

Two new recruits for MEA House

TWO new recruits have been appointed to work at a city office development which is celebrating its 40th anniversary.

MEA House, a five-storey building at Ellison Place in Newcastle city centre, opened in the early 1970s to provide high-quality, fully accessible office accommodation at competitive rents below market rate, exclusively for charitable organisations.

The development is still the only office accommodation block in the city to provide this service, and has extended its criteria to enable selected local community interest companies, industrial and provident societies and other forms of social enterprise to rent space there.

David Woolley from Gateshead will now become the development's facility supervisor. He will be the first point of call on reception, answering phone queries, and meeting and greeting visitors.

Originally from Wales, David worked in charity roles in London and Manchester before moving to the North East with his wife 23 years ago. He also worked as a tutor in Northumberland College, Newcastle College and North Tyneside College.

Woolley said: "There's a brilliant atmosphere here, and I enjoy the sociable nature of the position, as well as the variety of tasks involved. No two days are the same."

The second new starter is Stephen Williams from Byker, who has been appointed as a cleaner. Prior to coming to Newcastle, Stephen, originally from Liverpool, served in the armed forces for eight years.

Williams said: "I was looking for a job which involved working in a team, meeting new people, and helping towards a great cause."

MEA Trust chairman Colin Secombe said: "We're very pleased to welcome David and Stephen. They've joined us at a very significant stage in our history, and we're sure they'll be assets to the team."

New hotel jobs created as part of refurb deal

LEISURE

Coreena Ford

☎ 0191 201 6331
✉ coreena.ford@ncjmedia.co.uk

CAIRN Hotel Group plans to swell its ranks by 20% by creating 200 jobs as part of a refurbishment programme of four hotels.

The Newcastle-headquartered firm has completed a £31.5m refinancing with HSBC's Yorkshire and North East Corporate Centre, which includes £6.5m of new finance to support the revamp scheme.

The 21-strong hotel group, which employs 1,000 people, is giving a makeover to four hotels as part of an agreement with InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG), in which they will retain one of the IHG brands while Cairn retains ownership.

The hotels receiving the transformation are the Station Hotel in Aberdeen and The Bellhouse in Buckinghamshire, which will become Crowne Plazas, while the Chasley Hotel in Wakefield will become a Holiday Inn Express.

The Royal British in Edinburgh, meanwhile, will become a Hotel Indigo.

Cairn Group also says it will also use the finance to invest in upgrades at its other properties as part of its strategy to continually improve, and it also plans to seek further acquisitions to expand its portfolio.

The Tyneside firm owns four hotels in Newcastle, including the Cairn Hotel Newcastle, Carlton, Rooms Inn and the Royal Station Hotel, as well as hotels around the UK in London, York, Edinburgh, Fife, Aberdeen, Doncaster, Carlisle and Manchester.

It also owns three Holiday Inns, a Best Western, a Hotel Indigo, the Mercure Kings Head Hotel in Darlington and the most recent North East addition at Newcastle Airport, the Double Tree Hilton.



REVAMP SCHEME The Royal Station Hotel in Newcastle is one of four hotels in the Cairn Hotel Group being given a makeover

Cairn Group finance director Richard Warren said: "Our portfolio offers a broad range of hotels for a wide spectrum of customers, from the high end to travellers on a budget. However, some of our prop-



We will also be recruiting ambitious staff in these locations, boosting the local jobs market and economy

erties are better suited to a mainstream hotel brand as consumers are typically attracted to larger brands that they recognise and trust.

"That is why we have affiliated with IHG, which gives us a better path to market with some of our properties.

"We are undertaking refurbishment work at four of our properties to ensure they meet IHG's requirements and we will be working with local tradespeople and businesses in these communities during this process.

"We will also be recruiting ambitious staff in these locations, boost-

ing the local jobs market and economy."

An IHG spokesman said: "IHG is proud to work with the Cairn Hotel Group, which it sees as one of its major growth partners in the UK."

The multi-million pound refinancing was arranged by HSBC after a competitive pitch for the lucrative deal.

Tony Leech, HSBC Yorkshire and North East senior corporate banking manager, added: "The Cairn Hotel Group is a long-standing customer of HSBC so we are pleased we have been able to support the company on this latest project."

Making the dream of self-employment real

MANY people daydream about starting their own business, particularly in the North East if recent surveys are to be believed.

IT firm Sage revealed one in four would like to be self-employed while RBS found 31% of women in the region wanted to go it alone.

If you're one of those people, what's stopping you?

When you've been employed all your life you end up institutionalised to a degree. To step outside that bubble can be very daunting.

The perceived safety net of a regular fixed monthly salary is hard to give up. However in the current economic climate the reality is that nothing is

SARAH PITTENDRIGH

guaranteed. So why not grasp the nettle and create your own destiny?

I would probably have been a salary slave my whole life if I hadn't been forced into starting my own business back in 2008.

Back then I was a single mum reeling from the shock of losing my job as an events and marketing director when the firm I worked for went bust at the height of the recession. All I could think was

"How am I going to pay the mortgage?"

The need to support my son certainly spurred me on and I launched a business making made-to-measure chair covers and table linen for weddings, balls and corporate events.

I was bankrupt but managed to scrape together loans from my ex-husband and my family, as well as getting a grant from Business Link to create a website. I was securing business in the first month and now have 12 franchisees across the UK.

The freedom and the opportunities of being self-employed are immense but before taking the leap I would urge anyone to take a long, hard

look at their attributes first.

Running your own business is tough. You need to be self-motivated and very driven. You need a steeliness to your character and a self-belief that you're going to make it succeed.

Talking from experience, there will be knock-backs and doors shut in your face. You can't be scared to go and knock on the next door.

When I first started my company I pitched for an awards ceremony, but didn't get it because I didn't have a track record. It knocks your confidence but rather than going away and licking my wounds it just made me more determined.

If someone already has an existing supplier, you can't let that deter you. Whatever business

you're in there'll be competition. I simply persevered and persuaded venues to let me dress their function rooms to see the products in situ. That's when doors started opening for me.

Let your clients see what you can offer and how you're different to the competition.

I'm passionate about nurturing talent, and in this column I want to pass on my knowledge to the budding entrepreneurs of the future - whether it's writing a knock-out business plan, maximising social media or managing cash flow.

Sarah Pittendrigh is managing director of www.simplybowsandchaircovers.co.uk. Ask a question via Twitter: @simplybows