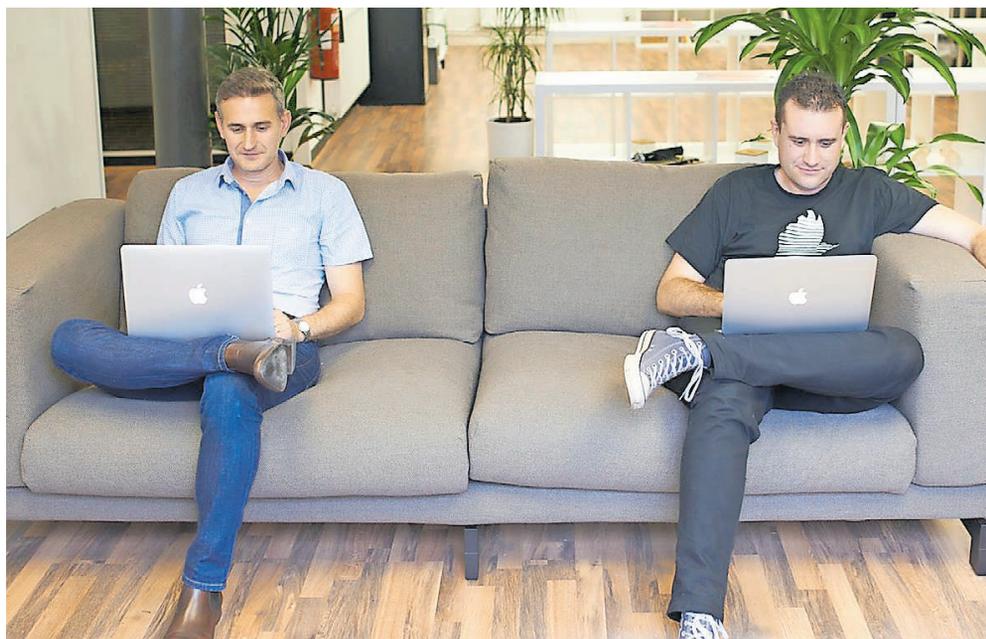


Firm selected for development programme



Rainbird chairman James Duez and chief executive Ben Taylor.

Picture: RAINBIRD

A Norwich artificial intelligence company has been chosen to take part in a development programme which has helped well-known technology companies to reach the next stage of growth.

Rainbird Technologies, based on Muspole Street, will be part of the Upscale 3.0 cohort, a programme run by London-

based Tech City UK, which will see it given coaching and support to grow.

Alumni of the scheme include energy firm Bulb, online music community Boiler Room and funding-platform Seedrs while coaches have included Skype founder Niklas Zennstrom, Skyscanner general manager Shane Corstorphine and Graze

chief executive Anthony Fletcher.

Rainbird co-founders Ben Taylor and James Duez said: "With such strong alumni, being selected for the Upscale 3.0 programme is a huge privilege.

"We are delighted that Rainbird has again been recognised as one of the most compelling scale-ups in the UK."

BID hopes to attract businesses with vision of R&D-focused city

Promoting Norwich as a destination for businesses which are keen to relocate has been highlighted as a key goal of the refreshed Norwich Business Improvement District (BID).

The organisation had its remit renewed and widened in November and, after lighting up the city over the festive season, is now seeking to promote Norwich to firms looking to move or expand.

BID executive director Stefan Gurney said: "We are looking at how we can commercially promote the city and market Norwich as a business destination.

"We have a real aspiration to showcase all the things Norwich has to offer; the value, the skillsets, the infrastructure, the cost of living and the wellbeing benefits. We have to decide how we promote that to the

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marketplace."

To help bolster the talent pool available in the city the BID will work with businesses and education bodies to develop skills among young people and is planning sector conferences to better understand the issues facing industries – the first of which will focus on leisure on February 6.

"Businesses want school-leavers to be as engaged and prepared as possible and there are lots of opportunities for us to work together with schools and businesses," Mr Gurney said.

He believes the city could style itself as a place for research and development to bolster its appeal to businesses.

Mr Gurney said: "There is growth in electric cars, autonomous cars, artificial intelligence and other technologies which will change the way we live our lives. I think Norwich has lots of organisations that are international leaders in these fields, in engineering at Hethel, in life sciences at the research park and University of East Anglia.

"We are creating the next generation of thought leadership and I would like to see us set ourselves up as a research and development city and push our recognition in these areas further afield."

Mr Gurney believes the city will physically change over the coming year, creating different opportunities for businesses, particularly with the relocation of Primark – a big footfall draw – and redevelopment of St Stephen's Street.

business

Region's employment rate still above average

Strong demand for workers has pushed the number of people in work to a record high - but the real value of pay is continuing to decline, data from the Office for National Statistics shows.

In the three months to November there were just over 32.2 million people in work, equal to a joint record high employment rate of 75.3%.

In the East of England the employment rate remains above average at 78.6% – an increase of 1% on the previous quarter – while its full-time workers

clocked up the highest average number of hours worked per week in the UK, at 38.4. Unemployment in the region was down by 3,000 to 119,000 in the quarter.

Julia Nix, Jobcentre Plus district manager for East Anglia, said the effects of a spate of possible and realised redundancies – including at Multiyork in Thetford and Britvic in Norwich – had begun to level off in December.

She added recruitment in food production, retail, manufacturing and construction was on the increase.

Three million still need to complete self assessment

With just a week to go before the self-assessment deadline, almost a third of those required to file their tax return have yet to do so, according to tax officers.

As of Wednesday, around eight million people nationally have filed their self-assessment for 2016/17 – but just over three million are yet to complete their returns, said HMRC (HM Revenue and Customs).

People in East Anglia have also been cutting it fine – as of January 5, 44% of those who needed to complete a self

assessment in Norfolk and Suffolk had not done so. In Essex the figure was 46% and in Cambridgeshire 47%. HMRC is reminding customers that sending in a tax return late will incur a £100 penalty – even if you do not owe any tax.

Angela MacDonald, HMRC director general of customer services, said: "Put a stop to that nagging feeling and do your self-assessment now."

Help is available at www.gov.uk/selfassessment or from the self assessment helpline on 0300 200 3310.

Mental health course for managers returns



Michelle Gant, director of The Engaging People Company, and Tom Oxley, director of Bamboo Mental Health, speak to businesses on mental health in the workplace at Open in Norwich in October. Picture: IMAGINATIVE MEDIA

A workshop designed to equip managers to support the mental wellbeing of their staff is returning to Norwich in April.

The Mental Health for Managers course, run by Norfolk firms Bamboo Mental Health and The Engaging People Company, will take place on April 19 at Open.

Through the workshop, attendees will learn how to identify and recognise the signs of poor mental health, and understand the impact of mental wellbeing in the work environment. It

follows the success of an earlier session in October.

Tom Oxley, director of Bamboo Mental Health, said: "Companies who want to make a difference will train their managers. It's an effective way of putting support through the organisation and reaching those who need it. Managers who leave the course will be confident to take on those complex conversations – to help their team and the employer."

Find out more at www.eventbrite.co.uk