

## BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN NEWCASTLE'S DAYTIME AND NIGHT-TIME ECONOMIES

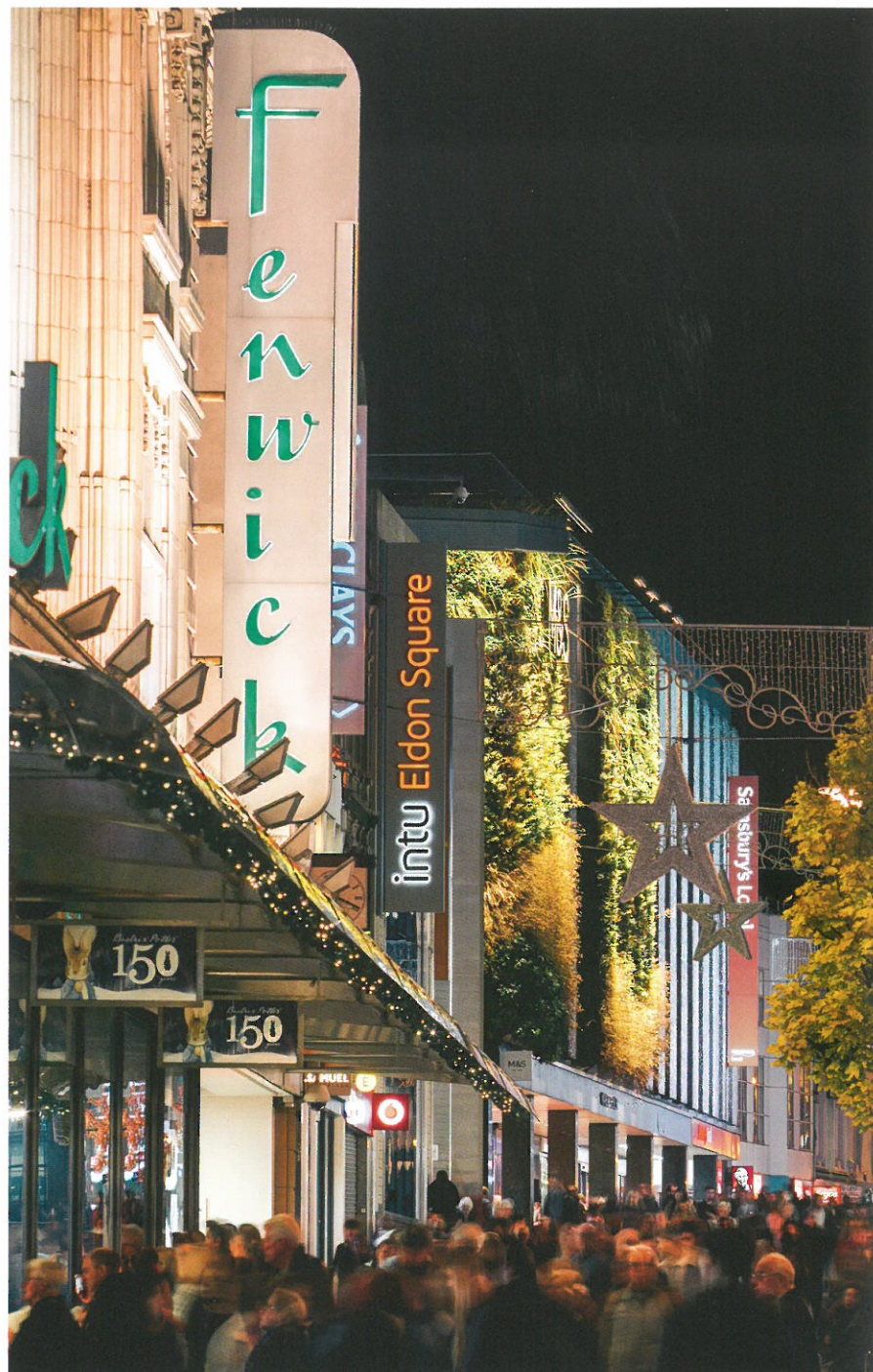
NE1 Limited, Newcastle's Business Improvement District, can't help but celebrate the success of Alive after Five, its award winning initiative which has transformed Newcastle City centre and has been worth an estimated £839 million since it was launched.

Stephen Patterson, Director of Communications at Newcastle NE1, discusses the scheme and the impact it has had on local businesses:

"The idea came about during our first year of operation back in 2009. We were discussing both the challenges and opportunities with key sectors of the city's business community and it quickly became evident that the retail sector was facing stiff competition from the internet and out of town shopping centres. In addition, many retailers were reporting strong trading figures for late opening on Thursday, which they thought could be replicated across the week.

"So working closely with the city council, retailers, licensees and cultural venues, NE1 formulated the plan for Alive after Five as Newcastle's response to the huge shift in consumer behaviour and expectations. We quickly identified that an innovative approach was required. The city needed to play to its strengths and include the city's excellent cultural and leisure sectors to provide a compelling offer that is greater than the sum of its parts.

"Following extensive consumer input, retail opening hours were extended until 8pm throughout the year supported by free car parking after 5pm in the seven council owned multi-storey car parks across the city. We also devised an annual programme of



high quality events combined with a heavy weight marketing campaign to ensure people were made aware of it.

"We were initially shocked at the positive results of the campaign, as it was the first time that the city provided a collective response to the increased competition from out of town shopping centres and internet shopping.

"The primary benefits of Alive after Five are focused on the consumer. It is about delivering far greater convenience so that customers can now shop when they want. It provides better value as visitors can park for free, and beyond this, the city is now a more welcoming and vibrant experience.

"Whilst retail has benefitted significantly from the scheme, the 13.7m additional visitors after 5pm has had a transformational impact on the city's restaurant scene, with over 75 new restaurants opening in the last 6 years alone.

"Newcastle Restaurant Week started with 13 restaurants six years ago, and now has 108 involved. We have the highest growth rate of independent restaurants, meaning more restaurants per capita, than any other city outside London.

"Although the scheme has been a huge success, we never underestimate the challenges facing the city, there is still so much to be done; Newcastle needs better regional, national and international transport links, and there will always be the need to focus on continuously improving the customer experience so that the city remains relevant and attractive to customers.

"Alive after Five is still unrivalled anywhere else in the UK and helped NE1 secure an award for the 'Best BID In Europe' at the 2016 EU BID Congress in Germany. The future of our city is a bright one, even when it starts to get dark!"