

# Impact Report

## 2023 - 2024



# What's Inside

Message from Our CEO	3
Who We Are	4
Year in Review	5
Inspiration	11
Mentoring	16
Socialising	18
Learning	19
Beyond the Forum	21

# Message from Our CEO

Welcome to the first Entrepreneurs' Forum impact report. I know that surrounding yourself with great people is key to entrepreneurial success and I am immensely proud of the community that the Forum has built over the past 21 years. Putting a figure on our impact isn't straightforward. Entrepreneurs come to our community to be inspired and energised, often with a single sentence or piece of advice resonating and changing the course of their journey. A member recently told me about a story they had heard at our conference in 2014 and even today, ten years on, the messages that were shared are helping them to reset when they encounter challenges.

Our members talk passionately about the people they meet at our events and relationships which started within our walls that develop into lifelong friendships. Relationships form naturally as well as through our mentoring programme where we connected **over 100 entrepreneurs** this year.

Our key measure of impact is how our members feel after attending our events. I'm delighted that **93% of event attendees reported being more energised** because of what we do, scoring our events 9.3/10.

I cannot write this introduction without referring to our Scale-up Leaders' Academy which gained accreditation from

the ScaleUp Institute in 2023, following their rigorous assessment. Our six month leadership programme, developed specifically for entrepreneurs, helps ready the founder for high growth. Over 50 entrepreneurs have benefitted from the programme over six cohorts, with 12 taking part in 2023. I am delighted to see these founders go from strength to strength.

Thank you to all corporate partners and business support partners who champion entrepreneurs in our region every day and bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to our community. Your help is invaluable to our members, of which we had **a total of 380 this year.**

Finally, a heartfelt thank you to the Forum team and our Board of Directors who have offered me encouragement as well as practical help throughout the year. In particular I will single out the support of James Robson MBE, our Chairman from 2018 - 2024, who is always incredibly generous with his time and wisdom in supporting myself and our members.

Looking ahead, I am excited about the opportunity to build on our achievements and amplify our impact across the region even further.



**Elaine Stroud**  
CEO

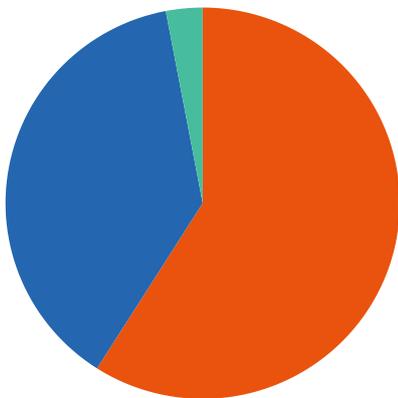
# Who We Are

We're a vibrant community of entrepreneurs in the North East, supporting each other to scale, survive and sustain our business journeys.

We're an independent not-for-profit membership organisation which focusses on the entrepreneur, not just the business.

Set up in 2002 by prominent entrepreneurs, Sir Peter Vardy and Lorna Moran OBE with 40 founding members, the Entrepreneurs' Forum has grown into an established community of over 350 entrepreneurs with representation from all sectors with annual turnover ranging from £250,000 to £300 million.

## How we're funded



- Member contributions 59%
- Commercial sponsorship 38%
- Local government support 3%



## Our purpose

To bring together and inspire North East entrepreneurs.

## Our values

### Members First

We always put our members first making sure their interests are at the heart of everything we do.

### Entrepreneurial

We're curious and we try new ideas so that we're continuously improving.

### Collaborative

We collaborate with each other and our partners, helping us to support well above our weight.

# Year in Review: Our Impact in Numbers

**361** North East entrepreneurial members

**106** mentoring connections made

**57** face to face events

**1,738** people attended our events

**93%** felt more energised after attending our events

**1,537** downloads of our podcast, A Cast of Entrepreneurs

**6,000** issues of forum magazine distributed throughout the year

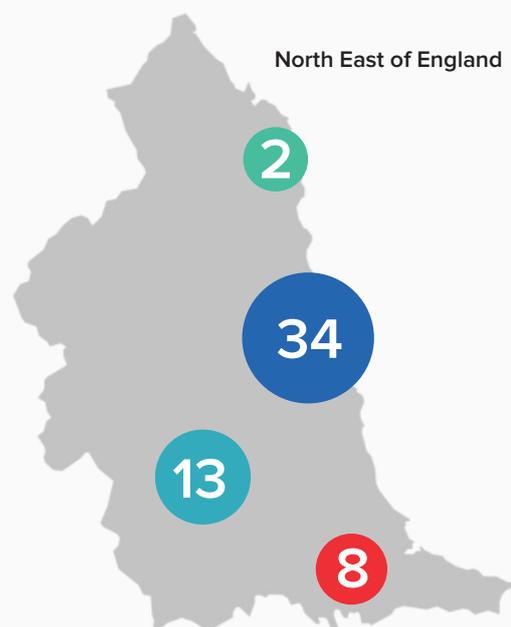
## Breakdown of event locations

**34** Tyne and Wear

**13** County Durham

**8** Teesside

**2** Northumberland



# Year in Review: Our Members

Our members are the lifeblood of our community, uniting and inspiring each other.

**361** entrepreneur members

**28%** members are female founders

**33%** members are based south of the region

**67%** members are based north of the region

**21%** members are under the age of 40

**26%** members are over the age of 55

**32%** members export

**34%** members belong to a family-owned business

**>11k** combined employees of our members' companies

**£2.2bn** combined turnover of our members



# Year in Review: Our Members

Hamish Adamson, Harlyn Solutions  
Bethany Ainsley, OptiMe  
Dave Allan, Resolution Media & Publishing  
Gareth Allen, Superior Recruitment  
James Allen, Guerilla  
James Allison, Middleton Lodge Events  
Imran Anwar, Alt Labs Studios  
Ian Baggett, Adderstone Group  
Simon Bailes, Simon Bailes  
Toby Bailey, RED Engineering  
Tom Baker, Certax Teesside  
Dame Margaret Barbour DBE DL, J Barbour & Sons  
Rosie Bath, Cera Cotton  
Nicola Bath, Parnell Plus  
Myk Baxter, Myk Baxter Marketing  
John Beamson, The CEO Adventurer  
Michael Beaton, DRS  
Laurence Beck, Parkers Chauffeurs  
Karl Beckett, Karl Beckett Business Walks  
John Behan, Smart Office Systems  
Kirsty Bell, Goldfinch Entertainment  
Yvonne Bell  
Olga Bell, MMCS Commercial Cleaning  
Sarah Bell, Hadrians Resourcing Solutions  
Nima Beni, Prima Cheese  
Dean Benson, Visualsoft  
Alisdair Beveridge, The Build Directory  
Stephen Black, Kinetic Properties  
Julie Blackie, Pink Boutique  
Mark Blacklee, Curo  
David Blair, Blair West  
Paul Blake, Newcastle Eagles Basketball  
Paul Blight, Tier One Capital  
Charlotte Bottomley, Third Aspect  
Diana Bourke, Echo-U  
Oliver Bourke, Mercury Wealth Management  
Mark Bracknall, Theo James Recruitment  
Louise Bradford, Creo Communications  
Richard Bradley, Dyer Engineering  
Margaret Bradshaw, Red Button Marketing & Training  
Stuart Bramley, Mira Marketing  
Jeff Breen, Cornerstone Fundraising & Development  
Owain Brennan, Seer BI  
Toby Bridges, NBT Group  
Andy Briggs, IA Growth  
Simon Briton, Quantify R&D  
David Broom, B7 Associates  
Maureen Brown, Sullivan Brown Resourcing Partners  
Kevin Brown, Pacifica Group  
Rob Brown, JUMP  
Richard Brown, Melius Cyber Consultancy  
Beverley Brown, CPBS Property Services  
Ian Brown, Chestnut BioPolymers  
Mark Bryant, Media Partnership  
Mark Bryce, Agilico  
Gill Burgess, Revolution Marketing UK  
Paul Callaghan, The Leighton Group  
Sarah Callender, Duo Global Consulting  
Paul Card, Paul Card Recruitment  
Chris Carroll, MGC Agency

James Carss, NRG  
Jo Carter, Concept Personnel  
Kimberley Cattin, SB1 Beauty Group  
Jonny Catto, iPac Packaging Innovations  
Brian Chick, Birch Tree Northern  
Nicki Clark, UMI  
Ben Cleary, Full Circle Brew Co.  
Tony Cleary, Lanchester Wines  
Caroline Cleary, Lanchester Wines  
David Cliff, Gedanken  
Chloe Clover, Wander Films  
Henry Coggin, Vida Creative  
Warren Colby, Agilico  
Gill Courtney, Stonelea Business Development  
Melissa Coutts, Recruitrite  
Steve Cowie, Melius Cyber Consultancy  
Graeme Coyle, Seller Presto  
Nicola Crowther, Crowther Mediation  
David Cudlip, The Advisory Group  
Glenn Cue, Todd & Cue  
Sara Davies MBE, Crafter's Companion  
Kim Davis, Explain Market Research  
Graeme Deanus, Acorn Laser  
John Devitt, Recovery4Life  
Alex Devitt, Recovery4Life  
Douglas Dinwiddie, White Digital  
Michael Ditchburn, Mint Interactive Solutions  
Michael Downey, Parker Knights  
Paul Drake, Sapere Software  
Simon Dronfield, Fuse Telecom  
Jon Dudgeon, Blu Sky  
Daniel Duffield, KOVE Properties  
John Duns, North East Times  
Lee Durham, durhamlane  
Bruce Durham, Huddle Culture  
Kelly Durham, Huddle Culture  
Mark Easby, Better Brand Agency  
Alan Easton, Boxmodel  
Lisa Eaton, Fabric Academy  
Paul Edwards, Edwards Commercial Cleaning Services  
Lorraine Ellison, Simply Additions  
Matthew Fannan, Atom Financial  
Martin Ferguson, MJF Group  
Neil Forrest, JMG Group  
Dan Foskett, Connection Flooring  
Ian Fraser, EastQuayIT  
Louis Freeman, Jump 360  
Jennifer Freeman, Be Found Be Chosen  
Richard Garland, GFW  
Emma Garrick, IGNITE Gas Training  
Christopher Garvey, Wolf Instinct Mindset  
Di Gates, Stick Theory  
Emma Gaudern, EMG Solicitors  
Nicholas Gianfreda, Wriggle Marketing  
Anna Gibson, Micro Scooters  
Ben Gibson, Micro Scooters  
Dave Gibson, Blu Sky  
Daniel Gibson, Harvest Foods  
Jonathan Gillie, Gillie & Blair Logistics  
Ian Gilthorpe, MBC Consultants  
Jonathan Gold, Finance Tree  
Sophia Gowland, The Petite Agency

Michael Grahamslaw, Northern Insight  
Jean-Louis Gravier, iPac Packaging Innovations  
James Gray, Taopix  
Andy Greener, Komodo  
Andrew Greenwell, NBMS  
Alasdair Greig, Northstar Ventures  
James Griffiths, IMH  
Michelle Grogan, Sereniti Health  
Jonny Grubin, SoPost  
Andrew Hall, Rowen Homes  
Sim Hall, Populus Select  
Michael Hall, eQuality Solutions Group  
Ummar Hanif, United Kingdom Development Corporation  
Paul Harbord, Steadfast Security Group  
Helena Harford, Print Cakes  
Samuel Harrison, Animmersion UK Ltd.  
Steven Hart, Central Employment & Training  
Sally Hart, GFW  
Lisa Hart Shepherd, The Lamp House  
Paul Haverson, D3 Associates  
Brendon Hayward, OSBIT  
Tom Heaney, Property Investment & Business Acquisitions  
Martin Hedley, Vision Achievement  
Ellen Hedley, Vida Creative  
Ian Henderson, The Duality Group  
Neil Henry, Option3 Logic  
Matthew Herrell, Atom Financial  
James Hill, Polar NE  
Richard Hogg, Jackson Hogg  
Simon Honeywood, Readysalted  
Charlie Houl, Hyhubs / Opencast  
Kevin Howell, Howell Technology Group  
Sarah Howell, Howell Technology Group  
Malcolm Humble, Arian EMS  
Gill Hunter, Square One Law  
Craig Huntingdon, Headspace Ventures  
Allana Hurst, Tights Tights Tights  
Jamie Hutchinson, Canning24  
Lee Hutchinson, Double Eleven  
Stephen Irish, Smart Origin  
Mohammed Ishaq, The Punjab Kitchen  
Vikki Jackson-Smith, J&B Recycling  
Kieran James, Stryde Accountancy  
Paul Jenkins, North IT  
George Jenkins, Modo Bloc  
Eldon Jobe, Melius Cyber Consultancy  
Brian Jobling  
Nadia Johnson, Ringtons  
Brad Johnson, Yellow Box Marketing  
Kevin Johnston, Funky Chunky Furniture  
Elaine Jordan, Extension Recruitment  
Brigitte Keatings, Ringtons  
Louise Kennedy, Oculus HR  
Benjamin Kinch, Greatspace Architects  
Ian Kinnery, Kinnery  
Phil Kite, The Adventurers Drinks Company  
Michael Knowles, ROAR Digital Marketing  
John Lamb, Accedo Group  
Carl Lamb, Accedo Group  
Kirsty Lawrenson, EYPS  
Steve Lawrenson, EYPS

Laurance Laybourne, 21 Hospitality Group  
 James Lees, Yellow Box Marketing  
 Jon Leighton, Land Digital  
 David Lewis, Collectables Retail  
 Peter Lillie, Double A Side Consulting  
 Ross Linnett, Recite  
 James Lomax, Lomax Training Services  
 Chris Lowery, NWR Hygiene Group  
 Linda Lowther, Advice4Business  
 Jonathan Luke, NEL Fund Managers  
 Robert Lynas, Engineering Design  
 Consultancy  
 Rachel Lynch, The Community Network  
 Jamie Mableson, Fuse Media  
 Andrew Mackay, Coleman James  
 Meenu Malhotra, Malhotra Group  
 Pete Mallon, North East Times  
 Chris March, Allies Group  
 Joel Marks, Cheviot Insured  
 Sally Marshall, Marshall Robertson Group  
 Nigel Marston, Jane Prior Funeral  
 Directors  
 Dan Martin, Swarm Energy  
 Suzie Martin, Smart-in Mortgages  
 Nikki Masterman, Inspired HR  
 Rob Mathieson, Ion Industries  
 Matthew Mavir, Last Night of Freedom  
 Tom Maxfield, Tom's Companies  
 Kelly Maxwell, Kelly's Heroes Private  
 Tuition  
 Lyle McCalmont, MCD Systems  
 Luis McCarthy, JMAC Group Holdings  
 Natasha McDonough, MMC Research &  
 Marketing  
 Ian McElroy, Tier One Capital  
 Lorraine McGill, Willow & Maine  
 Paul McGowan, Collingwood Legal  
 Neil McGregor, N McGregor Property  
 Services  
 Ben McKechnie, Epicurium  
 Phil McKenzie, Goldfinch Entertainment  
 Alastair McLeod, Gray Fox Consulting  
 David McPherson, Melius Cyber  
 Consultancy  
 Colin McQuade, CJM Recycling  
 Jayde McQuade, CJM Recycling  
 Keith Miller, Miller International  
 Sophie Milliken, Moja Group  
 Nigel Mills CBE  
 Paul Milner, Alt Studios  
 Ammar Mirza CBE, SME Centre of  
 Excellence  
 Sarah Monk, The Edwin Group  
 Caroline Moody, Moody Logistics &  
 Storage  
 Amy Mooney, Gas Angel  
 Paul Moore, Happiest at Home  
 Peter Moore, T3 Security  
 Joaquin Morales, New Horizon Marketing  
 and Advertising  
 Lorna Moran OBE  
 Chris Mullen, Classic Windows North East  
 Charlotte Nichols, Harvey & Hugo  
 Andrew Nicholson,  
 ImproveMyFactory.com  
 David Nicholson, The Nicholson Group  
 Graham Nicholson, G Forex  
 Christine Nugent  
 Nick Oates, 55 Degrees & Oates Family  
 Investment Co.  
 Mike O'Brien  
 Anthony O'Neill, The TV Agency

Kari Owers, O Agency  
 Brian Palmer, Tharsus Group  
 William Palmer, Central Employment &  
 Training  
 Chris Park, Park Corporate Insurance  
 Brokers  
 David Park, Park Corporate Insurance  
 Brokers  
 Dan Parker, Aspect Facades  
 Steven Parker, Phonetic Digital  
 Claire Parry, Week2Week Serviced  
 Apartments  
 Ean Parsons, Parsons Containers  
 Stephen Paul, Valued  
 Chris Peacock, Peacocks Medical Group  
 Sarat Pediredla, Hedgehog Lab  
 David Penny, Penny Petroleum Group  
 Pamela Petty, Entreprenising  
 Sarah Pittendrigh, Sarah Pittendrigh  
 Coaching  
 Jon Place, Integrity Technology Services  
 NE  
 Ruth Plater, Radial Path  
 Chrissie Plunkett, Twist Group  
 Paul Ponton, Central Employment &  
 Training  
 David Porter, Surge Marketing Solutions  
 Sarah Price, Go Well  
 Graham Purvis, Robson Laidler  
 Ben Quaintrell, My Property Box  
 Lee Quarzi, Lumo.Tax  
 Mike Racz, Racz Group  
 Steven Rawlingson, Samuel Knight  
 International  
 Michaela Reaney, The Opportunity Group  
 Tayler Reed, iPac Packaging Innovations  
 Sarah Reid, Richard Reed Solicitors  
 Nikki Renton, J Renton Groundworks  
 Ian Richards, Northstar Ventures  
 Ben Richardson, Accedo Group  
 Graham Robb, Recognition Marketing &  
 PR  
 Steven Robinson, Blu Sky  
 Bianca Robinson, CEO Sleepout  
 James Robson MBE, Alexander Jewitt &  
 Co. / Exwold Technology  
 Gary Rodgers, Agilico  
 Claire Rolston, CLR Law  
 Claire Rutherford, Definition IP  
 Nick Salloway, Qrious  
 Keian Sanchez, A Greener Solution  
 John Sanderson, STR Enterprises &  
 Keeping Inn  
 Scott Savin, Alt Studios  
 Nadia Scott, ReTraining  
 Bill Scott, Wilton Engineering  
 Paul Scott, NEL Fund Managers  
 Mark Scott, Skyflo Digital  
 Wenyan Sharp, Galaxy Energy Solutions  
 Sue Shaw-Toomey, Toomey Legal  
 Richard Shell, The Doxford Group  
 Garry Sheriff, IT Professional Services  
 Helen Short, Absolute Quality  
 Consultancy & Training Ltd.  
 Andrew Silver, 360 Growth Partners  
 Andrew Skelton, Smart Office Systems  
 Rachel Skeoch, Truenorth Marketing  
 Karl Smith, Urban Surfer  
 Dan Smith, TMP Wealth Management  
 Dale Smith, Host & Stay  
 Elliot Smith, Ringtons  
 Tom Smith, Ringtons

Rob Smith, William Smith Group 1832  
 Julia Smith, People Science Consulting  
 Tony Snaith, Communicate Technology  
 Sam Spoons, Talentheads  
 Andrew Stevenson, Samson Forth  
 David Stimson, Bennu Consulting  
 Carole Stonehouse  
 Paul Sykes, The Unite Group  
 Ben Tansey, Reheat (Renewable  
 Technologies)  
 Sam Tate, New World Financial Group  
 Graeme Tennick, Tennick Accountants  
 Sarah Thackray, BeaconHouse Events  
 Mark Thompson, Ryder Architecture  
 Joe Thompson, TT Industrial  
 Chris Thompson, Media Borne  
 Mark Trett, Central Employment &  
 Training  
 Kimberley Turner, Double Eleven  
 Nevil Tynemouth, New Results  
 Sir Peter Vardy, The Vardy Group of  
 Companies  
 Samantha Vassallo, Horizon Works  
 Marketing  
 Daniel Wade, Wade Construction  
 Management Consultants  
 Alastair Waite, Altec Engineering  
 Emma Walker, EW Estates  
 Martin Walker, Resolution Media &  
 Publishing  
 Paul Walker  
 Sarah Walmsley, Go Well  
 Andy Walton, The Nine Software  
 Company  
 Tim Ward, Do and Grow  
 Sasha Warr, Outsourced HR  
 Joanne Warren, Lumo.Tax  
 John Waterworth  
 Pete Watson, Atlas Cloud  
 Laura Weaving, Duo Global Consulting  
 Ltd.  
 Karen Weir, Weir Insurance Brokers Ltd.  
 Marcus Welch, Gosforth Fire Station  
 Oliver Wentworth, Wentworth Security  
 & Fire Protection  
 Simon West, Blair West  
 Sian Whelan, Norton Loxley  
 Keith Wickham, Gate 7  
 Jessica Williams, Just Williams Ltd.  
 Joanna Williams, Parnell Plus  
 Tony Wilson, Smart IT Support  
 Jay Wilson, Jaccountancy  
 Neil Wilton, Martlet  
 Karen Winterhalter, Onyx Health  
 Joe Wood, Country Style Foods  
 Johnny Woods, Thrive Marketing  
 Maureen Wright, Westray Recruitment  
 Group  
 Ashleigh Wright, Westray Recruitment  
 Group  
 Graham Wylie, Close House  
 Martha Wylie, Little Angels Fun Club  
 and Nursery  
 Deborah Wylie, Little Angels Fun Club  
 and Nursery  
 George Young, Smart Office Systems

# Year in Review: Our Partners

Collaborating with us, our partners bring knowledge, expertise and support us financially too. We thank each of them for their ongoing support.

## Our corporate partners

Our corporate partners each champion entrepreneurship in the North East. They give our members expert advice and offer their premises as venues for our events programme.



Brewin  
Dolphin

blusky

WHITE  
DIGITAL



ward  
hadaway



## Our business support partners

Our business support partners include local government and educational institutions. We share information about the support they offer to our members.



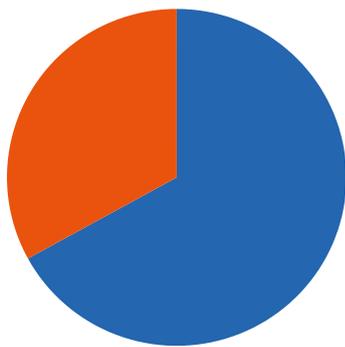
## Our 2023/2024 event partners

Event partners back our flagship conferences and annual gala awards dinner. They include: RBC Brewin Dolphin, Agilico, Lumo, British Business Bank, Wander, Northumbria University, Talentheads, Sullivan Brown, Park Commercial, UK Development Corporation, Kinnery, Business Durham, Week2Week Serviced Apartments, North of Tyne Combined Authority, Oculus HR, WilliamsAli, LDC, Ward Hadaway, RTC North, Malhotra Group and JMAC.

# Year in Review: Our Speakers

Throughout the year we bring a diverse range of speakers and panellists to our events and podcast.

With differing experience and viewpoints we want our members to hear from a variety of voices, ensuring that their experiences are positive and energising for all. It's not just about demographics, it's about diversity of thought. Here's some statistics for the year from across our podcast series and events calendar.



Male speakers (67%)  
Female speakers (33%)

10% BAME speakers

80% entrepreneur speakers

20% speakers from outside the region



# Inspiration: Insights and Events

Our main purpose is to inspire North East entrepreneurs and our programme of events throughout the year has done just that. With events taking place throughout the North East, we offer a variety of formats, a range of topics and an opportunity for people to build long-lasting relationships with fellow members.

## Dinners

We kicked 2024 off with our Chairman's Dinner. Over 80 of the region's entrepreneurs were treated to an honest and inspirational account from Sir Graham Wylie CBE on how he grew Sage from a humble start-up into one of the North East's largest employers, hiring thousands of people and supporting millions of customers.

At other private dinners we have heard from a fascinating range of speakers including Alan and Eileen Ferguson who told the story of Ferguson Transport and shared their passion for creating Ad Gefrin in Wooler, Sophie Milliken MBE on exiting a business and launching a start up again with Moja Group and Dale Smith on how he has scaled his family business, Host & Stay.

**“The event was one of the best yet, inspirational, motivational and empowering.”**

Steven Rawlingson,  
Samuel Knight International

## Round Tables

Other events in our 2023/2024 programme included round table discussions on topics to guide and inspire our members including: strategy, AI in marketing, preparing for investment and growing market share.

**“It was a great event, well organised, speaker excellent and very inspiring - could have listened to him all night.”**

Samantha Vassallo, Horizon Works

**“Sophie was a great decision for a Focus Dinner. Her story is real and honest and she is a pleasure to know and listen to. She is a motivational speaker and left me motivated to do and be more.”**

Nikki Masterman, Inspired HR

## Member Events

Our larger member events are open to the team's of our entrepreneurial members, widening the impact of our inspiration. From succession planning to hearing the experiences of entrepreneurs who are scaling their businesses, these events give the opportunity to hear real, lived experiences of entrepreneurs in the North East.

**“Inspiring, insightful and good fun. Excellent stories and good snippets to take out of them too.”**

Paul Edwards,  
Edwards Commercial Cleaning

**“Great choice of a panel. Really engaging and likeable people, who felt real.”**

Rob Mathieson, ION Industries



## On-site Visits

On-site visits are an exclusive opportunity for our members to get behind the scenes of some of the North East's most innovative and successful businesses, providing insight into best-practice and ideas to implement in their own business. We're grateful to Durham Distillery and Ringtons for allowing us access to their facilities in 2023.

**“Really enjoyed hearing about John's story of scale, tasting the gin and connecting with great entrepreneurs.”**

Joanne Warren, LUMO

**“Great to get inside a well run factory. The succession story of the 5th generation into this family business is fascinating.”**

James Robson MBE,  
Alexander Jewitt & Co.

## Entrepreneurial Awards

The jewel in the crown of the North East entrepreneurial calendar, our Entrepreneurial Awards celebrate and illuminate the best of the region's trailblazing business leaders.

### 2023 Entrepreneurial Awards Winners

<b>Emerging Talent</b>	Daniel Wade, Wade CMC
<b>Scale-up Entrepreneur of the Year</b>	Dale Smith, SDDE Group
<b>Entrepreneur of the Year</b>	Ben Ridgway and Jamie Cooke, iamproperty
<b>Mentor of the Year</b>	Alice Hall
<b>Lifetime Achievement</b>	Sir Graham Wylie CBE



## Conferences

Fortune Favours the Brave and Together We Can Take on the World are the two biggest entrepreneurial events in the region, bringing together 250 entrepreneurs to be inspired by amazing stories and make connections with other business leaders from our region.

With 77% of respondents to our feedback rating the conference either 9 or 10 out of 10, we're proud of the positive impact each conference has on our community - and we know that hearing honest and motivating stories can have a life-changing impact on our audience. From the maverick marketing story from Tony Anderson, easyjet to the resilience and determination of Rob Law, Trunki and the sustainability stories of Jo Chidley, Beauty Kitchen and Shelley Lawson, Frog Bikes, we create a day of entrepreneurs learning from entrepreneurs.

**“As always a great mix of inspiring speakers.”**

Andy Briggs, IA Growth

**“A superbly organised day with high quality speakers covering a good range of topics that included sustainability and social value in entrepreneurship. Good opportunities to network and lots of great inspiration to be had.”**

Bianca Robinson, CEO Sleepout



# Inspiration: Podcast

## A CAST OF **ENTREPRENEURS**

In May 2023 we launched our new podcast, A Cast of Entrepreneurs. As well as bringing together 36 entrepreneurs over 12 episodes, the podcast provides a platform to tell the stories and amplify the entrepreneurial voices of the North East.

With guests including Sara Davies MBE, founder of Crafters Companion and Dragon's Den investor, Rez Gachcar, founder of Mud Daddy and Entrepreneurial Awards winner in the Emerging Talent category and Kimberley Turner, Director of Double Eleven, the fastest growing large company in the region, the episodes have been downloaded over 1,500 times.

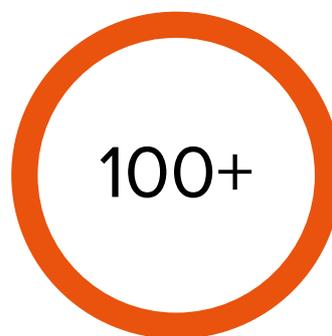


# Mentoring

Peer-to-peer sharing of experience is at the heart of the Forum's mentoring support and is available to all entrepreneur members. Thank you to all our members who give their time altruistically to help others, we couldn't deliver our mentoring programme without you.



mentoring connections helping entrepreneurs grow and build resilience and offering support over the long-term or for a one-off challenge



entrepreneurs enrolled as a mentor, giving their time altruistically to support their peers



Mentoring support included helping with governance decisions, expanding and setting up in the USA, brand re-launch, e-commerce sales growth, product sourcing, family business support and bouncing back from closing part of the business.

“Kirsty was the perfect mentor. During our session we discussed maximising on things that are going well and areas which need improvement. She has been great at giving me a fresh perspective and guidance on how to achieve this through small manageable steps.”



Kelly Maxwell, Kelly’s Heroes Private  
paired with  
Kirsty Lawrenson, EYPS

“Although Richard is in a manufacturing business, and Vida Creative is a digital agency, I think, as business owners we go through similar challenges and experiences, so his insight was extremely beneficial and thought-provoking.”



Ellen Hedley, Vida Creative  
paired with  
Richard Bradley, Dyer Engineering



# Socialising

We make building relationships and authentic friendships with fellow entrepreneurs easy at our many, varied social events across the region.

Having fun with us has sparked hundreds of conversations, provided a welcome relief from day-to-day business and offers peer support in a relaxed environment.

In addition to our own Entrepreneurs' Forum events, we've been able to offer our members the opportunity to socialise with each other at some leading events in the region including watching thrilling basketball at the Newcastle Eagles, dancing and laughing at the Utilita Arena and enjoying a round of golf at Close House.

**"Friday night was a fantastic experience attending Michael McIntyre's comedy show at Newcastle Arena with fellow members of the Entrepreneurs' Forum! Great to meet some new faces too. And after one of those long business travel ridden weeks, laughter was truly the best medicine."**

Toby Bridges, The NBT Group

**"Thank you so much for inviting us to the Madness gig, it was great fun and I enjoyed chatting to fellow EF members."**

Sarah Thackray, BeaconHouse Events

**18** social events

**236** entrepreneurs coming together from all corners of the North East



# Learning: Workshops

We believe successful entrepreneurs create a culture of learning in their businesses. This is why we encourage our members to bring their senior leadership teams to our workshops.

In 12 months we have hosted six expert-led workshops. Combining thought-provoking talks and interactive sessions, we've covered topics from how to build a high performance culture to executing effective social media strategies.



**“This was by far the best workshop I’ve attended in a long time. I found the speaker very genuine and relatable and gave some extremely practical guidance that can be implemented straight away.”**

Melissa Coutts, Recruitrite UK

**“This event was entertaining inspiring and engaging. It was great to have some really simple illustrations in multiple formats and I think that everybody attending will take away a real benefit. Well done.”**

Alisdair Beveridge,  
The Build Directory

## 303

participants over six sessions

## 6,363

hours of learning

# Learning: Scale-up Leaders' Academy

Our Scale-up Leaders' programme supported a sixth cohort of entrepreneurs in putting the foundations and structures in place to scale their businesses. Taking the total number of entrepreneurs who joined the Academy since its launch in 2017 up to 58, the impact of the 2023 cohort alone has been extensive:

12

entrepreneurs

29

new jobs created

8

senior promotions

£25k

new investment

6

new product launches

20+

new collaborations

"I now have the confidence to know I have tried and tested methods which have seen other businesses flourish and that insight and knowledge makes me feel less like I am making it up and more that I am driving the business for growth with knowledge and awareness."

Sam Spoons,  
Talentheads

"I can't thank Ian and the Forum enough for the difference they have made."

Andrew Greenwell,  
NBM Solutions

"Thanks to SULA, my business knowledge has dramatically increased. I have been able to develop my skills and provide my employees with the tools they need to establish effective processes and succeed. We also increased our forecast significantly after being on the programme."

Chris Carroll,  
MGC Agency

# Beyond the Forum

## Our Environment

We are committed to operating sustainably and where possible we are minimise our impact on the environment.

- Our magazine is printed on paper sourced from suppliers certified by the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) and the Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC). These certifications ensure that the paper used originates from responsibly managed forests and other controlled sources that comply with strict environmental, social, and economic standards. The ink used is vegetable.
- To minimise miles travelled to our events, we promote the use of public transport.
- We help to educate our membership on sustainable practices and in 2023 hosted a workshop on the Green Transition in partnership with Northumbria University.
- We work with event venues to minimise our carbon footprint and plastic waste.

## Our Supply Chain

We make every effort to use North East suppliers. In the year ending March 2024 over 85% of our suppliers were based locally. Non-local suppliers include speaker fees and travel to bring speakers from outside of the region to our events.



# Beyond the Forum

## Our Communities

In 2023 we supported local charities, extending our impact of the Forum into the wider community.

- Our annual Entrepreneurial Awards Dinner raised £7122.08 for Children's Heart Unit Fund (CHUF), a charity which supports children and their families receiving treatment at the Freeman Hospital in Newcastle.
- We raised some more money for CHUF and had lots of fun with some adventurous entrepreneurs taking part in the Annual Dragon Boat Race on the River Tyne.
- Elaine, our CEO, pedalled over 500 miles in eight days raising £998 for Smart Works, helping women secure employment and giving them confidence to reach their full potential.



# Our Governance

**We are a not-for-profit membership organisation.**

Our Board of Directors are all seasoned entrepreneurs who meet quarterly to steer the strategy and ensure we drive forward our ambition to make the North East an exceptional place to be an entrepreneur. The Board is led by Brendon Hayward who was appointed in January 2024. All board members offer their time to the Entrepreneurs' Forum on a voluntary basis.



**Brendon Hayward (Chair)**

Co-founder, OSBIT



**Brian Palmer OBE**

Founder, Tharsus



**Gill Courtney MBE**

Founder, Stonelea Business Development



**Pamela Petty**

Founder, Entreprising



**James Robson MBE**

Founder, Exwold and Alexander Jewitt & Co.



**Toby Bridges**

Executive Chairman,  
The NBT Group



**Kari Owers**

Founder, O.agency



**Yvonne Bell**

Director,  
Bell Bros. (Ashington)



**Mike O'Brien**

Co-founder, Opencast

# Our Team

We're a team of six, led by our CEO, Elaine Stroud. Our culture is one of inclusivity and empowerment, with everyone given a voice and a chance to shine.

- We work flexibly so the team can work where it suits them best, making it easy to manage life outside work.
- We have opportunities to learn and develop both through participating in Forum events and external training:
  - Scale-up Leaders' Academy – a 6 month programme on how to scale your business
  - Small Magical Events by Do Lectures – an online programme to help build world class events
  - Mini Executive MBA



**Elaine Stroud**  
CEO



**Michael Dixon**  
Membership and  
Mentoring



**Amy Mason**  
Marketing and  
Communciations



**Sally Cowling**  
Member Experience



**Emma Mills**  
Events



**Stacey Crowther**  
Events

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