

Rightfocus

Latimer Hinks' 8th charitable ball set for success after selling out



Andrea Tobin (Latimer Hinks) with Jane Robson, County Durham Foundation, Anne Elliott (Marketing Partner at Latimer Hinks) and Jane Bradshaw of St Teresa's Hospice.

A charity ball organised by one of Darlington and County Durham's longest established law firms, is proving to be a popular social highlight of the year after selling out its ticket allocation months in advance.

The Latimer Hinks 8th Charity Ball, which is being supported by HSBC, will take place on Friday, June 6 at Wynyard Hall, with a host of charities set to benefit from the evening.

St Teresa's Hospice and the County Durham Foundation are the law firm's main chosen charities, with a variety of smaller local charities also being supported. The firm's last ball in 2013 managed to raise £8,500 for a number of charities, including the two charities chosen for 2014, The Soldier's Charity, Darlington Town Mission and Age UK.

International swing singer, Cole Page, will provide the evening's live entertainment along with magician David Penn.

Anne Elliott, partner at Latimer Hinks Solicitors, said: "I am delighted with the interest and support that we have received for this year's charity ball which we are determined will be another great night.

Since holding our first ball in 1998 we have raised over £55,000 for some fantastic

“*Since holding our first ball in 1998 we have raised over £55,000 for some fantastic causes*”

causes, and we are looking forward to not only raising more money for charity but to providing our clients, colleagues and friends with another enjoyable event.

“St Teresa's Hospice carries out excellent work in providing care and support to local people as does the County Durham Foundation in supporting local charitable causes. We want to raise more money for these and other local charities, and the positive response in terms of selling all the tickets bodes well. We have also received support in the way of donations and auction and other prizes from clients, colleagues and friends – but we are still looking for more!”

Please contact Andrea Tobin, Marketing Manager at Latimer Hinks regarding prizes or sponsorship opportunities on 01325 341507 or email with the heading 'Sponsorship' to at@latimerhinks.co.uk

Welcome to Rightfocus...

In this issue we lead with good news regarding Latimer Hinks 8th charity ball, which is set for success after selling all of our ticket allocation. Through the ball, Latimer Hinks (supported by HSBC) are aiming to raise funds for St Teresa's Hospice and the County Durham Foundation.

Inside, we report on a landmark deal completed by Latimer Hinks on behalf of shoe retailer The Clinkard Group. We also bring news of an planning incentive for the agricultural community who are to be given the power to convert barns for residential use without planning permission. Continuing on a positive note you can read about how Latimer Hinks helped a local hairdresser fulfill a life long ambition, by buying the business for whom she had worked for eight years.

Finally, on the back page, Martin Williamson reviews the Help to Buy Scheme which was introduced in April 2013.



Latimer Hinks
S O L I C I T O R S

Latimer Hinks Solicitors completes historic deal for clinkard's

Neil Stevenson has completed a landmark deal on behalf of a well-known shoe retailer.

The Clinkard Group has increased its presence in the Midlands with the lease of an historic property in Shrewsbury, adding to its already established retail units in the region at Warwick, Stratford-upon-Avon and Banbury.

The Shrewsbury property is part of 'Ireland's Mansion' and is one of the oldest surviving timber framed buildings in the town, having been built by Shrewsbury MP Robert Ireland in the 16th Century.

Latimer Hinks completed the lease arrangements of the building and has previously acted on behalf of the Clinkard Group when the company acquired 12 branches from Stead and Simpson in 2008.

Neil Stevenson, a partner in the commercial property department at Latimer Hinks Solicitors, said: "This is an important acquisition for the Clinkard Group, which strengthens the company's position in the Midlands and on a national scale. The history surrounding the property at 'Ireland's Mansion' is fascinating and its prime location on Shrewsbury's high street allows the Clinkard Group to bring its strong brand and success to Shropshire."

Charles Clinkard said: "We are delighted to be able to add the Shrewsbury store to our growing portfolio; this latest expansion of our business has strengthened our commitment to the Midlands and positioned us well in many of the key



Neil Stevenson, Latimer Hinks & Jonathan Mankin of The Clinkard Group.

market towns strengthening our brand in the UK. I would like to thank Latimer Hinks Solicitors for their professionalism and expertise."

Established as a family-run business in 1924 by Charles' grandparents, Charles and Eveline Clinkard, The Clinkard Group has grown to become the leading independent footwear retailer in the UK with 32 locations nationwide.

New hope for agricultural community

Farmers are to be given the power to convert barns for residential use without planning permission under 'radical' new Government plans. Planning Minister Nick Boles said the new rules, which came into effect on April 6, will make "better use of redundant or underused agricultural buildings."

The planning relaxation will allow greater flexibility on changing a building's use, including altering agricultural buildings to residential spaces. The change is intended to support growth in rural communities and has been welcomed by the National Farmers Union (NFU) and the Country Land and Business Association (CLA.)

The NFU said the proposals would trust farmers to do the right thing with their buildings, and would allow them to make their own assessments of how their premises should be used. The potential to more easily convert barns will also aid business succession with the option being open to create a new home for a retiring farmer or one for younger generations.

The new rules will also help with any plans to diversify the use of the farm's buildings. Increasingly many farming families are diversifying as a way to continue to live and work on their farm. The new rules should also serve to boost the wider local economy and the regional property market, which often suffers from a dearth of locally available properties.

The relaxation of the planning law will apply only to buildings already being

used for agricultural purposes when the proposal was first made in the 2013 Budget. Anyone who converts a barn will lose their agricultural permitted development rights for a decade.

So, what are the key elements of the new rules?

- Farm owners will each be allowed to convert up to 450 sq metres (4, 850 sq ft) of farm buildings for residential use, without having to seek planning permission.
- Deregulation will not apply to National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Conservation Areas. Planning permission will still be required in these areas.
- Farmers or developers must still gain "approval" for designs from the local authority; however councils won't be able to reject the principle of conversion.
- Planners often look more favourably on barns that will be converted for business rather than residential use, as the former usage boosts employment.
- Finally, barn owners do not have to be farmers to benefit from the new rules, but if the property wasn't a working farm on March 2013 they won't qualify.

According to the Historic Farm Buildings Survey, there were 600,000 farm buildings built before 1900 and 1.8m built since then.

For further information call Neil Stevenson in the commercial property department on 01325 341 500 or visit www.latimerhinks.co.uk.

Are new crowdfunding rules crowding out investors?

New Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) guidelines on crowdfunding are proving divisive, with concerns that investors will be put off supporting start-ups. But the FCA stresses the rules protect the investor.

The new regulations came into force on April 1st 2014 and included the much-discussed 10% rule. This states that inexperienced investors must certify they won't invest more than 10% of their net assets in an unlisted business. The guidelines also cover crowdfunding platforms – which must be clear, easy to understand, and not underplay the potential risks involved in investing.

However, while the FCA feel these are safeguards designed to protect the investor and inspire consumer confidence, many involved with crowdfunding platforms have expressed concern. Some fear the new rules will deter potential investors and ultimately limit innovation.

What is clear is that this is a lucrative market for start-ups. According to The Crowdfunding Centre run by the Social Foundation, equity and reward projects launched to date in 2014 have topped 2,600. And it's estimated that crowdfunding currently raises approximately £1,700 per hour in the UK.

Latimer Hinks Solicitors helps Darlington business woman fulfil life-long ambition



Caption: Neil Stevenson, Latimer Hinks & Caroline Brown at Get Smart Hair & Beauty.

Neil Stevenson has helped a local woman fulfil her ambition of running the hair salon where she worked for eight years.

Caroline Brown, 30, has now taken over the 'Get Smart' Hair and Beauty at 38 Bondgate in Darlington after purchasing the business and taking on the lease arrangements. Latimer Hinks completed the sale and lease arrangements, which have enabled Caroline to set up her new business employing two members of staff.

Caroline, who worked at the salon for eight years after moving from another Darlington salon, having been a hairdresser

for 15 years, said: "Latimer Hinks' Neil Stevenson was very supportive and professional and has helped me fulfil my ambition of running my own hair salon."

Ms Brown, who lives in Darlington and went to Darlington College of Technology, added: "I found Neil at Latimer Hinks to be very helpful and easy to deal with throughout. He was approachable and offered a thorough service, which was good value for money. I'd like to thank him for his help and support in helping to make everything run smoothly.

Neil Stevenson, a partner in the commercial property department at

Latimer Hinks Solicitors, who conducted the legal work, said: "I am delighted to have been able to help Caroline achieve her dream and I am sure that the business will continue to go from strength to strength under her ownership."

As well as hairdressing, the salon also offers a variety of nail and beauty treatments including Racoon hair extensions, OPI Gel colour manicures and Total Cover male hair replacement systems. Get Smart can be contacted on 01325 360 986.

Competition probe could lead to more hotel room discounts

Following an Office of Fair Trading investigation, UK hotels and online travel agents will have more freedom to offer discount rates on room only bookings – increasing competition in the UK travel industry.

Annual tax-free savings limit to be lifted to £15,000



The new Isa (Nisa) will give savers more choice and greater flexibility over how they store their money.

Under current rules, savers can put away up to £11,520 tax free each year – with a limit of £5,760 in a cash account and the rest in investments. Isas have proved to be so popular that, by the end of 2013, there was over £433 billion stored in these accounts – with all interest tax free.

From July 1, cash and shares Isas will combine to form the Nisa, with an annual allowance of £15,000. Unlike existing Isa rules, savers will be able to store as

much of their allowance as they choose in either cash or investments, and freely transfer funds between the two. The simplicity and flexibility of this new account will be particularly welcome for homebuyers and people approaching retirement who want easier access to their savings.

The new higher limits will also apply to Junior Isas, with the annual allowance increasing from £3,720 to £4,000. Those aged between 16 and 18 will have access to the full £15,000 allowance, although only in cash.

“ From July 1, cash and shares Isas will combine to form the Nisa – with an annual allowance of £15,000 ”

Isas will continue to be governed by the current rules until the Nisa comes into effect. The allowance for 2014-15 is £11,880, with half in cash and half in investments. From July 1, the amount saved will contribute towards the new £15,000 allowance, which will continue to run until 5 April 2015.

Many banks and building societies are already offering 'Nisa ready' savings. These will allow customers to make use of the full allowance and flexible conditions of the new Isa in July, even if they have opened a fixed-rate account.

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Help to buy, one year on...

Since its introduction last April, the Government's 'controversial' Help to Buy scheme has been the focus whenever the term 'housing bubble' is mentioned. Nevertheless, its success must not be ignored.

A Help to Buy equity loan sees the Government lend you up to 20% of the cost of a new-build home, meaning buyers will only require a five per cent cash deposit and a 75% mortgage to make up the rest on properties up to the value of £600,000.

The latest government statistics have revealed that more than 17,000 homes

have been bought under the scheme, with 80% being first-time buyers. However, 77% of these properties were purchased outside of London, which only fuels the hype surrounding the North-South divide.

A fifth of all homes built since April 2013 have been sold through Help to Buy, according to Countrywide - the UK's largest listed estate agent - with half of new home sales in the North sold through the scheme. County Durham alone saw 167 sales. The region's beleaguered housing market, which is well below pre-recessionary levels, has received a boost in house building activity.

The second phase of Help to Buy, which launched in October, is a much broader scheme that applies to second-hand properties, as well as new-builds. The Government does not lend money to the homebuyer, but it does guarantee up to 15% of the loan, allowing for borrowers with a five per cent deposit more of a choice on mortgages.

Help to Buy is playing its role in rejuvenating the economy and getting people onto the housing ladder, as well as moving up it. House building demand is on the rise and the challenge will be maintaining momentum, but with an extension of the scheme to 2020, this all bodes well for the future.

Martin Williamson is Head of Residential Property at Latimer Hinks Solicitors in Darlington. Latimer Hinks has a team of around 40 people serving private and corporate clients. For further information: www.latimerhinks.co.uk or call 01325 341500.



Martin Williamson, Head of Residential Property.