



## NE1 RESTAURANT WEEK ENJOYS RECORD SUCCESS

By Stephen Patterson, Director of Communications at NE1 Ltd.

For the Restaurant Week enthusiast who eagerly telephones the NE1 office every day for a week before NE1 Newcastle Restaurant Week dates are revealed, to the 100 plus restaurants who participate, and the tens of thousands of diners who enjoy the £10 or £15 per head dining experience in the city, the twice yearly event is, and I hesitate to say 'Just', a well established foodie event in the city's annual events calendar.

Most people don't give it much thought, or are completely unaware that NE1 Newcastle Restaurant Week is part of a much wider events programme in the city, a successful strategy for 'place branding' Newcastle city centre, delivered by NE1 Ltd. Instead, the majority just book up in their tens of thousands to enjoy the offer and play their part in creating the vibrant restaurant scene the city now enjoys and collectively contribute to the half a million pounds plus that's added to the city's economic economy each time it is held.

Behind the scenes the wider aim of these events is to raise awareness of Newcastle's unique offer, setting it apart from other UK and European cities while delivering more immediate economic returns for participating businesses and the local economy.

Sounds grandiose, but events play to a city's strengths and are a tried and tested method of creating a sense of place for a city helping to market it not just to its own immediate residents but to promote it to national and international audiences.

The NE1 Newcastle Restaurant Week events are a fantastic case in point. On one level they were designed eight years ago to support Newcastle's city centre restaurant businesses at two traditionally quiet times of the year – January, in the post Christmas lull pre-pay day and in the first week of August. They have certainly more than delivered against this stated aim and are now instrumental



in strengthening the city's leisure scene and helping to attract new restaurants and brands to the city. It is no coincidence that the growth of fine dining in Newcastle and the popularity of NE1 Newcastle Restaurant Week, have gone hand in hand.

It is also telling that many new restaurants, some only days and weeks after opening, are keen to get involved in their first Restaurant Week. The event's reputation precedes it and new restaurants are familiar with the formula and recognise the benefits that can be delivered for their business even before they set up shop.

The fact that NE1, a BID company and external business, is managing and delivering the event is a huge support for businesses and helps bring the industry together in a non-partisan way to celebrate and grow Newcastle's culinary credentials.

Success breeds success and NE1 Newcastle Restaurant Week has helped give diners a high value offer, promoted the sector at a traditionally quiet time of the year and turned the spotlight on the city.

The event was the brainchild of NE1 in partnership with restaurateur Terry Laybourne, who had experienced a similar Restaurant Week formula when dining in New York. The event translated well to Newcastle and from little acorns mighty oaks do grow. The original 13 restaurateurs are still involved, joined now by over 100 city centre restaurants. January's Restaurant Week delivered record results with a 38% increase on January 2018 - with 112 restaurants involved, over 45,000 diners participated providing in excess of £600,000 boost to the local economy.

Events play a key part in shaping the identity of our towns and cities and how people interact with businesses, buildings and each other – never more so than today with the continued rise of online experiences, we still yearn for first person, real life social experiences.

For NE1, events form an integral part of our growth plans for the city and were a key part of the BID renewal proposals last year. January's record breaking NE1 Restaurant Week was the first event in this year's calendar and its continued growth and success is a strong sign of what is to come this year.