North East entrepreneurs join forces to launch new business venture

Two North East entrepreneurs have joined forces to create a new networking business that aims to bring business owners and leaders together.

Paul Lancaster, founder of UK Startup Week and the monthly Platform events, has teamed up with well known tech investor Neil Stephenson to launch Stellar Business Events, a Sunderland based networking and events venture.

Mr Lancaster said the pair, who are good friends and have been working together informally for a number of years, want to create a company that can bring the business community together in an inspiring, friendly and supportive environment. The pair are also keen to talk to business owners, leaders and investors who would like to use their Platform or UK Startup Week events as a way to raise their profile and reach potential customers or clients.

Mr Lancaster said: “Since 2016, I’ve grown an events business which is strongly rooted in the North East of England but has huge reach nationally and it’s our intention to scale out our offering into new markets and new geographies. Over the past 12 months we’ve run 21 Platform events in Newcastle and Sunderland that have attracted over 700 business owners and leaders and we intend to expand this to Teesside in Q1 of 2025 and then up to Scotland shortly after, giving us a truly Northern UK footprint.

“In addition, our five-day, multi-venue UK Startup Week festival is due to take place in Sunderland between June 2-6 with a series of energising events that will inspire and educate people how to start and grow their business in the

North East and wider North of England. Our last Startup Week festival in Newcastle attracted just over 800 delegates from across the UK and we expect a similar number in Sunderland in June.”

Mr Stephenson said: “I’m excited to be working with Paul to build out this proposition nationwide as I understand the value of good networking to find customers, partners, employees and sometimes even investors. I’m also hoping we can find opportunity to develop a new angel investor network alongside the events as a way to help seed fund the next generation of businesses.

“The ever-expanding tech/digital/e-commerce market and the new AI and virtual reality worlds bring huge opportunities to build new and exciting businesses at scale. We aim to be right at the centre of that new revolution.”