

Impact Report

2023 - 2024



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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

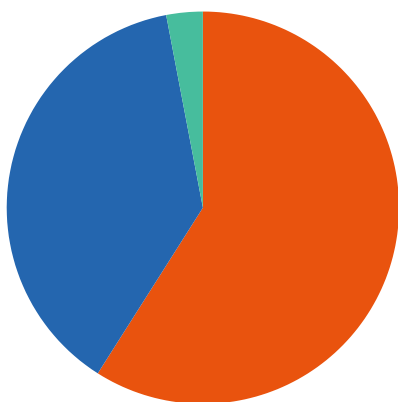
Who We Are

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

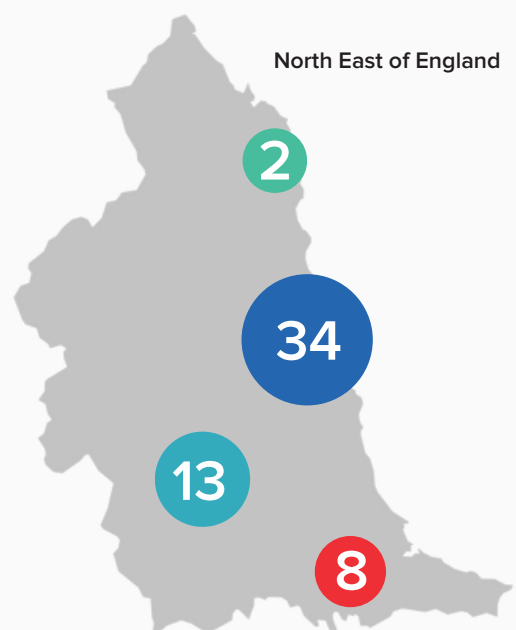
Breakdown of event locations

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 Houlst, 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 Mablesen, 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, Hedghog 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, Talentheds, 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.



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

Emerging Talent	Daniel Wade, Wade CMC
Scale-up Entrepreneur of the Year	Dale Smith, SDDE Group
Entrepreneur of the Year	Ben Ridgway and Jamie Cooke, iamproperty
Mentor of the Year	Alice Hall
Lifetime Achievement	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.

106

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

100+

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 Spours,
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, Entreprenising



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.

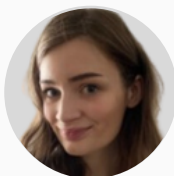
- We work flexibly so the team can work where it suits them best, making it easy to manage life outside work.
- We have opportunities to learn and develop both through participating in Forum events and external training:
 - Scale-up Leaders' Academy – a 6 month programme on how to scale your business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



Elaine Stroud
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Michael Dixon
Membership and
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Sally Cowling
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Emma Mills
Events



Stacey Crowther
Events

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