

# Leisure firm to invest £600,000 into popular County Durham hotel and restaurant

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A Newcastle leisure group is set to invest £600,000 into one of its hotels after being given the green light for expansion by planners.

Family owned STR Enterprises, which owns and operates a number of hotels across the North East, has received planning permission from Durham County Council for a major upgrade to its Honest Lawyer Hotel at Croxdale Bridge, County Durham.

Based three miles from Durham city centre, the venue had developed a faithful following of locals visiting its bar and restaurant and tourist staying in its accommodation.

But the pandemic forced its owners, the Sanderson family, to review and reconfigure the hotel in light of potentially ongoing restrictions and changing trends in weddings and other functions.

After working with designers at Newcastle-based Bilateral Design, the firm is remodelling the interior to create a new function room and bar, while also making changes to its restaurant.

Jason Sanderson, director of STR Enterprises – which also includes The Victoria Hotel and Point Cottages in Bamburgh, The Quayside Exchange in Sunderland, The Centurion Bar in Newcastle and Centurion Park, at Wallsend – said the first phase of work will start soon.

He said: “As a hospitality company, we’ve always been interested in unique buildings whose potential hasn’t been realised for one reason or another but could be achieved with investment and great service. We therefore purchased the hotel, previously known as the Bridge Inn, in 2003 and renamed it the Honest Lawyer after a popular New Zealand hotel.

“Under the careful stewardship of our group’s executive chef, Harry Bailey, we then built up a first class reputation for the accommodation, restaurant and importantly as a function venue, particularly for weddings.

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“However, to stay ahead in the hospitality sector, you have to be very self-critical and, in truth, we had already begun to look at refreshing the venue and its offer prior to the onset of the pandemic in 2020.”

He added: The £600,000 investment project will allow us to maintain our individuality and build upon our reputation for great food and excellent service and we can’t wait to fully re-open later this year.”