

Hull's Paragon Arcade full to capacity with Victorian venue primed to meet culinary needs of city customers

A Victorian arcade in the centre of Hull is now back to capacity with the arrival of a host of new tenants and the reopening of a destination restaurant.

Stretch Pizza is the latest addition to the food offer at Paragon Arcade, which has been further enhanced by the reopening of The Hispanist after a two month revamp. With other new openings it now has six food outlets serving Chinese, pan-Asian, Italian, Spanish, coffee and snacks, and now smoothies and other healthy options.

Four retailers sell music and memorabilia, jewellery, babywear and flowers. There are also four service businesses working in men's and women's hair, beauty and aesthetics, and tattoos.

Read more: [2023's Top 30 Under 30 named as Humber region's rising stars recognised](#)

Georgia Allenby, design and marketing manager for owner, Allenby Commercial, said: "It's great to see Paragon Arcade full again with vibrant new businesses all locally-owned and offering something completely different. We have always tried to create a really good mix and that's what we have.

"Every one of them has a good customer base and we will try to build on that by resuming our events programme, which is really exciting given that we already have great music and fantastic street food under our own roof!"

Allenbys moved quickly to replace businesses which have moved

out during the last year in search of bigger premises or to focus on their online sales. One trader, Elena Georgiou, moved her brow business upstairs to Paragon Studios, which Allenby is offering to businesses in need of workspace but not a shop window.

In the arcade the largest arrival is Stretch Pizza, where husband and wife team Jason and Tash Nichols are serving customers in a 40-seat restaurant, fulfilling a pre-pandemic dream.



Jason Nichols at Stretch Pizza, Paragon Arcade, Hull.
(Image: Ascough Associates Media and Public Relations)
Jason used to work as an apprenticeship assessor in the hospitality industry and spent his time driving across North and East Yorkshire visiting trainees in hotels, cafes, even care homes.

After he was furloughed he turned his attention to his passion for pizza, and in particular a style he had found at a restaurant in Leeds. He developed his recipe, Tash bought him a proper oven and he knew he was onto something when family and friends kept inviting themselves round for more.

They worked at markets, festivals, weddings and HullBID's Hull street food nights, building queues and a reputation, and also did a few pop-ups before the invitation came to take the space at Paragon Arcade. Jason's training skills have been put to good use assembling a team of nine, and there may be more employment as he prepares to add summer outdoor events to the current workload.

Dewy, the new outlet selling smoothies and healthy food, was opened in January Rania Besleme and her daughter Christina Tsitlakidou. Rania had been waiting for a unit to become available for over two years and is now open six days a week with about 20 seats across two floors.

Christina said: "We were attracted by the look of the arcade. It's bright and homely and we really love everybody who works here. There's a really nice community feel and everybody really gets along together."

Ben Liang opened Salt and Pepper Club in November selling Chinese street food and complementing the Asian flavours served up by Oishii Ne, which opened last summer. Further along, Milchig, which first opened in 2020, has expanded to double its space for customers to enjoy coffee, ice cream, cakes, cookies and brownies all made on the premises.



Ashlee Spyvee at Myra Rose, Paragon Arcade, Hull.

(Image: Ascough Associates Media and Public Relations)

Seventeen-year-old Ashlee Spyvee named her babywear shop Mya Rose after her 17-month-old sister and was inspired to launch the business by her experience of trying to find suitable clothes.

Ashlee said: "I knew there was a gap in the market because we found it difficult to get the clothes we wanted for Mya Rose. Some things were very expensive but we've put the effort in to get good quality, nice clothes at affordable prices. We try to make sure everything is different from what you'd find in the high street shops and we get quite a few people travelling here from out of town."

Lucy Thompson and colleague Allie Harrod recently opened Allie & Wade Studios providing hair, beauty and aesthetics services.

Lucy said: “We used to rent chairs in another business nearby and when that closed we decided we wanted to work together. We’re really busy and we’re taking on another person in April as a lash technician. The Arcade is wonderful, a lovely community where everybody knows each other. There are some great lunch options as well!”

The Hispanist looking for a fresh start after launching just ahead of lockdowns



Chef patron Nick Hill had first opened The Hispanist just ahead of Christmas 2019, too late to make the most of the festive season, only to be greeted by Covid early the next year.

Successive lockdowns and the economic hit inflicted by

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has made the challenge of the early years of a new business launch a seismic battle.

He won the Best in Food and Drink category at this year's HullBID Awards is looking forward to welcoming back diners from across the country.

He said: "I decided to close at the beginning of the year because I needed to get my energy back up and our energy costs down. That's a real issue and that's what worries me the most. You go from spending £350 to £400 a month up to £1,700.

"We've changed the downstairs a bit to help us run things better. Upstairs is much the same. The décor has to be good, the food has to be good, the people have to be good. That's what sets the standard. We have always wanted to drive up standards and that's what we'll keep doing.

"We have put more and more money into it, more than we should do. Sometimes I don't know how we did it, but now it's about surviving and earning a bit of money. It's interesting to think about what things could have been like in a different time."