



Impact Report

2024 - 2025

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 second Entrepreneurs' Forum Impact Report.

When I look back at 2025, I am struck by the resilience, creativity and determination of our members. The Entrepreneurs' Forum exists to support these people - the individuals who take risks, create jobs and drive growth across the North East and beyond. Our mission is simple but ambitious: to be the number one support organisation for entrepreneurs in the UK. This year has reminded me why ambition matters so much.

The life of an entrepreneur is never easy. In 2025, our members faced rising costs, challenging government policies, skills shortages and uncertainty in the markets. Confidence was damaged by the Autumn budget, yet despite these challenges, our community of North East based entrepreneurs collectively generated turnover of £2.5 billion, up from £2.2 billion in the previous year. Together, they employed 16,000 staff.

Our quarterly pulse survey confirms our members have ambitious growth plans, with two thirds planning revenue increases in the next 12 months. Most can see opportunities to grow market share in their existing markets, whilst nearly half intend to introduce new products or services in the coming year.

International operations have been challenging with introductions of tariffs causing uncertainty. Yet despite this, our

members sought solutions. Take Victoria Lynch, founder of Stockton based Additional Lengths, who's shifted market focus from the US to Europe, Australia and the Middle East.

However, the numbers only tell part of the story. What excites me most is seeing the way our members support each other when given the opportunity. Our events programme is designed to create the environment where ideas and challenges can be shared openly and honestly. This year alone, we brokered nearly 100 mentoring connections, and provided over 4500 hours of education via our learning workshops. Time and time again, members tell us that these moments of connection are the inspiration that helps them move forwards with confidence.

Looking ahead, our ambition remains to be the leading support organisation for entrepreneurs in the UK, supporting the entrepreneur, not just the business. This means continuing to raise the bar on the quality of our events and programmes and investing in the insights and data which demonstrate the impact we have.

None of this would be possible without our members, partners and supporters. I am deeply grateful for the trust you place in the Entrepreneurs' Forum. As you read this report, I hope you take pride in what we have achieved in 2025 and feel inspired, as I do, about what lies ahead.



Elaine Stroud
CEO

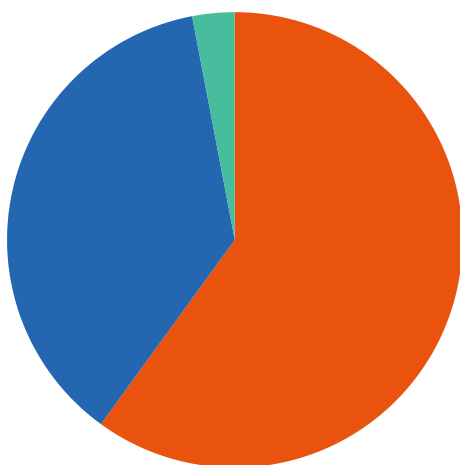
Who We Are

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

We are an independent not-for-profit membership organisation of entrepreneurs, for entrepreneurs - not just their businesses.

Established in 2002 by prominent North East entrepreneurs Sir Peter Vardy (Reg Vardy Group) and Lorna Moran OBE (Northern Recruitment Group) the Entrepreneurs' Forum has grown from 40 founding members into an established community of hundreds of business owners from all sectors with annual turnovers ranging from £250,000 to £400million.

How we're funded



- Member contributions 60%
- Commercial sponsorship 37%
- Local government support 3%



Our mission

To be the UK's leading support organisation for entrepreneurs.

Our purpose

To bring together and inspire North East entrepreneurs.

Our values

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

We're entrepreneurial, we try new ideas so that we're continuously improving.

Our collaborative approach with each other and our partners helps us support well above our weight.

Year in Review:

Our Impact in Numbers



2024 - 2025	2023 - 2024	
411	361	North East entrepreneurial members supported
96	106	bespoke 1-1 mentoring connections
70	57	face to face events
6	0	online events
1,700	1,738	delegates attended our events
87%	93%	felt more energised after attending our events
4,500	6,000	copies of forum magazine distributed throughout the year

Breakdown of event locations

42 Tyne and Wear

2023 - 2024 figure: 34

10 County Durham

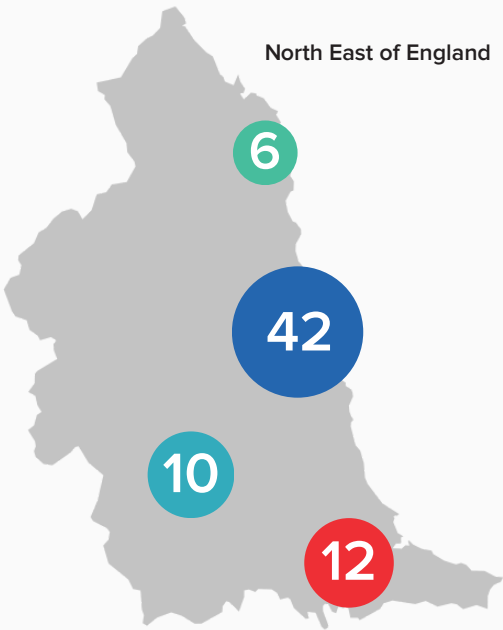
2023 - 2024 figure: 13

12 Teesside

2023 - 2024 figure: 8

6 Northumberland

2023 - 2024 figure: 2



Year in Review: Our Members

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

2024 - 2025	2023 - 2024	
411	361	North East entrepreneurial members supported
£2.5bn	£2.2bn	combined turnover of our members
16,000	11,000	combined employees of our members' companies
28%	28%	members are female founders
32%	33%	members are based south of the region
68%	67%	members are based north of the region
22%	21%	members are under the age of 40
24%	26%	members are over the age of 55
33%	32%	members who's businesses are exporters
37%	34%	members belong to a family-owned business

Year in Review: Our Members

Abu Ali, FRP Corporate Finance
Adam Woodhead
Alasdair Greig, Northstar Ventures
Alastair Waite, Altec Engineering
Alastair Yong, Affinity Systems
Alex Devitt, Recovery4Life
Ali Boville, Beartech Dev
Alisdair Beveridge, The Build Directory
Alistair McLeod, Gray Fox Consulting
Allana Hurst, Tights Tights Tights
Ammar Mirza CBE, AmmarM Group
Amy Mooney, Mutha Cuva
Andrew Greenwell, NBMS
Andrew Knowles, Knowles & Co.
Andrew Mackay, Coleman James
Andrew Nicholson, ImproveMyFactory.com
Andrew Silver, 360 Growth Partners
Andrew Skelton, Smart Office Systems
Andrew Stevenson, Samson Forth
Andy Briggs, IA Growth
Andy Greener, Komodo Digital
Andy Walton, The Nine Software Company
Aneta Majerska, AG Controls
Angela Carrington, The Bigger Picture
Ann-Marie Middleton, Zaltek
Aqib Zeeshan, Platvix
Ashleigh Wright, Westray Recruitment Group
Austin Gibbons, Brighter Compliance
Ben Cleary, Full Circle Brew Co.
Ben Tansey, Re:heat (Renewable Technologies)
Ben Wilkes, Metrik Systems
Bethany Ainsley, OptiMe
Beverley Brown, CPBS Property Services
Bianca Robinson, CEO Sleepout
Bill Scott, Wilton Engineering
Bob Evans, Kingsmere Finance Directors
Brad Johnson, Yellow Box Marketing
Brendon Hayward, OSBIT
Brian Chick, Birch Tree Northern
Brian Jobling
Brian Palmer OBE, Tharsus Group
Brigitte Keatings, Ringtons
Bruce Durham, Huddle Culture
Carole Stonehouse
Caroline Cleary, Lanchester Wines
Caroline Moody, Moody Logistics & Storage
Cassie Moyse, Portfolio North
Charlie Hault, HyHubs/Openecast
Charlotte Nichols, Harvey & Hugo
Charlotte Staerck, The Handbag Clinic
Charlotte Thompson, The Oat Kitchen
Charlotte Windebank, FIRST
Chloe Clover, Wander Films
Chris Carroll, ResolveBeyond
Chris Lowery, NWR Hygiene Group
Chris March, Allies Group
Chris Mullen, Classic Windows North East
Chris Park, Park Corporate Insurance Brokers
Chris Peacock, Peacocks Medical Group
Chris Thompson, Media Borne
Chris Wood, Tanglewood Games
Chrissie Plunkett, Twist Group

Christine Nugent
Christopher Garvey, Wolf Instinct Mindset
Claire Parry, Week2Week Serviced Apartments
Claire Rolston, CLR Law
Claire Rutherford, Definition IP
Claire Walton, Leaders are Making a Difference
Colin McQuade, CJM Recycling
Craig Hawkes, Kaleidoscope CFA
Craig Huntingdon, Headspace Ventures
Craig Smith, The Printed Bag Shop
Dale Smith, Host & Stay
Dame Margaret Barbour, J Barbour & Sons
Dan Kitchen, Razorblue
Dan Martin, Black Bee Rum
Dan Smith, TMP Wealth Management
Daniel Gibson, Harvest Foods
Daniel Wade, Wade Construction Management Consultants
Darren Race, Think Eleven
Dave Gibson, Blu Sky
David Blair, Blair West
David Broom, B7
David Brophy, Waymark
David Cliff, Gedanken
David Cudlip, The Advisory Group
David Lewis, Collectables Retail
David McPherson, Melius Cyber Consultancy
David Nicholson, The Nicholson Group
David Park, Park Corporate Insurance Brokers
David Penny, Penny Petroleum Group
David Porter, Surge Marketing Solutions
David Wilkinson, David Wilkinson Coaching
Dean Benson, Visualsoft
Deborah Wylie, Little Angels Fun Club & Nursery
Derek Lister, Nicander
Derek Scott, Consultive Solutions
Di Gates, Stick Theory
Doug Dinwiddie, Maitland
Duncan Young, Sanderson Young
Ean Parsons, Parsons Containers
Elaine Irving, Extension Recruitment
Eldon Jobe, Melius Cyber Consultancy
Ellen Hedley, Vida Creative
Elliot Smith, Ringtons
Emily Pearson, Our Mind's Work
Emma Garrick, IGNITE Gas Training
Emma Gaudern, EMG Solicitors
Fozia Saleem, Magnitude Biosciences
Garry Sheriff, IT Professional Services
Gary Giles, OGEL
Gary Rodgers, Agilico
George Jenkins, Modo Bloc
George Young, Smart Office Systems
Gill Burgess, Revolution Marketing UK
Gill Courtney, Stonelea Business Development
Gill Hunter, Square One Law
Glenn Cue, Todd & Cue
Graeme Cochrane, GLC Projects
Graeme Coyle, Seller Presto
Graeme Deanus, Acorn Laser
Graeme Tennick, Tennick Accountants
Graham Nicholson, G Forex
Graham Robb, Recognition PR

Graham Robson, Business Doctors
 Grahame Chapman, Cleaning and Support Services
 Grant Davidson, Rotational Engineering
 Grant Henderson, Shorza
 Grzegorz Majerski, AG Controls
 Hamish Adamson, Harlyn Solutions
 Hannah Brennan, Seer BI
 Helen Short, Absolute Quality Consultancy & Training
 Helena Harford, Print Cakes
 Helmut Okike, Quovoy
 Henry Coggin, Vida Creative
 Ian Baggett, Adderstone Group
 Ian Brown, Chestnut BioPolymers
 Ian Fraser, EastQuayIT
 Ian Gilthorpe, MBC Consultants
 Ian Kinnery, Kinnery
 Ian Lambert, Q Interiors
 Ian McElroy, Tier One Capital
 Ian Richards, Northstar Ventures
 Imran Anwar, Alt Labs Agency
 Jack Deverson, Evidence Based Education
 Jaimie Longmuir, USAsports.co.uk
 James Allen, Guerilla
 James Allison, Middleton Lodge Events
 James Clinghan, Trusted Business Partner
 James Gray, Taopix
 James Griffiths, IMH
 James Lees, Yellow Box Marketing
 James Lomax, Lomax Training Services
 James Robson MBE, Micropore Technologies
 James Widmer, Advanced Electric Machines
 Jamie Mablesen, Fuse Media
 Jamie Petterson, Sales Boutique
 Jason Redpath, Robson and Redpath
 Jason Turner, Burns and Turner
 Jay Wilson, Jaccountancy
 Jayde McQuade, CJM Recycling
 Jean-Louis Gravier, iPac Packaging Innovations
 Jeni Smith, NetKno
 Jennifer Freeman, Be Found Be Chosen
 Jessica Tucker, Social Allies
 Jessica Williams, Just Williams
 Jo Carter, Concept Onyx Recruitment
 Joanna Feeley, TrendBible
 Joanna Williams, Parnell Plus
 Joanne Warren, Lumo.Tax
 Joaquin Morales, New Horizon Marketing and Advertising
 Joe Thompson, TT Industrial
 Joe Wood, Country Style Foods
 Joel Marks, St. Ebba Capital
 John Beamson, The CEO Adventurer
 John Behan, Smart Office Systems
 John Devitt, Recovery4Life
 John Duns, North East Times
 John Porrett, Unique Magazines
 John Sanderson, STR Enterprises and subsidiary Keeping Inn
 Johnny Harrison, Corporate Personal Wellbeing
 Jon Dudgeon, Blu Sky
 Jon Leighton, Land Digital
 Jonathan Gillie, Gillie & Blair Logistics
 Jonathan Gold, Finance Tree
 Jonathan Luke, NEL Fund Managers
 Jonny Catto, iPac Packaging Innovations
 Josh Thompson, Endeavour Windows
 Joshy Jin, WowzaBox
 Julia Smith, People Science Consulting
 Julian Leighton, Dynamic Path Ventures
 Karen Weir, Weir Insurance Brokers
 Kari Owers, O.Agency
 Karl Beckett, Karl Beckett Business Walks
 Kate Cooper-Fay, Cooper-Fay Harris
 Kayleigh Laverick, Mamma Social Co
 Keian Sanchez, Greener Solutions Group

Keith Lawson, Metrik Systems
 Keith Miller, Miller International
 Keith Wickham, Gate 7
 Kelly Durham, Huddle Culture
 Kelly Maxwell, Kelly's Heroes Private Tuition
 Kerry Black, Clementine Services
 Kevin Brown, Pacifica Group
 Kevin Howell, Howell Technology Group
 Kevin Johnston, Funky Chunky Furniture
 Kieran James, Stryde Accountancy
 Kieron Goldsborough, Different Narrative Integrated Marketing
 Kim Davis, Explain Market Research
 Kimberley Cattin, SB1 Group
 Kimberley Turner, Double11
 Kirsty Lawrenson, Therapy North
 Laura Weaving, Perform Platform
 Laurance Laybourne, 21 Hospitality Group
 Laurence Beck, Parkers Chauffeurs
 Lee Durham, durhamlane
 Lee Hutchinson, Double11
 Lee Quarzi, Lumo.Tax
 Lee Robinson, JohnJasper Associates
 Lesley Wratten, Lemon Business Solutions
 Liam Monte, 3Dental Manufacturing
 Linda Lowther, Advice4Business
 Lorna Moran OBE
 Lorraine Ellison, Simply Additions
 Lorraine McGill, Willow & Maine
 Louis Freeman, Jump 360
 Louise Bradford, Creo Communications
 Louise Kennedy, Oculus HR
 Luis McCarthy, JMAC Group
 Lyle McCalmont, MCD Systems
 Malcolm Humble, Arian EMS
 Marcus Welch, Gosforth Fire Station
 Marie Ranson, Marie Ranson Coaching
 Mark Black, Clementine Services
 Mark Blacklee, Clementine Services
 Mark Bracknall, Theo James Recruitment
 Mark Bryant, Media Partnership
 Mark Bryce, Agilico
 Mark Easby, Better
 Mark Edmondson, Inflo Group
 Mark Middleton, ZalteK
 Mark Renney, Wubbleyou
 Mark Scott, Skyflo Digital
 Mark Thompson, Ryder Architecture
 Mark Trett, Central Employment & Training
 Martha Wylie, Little Angels Fun Club & Nursery
 Martin Anderson, Lemon Business Solutions
 Matthew Boyd, Jones Boyd
 Matthew Fannan, Atom Financial
 Matthew Goddard, The Décor Group
 Matthew Herrell, Atom Financial
 Matthew Mavir, Last Night of Freedom
 Matthew Strain, Silva Lex
 Maureen Brown, Sullivan Brown Resourcing Partners
 Maureen Wright, Westray Recruitment Group
 Meenu Malhotra, Malhotra Group
 Melissa Coutts, Recruitrite
 Michael Beaton, DRS
 Michael Coulthard, ThreeSixty Talent
 Michael Ditchburn, Mint Interactive Solutions
 Michael Downey, Parker Knights
 Michael Grahamslaw, Northern Insight
 Michael Hall, eQuality Solutions Group
 Michael Knowles, ROAR Digital Marketing
 Michael Povey, Circle Cloud
 Michael van Zwanenberg, DME Systems
 Michaela Reaney, The Opportunity Group
 Michelle Grogan, Sereniti Health
 Mike O'Brien
 Mike Racz, Racz Group

Mohammed Ishaq, The Punjab Kitchen
 Nadia Johnson, Ringtons
 Nagma Ebanks-Beni MBE, Prima Cheese
 Neil Forrest, JMG Group
 Neil Henry, Option 3 Logic
 Neil McGregor, N McGregor Property Services
 Nevil Tynemouth, New Results
 Niall Ash, Ashgarth Engineering
 Nicholas Gianfreda, Wriggle Marketing
 Nick Oates, 55 Degrees & Oates Family Investment Co.
 Nick Wilson, Robson Laidler
 Nicki Clark OBE, UMi
 Nicola Bath, Parnell Plus
 Nicola Crowther, Crowther Mediation
 Nigel Marston, Jayne Prior Funeral Directors
 Nigel Mills CBE, The Lakes Distillery
 Nikki Masterman, Inspired HR
 Nikki Renton, J Renton Groundworks
 Nima Beni, Prima Cheese
 Olga Bell, MMCS Commercial Cleaning
 Oliver Bennett, Tyne Bank Brewery
 Oliver Bourke, Mercury Wealth Management
 Oliver Wentworth, Wentworth Security & Fire Protection
 Pamela Petty, Entreprenising
 Paul Blake, Newcastle Eagles Basketball
 Paul Blight, Tier One Capital
 Paul Callaghan CBE, The Leighton Group
 Paul Card, Paul Card Recruitment
 Paul Drake, Sapere Software
 Paul Edwards, Edwards Commercial Cleaning Services
 Paul Harbord, Steadfast Security Group
 Paul Haverson, D3 Associates
 Paul Jenkins, North IT
 Paul McGowan, Collingwood Legal
 Paul Ponton, Central Employment & Training
 Paul Reade, Francis Bradshaw Consulting
 Paul Scott, NEL Fund Managers
 Paul Sykes, The Unite Group
 Paul Walker
 Paul Westgarth, Ashgarth Engineering
 Paul Wilson, EDM Zone
 Pete Mallon, North East Times
 Pete Watson, Atlas Cloud
 Pete Wilkinson, Reclaro
 Peter Eagle, TMS Grid
 Peter Fairley, Fairley Gunn Group
 Peter Lillie, Double A Side Consulting
 Peter Moore, T3 Security
 Philip Cain, CDC Wealth Management Limited
 Philip Inegbedion, OtaskiES
 Philip White, Irrigonics
 Ralph Thompson, Silvermoor
 Richard Bradley, Dyer Engineering
 Richard Brown, Melius Cyber Consultancy
 Richard Coates, Lumanorth
 Richard Garland, GFW
 Richard Hogg, Jackson Hogg
 Richard Lane, durhamlane
 Richard Shell, The Doxford Group
 Rob Boville, Beartech Dev
 Rob Brown, JUMP
 Rob Mathieson, ION
 Rob Smith, William Smith Group 1832
 Robbie Redpath, Robson and Redpath
 Ross Linnett, Recite
 Ruth Plater, Radial Path
 Ryan Ingram, Vacant Nests
 Sally Hart, GFW
 Sally Marshall, Marshall Robertson Group
 Sam Gordon, Big Purple Group
 Sam Spoors, Talenthreads
 Samantha Vassallo, Horizon Works Marketing
 Samuel Harrison, Animmersion UK

Sara Davies MBE, Crafter's Companion
 Sarah Bell, Hadrians Resourcing Solutions
 Sarah Callender, Perform Platform
 Sarah Grant, My Healthcare Recruit
 Sarah Howell, Howell Technology Group
 Sarah Monk, The Edwin Group
 Sarah Pittendrigh, Sarah Pittendrigh Coaching
 Sarah Price, Go Well
 Sarah Reid, Richard Reed Solicitors
 Sarah Thackray, BeaconHouse Events
 Sarah Walmsley, Go Well
 Sarat Pediredla, Hedgehog Lab
 Sasha Warr, Outsourced HR
 Shak Asghar, Like Us
 Shane Parkins, Climb and Conquer
 Sharon Starkey, Resolution Communications
 Shaun Hogg, Vove
 Shawn Bone, Cavu Corporate Finance
 Sim Hall, Populus Select
 Simon Bailes, Simon Bailes Peugeot
 Simon Briton, Quantify R&D
 Simon Dronfield, Fuse Telecom
 Simon Honeywood, Readysalted
 Simon West, Blair West
 Siobhan Collyer, Norton Loxley
 Sir Graham Wylie, Close House
 Sir Peter Vardy, The Vardy Group of Companies
 Sola Idowu, Hexis Lab
 Sophie Milliken MBE, Moja Group
 Stephen Black, Kinetic Properties
 Stephen Irish, Smart Origin
 Stephen Paul, Valued
 Steve Cowie, Melius Cyber Consultancy
 Steve Lawrenson, Therapy North
 Steve Pugh, Roadmap MBA
 Steven Hart, Central Employment & Training
 Steven Parker, Phonetic Digital
 Steven Rawlingson, Samuel Knight International
 Steven Robinson, Blu Sky
 Stuart Bramley, Mira Marketing
 Sue Shaw-Toomey, Toomey Legal
 Suzie Martin, Smart-in Mortgages
 Tania Cooper MBE, Steel Benders UK
 Tanya Garland, Cool Blue Brand Communications
 Tayler Reed, iPac Packaging Innovations
 Tim Ward, Do and Grow
 Toby Bailey, Red Engineering
 Toby Bridges, NBT Group
 Tom Baker, Certax Teesside
 Tom Heaney, Property Investment & Business Acquisitions
 Tom Maxfield, Tom's Companies
 Tom Smith, Ringtons
 Tomas Robertson, Circle Cloud
 Tony Cleary, Lanchester Wines
 Tony Snaith, Communicate Technology
 Tony Wilson, Smart IT
 Trevor Shingler, T & G Direct Funeral Services
 Ummar Hanif, United Kingdom Development Corporation
 Veronica Swindale, Nesma
 Vic Morgan, Venture Stream
 Victoria Lynch, Additional Lengths
 Victoria Taylor, Probe Industries
 Vikki Jackson-Smith, J&B Recycling
 Warren Colby, Agilico
 Will Halford, Boniplas
 William Palmer, Central Employment & Training
 Willow Redpath, Robson and Redpath
 Yvonne Bell, Bell Bros (Ashington)



Year in Review:

Our Partners

Working in collaboration with our partners, we benefit from their knowledge, expertise, and financial support. We sincerely thank each of them for their continued commitment.

Our corporate partners

Each of our corporate partners is carefully selected because they offer value to our members. They each champion entrepreneurship in the North East. They give our members expert advice and offer their premises as venues for our events programme.



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.



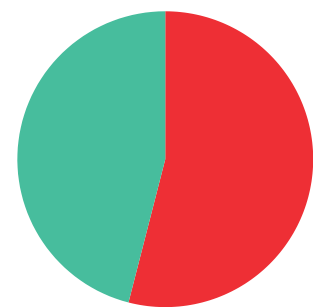
Year in Review: Our Speakers



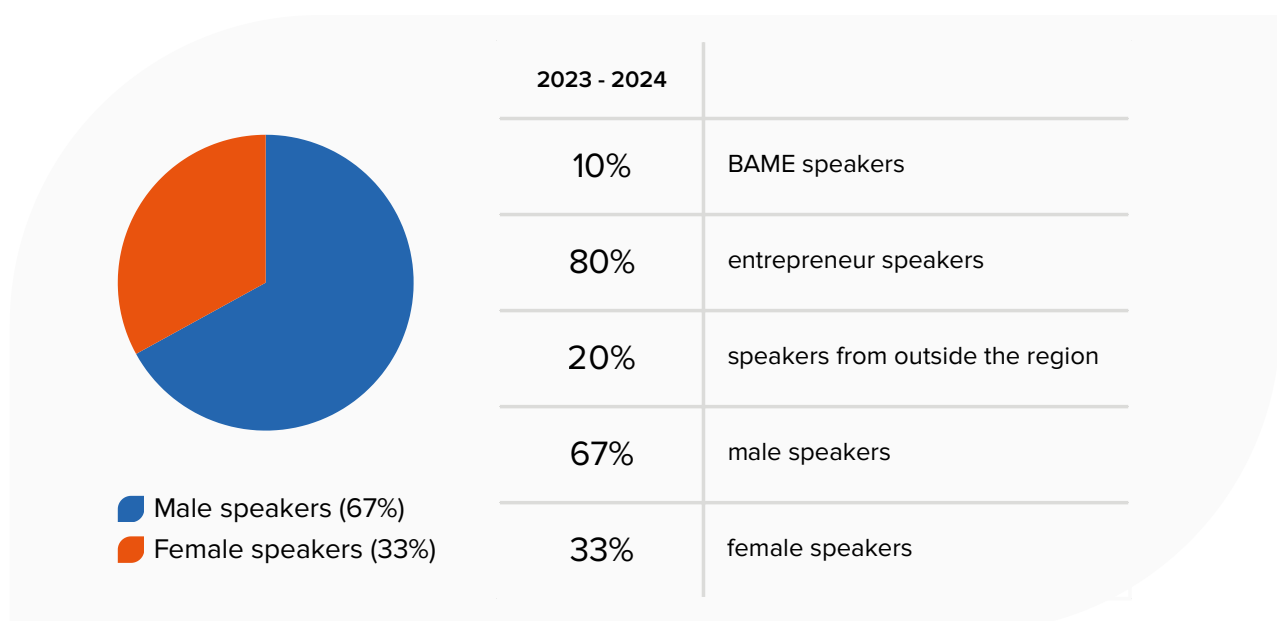
Throughout the year we aim to bring a diverse range of speakers and panellists to our events. In 2025, we worked to ensure we had greater representation from female entrepreneurs on our stages.

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 events calendar.

2024 - 2025	
7%	BAME speakers
80%	entrepreneur speakers
13%	speakers from outside the region
54%	male speakers
46%	female speakers



Male speakers (54%)
Female speakers (46%)



Inspiration: Insights and Events

Every entrepreneur faces days when they feel like quitting and returning to employment. In response, we offer inspirational events, designed to get entrepreneurs through the challenges, energising their commitment to drive their business forward. We do this through sharing of entrepreneurial stories and experience in various event formats.

Entrepreneur-only Dinners

We kicked off our 2025 events programme with our annual Chairman's Dinner. Over 60 of the region's finest entrepreneurs were treated to an inspiring and enjoyable evening at the breathtaking SIX rooftop restaurant at BALTIC. This year we were honoured to feature Lee Hutchinson, Founder of Double Eleven and Pneuma Group, who shared his journey from founding the business in 2009 to employing over 400 staff from their Middlesbrough HQ in 2025.

Members heard the honest truth about the challenges the business has faced over the

years, together with insights into the pivotal decisions that transformed it from a start-up into an internationally renowned brand.

At other private dinners we have heard from a fascinating range of regional entrepreneurs including Julian Leighton who details what it was like to step away from Orange Bus, the business he poured her heart and soul into, Herb Kim on founding Thinking Digital and Nagma Ebanks-Beni MBE on how she spearheaded Prima Cheese's expansion into international markets.



"Being in business can be a lonely place. To meet other entrepreneurs is energising and fills up my 'enthusiasm bucket' so I can go back to our business and lead the team with renewed optimism and vigour!"

Paul Edwards, Edwards Commercial Cleaning Services

"Love these dinners! Always a very supportive environment and a place for learning, sharing and collaborating."

Gill Hunter, Square One Law



More Round Tables

Entrepreneur-only small events create an honest environment where members can pick the brains of seasoned entrepreneurs, getting answers to the challenges they are facing.

In recognition of the value of these sessions, we increased the number from 10 (2024) to 17 this year.

"It was great to see three young people making huge strides forward in their business. Very inspirational, open, honest and good fun too."

Bill Scott, Wilton Group



Founder-Led On-site Visits

On-site visits offer our members an exclusive opportunity to go behind the scenes of some of the North East's most innovative and successful businesses. Where possible, we ask the founder to give a guided tour of their business, sharing valuable insights into how it was built. A massive thank you to EGGER, Prima Cheese, Lanchester Wines, Ad Gefrin, WANDER and Nissan for allowing us access to their facilities in 2024/2025.

Inspiring Stories from Those Who've Done It

Our larger events are open to the wider teams of our entrepreneurial members, extending the reach and impact of the inspiration we share. This year we heard from Dame Irene Hays (Hays Travel), Jonny Grubin (SoPost), Matt Mavir (Last Night of Freedom), Victoria Lynch (Additional Lengths), Dr Phil Buckley (Low Carbon Materials), Brian Palmer (Tharsus), Pete Watson (Atlas Cloud), Jonathan O'Halloran (QuantuMDx) and many more seasoned entrepreneurs.



"The tour, food and team were amazing. Very impressive new venture and exudes class and professionalism."

Ben Cleary, Full Circle Brew

"I've had some excellent experiences with the Entrepreneurs' Forum over the years, but yesterday's visit has to be near the top of the list. It was one of those days that makes you realise how much you don't know!"

Toby Bridges,
The NBT Group



"The achievements and the enthusiasm of the owner is inspiring."

Peter Conroy,
Metropolitan House



World Class Conferences

With over 73% of attendees rating our conferences 9 or 10 out of 10, we're proud of the powerful impact the day has on our community. We know that honest, inspiring stories can be truly life-changing - and that's exactly what we deliver.

Our conferences always include world class founders as headline speakers. This year we were given a scaling up masterclass by former CEO of Gymshark, Steve Hewitt, a powerful lesson in purpose-driven leadership by Rosie Brown co-CEO at COOK and were taken through the rollercoaster start up journey of Fever-Tree by founder Charles Rolls.

We couple the entrepreneurial lessons with sessions designed to spark creativity and build resilience. If you've ever been fortunate to listen to Mark Deeks you'll understand the power of music for entrepreneurs.



"It is great to hear the ups and downs of an entrepreneur's working life... makes you realise you are not alone."

Yvonne Bell, Bell Bros. (Ashington)



"The event left me feeling really inspired and excited, I got so much from it. The energy in the room was electric - it was such a great event!"

Jon Dudgeon, Blu Sky

"Great to network, socialise and chat business with like-minded people."

Richard Lane, durhamlane



"I always really value the day. I love the networking, as I think the talks form the basis for great conversations."

Andrew Silver, 360 Growth Partners



Entrepreneurial Awards: Illuminating North East Success

The jewel in the crown of the entrepreneurial events calendar, our annual Entrepreneurial Awards celebrate and illuminate the trailblazers, pioneers and innovators of the North East.

In 2024 the Forum introduced a string of new award categories in a bid to shine a light on more of the remarkable talent and diversity of the region's business community - representing every stage of the business lifecycle.

Our Award winners for 2024 were:

One to Watch (Replaced Emerging Talent)	Natasha Boulding, Low Carbon Materials
Impact Award*	Kari Owers, O Agency
Caroline Theobald Award*	Charlie Hoult
Scale-up Entrepreneur of the Year	Mark Edmondson, Inflo Group
Entrepreneur of the Year	Mark Edmondson, Inflo Group
Lifetime Achievement	Nigel Mills CBE

*New awards for 2024

Event Partners

Event partners back our two flagship conferences as well as our annual Entrepreneurial Awards dinner. Partners who supported our 2024/2025 events include:

Ward Hadaway, RTC North, Maitland, Prima Cheese, UMi, North East Combined Authority (NECA), ROAR Digital Marketing, WANDER, Northumbria University, Agilico, Oculus HR, Talentheads, Outsourced HR, 360 Growth Partners, Kinnery, OptiMe, ScaleUp Britain, ScaleUp Institute and The London Stock Exchange.

Mentoring

Mentoring isn't just a nice to have; a study by Forbes in 2018 identified that founders who have been mentored by a top-performing entrepreneur are three times more likely to go on and become top performers themselves.

80%

80% of business owners agree that mentors have a direct impact on the growth and survival of their business

96

We brokered 96 mentoring connections in 2024/2025 in comparison to 106 the year prior, helping entrepreneurs to grow and build resilience. Offering one-to-one support over the long-term or for a one-off challenge.

100+

Entrepreneurs enrolled as a mentor, giving their time altruistically to support their fellow members.

"The mentoring was focused around raising angel investment for my new climate tech start-up, Mutha Cuva. My mentor Nigel really challenged me on my original pitch deck – in the best possible way – and the changes I made off the back of his input went on to help me secure investment."

Amy Mooney, Mutha Cuva



"I have used the mentoring programme a couple of times now, as I am a big believer of mentoring, sharing knowledge, and asking people who can help to help; they usually do, and the mentors in the Entrepreneurs' Forum have helped me immensely, and for that I am very thankful."

Mark Blacklee, Curo



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 social events, we offer members the chance to connect at some of the region's leading experiences - from watching thrilling basketball with the Newcastle Eagles, to dancing and laughing at the Utilita Arena, and enjoying a round of golf at Close House.



“A big thank you to the Entrepreneurs’ Forum, Paul Blake, and the fantastic hospitality team at Newcastle Eagles for such a brilliant evening. Great networking, excellent food and drink, and some top-quality basketball on display. It doesn’t get much better than that.”

Michael Knowles,
ROAR Digital Marketing



Social events in 2024/2025 compared to 18 the year prior.



Entrepreneurs coming together from all corners of the North East for our social events compared 236 the year before.

Learning: Workshops

We believe successful entrepreneurs foster a culture of continuous learning within their businesses. That's why we encourage our members to bring their senior leadership teams to our workshops – to learn, grow and lead together.

In 12 months we have hosted six expert led workshops, each addressing barriers to growth. Combining thought-provoking talks and interactive sessions, we've covered topics such as 'AI in Action', 'The Power of PR' and 'Successful Spontaneous Speaking'.

2024 - 2025	2023 - 2024	
217	303	participants over six sessions
4,557	6,363	hours of learning



"PR & brand has been a focus this year, and this workshop gave several useful and actional insights into how we do this better."
Mark Renney, Wubbleyou



"Excellent speaker! Jo is fabulous at getting everyone in the room engaged and energised. A highly enjoyable session with a lot of practical takeaways and learnings."
Elaine Irving,
Extension Recruitment



"Brilliant workshop with great insights. This time, I walked away with something that also resonated on a personal level: the importance of building a network. A win-win all around!"
Alex Devenport, DRS



Learning: Scale-up Leaders' Academy

Our Scale-up Leaders' Academy is our flagship leadership course, designed for entrepreneurs who want to scale their organisations. Run annually, over six months, the programme delivers practical learning to founders to allow them to position their business for high growth.

Launched in 2017, the Academy is backed by the UK ScaleUp Institute as a "One to Watch" programme. Previous alumni include Jo Feeley (Trend Bible), Richard Lane (durhamlane), Raman Seghal (ramarketing), Steve Rawlingson (Samuel Knight), Emma Gaudern (EMG Solicitors), Chloe Clover (Wander Films) and Danny Wade (Wade Construction Management).

2017-2024 impact:

- 67 entrepreneurs completed the programme
- Average growth in employees since completion of the programme = +17
- Average growth in balance sheet since completion of the programme = +137%
- 10 founders have raised external finance totalling approximately £8 million
- 3 founders have successfully exited, two of which have gone on to create new businesses

2024 cohort members:

- Ellen Hedley, Vida Creative
- Steven Robinson, Blu Sky
- Jessica Williams, Just Williams
- Samantha Vassallo, Horizonworks
- Daniel Wade, Wade Construction Management
- Nikki Renton, J Renton Groundworks
- Laura Weaving, DUO Global Consulting
- Sarah Callender, DUO Global Consulting
- Graeme Cochrane, GLC Projects

Beyond the Forum

Our Environment

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

- Our member 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 made using vegetable oils and colorants, a more eco-friendly alternative to traditional petroleum-based inks.
- To minimise miles travelled to our events, we promote the use of public transport and car sharing where possible, including for speakers who travelled from outside of the region to our events.
- We work with each of our event venues to minimise our carbon footprint, as well as plastic and food waste.

Our Supply Chain

We make every effort to use North East suppliers. In the year ending March 2025, over 92% of our suppliers were based locally, with the final 8% being UK National or overseas.



Our Governance

We are a not-for-profit membership organisation.

Our Board of Directors are all experienced entrepreneurs who meet quarterly to guide our strategic direction and champion our mission: to make the North East an outstanding place to start and grow a business. The board is chaired by Brendon Hayward of OSBIT who was appointed in January 2024. All members generously volunteer their time and expertise to support the work of the Entrepreneurs' Forum. Previous chairmen include James Robson MBE, Nigel Mills CBE, Paul Walker, Tom Maxfield and Sir Peter Vardy.



Brendon Hayward (Chair)

Co-founder,
OSBIT



Kimberley Turner

FD,
Double Eleven



Brian Palmer OBE

Founder, Tharsus



Sarah Thackray

Co-founder,
BeaconHouse Events



Pamela Petty

Founder,
Entrepreinising



James Robson MBE

Founder, Exwold and
Alexander Jewitt & Co.



Toby Bridges

Executive Chairman,
The NBT Group



Kari Owers

Founder,
O.agency



Richard Lane

Co-founder,
durhamlane



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.

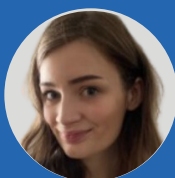
- We believe that when people are supported and heard, great things happen.
- We have hybrid working allowing for flexibility so the team can work when and where it suits them best, making it easy to manage life away from work.
- We have opportunities to learn and develop both through participating in Forum events and external training.



Elaine Stroud
CEO



Michael Dixon
Membership and
Mentoring



Amy Mason
Marketing and
Communciations



Sally Cowling
Member Experience



Emma Mills
Events



Stacey Crowther
Events

Proud to be partnered with:



Brewin
Dolphin

blusky

Maitland.
Creative & Digital Solutions



agilico
Workplace Technology

ward
hadaway

Working in collaboration with:



Northern
Accelerator 



Newcastle | Business
University | School



Northumbria
University
NEWCASTLE

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