

## IT works

The drive to develop better links between IT businesses in the North and those in the South stepped up a gear at the region's biggest IT event.

As part of a long-term marketing campaign to win new business for IT and digital businesses, Tyne and Wear Development Company invited a handful of leading names to IT Works at St James' Park.

IT Works is the latest in a line of events Tyne and Wear Development Company has attended as part of a marketing campaign the agency is running with Newcastle University to promote the region's IT sector.

Interest in the region's growing digital economy was strong with visits arranged for a host of firms including London-based Vocord, which specialises in the development, manufacture and sale of a range of telecoms and video processing applications.

Leonid Molchalovsky, UK managing director, said: "IT Works was a great opportunity to meet North East firms. Tyne and Wear Development Company helped to identify a range of software developers, system integrators and distributors that work in similar fields and we're looking forward to developing that relationship."

Nick Kemp, business development officer at Tyne and Wear Development Company, said: "IT works is the biggest IT event in the North and is a fantastic opportunity for local firms to showcase the skills and services they have to offer.



L-R Vincent Woods, Benchmark Communications  
Gary Nestor, Newcastle University, and Nick Kemp

"The region has a young, growing and dynamic digital sector, with a great infrastructure and excellent raw materials. We have to make the most of opportunities like this to shout about it and get North East businesses talking to other companies in related fields."

The campaign was launched last year and has helped to generate several new business leads for regional companies by developing closer links with business counterparts in the South East.

## Robin a cert for success



L-R Gary Nestor, Robin Scott, Carole White from TEDCO and Sarah Gibson of Tyne and Wear Development Company

A Newcastle University student looks a safe bet for success after picking up a major award for his innovative online betting information service.

Robin Scott, 22, landed the top prize in the e-business section at Newcastle University's Enterprise Challenge awards, before walking off with the top award for Overall Business Viability for Systemlays UK.

Robin, a final year law student, set up the service in June 2005 to provide would-be punters with detailed information for placing and laying bets on betting exchanges. He plans to use the funding provided by Tyne and Wear Development Company – the award sponsors – to develop and market the firm.

Having had a keen interest in racing since his

childhood in North Yorkshire, Robin founded the company after successfully producing and selling various gambling publications on the eBay website.

He said: "I'd sold quite a number of e-publications on eBay but realised I could make more by cutting out the middle man and selling directly on my own site.

"The site is based on a computer database of horse ratings I've developed over the past decade. It's updated daily with details of things such as horse times and going reports to provide detailed race predictions.

"It's proved very popular with punters as the number of betting exchanges, such as Betfair, have grown. It's used by everyone from total novices through to experienced tipsters."

Members pay a monthly subscription to receive daily tips and lay selections. Such has been the popularity of the site [www.24hourtrading.co.uk](http://www.24hourtrading.co.uk) that Robin has even been approached with a job offer by the chief executive of Skybet.

Nick Kemp, business development officer at award sponsors Tyne and Wear Development Company, said: "We're working closely with the University to promote the development of the region's IT sector and are delighted to see young entrepreneurs like Robin making their mark in this area. Systemlays UK is an innovative business that looks to have a bright future."

## Contact Centre awards return

The success of the region's contact centre industry will again be recognised by its very own 'Oscar'-style awards ceremony.

The North East Contact Centre Awards are set to return for the fourth successive year with a black tie awards ceremony being held at the Stadium of Light, Sunderland on November 3.

Among the highlights of the event, which was launched by deputy leader of Sunderland City Council, Councillor Paul Watson, will be a competition to find the 'voice' for a new predictive dialler and voice recording telephone system - Elsbeth. There will also be a new award to recognise the achievements of the region's smaller contact centres.



L-R Andreas Lassmann iCampus, Councillor Paul Watson and Vicki Reed from MFI

Paul Buie, manager of Tyne and Wear Development Company, said: "The North East contact centre industry is widely acknowledged as one of the most successful and productive in the UK. These awards are helping to celebrate this success and the achievements of leading performers working in the sector."

Councillor Watson added: "I'm delighted to be able to kick off the countdown to this year's Contact Centre Awards. As in previous years they are geared towards rewarding front line staff and are hugely popular in the industry, which remains one of the most vibrant and successful in the North East."

Besides a new award for smaller contact centres, the competition will see centres competing for nine other 'Oscar'-like awards including Contact Centre of the Year.

The search for a UK voice for 'Elsbeth' is being run by iCampus, which has a base at Silverlink in North Tyneside. The company, whose award winning predictive dialler and voice recording system is now available in the UK, announced its search for the perfect British voice at this year's Contact Centre Awards launch.

Organised by Tyne and Wear Development Company in partnership with Sunderland City Council, the awards are supported by One NorthEast, Adecco Recruitment Services, North East Contact Centre Academy, Kelly Services, Pertemps, IT Campus, North East Employer Coalition and Contact Centre Professional.

## For assistance or information

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## Contact Centre Conference calls

The North East's first Contact Centre Conference will be held in Tyne and Wear early next year.

The conference, which is being organised by Tyne and Wear Development Company, One NorthEast and the Call Centre Advisory Board, will look at ways of developing one of the region's fastest growing industries.

It will look to build on the success of the North East Contact Centre Awards by bringing together business development agencies, senior decision makers in the industry and senior managers and team leaders working on the shop floor.

Objectives of the inaugural conference will be to develop a strong network of leading contact centre professionals, discuss the profile and image of the industry, share best practice and identify ways forward for sector-based issues.

Organisers hope the conference will become a permanent fixture in the industry's calendar.

For more information, please contact Sarah Gibson on 0191 5169099 or email [sarah.gibson@tyne-wear.co.uk](mailto:sarah.gibson@tyne-wear.co.uk)



# the investor

## Valeo gears up for Washington move

Valeo, one of the world's leading automotive suppliers, has announced plans to extend its UK operations with the opening of a new assembly facility in Tyne and Wear.

Valeo Cooling Systems Ltd will create up to 60 new jobs when its facility opens at the new 194 Commerce Business Park in Washington. The company will supply front-end modules including headlights and radiators for Nissan's new 4x4 which goes into production in December this year.

Arnaud Brunetiere, facility manager at Valeo, said: "Tyne and Wear has a strong automotive industry and supply chain, allied to an excellent tradition in manufacturing. With the skills base and support available it was the obvious choice for our new plant."

An inward investment team headed by Tyne and Wear Development Company and supported by Sunderland City Council and One NorthEast - both of which provided financial assistance - has helped Valeo with the move.

Property developers In-Site Property Solutions, which recently developed 194 Commerce Park,



Paul Buie (left) with Arnaud Brunetiere

also played a key role in supporting the company with the move.

Paul Buie, manager, Tyne and Wear Development Company, said: "We have been working closely

with Valeo for well over a year and are delighted that such a high profile company has chosen Tyne and Wear as the location for its latest investment. We look forward to seeing the company grow in the region."

## Tacle in the driving seat



Bob Rossiter, chief executive of Lear (left) with Cllr Bob Symonds and Mayor Tom Foster

Sunderland's reputation as the UK's fastest growing automotive location has also been strengthened by the opening of a new automotive components factory in Houghton-le-Spring.

Tacle Seating UK Ltd is a joint venture between the Lear Corporation, the world's leading automotive supplier and Japanese company Tachi-S, one of the leading Japanese automotive suppliers.

The factory, which will produce seating units for 144,000 cars a year for the Nissan plant in Washington, will create 250 new jobs on the Sunderland City Council owned Rainton Bridge North Business Park, with the promise of more to come. Sunderland City Council first met Lear in 2001 and has spent the last 18 months setting

up the deal with the support of Tyne and Wear Development Company.

Council leader and chairman of Tyne and Wear Development Company, Cllr Bob Symonds said: "This is yet another major US investment for Sunderland, demonstrating the importance of the city's economic ties with America both in terms of creating jobs and investment."

Paul Buie, manager Tyne and Wear Development Company, said: "This is a positive story for Tyne and Wear and the region as a whole. Lear's arrival is a major boost for our automotive industry, which continues to go from strength-to-strength, and demonstrates once again the region's ability to attract big name investors from around the world."

## Investment success

### Boreas expands into Newcastle

An international subsea engineering consultancy is expanding to open a new office in Newcastle as it looks to tap into the region's engineering and offshore skills base.

Boreas Consultants, which has offices in Aberdeen, London and Cranfield and employs 35 people, will open a fourth practice in Mosley Street thanks to the support of Tyne and Wear Development Company.

Boreas provides support to the oil, gas and renewable energy industries, specialising in subsea flow lines, equipment and control systems. It works for many of the world's leading companies including BP and Shell and has an annual turnover in excess of £3 million.

It is looking to grow its share of the international market and sees Newcastle as a key centre for meeting the needs of international clients and winning new business.

Malcolm Carr, director at Boreas Consultants, said: "The North East is a hotbed for offshore engineering expertise. The traditions established by British Gas have been maintained by the plethora of private companies and there's also



Nick Kemp (left) with Malcolm Carr

great research and development expertise and facilities at Newcastle University.

"Tyne and Wear Development Company works with many of the key players in the region's offshore industry and its support has been invaluable in finding a good location and setting up here."

Malcolm added: "The areas we're particularly looking at in the future will be fracture mechanics and pipeline research and development. We're also looking to

develop our presence in the renewable sector." Tyne and Wear Development Company has helped Boreas in its expansion plans, providing support in identifying suitable premises at Churchill House.

Nick Kemp, business development officer at Tyne and Wear Development Company, said: "It's great to see a growing company bringing skilled jobs to the region. We have a good heritage in the offshore sector and Boreas' arrival will add to the expertise and skills already here."

## Sound of success for Opus



L-R Mark Hunter Purvis, Peter Chapman & Adrian Howe from Opus21 with Deborah Fletcher

A fledgling Tyneside print and packaging firm is looking to expand after moving into new business premises.

Opus 21 Digital, which was formed earlier this year by Mark Hunter Purvis and fellow directors Peter

Chapman and Adrian Howe, has moved into a 3,000 sq ft facility at the Tyne Tunnel Trading Estate.

The company designs, develops and assembles prototype packaging and has a growing order book that includes major household names including Procter & Gamble and Scottish and Newcastle.

The new plant – the company's first since setting up – will pave the way for future growth. Opus has just taken on its first full time employee and hopes to add a further two or three by the end of the year, pushing turnover beyond £500,000.

Tyne and Wear Development Company supported Opus with the move. The agency helped the firm to identify a property that matched its needs and to access funding through the Selective Finance for Investment (SFI). This money has been invested in new equipment – including a digital press, one of only four in the country.

Mark, who along with his fellow directors has a wealth of print experience garnered from several years in the industry, said: "The funding has helped us to invest in new equipment which is vital for growing the business. We're in a niche market and the digital print press can really help us to open new doors.

"We've had great backing from Tyne and Wear Development Company and other agencies and are looking to the future with optimism."

Deborah Fletcher, information officer at Tyne and Wear Development Company, said: "The costs associated with setting up a new business can sometimes be prohibitive, particularly in an industry like printing where there's often a significant up front investment. Our goal is to take away these teething problems and help businesses thrive."

## Company praised by Big Lottery Fund

Big Lottery Fund has opened its new northern headquarters at the St James' Gate development in Newcastle creating 150 jobs.

The expansion, which was announced last year, sees Newcastle, alongside Birmingham, become a key operational centre for distributing lottery cash. This was a role previously undertaken by London and eight other regional centres.

Sir Clive Booth, chair of the Big Lottery Fund, opened the new office earlier this summer with Minister for Sport, Richard Caborn, and paid a glowing tribute to the role played by the Tyne and Wear Development Company.

Speaking at the launch he said: "The full backing of the Tyne and Wear Development Company was critical for us. We greatly appreciate the enthusiasm they showed from the start and the advice provided right through the process."

Tyne and Wear Development Company led a regional investment team that assisted Big Lottery Fund with the project. Others involved included Newcastle City Council, One NorthEast and Government Office for the North East.

Nick Kemp said: "Big Lottery Fund's investment in Newcastle is a major vote of confidence in the work of the current staff and opportunities within the area. It's nice for the company to receive recognition for the work we do."

Big Lottery Fund's investment in the region is a major step forward for the Lyons Review, which identified and promoted the relocation of civil service jobs from London and the South East.



Tim Davies-Pugh of Big Lottery Fund with Nick Kemp

## Spanish success in Tyne & Wear

A Spanish automotive supply company has celebrated six years in Tyne and Wear in style – more than doubling the size of its workforce since its arrival.

The Gestamp Automocion Group opened its first UK factory in Sunderland in 2000 to supply the Nissan car plant after receiving support with its investment plans from Tyne and Wear Development Company.

And, following a successful start to life in the region, Gestamp has enjoyed significant growth, with its workforce spiralling from 70 employees to more than 170.

Gestamp, which manufactures body parts, brake and clutch pedal assemblies, is already paving the way for future growth, having moved to a new 12,000 sq m factory on Washington's Stephenson Industrial Estate after outgrowing its initial site in Ferryboat Lane.

Pat Watson, non-executive director with Gestamp UK, said: "Tyne and Wear has proved to be an excellent location for us and the support we've had from Tyne and Wear Development Company has been excellent. We first met them in 1998 and they have provided valuable assistance ever since."

Gestamp's arrival into the UK was assisted by Tyne and Wear Development Company, which helped with the location of a suitable site, financial support, recruitment and government liaison. It is one of many international investors the company has supported since its formation in 1986.

Paul Buie, manager of Tyne and Wear Development Company, said: "We are delighted to have provided ongoing support to Gestamp over the past six years, from their initial enquiry through the first investment and the continued expansion of the workforce.

"It's great to see the firm, and the automotive sector in general, going from strength-to-strength."

## Newcastle bistro to hit TV screens



Tom Sillar (left) with Trevor Sawyer

A Newcastle bistro is set to star in a national television series featuring celebrity chef Gary Rhodes.

The Comfort Food Company, based in Pudding Chare, will appear on UK TV Food's new series on local food champions after being short-listed for the prestigious Local Food Hero Awards.

Led by Gary Rhodes and backed by UK TV Food, the awards recognise those working to promote British food and put it onto plates in pubs and restaurants.

Comfort Food Company, which was set up in 2004 by husband and wife team Tom and Emily Sillar with the support of the Tyne and Wear Small Business Grant Scheme, has made its mission to champion North East food.

It is one of only four restaurants nationwide that sources all its produce locally and prints the ingredients on its menu. A menu that includes mouthwatering dishes such as Parmesan risotto, Castlehills Aberdeen Angus rump steak and Robson's borage honey crème caramel.

Tom explains: "Our whole raison d'etre for setting up was to source food from local suppliers, so it's fantastic to be recognised for doing that. The North East has a fantastic food heritage and we're proud to reflect that in the food we serve.

"We've enjoyed an excellent first two years in business and this is really the icing on the cake. We're grateful for all the support we've had, particularly from the Tyne and Wear Small Business Grant team."

Funding from the Small Business Grant scheme, which is managed by Tyne and Wear Development Company, helped the company to set up and purchase key equipment.

Set up in 2003, the Tyne and Wear Small Business Grant scheme has supported more than 450 businesses since its inception. It receives Single Programme Funding from One NorthEast through the Tyne Wear Partnership and is managed by Tyne and Wear Development Company on behalf of the region's five local authorities.

Trevor Sawyer, project manager from Tyne and Wear Development Company, said: "It's rewarding to see the small grants scheme having such an impact. For many businesses like Comfort Foods it's crucial in getting successful ventures off the ground."

Filming for the show will take place over the summer and will be broadcast on UK TV Food in the autumn.

## Fired up for success

Funding from the Tyne and Wear Small Business Grant scheme has helped entrepreneur, Jo Ratcliffe, to realise her ambition of running her own business.

Jo, from Whitley Bay, set up Paintpots! early last year after benefiting from a grant and has enjoyed an excellent first year in business.

The innovative business, which is based at Monkseaton Metro Station, invites adults and children to come along and paint their own pottery. The pottery is then fired and ready for collection within four days.

She said: "It's very popular in the South and, after doing a bit of research, I recognised there was a gap in the market up here. Things have gone incredibly well in the first 12 months

and I'm grateful to the Small Business Grant scheme for the support they provided.

"It's always difficult taking that first step and getting your business off the ground. The backing I received enabled me to buy my first pieces of equipment."

It's been a whirlwind 12 months for Jo, who gave birth to her second child earlier this year, but has still managed to find time to work on plans to develop the business. Future plans include opening a second studio and branching out into other crafts and jewellery making.

Jo added: "I've got a few ideas as to how I'd like to see the business develop and I'll be working hard to achieve these over the next few years."



Trevor Sawyer with Jo Ratcliffe