has built up a formidable online presence, with nearly 500,000 page views on his www.secretdinerorg site, growing by 10% a month, and a robust and loyal following on Facebook and Twitter, where his followers include Michelin-starred chefs and foodies from across the UK.

Secret Diner gives his readers independent, informed advice on where to eat in the North East, while actively supporting the region’s best restaurants, particularly those that serve fresh local produce. Restaurants have tweeted that a single rave review from Secret Diner can bring an avalanche of bookings.

Taste Magazine (@MagazineTaste)
Dedicated North East food and drink magazine

Fat Hippo (@fathippofood)
Popular burger restaurant in Jesmond and Newcastle city centre

Scran on the Tyne (@NE_Scran)
Self-confessed gastronomy obsessives, celebrating all things food and drink

Brocksbushes (@brocksbushes)
Farm shop, tea room and pick-your-own fruit farm. Farmhouse baking and cooking fresh every day

NorthumberlandCheese (@NlandCheese)
Northumberland Cheese Company produces artisan cheeses

The Botanist (@TheBotanistNCL)
Based in the city centre of Newcastle, serving beer, cocktails and food with live music every day
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