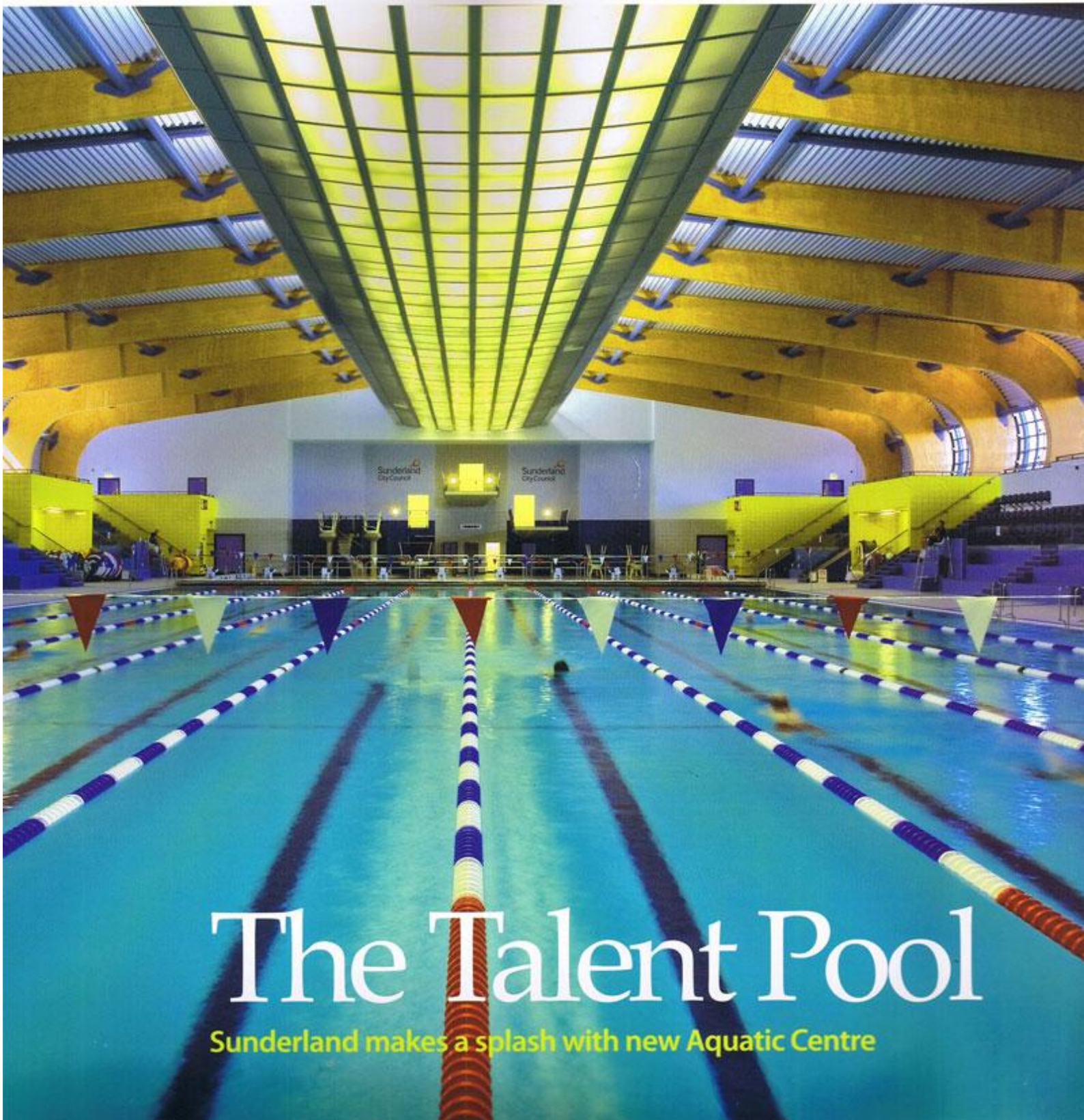


touchstone

News, issues and developments from the Regional Development Agency for the North East



The Talent Pool

Sunderland makes a splash with new Aquatic Centre



AN EVERYDAY STORY OF BUSINESS SUPPORT

Durham-based Ameeca is revolutionising additional story time with a high-tech invention thanks to Business Link North East.

Founded by teacher Eleanor Johnson and her lecturer husband Simon, Ameeca has created StoryPhones, a wireless MP3 player which enables children to listen to pre-recorded stories down-loaded from the web.

They set up Ameeca two years ago with support from Business Link.

Business Link's expert brokers identified funding opportunities to get the fledgling company off the ground and develop a StoryPhones prototype.

They were also influential in helping Ameeca secure financial support at the end of last year, which they will use to produce the first batch of StoryPhones.

Ameeca, which employs an engineer and an education consultant to create content in-house, is continuing to work with Business Link to identify further funding to promote StoryPhones through marketing, PR and website development.

"Business Link has provided high quality support every step of the way, presenting us with the opportunity to develop our ideas into reality," Simon explained.

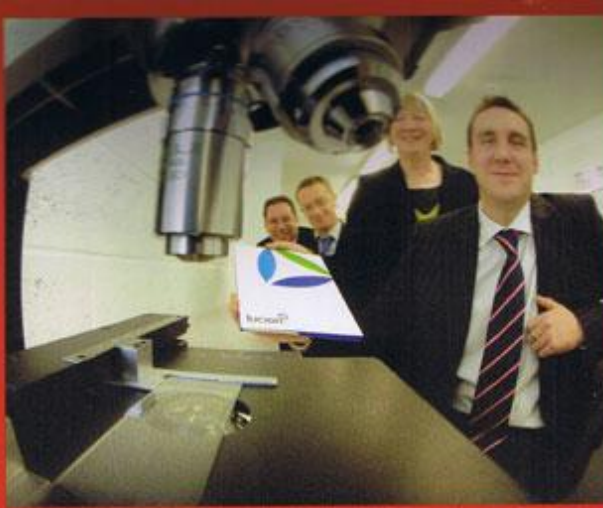
THE FABRIC OF ENGLISH LIFE

Tees Valley-based soft furnishings company Pins and Ribbons sells hand-made curtains, cushions, door-stops and bed linen to customers worldwide who log onto its e-commerce website. It also stocks 130 shops across the UK with its quality products.

Kerrie Murray set up the eco-friendly company in 2006. Although experienced in hand-making soft furnishings for friends and family, Kerrie admits that she only had 'very vague ideas' of how to start-up and run a company and went to Business Link North East for support.

"They definitely pointed me in the right direction, providing invaluable guidance which covered writing a business plan, setting financial projections, marketing products and employing staff," she said.

Business Link also identified funding options and supported Kerrie's applications for financial assistance towards the Pins and Ribbons website and her attendance at a trade event to increase awareness of her products.



NEW LOOK FOR LUCION ENVIRONMENTAL

Gateshead-based asbestos consultancy Lucion Environmental is on the threshold of significant expansion following a new profile-raising exercise.

Set up five years ago by Dr Patrick Morton and Charles Pickles, it has grown from a partnership into a company with a national presence and a turnover of over £1million.

The company specialises in the surveying and testing of asbestos-containing materials in buildings, as well as offering management services for removal.

Business Link North East account manager Judith Falla has worked with the company to help raise its profile with the development of a new website and a rebrand of its corporate identity.

Patrick said: "Our relationship with Judith has been important right from the early days of the business. Her support has been much more than just assisting us with gaining necessary finances, she has provided us with an independent voice which has been invaluable."



"They definitely pointed me in the right direction, providing invaluable guidance which covered writing a business plan, setting financial projections, marketing products and employing staff."