

# People on the move: key North East appointments of the week

Newcastle law firm **Muckle LLP** has welcomed newly qualified solicitor Kieran O'Donogue to its dispute resolution team.

Kieran, who qualified in January, will assist senior partners with a range of commercial disputes including in contract, negligence, defamation and breach of privacy for both claimants and defendants.

He said: "Since starting my training at Muckle, I always knew I wanted to stay and qualify at the firm. My first seat was in the dispute resolution team and I really enjoyed the broad range of disputes that the team undertakes, so it's fantastic to join the team on a permanent basis. I've had great support from the senior partners within the team and I'm looking forward to working alongside them and developing my expertise."

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Susan Howe, partner and head of dispute resolution, said: "It's a pleasure to have Kieran on board and we're delighted to welcome him to our team. Kieran has had experience working across multiple departments within the firm that has enabled him to build a strong skillset. I am sure he will be a fantastic asset for both the dispute resolution team and our clients."



From left: joining Rise are Lindsay Peach, Helen Tong and Tracy Saunders.

(Image: Rise)

Local health and wellbeing charity **Rise** has strengthened its team with three key appointments.

From its base in North Shields, Rise uses physical activity to tackle health, social and economic inequalities to improve the quality of life for disadvantaged communities and hard to reach groups across Northumberland and Tyne & Wear. The charity, which is part of a network of 42 Active Partnerships across the country, has appointed Helen Tong, Lindsay Peach and Tracy Saunders.

Helen joins Rise as business development director, Lindsay joins as trusts and foundations manager and Tracy has joined as an administration officer. Chief Executive of Rise, Clare Morley, said: "Helen, Lindsay and Tracy are experienced in their fields and add to an already talented and dedicated team. They join us at an exciting time. We have made a huge amount of progress securing more funding and increasing the

charity's profile in the last 18 months as we work to build back fairer following the pandemic.

"Their skills and passion will help us to be even more actively involved in helping communities and businesses to stay physically and mentally well by reducing barriers to physical activity."



Iain Lightfoot, managing director of Newcastle Financial Advisers

(Image: Newcastle Building Society)

Iain Lightfoot has joined **Newcastle Building Society** to become managing director of Newcastle Financial Advisers'.

With 32 years' experience in financial services and advice, he has held senior roles with the likes of Skipton and TSB, and joins from accountancy firm Armstrong Watson's financial planning team.

He said: "At a time when consumer finances are feeling the pressure of rising inflation and the increased cost of living, it's important that people feel their money is working hard for them, and that they're able to easily access face-to-face financial advice that's personalised, authentic and reliable. I'm passionate about providing the right environment and culture to deliver financial advice of the highest quality, and working in collaboration with Newcastle Building Society colleagues we'll continue to deliver on our purpose of connecting our communities with a better financial future, building meaningful, long-lasting customer relationships."





Carol Cairns, chair of CENE

(Image: CENE)

**Constructing Excellence in the North East (CENE)** has appointed Carol Cairns as its new chair

Carol succeeds Tim Bailey, who is head of practice of xsite architecture. He has worked closely with Carol, who was previously vice-chair and is head of programme management office (PMO) at Northumbrian Water. The water services company is one of the founding members of CENE. Carol is a chartered civil engineer with 25 years' experience leading asset management investment planning, business transformation and substantial capital investment programmes in the water sector.

She said: "Having worked closely with Tim over the last three years, I want to continue to build on his very strong foundations. The CENE mission is to deliver improved industry performance resulting in a demonstrably better built environment. By working collaboratively, our vision is for the construction industry to realise maximum value for all clients and that we are respected as being an organisation which is inclusive, influential and essential.

"Moving forward, we have a number of strategic objectives and they are to be an influencer in the region, to grow our membership, support life-long learning and continue to be ambitious in what the North East built environment can collectively achieve, as we continue to be a voice of influence."



The new appointments at the SDDE Smith Group  
(Image: SDDE Smith Group)

North East-based property expert **The SDDE Smith Group** has made a number of senior appointments.

The firm, which provides client services for the real estate sector, has appointed Gary Wood as chief operating officer, bringing more than 10 years' experience in senior management roles within the construction industry, and Ben Duncan has been appointed as commercial director for Host & Stay, focusing on expansion and growth.

Following the group's acquisition of Redcar Athletic in 2022, the club's managing director Ryan McKnight has been appointed as the firm's people and place director. James Baird joins as chief technology officer and managing director of ResiCentral and will lead the technology arm of the group, while Reece Ingham joins as group financial controller. Steve Padgett comes in as chief financial officer.

Dale Smith, CEO, said: “We have seen our colleague base grow rapidly in the last three years, with local people being given opportunities to develop and progress their careers, with colleagues starting at entry level and making their way to senior leadership roles within a matter of months not years. We want to keep creating those opportunities, but we also must bring in the best experience and talent from outside of the area too, because that enables us to keep learning, to keep improving, and to keep growing the business. I’m truly excited about the journey we’re on, and it’s a great time to be a North East business.”

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