

## Gateshead Council takes the lead in Smarter Working

Gateshead Council has pledged its support for smarter working practices by signing the Work Wise Concordat. With a workforce of some 10,000 people spanning 1,200 types of job, it is the largest local authority in the country to become part of the Work Wise campaign.

The Council now plans to work towards the Work Wise Standard, a mark of excellence for those who actively plan and promote smarter working practices. Achievement of the Standard requires an organisation to demonstrate its understanding and use of smarter working as a strategic planning tool, to involve staff in defining future strategies, and to implement change that delivers benefits to the organisation, its employees and its customers.

Sarah Stewart, WWNE project director is delighted to welcome Gateshead Council as an active member of the campaign. She says:

"More and more organisations who work smarter notice savings in areas such as reduced accommodation costs as well as other benefits including, enhanced workforce productivity, improved customer service and in developing

their reputation as an employer of choice.

"The carbon agenda is also another important consideration. The reduction of our collective carbon footprint as a nation is going to be one of the major drivers for change in the way we live and work in the years ahead and smarter working has a major role to play here too."

Jeff Dean, Director of Corporate Services, from Gateshead Council, said:

"The adoption of smarter working practices within the Council has already led to a greater focus on output instead of just the number of hours worked in a week.

"In deciding to sign the Concordat we believe it will bring even greater clarity to the way in which we are shaping our HR and operational policies. In line with all public sector bodies we have a mandate from central government to reduce our expenditure year on year by adopting more efficient ways of working and I would encourage all local authorities to embrace the thinking behind the Work Wise campaign."

## Keen interest in advisory roles



The initial briefing session for potential WWNE Advisers

One of the positive outcomes of these more challenging economic times has been a recognition by organisations that to remain competitive, they must review all aspects of the way they work.

Against this backdrop, the wisdom of the Work Wise campaign and the benefits of smarter working have really begun to gain traction.

As a result, there has been a great deal of enthusiasm shown in Work Wise North East's (WWNE) goal to appoint a number of regionally based WWNE Advisers who are able to assist employers implement flexible and remote working practices.

The initial briefing session, which attracted 25 delegates, was held in December and two more, planned for March, are expected to draw similar numbers of consultants with relevant experience who wish to find out more about the benefits of becoming WWNE Advisers.

Susan Bilton, an organisational development specialist with Ark Associates, has already been signed up as a Work Wise Adviser since the start of the year and others are now going through the qualification process.

Those who wish to find out more can attend either of the briefing sessions in March as follows:

**Friday, 26 March, 10.30am-1pm at the NECC offices in The Stamp Exchange, Westgate Road, Newcastle or**

**Monday, 29 March, 10.30am-1pm at NECC offices at Aykley Heads, Durham.**

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Signing the Concordat (L to R) Sarah Stewart, WWNE Project Director, Mike Barker, Strategic Director, Legal and Corporate Services, Gateshead Council, Jeff Dean, Director of Corporate Services, Gateshead Council and Simon Roberson, WWNE Chair

## Keen interest in advisory roles - continued

Sarah Stewart, WWNE Project Director says: "The process for becoming a WWNE Adviser is reasonably straightforward. Once candidates have completed the application form, they are invited for a short interview so that we can be sure the experience they offer is relevant and to provide them with more information about the campaign and our future plans. At that point, they are also encouraged to sign the Work Wise Concordat.

"We do ask for a £250 registration fee. This is to ensure our potential Advisers have a degree of commitment to the Work Wise campaign and, being a not-for-profit organisation, this also helps us to cover some of the costs involved in administration and managing the training sessions.

### Those who become Advisers are:

- Invited to attend a training session and to meet other Advisers
- Featured in the WWNE Advisers Guide (paper and web based) issued to regional employers
- Invited to attend future Work Wise events
- Informed of potential opportunities to provide advice to organisations wishing to implement smarter working practices

### We are particularly interested in hearing from consultants with relevant experience in

- Organisational development
- IT systems and support
- Transport and travel planning
- Legal and health & safety issues
- Property planning and facilities management
- Environmental and climate change management

### ARE YOU INTERESTED IN BECOMING A WORK WISE ADVISER?

If so, please contact Sarah Stewart ([sarah.stewart@workwisenortheast.org](mailto:sarah.stewart@workwisenortheast.org) 0191 213 5010) to register for one of the briefing sessions on 26 and 29 March or to request further information.

## STOP PRESS CBI calls for change to work patterns

In a new report called 'Tackling congestion, driving growth – A new approach to roads policy', the CBI argues that time and money wasted on Britain's congested roads could be saved and calls for radical changes to the way we work and commute. A series of suggestions are made about how government and business can address the issue.

## STOP PRESS

# The region shows it is carbon conscious

A number of recent events and activities demonstrate a growing regional consciousness of the importance of doing our bit to deliver a low carbon economy.

## ACT Travelwise

In November, Sarah Stewart addressed the ACT Travelwise Conference at The Sage Gateshead where she spoke on the theme: Smarter Business Decisions: How the Environment Matters. She reported that as well as helping to drive regional competitiveness, address skills shortages and boost economic inclusion, smarter working is also helping the region deliver a low carbon economy for the future by easing transport congestion and pollution.

She explained how, in part, the WWNE partnership had grown out of the need to

provide a coordinated response to developing a better road infrastructure and to proactively tackle the rising traffic volumes being seen across the region.

Sarah said: "Increasingly, an added incentive for introducing smarter working is the benefit to be realised in terms of delivering environmental objectives, particularly in terms of cutting work related travel but also in the reductions in carbon footprint that arise from reducing the amount of office space used."

## Dual boost for regional traffic trouble spot

One of the main areas in the region affected by traffic congestion is the Team Valley – home to the largest business park in the UK. In the last 20 years, despite trebling in size, the road network to and through the Team Valley has not changed at all.

Not only are 21,000 people employed there, but there is also a growing population of shoppers and students travelling to and from the area.

So it is not before time that the decision has been taken to appoint a travel plan co-ordinator and that role has been awarded to one of WWNE's Strategic Partners, The Workplace Travel Plan Company (WPTPCo).

Appointed by Buildings for Business, a 50/50 partnership company between One North East and UK Land Estates, WPTPCo will work with Buildings for Business's new recruit, David Gibbs, to develop a transport and access strategy for Team Valley.

Peter Wignall, WPTPCo's managing director, is involved in similar schemes in different parts of the country and will seek to bring home best practice to the region. He said:

"We are delighted to have been chosen to act as the Team Valley's first travel plan



**Travel Planning Vision:** (L to R) David Gibbs, Buildings for Business, Peter Wignall, WPTPCo, Michael Spriggs, Chief Executive, Buildings for Business and Gary Hudson, Buildings for Business

co-ordinator. The initiative is about the long term development of the more sustainable forms of travel. We don't underestimate the task."

One of the first aspects of the appointment is to draw together a project steering group as well as an operational group. Both will act as a conduit for funding, sponsorship, advertising opportunities and in kind support. In her role as project director for WWNE, Sarah Stewart has been appointed to a role within the operational group.

## Salary sacrifice scheme encourages pedal power



Ian Kirtley

During Commute Smart Week the benefits of using alternative modes of transport were highlighted - instead of taking the car to work. We featured Ian Kirtley, European funding accountant at One North East's Stella House HQ at Newburn, who, under One North East's Salary Sacrifice Scheme, purchased a bike and travels the eight mile journey – from his home in Gosforth and back – most days. Ian said:

"Travelling by bike is a great way to maintain fitness levels. Also, if you purchase a bike through a scheme like One North East's, you only incur about 60 per cent of the overall cost due to the tax and National Insurance savings that the scheme offers."

# Home Business Focus

## Help with the home work: new £1.1m fund to encourage home working



Thanks to WWNE, all readers should be aware of the benefits of home working. Regional Development Agency, One North East is committed to encouraging further growth in home working by adding value to what the region can offer with a new fund to pilot home working.

The Home Working Fund is aimed at enabling companies to create new jobs for "home workers" in the region.

The £1.1m Fund is open to eligible companies and is designed to contribute to the costs of establishing home workers.

A total of 360 new jobs are due to be created in the North East between now and the end of September 2011.

The Fund is open to any appropriate businesses in the region and will provide direct financial support, up to a maximum of **£3,000** per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) home worker. This comprises up to **£2,000** for skills development and up to **£1,000** towards capital equipment. The capital equipment supported will be specific computer hardware, software and associated telephony.

This new Fund will operate on a "first come first

served" basis and is being managed by business development organisation, Entrust. Dan Brophy, Entrust's CEO, said:

"This unique pilot will fast track opportunities for participating companies to explore home working and will open up new horizons for individuals who might be considering how home working could work for them."

To find out more or for an application pack please contact Leanne Moseley or Sarah Belton on 0191 244 4000 or email [homeworkingfund@entrust.co.uk](mailto:homeworkingfund@entrust.co.uk)

## Twelve months of home business in one day..

...that is exactly what Enterprise Nation celebrated at its annual conference held at the BT Centre in London at the end of 2009. The conference and the production of the Home Business Report, launched at the event, were both sponsored by BT.

Helen Garner and Debbie Dunn of Tedco were there on the day, representing the North East. Here's what they had to say:

"As you might imagine, there was a strong emphasis on using the internet as a business development tool.

"Doug Richard (former Dragon and CEO, School for Start-ups) opened the session well and was keen to encourage everyone to emblazon their URL across every conceivable piece of correspondence. Good advice.



*left: Dragon, Doug Richards  
right: The 'Game Changing Websites' session*

"The next session, Game Changing Websites, led by Mark Lewis, head of eBay UK, told us that there are now over 120,000 businesses registered on eBay and that over half the sales on eBay are from Buy it Now purchases. The secret of success, he said, is to find unique

products and offer excellent customer service.

"Christian Arno, founder of global translation business, lingo24.com and Mike Hollands, founder of Toniks, both talked about their experiences of running a home-based business.

"Make me Famous, a session led by a distinguished panel of media experts, gave an insight into how the PR process works while Mark Dixon, CEO of Regus, told us his rags to riches and back again story – an inspirational tale about never giving up.

"It was a very enjoyable day and one which allowed us to take back with us a number of helpful tips should we ever decide to become part of the 5 to 9 economy!"

Images courtesy of [www.enterprisenation.com](http://www.enterprisenation.com)

## UK benefits from North East's £6.7billion home based businesses

The latest Home Business Report called for more support for the rapidly growing number of home-based businesses in the North East (78,573 when the report was published) – where five of the top 100 UK home business hotspots are to be found in Newcastle, Middlesbrough, Sunderland, Stockton on Tees and Darlington.

These North East-based businesses are generating an estimated annual income of £6.7 billion for the UK economy, yet still miss out on vital advice and help because their success and growth is not being fully recognised. The report argues that the awarding of grants and support from government, regional development agencies and business support bodies should

be more dependent on growth in earnings, rather than growth in employees.

Nearly half of the firms surveyed (45 per cent) plan to increase turnover by using freelancers and outsourcing, while 42 per cent intend to make better use of resources. Only four per cent will consider hiring full-time employees.

Emma Jones, founder of Enterprise Nation and author of the report on the UK's 2.8 million home businesses said:

"Basing a business at home is certainly no obstacle to growth as home business owners are making the most of technology to outsource work and collaborate with other talented minds. It's a most modern way to grow,

yet it is not recognised in business support programmes and policy."

Simon Roberson, Chair of WWNE and BT's Regional Partnership Director North East, adds:

"The report confirms the increasingly important role played by communications in the success of this exciting and vibrant sector.

"These home-based entrepreneurs really are the lifeblood of their local communities. They are demonstrating great business acumen by ensuring they harness the opportunities the internet brings and concentrating on their core business. This is how they are flourishing in this tough economic climate."

## Smarter Working Forum

David Lennan, WWUK Chair, visited the North East to facilitate a conference involving HR directors and senior managers of major regional employers at the offices of Dickinson Dees on 23 March. Those attending shared their

experiences of smarter working with a view to identifying best practice, concerns or issues, challenges and solutions within a Chatham House setting.

**If you are interested in attending the forum when it next meets, please contact Sarah Stewart at [sarah.stewart@workwisenortheast.org](mailto:sarah.stewart@workwisenortheast.org)**

# Partner Page

## TUC Northern: Good Society – and how we achieve it

The chance to debate some of the key issues of our times saw over 90 delegates attend the TUC two-day conference at the start of February. The thrust of the event was to propose a different way of working, a different way of living, underpinned by values that put people and communities first – financial systems, public services, citizenship, the quality of working life and the real possibility of a low carbon future.

A prestigious line up of speakers shaped the two-day event. Kevin Rowan, TUC Northern Regional Secretary, commented: "Last year's recession, among other things, has caused us all to think about the world in which we live – our financial system, public services, the environment and our working lives. This conference provided the opportunity for a high-level debate about how these issues can all contribute to delivering a 'good society' for us all to live in and to understand that another world really is possible."



Paul Rasmussen, President, Party of European Socialists, was a key speaker at the Good Society conference

## ANEC SUMMIT 2010 'Can do' region, 'can do' people

The North East is a 'can do' region with a strong tradition of partnership working, which must continue. That was the resounding message from The Summit 2010 when it was held at The Sage Gateshead in January.

The event brought hundreds of councillors and senior local authority officers together with key partners from the public, community and business sectors.

In a pre-recorded message, Gordon Brown said: "These have been tough times but, as this conference shows, the North East is a 'can do' region and your spirit, your resilience, your creativity is already enabling you to benefit from, and in turn, to drive the economic recovery."



A video message by Prime Minister Gordon Brown is introduced by Nick Brown MP, Minister for the North East at The Summit 2010

## Everything you need to know ...virtually

A joint networking event - Everything you need to know... virtually - with the Chamber of Commerce and BT was held on 25 February at Durham Cricket Club. Both Sarah Stewart and Simon Roberson spoke at the event and three workshops were held on the topic of mobile and remote working.

## Introduction to Smarter Working

Simon Roberson staged a seminar at the Copthorne Hotel on March 16th for members of the CIPD, providing a background to the campaign.



left: Rod Davey, CIPD  
Right: Simon Roberson, WWNE Chair

## Forthcoming event

TUC North Annual Conference  
22-23 May  
NewcastleGateshead Hilton