

# BARK



ISSUE 11





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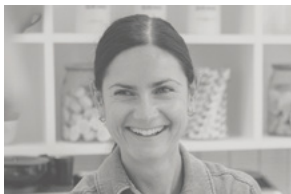
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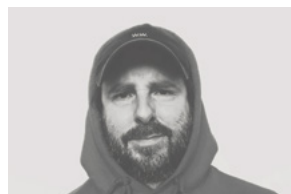
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# WELCOME



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Welcome to issue 11 of Bark, it has been some time since our last issue as we focussed on developing our team, our move to our new Cardiff HQ and the acquisition of United Studios in the Autumn of 2022, but BARK remains a key part of our resource library and we are thrilled to be able to share this issue with you.

In keeping with our roots with BARK, this issue includes interviews with people we have met who excite and inspire our team and thought-provoking articles on issues or trends that we are talking about 'in the office'. We remain hybrid and our remote team is growing each month, but it has been great to see the team so committed to making regular trips to connect in person and more of the team coming in to the office on a regular basis. In this issue you will find our thoughts on discussions such as your digital carbon footprint and ChatGPT, as well as our insight paper on the Housing Association sector, we hope you find them interesting and informative in equal measure.

This year has also seen the return of our in-person event series and we have been delighted to host Tom Pike, Richard Wolfe and Rhinal Patel, and you can read a follow up interview with Tom on page 10.

There have been a lot of changes at Spindogs since BARK 10 was launched, but what remains the same is our passion and commitment to delivering transformative solutions in the digital and brand space, we have launched some incredible solutions over the last 2 years, for both medium sized and global brands, that most importantly have had a very real and tangible impact on the bottom line for our clients.

I look forward to seeing you in person soon and in the meantime, happy reading!

**LIAM GILES**

Managing Director

# 01

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**INTERVIEW WITH ARTIST AND DESIGNER  
TOM PIKE**

We took this opportunity to ask Tom about the collaborative nature of his work for the world's most iconic fashion and sportswear brands.

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**INTERVIEW WITH DR LEANNE CULLEN-  
UNSWORTH, CEO AT PROJECT SEAGRASS**

Find out what drives their mission for marine conservation and what part we can all play in supporting their ground breaking initiatives.

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CHAT



ADIDAS

# TOM PIKE

This Spring we were fortunate to sit down with Tom Pike, a fashion designer and artist who has worked for some of the world's most iconic fashion and sportswear brands.



CLAIRE SWINELL

Tom's career has seen him work globally for brands such as Levi's, Red Dot and Umbro and until recently Tom had spent the last 12 years at Adidas in Germany, as Design Director for Adidas Sportswear.

We took this opportunity to ask Tom about the collaborative nature of his work, to find out where we can all take inspiration from the varying approaches of some of the brands Tom has worked with, as well as his thoughts on sustainability in fashion, something that should definitely be on all of our minds.

**“I researched my passion for sportswear and developed my own personal take on sportswear as an authentic fashion style/language.”**



**C: WHEN YOU BEGAN YOUR DEGREE IN FASHION AND TEXTILES AT RAVENSBOURNE WAS SPORTSWEAR ALWAYS ON YOUR AGENDA?**

**T:** I always had a sportswear/streetwear personal style, which I think was a product of growing up playing sports and growing up close to Manchester, whilst the rave and club scene was so prevalent. However, I hadn't thought of sportswear as a legitimate fashion genre and so I suppose I was looking at catwalk collections and trying to copy a luxury fashion aesthetic. It was only really towards the end of my BA and then during my MA at Royal College of Art, that I researched my passion for sportswear and developed my own personal take on sportswear as an authentic fashion style/language.

**C: WHEN WORKING AT ADIDAS, HOW FAR IN ADVANCE OF A COLLECTION WOULD YOU AND YOUR TEAM BEGIN THE CREATIVE PROCESS?**

**T:** It was either 18 or 14 months in advance depending on the collection. However, we did also have a clothing range that was much closer to the market delivery date where we would work about 6 /8 months ahead.

**C: HOW DO YOU BEGIN TO PREDICT OR CREATE TRENDS THAT FAR IN ADVANCE?**

**T:** I don't know if there is an easy answer to that. It's not really about predicting trends as much as it is about moving with the pace of current style and culture and then keeping up to date with modern aesthetics and applying the DNA of Adidas to keep the collections authentic.

**C: WHAT DOES THIS LENGTH OF TIME MEAN IN TERMS OF USING SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES OR MATERIALS?**

**T:** Adidas started replacing unsustainable fabrics when I arrived there in 2010. Sustainability at Adidas was never a seasonal thing and we would always be looking to improve our impact on the environment from a product creation side, regardless of seasonal deadlines.

**C: TO WHAT DEGREE IS THE CREATIVE PROCESS IMPACTED BY THE COMMERCIALS?**

**T:** It would always depends on the collection, we had collections that were aimed at a lower price point and a very big democratic consumer and obviously one of the biggest considerations for a collection like this was low raw material prices that limit options. The design also needed to be simple and iconic, which limits the complexity of the design but you need to be really very creative to design something at low cost, simple but iconic. I actually used to relish that challenge!

**C: TO ACHIEVE THOSE GOALS HOW CLOSELY DID YOU WORK WITH THE ADIDAS BRAND AND MARKETING TEAMS?**

**T:** The design teams and the marketing teams work closely every day and for the majority of the time it was quite a smooth process... but not always! The marketing teams ultimately had the responsibility of the collections selling well and the design teams worked towards a marketing brief.

**“My major creative goal for the year is to exhibit my paintings in a London gallery.”**



**C: HOW WERE COLLABORATIONS WITH OTHER CELEBRITIES OR BRANDS DECIDED UPON?**

**T:** Mainly collaborations were decided on depending on the popularity and relevancy of the collaborator and this was mainly done through the marketing teams and sometimes the design teams were asked for input.

**C: WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR FAVOURITE COLLABORATION TO DATE?**

**T:** Parley was a great collaboration... It was a bit stressful, which I like... It was fast paced and working with the Parley founders was complicated but inspiring.

*Parley is an environmental organisation aiming to protect our oceans, they work across the fields of fashion, science, art, technology and sport, to name a few, and have a range of initiatives aimed at raising awareness and challenging all of us to question our role in the solutions needed to make a big environmental impact.*

**C: WHAT MATERIAL WERE THE GARMENTS MADE OF? WERE THEY DYED?**

**T:** All of the fabrics came from the pre-determined Parley/Adidas fabric toolbox and all of the fabrics had been worked on over a number of years and developed by a specific Adidas material development team. Some of the materials were dyed but we also used 'No-Dye' fabrics that came in its off white, raw state.

**C: WHY DO YOU LOVE PARLEY'S ETHOS**

**T:** Parley is a simple concept and there is not too much finger wagging or guilt tripping. They make fabric from the bottles collected out of the sea, it's a positive, solution-based idea that can then be transformed into anything by designers.

**C: WOULD YOU COLLABORATE WITH THEM AGAIN?**

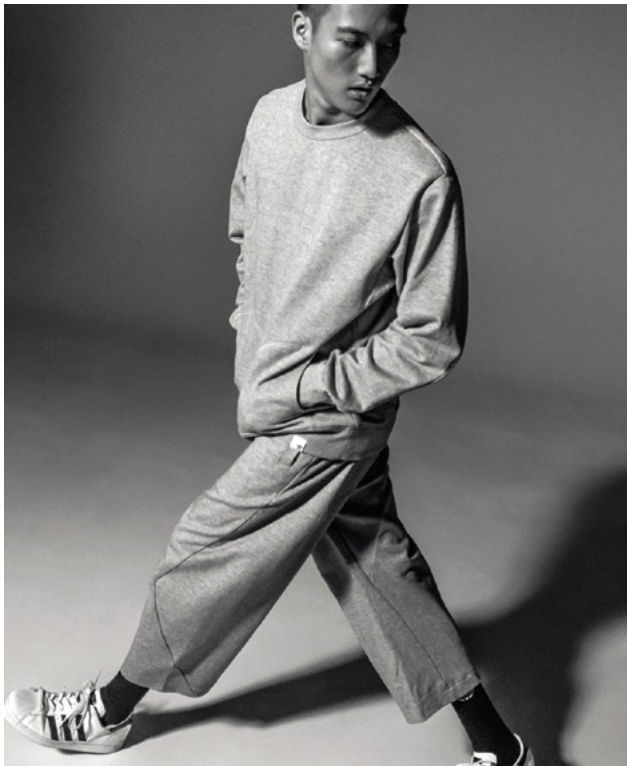
**T:** I would absolutely work with Parley again. The founders are passionate and opinionated and the kind of people that keep life exciting.

**C: HOW SUCCESSFUL WAS THE COLLECTION?**

**T:** I'm not aware of how financially successful the collection was but I know that the gender fluid 'activist' collection was iterated for a few more seasons, basically unchanged, which shows a certain confidence in the design.

**C: DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE COLLECTION FROM ANOTHER BRAND?**

**T:** I don't tend to have a favorite brand that I always like or follow but I have always loved what Kim Jones has done in his career and seeing him collaborate with Stussy for Dior was a nice touch and a nod to real, authentic, modern menswear references.



**C: YOU HAVE WORKED AT SOME INCREDIBLE BRANDS, LEVI'S, RED DOT, ADIDAS, AND SO I HAVE TO ASK, WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE ITEM OF FOOTWEAR / CLOTHING THAT YOU OWN FROM ONE OF THESE BRANDS?**

**T:** Adidas GSG9 Boots

**C: YOU ARE CURRENTLY TAKING A BREAK FROM THE CORPORATE SPORTSWEAR MARKET TO FOCUS ON YOUR PASSION – PAINTING – WHAT DOES THE AVERAGE DAY LOOK LIKE FOR YOU NOW THAT YOU ARE BACK IN THE UK?**

**T:** Well, I absolutely tend to stay in bed a bit longer! I do all my life administration in bed before 10am. I take the dog for a walk and then start to set up dust sheets in the lounge in my flat in Hackney and start to paint. It involves switching between the bathroom and the lounge and so it's a bit disruptive for my wife if she's working from home. On those days I'll go swimming and discover art galleries in London. I have also been teaching at a couple of London fashion colleges, which has always been something I enjoy and find very inspiring.

**C: LASTLY, WHAT ARE YOUR CREATIVE GOALS FOR 2023?**

**T:** My major creative goal for the year is to exhibit my paintings in a London gallery. Additionally, I'd like to see how I can forge my own creative eco system that incorporates art and design.

A huge thank you to Tom for being so generous with his time and answering all of our questions, you can find out more about Tom's art and his current collection by heading to – <https://pikeprojects.art/>

You can also support Parley in their global effort to protect our oceans by finding out more about their work here - <https://parley.tv/>



PROJECT SEAGRASS

# DR LEANNE CULLEN-UNSWORTH

This year Project Seagrass celebrates 10 years of marine conservation, focusing on saving the world's seagrass. I sat down with their CEO, Dr Leanne Cullen-Unsworth to find out what drives their mission for marine conservation and what part we can all play in supporting their ground breaking initiatives.



CLAIRE SWINDELL





**C: LEANNE, YOUR CAREER IN CONSERVATION HAS SEEN YOU TRAVEL THE WORLD AND EXPLORE SOME INCREDIBLE HABITATS, AND YOU CLEARLY HAVE A PASSION FOR ADDRESSING THE IMPACT WE HAVE HAD ON OUR OCEANS, CAN YOU TALK US THROUGH HOW SEAGRASS BECAME YOUR FOCUS?**

**L:** Throughout my travels during my degree, Masters and PhD what I found most interesting is that everywhere I worked the community often had a dependency on a resource and therefore a healthy respect for it and a desire to protect it. Some of the communities I came across, for example in Indonesia, were entirely dependent on a particular resource for every household need, Seagrass being one of them, and that opened my eyes to the power of seagrass and the importance of us protecting it and restoring it. I knew that eventually I would return to the UK and could see seagrass was just as important to UK biodiversity as overseas and so chose it as my primary research focus.

**C: YOU LAUNCHED PROJECT SEAGRASS WITH YOUR COLLEAGUES IN 2013 AND 2 YEARS LATER BECAME A CHARITY TO FURTHER YOUR WORK IN THIS SPACE, HAS THERE BEEN A PARTICULAR HIGHLIGHT OVER THE LAST 10 YEARS?**

**L:** When we launched our goal was to raise awareness about this incredible habitat and its importance, we also wanted to continue to evidence the value of seagrass across its range, the globe. Key for us is ensuring protection of seagrass but given how much has been lost, we also needed to look at restoring this vital habitat. We began to look at restoring seagrass in the UK, having lost up to 92% of our seagrass meadows in the

last 100 years, and our initial goal was to have 30 hectares of seagrass meadow in the UK by 2030. We are on track to achieve, and potentially exceed, that goal and that is something I am extremely proud of. The project in Dale has been particularly successful as the UK's first meadow scale seagrass restoration project, and that is in part a testament to the community support we have in that area, we planted seeds over an area of two hectares in Dale and continue to monitor and reinforce that area annually. It takes 5-7 years for us to say with any certainty that a meadow has been created. We plant seeds and give those seeds the best possible chance of becoming a meadow over this timeframe. This is not a mission that has short term gains, the commitment of our team and supporters is based on a genuine commitment to restore these habitats.

We now have restoration projects in the Firth of Forth, Scotland, Pen Llyn and Ynys Mon, North Wales and the Isle of Wight, Solent, and we continue to explore locations which show traits that suggest a seagrass meadow might be successful. We're also now exploring the Essex coastline. Each of these locations has vibrant community volunteers or teams on the ground who support our team in their work and engage the wider community in our mission, the collaboration we have with these community partners means we are able to make a real and tangible difference in areas we have initially identified as having the most chance of success for seagrass meadows.

**C: YOU HAVE SEEN SIGNIFICANT GROWTH IN THE LAST 4 YEARS AND HAVE BEEN ABLE TO EXPAND YOUR TEAM AND THEREFORE ACCELERATE YOUR WORK, HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THIS PERIOD OF SUDDEN GROWTH?**



**“A core part of our message is that people and the environment are compatible, we have to keep demonstrating that!”**

**L:** A Welsh Government grant in 2019 meant we were able to begin to expand our team, and our team is the heart of our organisation. I am extremely proud of their dedication to our mission and their passion for making a difference. A larger team enables us to spread the word more quickly, focus on the research we need, and achieve more on the ground action. A core part of our message is that people and the environment are compatible, we have to keep demonstrating that! We are in a nature crisis but the great thing about seagrass is that it is not a ‘keep out’ area, and we have such great community support on the ground sharing this message and ensuring their community understand and appreciate how our work and their enjoyment of the habitat can work in harmony.

It has been a very busy but exciting time and I am inspired by our current team to keep innovating and not take our foot off the gas, there is still a lot of work to be done and the potential is huge!

**C: HOW DO YOU PLAN TO ENGAGE MORE COMMUNITIES IN THE MISSION OF PROJECT SEAGRASS?**

**L:** We launched our SeagrassSpotter app and website in 2015 and it is now available in nine languages. The app enables the general public across the world to identify and upload photos of seagrass in their locality, this helps us map seagrass across the globe, fuelling research and engaging people with the mission to save seagrass at the same time. Other scientists and





water users or conservationists are particularly engaged with the app but it is accessible to all and we encourage your audience to take a look, wild swimmers, kayakers and dog walkers for example are other key groups who could help 'spot' seagrass.

We have a real opportunity to reverse the impact humans have had on seagrass meadows in the UK over the last century which means we are an extremely optimistic organisation, and we hope people will be engaged with our mission and want to support our efforts knowing it will have a real and long-lasting impact.

As I mentioned, restoration is not a short-term project and it takes time to see the results of our hard work, what is exciting about this is that as more young people engage with the projects they are going to remain engaged for a substantial amount of time within their community, therefore leaving a legacy for future generations.

#### **C: WHAT CAN SPINDOGS AND OUR NETWORK OF CLIENTS AND CONTACTS DO TO SUPPORT PROJECT SEAGRASS?**

**L:** We are really passionate about our SeagrassSpotter app ([www.seagrassspotter.org](http://www.seagrassspotter.org)) and will be relaunching it this year, and we would love to see more people in the UK's coastal areas looking for seagrass and sharing their photos, as it makes a tangible difference to our

research. And not just our research, the data we collect is open access to anyone, including other scientists, in the hope that we can accelerate all of our research and make a difference more quickly.

Thank you Leanne, we wish Project Seagrass every success and wish you a very happy 10th Birthday, enjoy the celebrations!

You can support Project Seagrass in a myriad of ways, all of which can be found here – ([www.projectseagrass.org](http://www.projectseagrass.org))

In the meantime we encourage you to download the app ([www.seagrassspotter.org](http://www.seagrassspotter.org)) and take a stroll on the beach, looking out for this incredible resource whilst you're there!

# 02

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### **YORKSHIRE HOUSING**

Discover how Yorkshire Housing leads the way in Innovation after delivering the 'wow factor'.

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### **CALL OF THE WILD**

Learn more about their visual identity, that pays homage to the journey so far, and signals the exciting adventure that still lies ahead for the Call of the Wild brand.





# YORKSHIRE HOUSING LEADS THE WAY IN INNOVATION AFTER DELIVERING THE ‘WOW FACTOR’



HANNAH COOK



ABIGAIL PHILLIPS



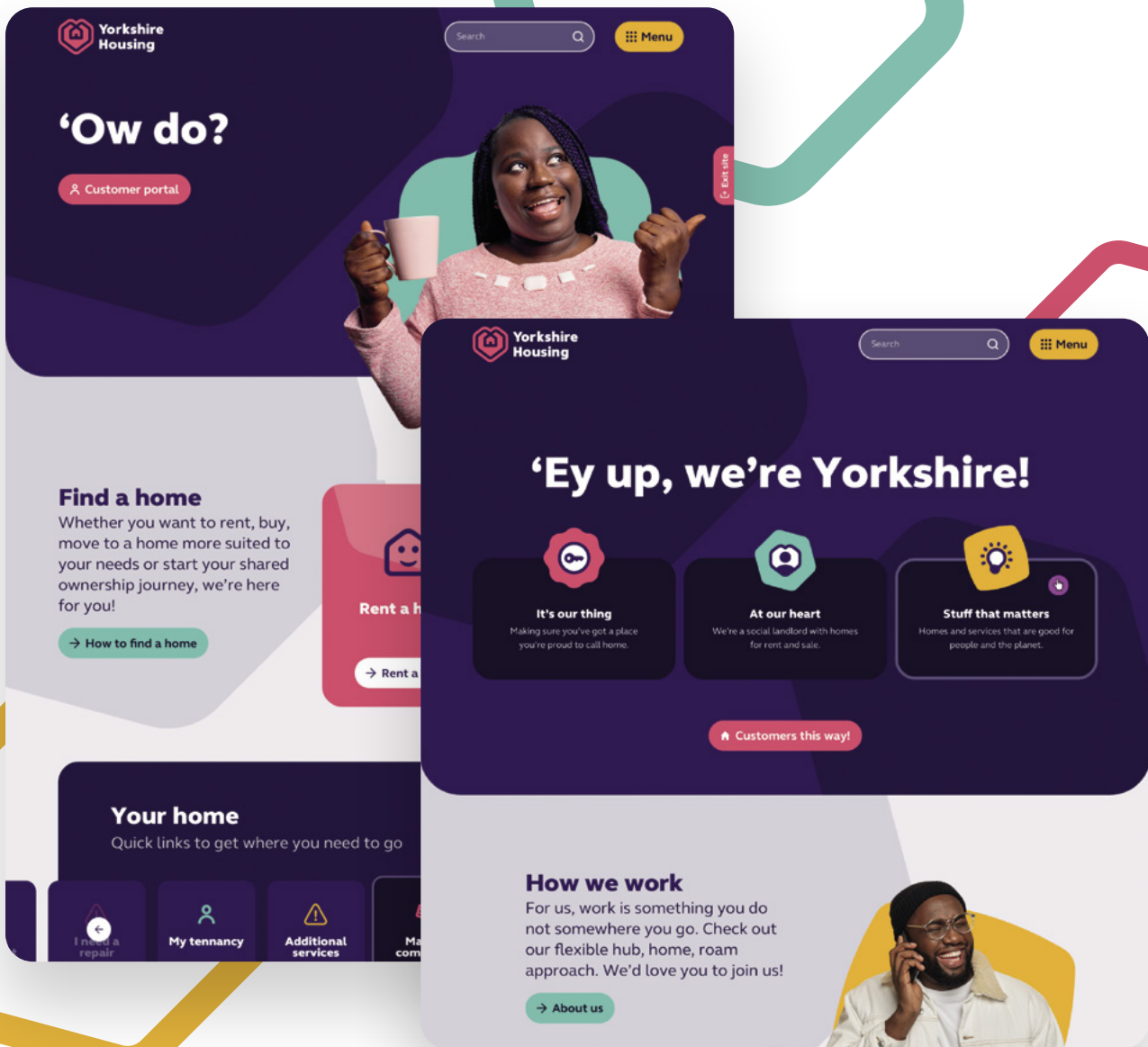
As a customer-centric industry, housing associations need to be reviewing their technology and internal operations to ensure they are delivering the most effective communication and services to their customers. Whether that's improving web structure or optimising portal interfaces to make sure customers get the best experience from them, housing associations need to maximise their digital potential to meet their customers' demands.

But Yorkshire Housing already know the power of digital innovation and how it can drive the organisation forward. Having built a reputation for doing things differently by using data and technology to transform their customers services, and having gone through a recent rebrand, it was time for the group to have a website that reflected their purpose and aligned with their new branding.

## TURNING HOUSES INTO HOMES

Yorkshire Housing is the biggest housing association based in Yorkshire. With more than 20,000 homes across the region, Yorkshire Housing pride themselves on making it possible for people to have a place they're proud to call home. As well as providing social and affordable homes, Yorkshire Housing continuously strive to tackle the housing crisis. Their mission is to build 8,000 new homes across Yorkshire by 2030 to help people get on the housing ladder through schemes, such as shared ownership and rent-to-buy.

Customers are at the heart of Yorkshire Housing, which is why the team are big on building a community and delivering a great experience for them. Innovative by nature, the business is always reinvesting their money back into the business to lead the housing association market, but most importantly, to improve their customers' homes and their services.



## INFLUENCING PARTNERS

To help Yorkshire Housing to continue to lead the way in innovation, the team approached us to deliver a brand-new website that reflected their vision as an organisation. After going through a successful rebrand, it was time for the team to have a website that reflected their new direction.

The current website didn't reflect Yorkshire Housing as a forward-thinking, strong and resilient organisation. The team are continuously looking for opportunities to stand out in the housing association industry, and the dated website didn't reflect their proactivity or ambition for the future.

One of the main objectives for a new website was that it needed to open opportunities for collaboration. Driving interest from partners and investors was key for the new website – it had to be designed in a way that showcased Yorkshire Housing as a leading organisation that partners would be excited to work with. While the website needed to influence partners to work with the housing association, it also needed to serve existing and future Yorkshire Housing customers.

From a user perspective, the website wasn't user-friendly and didn't enable customers to self-serve. Heaps of buried content on the site and poor navigation made it difficult for users to find what they're looking for with

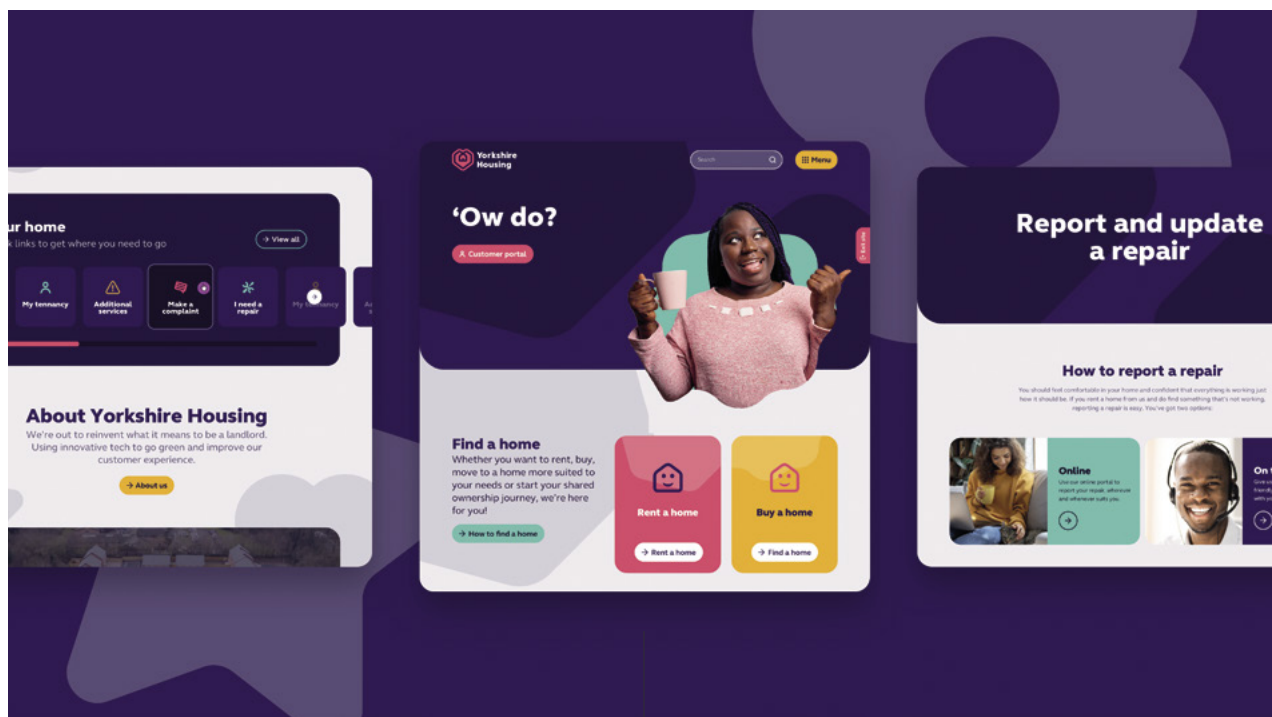
ease, and discouraged customers from engaging with Yorkshire Housing online. Not only was the website hard for users to navigate, but the CMS didn't give the team the flexibility and support to create and manage their content.

A new website would bring the services in line with the brand, attract new partners and encourage customers to self-serve online. It would also make it easier for the team to create strategic content that supported their customers.

Read on to find out how we embarked on the project by going through a discovery process to ensure the team had a website that influenced partners, delivered a better user experience and showcased the Yorkshire Housing brand and talent.

## DISCOVERING YORKSHIRE HOUSING

Our first approach was to kick off the project with a discovery phase. Working collaboratively, the discovery process gave us a bigger picture of the project. Through a series of workshops, we defined the website's objectives, their users, current challenges, and insights into the makeup of the organisation.



The discovery phase enabled everyone to have a deeper understanding of who uses the website and to establish what their user journeys look like. As the website is used by every department and multiple types of customers, it was important that we took the time to listen to a variety of users. We needed to understand their requirements and how they use the website, making sure that we recommend features and functionality that are going to support their user journeys. That said, the discovery phase gave us the insights we needed to propel the project forward and lay the foundations for the new website design.

Reviewing and recommending a new sitemap also made sure that content was categorised appropriately and would make it easier for users to navigate the website and for the internal team to organise content on the website.

#### DELIVERING FLEXIBILITY

After identifying the organisation's wants, needs and challenges, it was clear that Umbraco would be the most suitable platform for the website. Umbraco gives the team the flexibility to create and manage content, and deliver a better user experience. A range of flexible content blocks enables the team to create different types of content and page layouts to inform investors on what they do, and guide customers on looking after and managing their homes.

With investors being an integral part to the new website, it was important that the homepage was designed with this audience in mind. The design was a shop window for partners who were interested in Yorkshire Housing and an opportunity to shout about the organisation's work and strategy, encouraging these users to get in touch.

The website design needed to make it easier for customers to self-serve on the website. A dedicated landing page for customers would enable

them to find what they're looking for and navigate the content on the rest of the site. Being able to report a repair or get a quick update within a few steps, was a key factor for customers. Umbraco enables the team to create multiple forms for their customers, allowing them to engage with Yorkshire Housing at a click of a button.

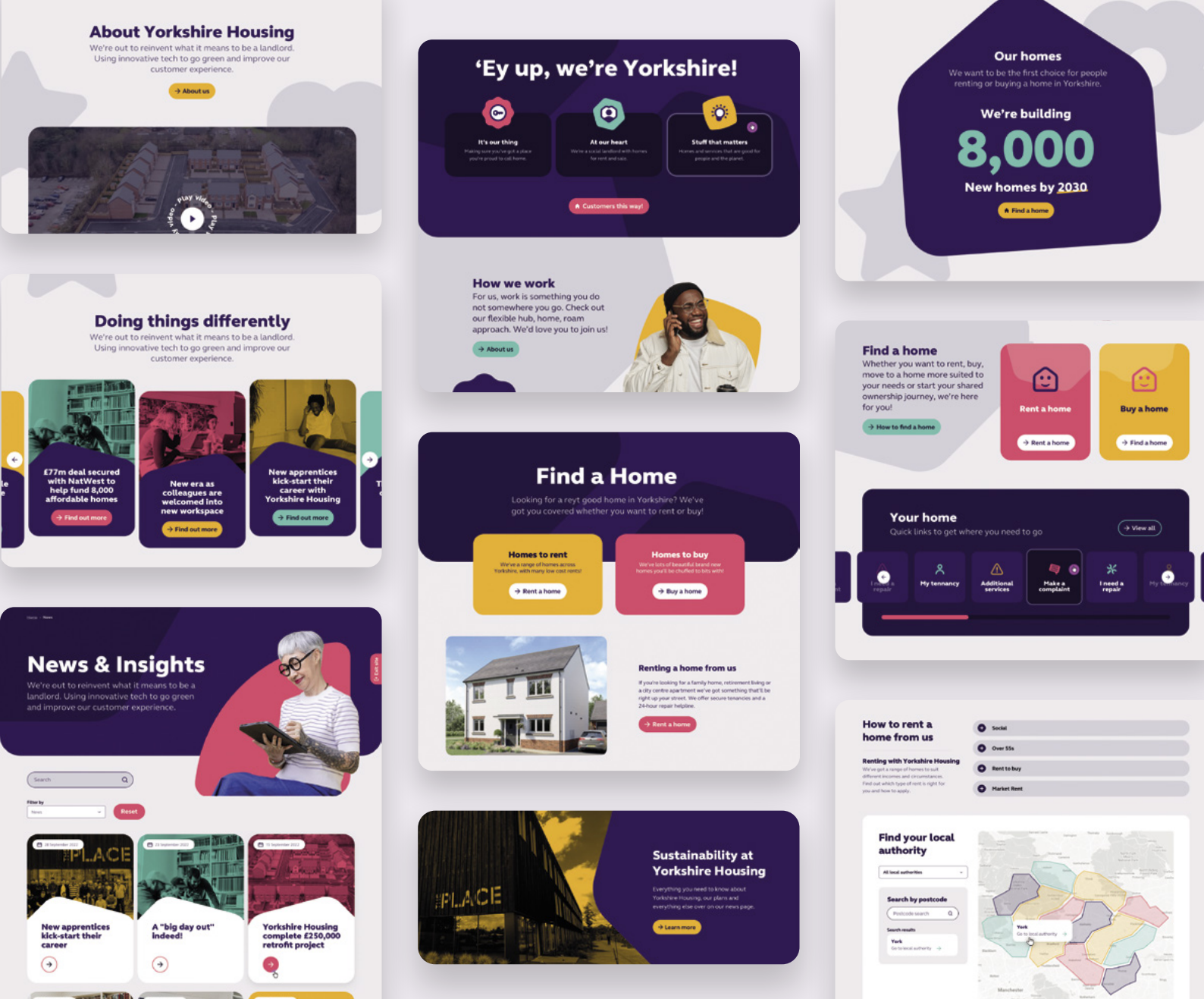
As the team had accumulated mountains of content on the site, they benefitted from an outside perspective and training session on writing web content for SEO, led by our team. Yorkshire Housing's communications team devised a plan for content and we supported them by creating and populating some of the content. Together we ensured the site reflected the insights from the discovery phase, desired tone of voice, engaged with users, and guided every visitor on their website journey.

#### CELEBRATING COLLABORATION

From the offset, the whole project has been a collaboration between Spindogs and Yorkshire Housing. By working together and introducing different expertise at various stages of the project, we were able to ensure that we had a deep understanding of the travel of direction, the brand and the purpose for the new website.

As well as listening to the Yorkshire Housing team about their requirements and challenges, we were able to guide them on the best design and functionality to support their needs and meet their expectations. As a result, Yorkshire Housing has a website that attracts investors and enables customers to self-serve online.

From the beginning, the objective was to create a website that had the 'wow factor'. After wowing the Chief Executive with the finished website, we can truly say that we've delivered!



**“The website is a vibrant showcase for the business, feels uniquely like us and is easy for customers to use. As they say in Yorkshire we’re well chuffed with the result.”**

Hannah Jowett - Head of Communications & Brand



# CALL OF THE WILD



RHYS ASHMAN



## FROM BANNAU BRYCHEINIOG TO THE TOP OF THE SHARD

Born in 1998 out of a long-term friendship based on a shared passion for the outdoors, Call of the Wild has helped clients from diverse industries to develop their leaders and the teams they lead for the best part of 25 years. While their roots are firmly planted in the outdoors, Call of the Wild focus on skills development and actionable outcomes regardless of the location, whether it be in the classroom, outdoors or online. As a result, they pride themselves on the ability to facilitate valuable professional leadership and management programmes and team development experiences anywhere - be it at the heart of Bannau Brycheiniog or at the top of the Shard.

With a 25-year anniversary on the horizon, Call of the Wild wanted to embark on an ambitious rebrand that symbolised their growth and maturity as an organisation and reflected their unique position in the training space. To bring this vision to life, the team approached Spindogs to embark on a rebrand. With the celebration of their anniversary as a catalyst, our aim was to provide a launchpad for the future that reflected a more considered direction of travel, while still preserving the deep-rooted connection to the company's story.

## HEADING BACK TO THE CLASSROOM

While a new logo and supporting collateral are often the exciting visual representation of a brand project, it's crucial that they are underpinned by a strong and defensible brand position, otherwise your go-to-market can lack depth or appear inauthentic.

Undertaking a comprehensive Brand Discovery is the first step to gaining a deeper understanding of our clients' brands, and the Call of the Wild project was no different. Through collaborative workshops with members from across the Call of the Wild and Spindogs teams we interrogated the organisation aiming to uncover insight into their services and USPs, their audiences, and values as an organisation and as individual leaders. While the Brand Discovery identified clearly defensible values and voice, Call of the Wild's service offering and consequently their organisational purpose provided a more unusual challenge.

Concentrating on the experience of 'learning' and avoiding the terms 'training' and 'outdoors', we proposed 'Big Learning' as a go-to-market solution. By enabling Call of the Wild to own their uniqueness, 'Big Learning' breaks down the barriers of location - all environments can be inspirational - and places the focus on the outcomes and the journey towards achieving them.

Identifying 'Big Learning' as the means of communicating Call of the Wild's unique approach enabled to unlock the brand as a whole. Previously



**“We really enjoyed the brand discovery phase with Spindogs and felt they really understood our DNA through the process. What they’ve delivered has neatly brought together the elements of our offering, matching our vision for the future with a nod to our history, and provided us with a clean, modern brand that will grow with us”**

Mark Soanes - Director, Call of the Wild



identified brand values and tone of voice took on greater meaning as a result of better articulation, and a clear and compelling client commitment was developed alongside a resonant brand purpose. ‘Empowering growth by creating inspirational learning environments’ would become a reason for being that spanned everyone in the organisation from top to bottom and reinforced their already exhibiting behaviours as part of a greater whole.

The concept of Big Learning along with articulation and direction for the brand in action (values, purpose, client commitment, tone of voice) were compiled in a Brand Blueprint, which will enable Call of the Wild to inform their brand successfully into the future.

#### SHOWCASING AUTHENTIC MOMENTS

Ultimately, ‘Big Learning’ gave us the confidence and direction to deliver an exciting and authentic visual identity and enable the rebrand to capture the essence of its dual nature without being confined to a specific theme or aesthetic.

Drawing inspiration from industries that effortlessly blend urban and natural elements, such as outdoor clothing brands like Columbia and North Face, we sought to create a cohesive brand identity that resonated with their audience.

One of the key areas for evolution identified was photography. Recognising that visual storytelling was vital for showcasing their story, we aimed to capture the spirit of their services across various environments, seamlessly transitioning from the street to mountain landscapes. To achieve this, we curated a collection of photography that exemplified the desired approach – engaging learning environments, genuine and candid interactions between people, and the positive impact of their Call of the Wild experience. By moving away from staged, posed images, we could showcase authentic moments, conveying a sense of active participation,

even if the individuals weren’t always smiling or laughing. In the outdoor imagery, we aimed to capture the essence of teamwork and collaboration, often hinting at a group effort through the portrayal of a single person. The focus was on selecting imagery that portrayed a more genuine, and diverse representation of their experiences and audience.

#### EMBRACING NATURE: PAYING HOMAGE TO THE RED KITE

For 25 years, Call of the Wild had built their reputation using a logo featuring the red kite – a symbol synonymous with their brand and the surrounding location. While this icon had played a pivotal role in the company’s success, it also posed some challenges. The strong association with the red kite often led to misconceptions about what the company did. However, it also provided a recognisable visual focal point for the team, and clearly carried significant emotional attachment. We recognised the need to evolve Call of the Wild’s identity but didn’t want to compromise such a huge part of their story.

Colour plays a significant role in the branding process. We recognised the importance of selecting a new colour palette that resonated with their brand values and conveyed a sense of harmony and consistency between the outdoors and business aspects of their offerings. Colour offered us a connection to heritage while enabling forward progression.

Looking to the red kite for inspiration, we used an image of the bird and extracted its colours of natural, earth tones to shape what was to be the chosen colour palette that formed the foundation of their rebranding efforts. The bright red on the original brand made way for slate, sand, hearthstone, patent, and gold – adding sophistication and flexibility to their visual identity. Mixing and blending these colours also allowed us to produce a broad suite of shades and tints, allowing for seamless integration across their various brand assets.



# CALL OF THE WILD

CALL OF THE WILD

CALL OF THE WILD

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**“We were able to bring the company’s personality to life, which was a real pleasure. Working closely with a brave and trusting client always produces the best results, and seeing them run with the brand is really gratifying and always the true end goal for an identity project.”**

Rhys Ashman - Creative Manager

#### EMPOWERING USE OF THE BRAND ACROSS EVERY TOUCHPOINT

Upon reviewing the assets that already existed, we quickly identified typography as a key area for consideration. Our goal became to simplify their typography and provide a typeface selection that was easily recognisable.

We streamlined their typeface selection to just one, ensuring uniformity throughout the brand. In addition, we introduced hierarchy guidelines to empower Call of the Wild in their future application of the brand, allowing them to control the way users perceive and read their content and to ensure consistency across all touchpoints. We have found empowerment is key to the success of a business ensuring consistency in the roll out of any significant brand update.

#### THINKING INSIDE THE BOX

As with any brand project, the logo was a huge focal point of the rebranding process. While respecting the company’s legacy, we wanted to address its visual shortcomings, and reflect Call of the Wild’s growth and brand maturity.

The previous logo had pacing issues and visual irregularities due to the sentence-like name and conjunctive words. To rectify this, we reimaged the logo by compacting the text to a uniform height and positioning the icon to the left. By employing the same height for all elements, we achieved a more balanced and cohesive visual identity.

When designing the logo, we took into account Call of the Wild’s unique proposition and instead of following the conventional challenge of ‘thinking



outside the box', we chose to think inside the box, literally. We based Call of the Wild's brand concept around a box to signify the company's adaptability in any environment and drew inspiration from topographical maps and using the point of view of a red kite. As a company operating in the outdoors and Bannau Brycheiniog, Call of the Wild are extremely familiar with maps and this represents the expertise that they bring to their client's organisations. By dividing the topography maps into squares, and blending them with abstract patterns, we developed a unique logo with ever-changing iterations. They say a logo should be able to be drawn by anyone, and this is true for Call of the Wild – this unique logo provides a recognisable symbol of Call of the Wild's identity.

To further enhance the logo, we created a dynamic element that can be used in a digital format – a constantly evolving and morphing logo, showcasing the company's adaptability and ever-changing nature. This animated logo will never be the same twice – but will still feel like Call of the Wild, just like no two of their development sessions are never the same.

#### OUTDOORS, ON-SITE, ONLINE

We know that a successful brand should be effortlessly adaptable, whether it's on the side of a building or as compact as an app icon. We carefully designed the brand to make sure it could seamlessly transition across different touchpoints for Call of the Wild. From merchandise such as umbrellas and water bottles, to uniforms for their outdoor instructors we considered every detail. Not only would this enhance their visual identity, but also ensured their instructors could stand out for safety purposes, especially against natural backdrops.

By incorporating the 'Big Learning' concept into visual elements, such as clean lines juxtaposed against organic patterns, we could convey the fusion of outdoor adventure and corporate professionalism.

Documentation and data visualisation received a facelift too, with the new brand elements seamlessly blending to create visually appealing and coherent materials that makes the brand feel like the huge outfit that they are.

#### THE ADVENTURE CONTINUES

By articulating a challenging proposition to better engage with their audience and reimagining their visual brand, Call of the Wild are now well placed to successfully showcase their quality and unique ability to deliver leadership and development outcomes. The cohesive visual identity not only reinforces their future growth plans, but pays homage to the journey they have been on, and signals the exciting adventure that still lies ahead for the Call of the Wild brand.

We are extremely proud to have been a part of Call of the Wild's journey, and you can find out more about their business here:

[www.callofthewild.co.uk](http://www.callofthewild.co.uk)

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# SUSTAINABILITY AND THE DIGITAL DILEMMA: HOW GOING DIGITAL CAN HELP THE ENVIRONMENT



DAVE MORGAN

Digital transformation is having a profound effect on businesses and is changing the way they operate online, however, our online habits are having a surprisingly harmful effect on the environment. Every minute that we spend scrolling a newsfeed, browsing the internet, streaming a video, joining a conference etc. contributes to your and your business' digital carbon footprint.

Internet usage alone contributes to a staggering 3.7% of global emissions - which is equivalent to all air traffic in the world - a figure that's expected to double by 2025 indicating a substantial increase in CO2 emissions resulting from internet use.

With the shift to remote work, our reliance on the internet has only increased, further exacerbating the problem. Fortunately, there are practical measures you can take to minimise your businesses carbon output.

## HOW DO DIGITAL SOLUTIONS PRODUCE A CARBON FOOTPRINT?

A digital carbon footprint is the CO2 emissions that result from the production, use and data transfer of digital devices. Hosting, transporting and viewing digital services can all contribute to this output. Power usage across all three of these channels is then amplified by things such as the number of website pages, requests, volume and file size. Activities such as internet traffic, sending emails, streaming video content, video conference calls and voice over VoIP all use this power. The impact can be huge - data from Science Focus and OVO Energy suggests "global email usage generates as much CO2 as having 7 million extra cars on the road".

## SO HOW CAN YOU MEASURE A WEBSITE'S CARBON FOOTPRINT?

Despite the ease that the internet and digital technologies bring to our lives, they do have their drawbacks - one of which is the impact websites have on the environment. But how can you measure this impact?

Here are a selection of tools that you can use to audit your website to make a start with recognising and reducing your digital carbon footprint:

- Inbuilt browser tools**  
 Allows you to see actual page size, are there any really large images that can be resized and/or are contributing massively to your websites page size
- Page speed insights**  
 Gives you more in-depth technical information such as whether you are leveraging compression to reduce the amount of data transported
- Website usage analytics (for example as provided by Google Analytics)**
  - Are any pages obsolete or out of date, should they be redirected to more appropriate current pages?
  - Are there pages with very similar content ("duplicate content") that can be condensed into a single page?
  - Can any key user journeys be shortened so users can find the content with fewer page views?

## WHAT CAN YOU DO IMMEDIATELY TO REDUCE THE CARBON FOOTPRINT OF YOUR WEBSITE?

Here are some quick wins you can do right away to help reduce the carbon footprint of your website which are low cost and easy to implement:

- Review image sizes and look for any oversized images that can be resized and/or compressed - adding images larger than necessary and will result in larger page sizes. Before uploading your images to your site, compress them to reduce the file size even further. Online tools such as Compress JPG or PNG Gauntlet can compress images for you
- Ensure any documents uploaded are not saved for print but instead saved for web

# “If the internet was a country, it would be the world’s sixth-largest polluter.”

nature.com



3. If your website has a scrolling hero banner, keep the banner to a maximum of 3 images
4. Ensure you are using auto playing video only when it's strictly necessary as video uses a huge amount of bandwidth and processing power (which both need energy!). Consider changing to 'on demand' by adding a play / pause button
5. Remove any out of date, unnecessary and largely duplicated pages - regularly spring cleaning pages that you're not using anymore not only improves your carbon footprint, but ensures your website is optimised for search and will help your site visitors find the content they want
6. Assess your SEO and content - 68% of users initiate their journey through search engines. Ensuring your audience lands on the right page reduces your website's carbon footprint considerably

## THE BIGGER PICTURE

What are some viable long-term solutions to minimise your carbon footprint?

One effective measure is to migrate your hosting (and IT infrastructure) to a carbon neutral provider – these companies strive to maintain a balance between the amount of carbon they produce and remove. Another option is to choose a carbon-negative provider that removes more carbon than they emit.

To further decrease your carbon footprint, consider selecting a provider located closer to your user base. This can reduce transportation emissions and have a positive impact on your overall carbon footprint. Additionally, some hosted web and IT solutions offer a sleep mode feature that can be enabled to conserve energy.

Content Delivery Networks (CDNs) also offer a remarkable positive effect on the environment. As its name suggests CDNs provide content to users through its network of fast servers worldwide. This means that users can

access the content they need more quickly, without the need for multiple requests to distant servers, which consume more energy and produce more carbon emissions.

## WHAT ELSE IS TECHNOLOGY DOING TO SUPPORT REDUCING CARBON EMISSIONS?

Data centres, which consume large amounts of energy to store vast quantities of digital information, contribute massively to environmental concerns such as high greenhouse gas emissions from cooling systems and IT equipment, and excessive energy consumption. But, by harnessing technology like AI, data centres are making significant progress towards reducing their environmental impact and improving their sustainability. Major companies like Google have already invested in AI to reduce energy consumption at its data centres. It has been estimated that AI can help reduce carbon emissions by a staggering 14 billion tons by 2035 and has the ground-breaking potential, when used within data centres, to optimise maintenance and electricity production.

CMS platforms such as WordPress and Umbraco are regularly releasing patches and updates with a focus on improving performance which improves user experience, helps websites rank higher in search engines and reduces carbon emissions.

Computer hardware is also becoming more efficient all the time, and older, more power demanding computers are regularly being phased out and replaced with more powerful and more energy efficient replacements.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

So now you've learned the ins and outs of sustainability and the digital dilemma, what can you do next to help with the issue? You can help by raising awareness across the relevant departments, take some of the baseline measurements we've discussed in this blog and begin your journey to becoming more carbon neutral.



# HARLEY-DAVIDSON TURN 120



Proud to be a trusted partner of Harley-Davidson since 2021, a partnership rooted in a mutual appreciation for great quality, innovation and the journey as well as the destination.

Wishing the iconic Harley-Davidson brand a happy 120th Birthday from everyone here at Spindogs.



# 120 120 120



**JUST ONE  
SMALL POSITIVE  
THOUGHT IN THE  
MORNING CAN  
CHANGE YOUR  
WHOLE DAY.**

**NOT OUR WORDS, BUT THE WORDS OF THE DALAI LAMA.**



# THE RISE OF THE ROBOTS: THE USE OF GENERATIVE AI IN MARKETING



LAURA WILLIAMS

This year, talk of AI has been everywhere. After quietly bubbling under the surface for some time, generative AI is truly having its moment, partly helped by the emergence of ChatGPT, an open source language model introduced by OpenAI at the end of 2022 - which garnered over 1 million users in just 5 days - that has taken the internet by storm, raised eyebrows and opened up the conversation of how much AI tools should be embraced in the creative space, if at all.

## FIRST, WHAT IS GENERATIVE AI?

Generative AI is an umbrella term that covers the kind of AI models (ChatGPT, Jasper, CopyAI to name a few) that focus on creative processes, and their capabilities are truly impressive. It can produce novel content such as blogs, poetry, recipes, essays, analyse text and offer suggestions for improvement, write code in widely used languages like Java or Python and for the most part is indistinguishable from human-generated content to the naked eye. Crazy, right? These generative AI bots are free to access online, which means it is possible for anybody to write content, create code, and who knows maybe write a future Best Screenplay at the Oscars in just a few clicks, look out Quentin Tarantino!

By entering a prompt into an AI tool you can generate a plethora of options that can be chopped and changed. The prompts can get quite specific, for example, we asked ChatGPT to create us a

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# “There has been a significant rise in the popularity of AI among marketers, in fact 35% of marketers have reported using AI and automation in their roles.”

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new bio, featuring Welsh slang as an ode to our Cardiff origins and to throw in the odd dog pun for good measure

“Shwmae! If you’re after a team of top dogs to help your business achieve fleas and fortune, Spindogs is the pack to join. We’re a bunch of proper cwtchy collies who know their stuff when it comes to web and digital, and we’ll work like a pack of hounds to get the job done. Whether you need help with your website, social media or anything in between we’re always ready to get our paws dirty. Tidy!

It understood the assignment, but we won’t be changing our bio anytime soon!

It’s not just text-generating AI that is gaining attention; AI-generated artwork and audio are also having their moment. You may have come across the TikTok trend of artists doing AI covers of songs for example, resulting in unexpected and impressive renditions like Kanye West’s version of Hey There Delilah. It’s not unreasonable to say that this technology will see many areas of life having to adapt to its capabilities, whether that’s the workplace or in schools, to ensure it is used effectively and ethically.

## HOW ARE MARKETERS USING AI?

As generative AI continues to develop, it makes sense that marketers and creatives will start to explore the possibilities of generative AI and the impact it can have in their roles. Even Ryan Reynolds is getting in on the AI action, after he debuted an ad for his brand Mint Mobile (which was sold to T-Mobile earlier this year), in which the ad copy was partially written by ChatGPT.

Generative AI opens up a new world of possibilities and according to HubSpot it seems the most common application of AI so far within marketing has been creating content. Creating exceptional content that engages, converts, educates, and stands out online is a time-consuming process, and it’s the details that take a piece from good to great. AI content marketing tools can help get you from a blank page to a strong outline, then a piece in good shape. Then, marketers and copywriters can work their magic and turn the draft into a valuable piece of brand content. As we all know, generative AI can’t replace the skills of a professional writer. But

it can create a helpful starting point that could save writers hours, letting them create more content, faster.

There has been a significant rise in the popularity of AI among marketers, in fact 35% of marketers have reported using AI and automation in their roles, and this popularity stems from the realisation that there is a clear distinction between high-impact and low-impact work. Tasks like creative brainstorming, strategising, project execution fall into the high-impact category - they are rewarding and satisfying to do.

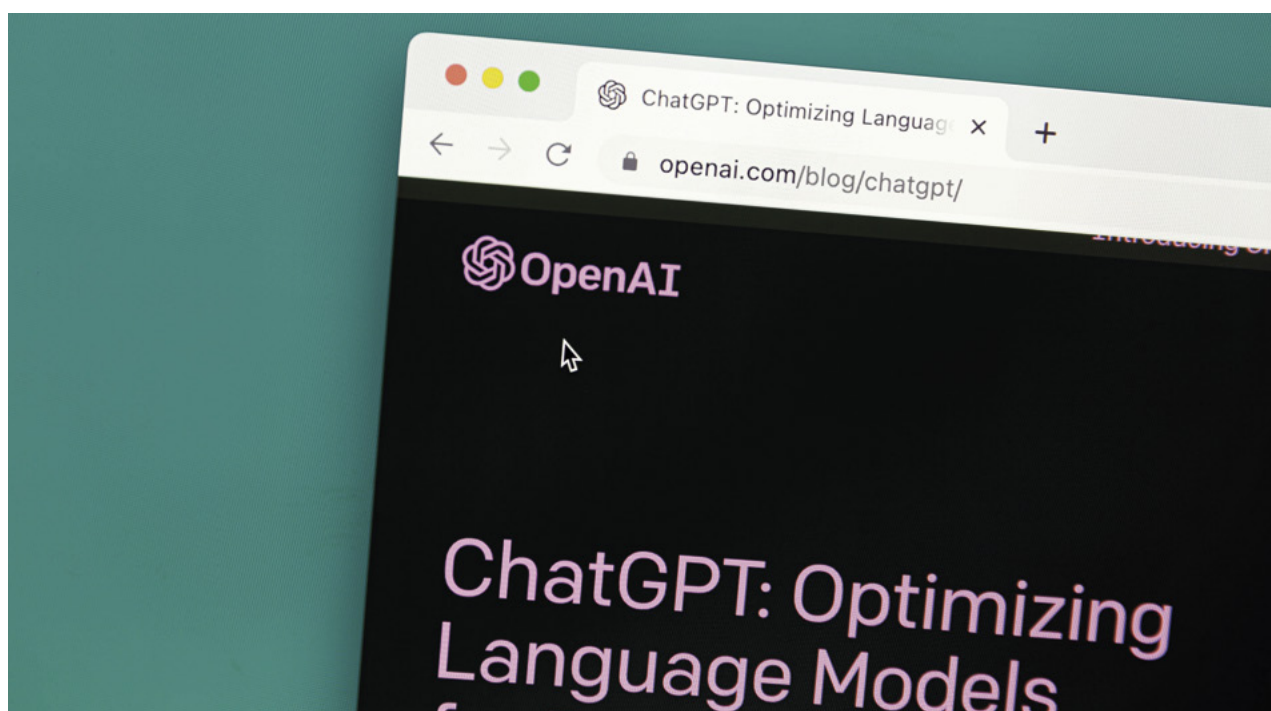
According to HubSpot, marketers spend an average of five hours a day on manual, administrative, or operational tasks, such as keyword research, data cleanup, list building, and formatting blogs. Many of these tasks are done within platforms that are as user-friendly as possible, but even so, it’s still a lot of repetitive work. However, the implementation of AI tools allows marketers to accomplish these tasks in half the time and allows marketers to lean further into the more creative and strategic tasks and leave the dull work to the robots.

AI technology is evolving quickly, but by learning to get the best out of it, there’s no doubt that marketers can use AI to their advantage and unlock a whole world of insights, ideas, and save an enormous amount of time.

## WHAT’S THE CATCH?

You may have seen this film before, remembering the buzz surrounding first-generation AI virtual assistants and chatbots nearly a decade ago, obediently following simple commands and providing basic answers. To think that we thought Gmail’s rollout of the autocomplete feature was impressive! But this new wave of generative AI is a totally different beast - and it’s understandable to have some hesitations before diving in head-first.

One of the biggest concerns associated with using machine-generated content is the misconception that it can be a replacement for human creativity. AI is not a replacement for humans, and there is no AI tool that can replace the emotional element of marketing, because AI has no actual thoughts, opinions or feelings - unlike us. Emotion, and creativity are essential elements of great marketing - something that AI can’t replicate just yet.



Generative AI also has the potential to be, well...wrong. These AI models are only as good as the data they are trained on (ChatGPT's knowledge is limited to data from 2021), and sometimes its creations are flawed, or don't make sense. Issues with duplicate and repetitive content are another concern. As AI creates content that is based on pre-existing information that is available to everyone, much of what AI generates is hardly creative, but rather an aggregate of what humans generated before. Without human intervention, it could be indistinguishable with the content created around similar topics amongst competitors or even worse, just downright boring. If you have tried ChatGPT you would have noticed it has a tendency to talk in a bland, almost Wikipedia-eque way. So if you're using these models on a daily basis, your writing might end up impacted by the generic, sanitised outputs.

Lastly, an increased use of AI tools can lead to the risk of over-reliance on our robot friends, OpenAI itself, for example, even highlights overreliance as a potential problem. The model's system card says: "As users become more comfortable with the system, dependency on the model may hinder the development of new skills or even lead to the loss of important skills." It's not totally implausible either, when you think of how reliant on tech we have become in the past few years, how easy do you find mathematical equations now that we have a calculator at our fingertips at all times? What if we get used to providing only a starting prompt for a text, which the AI then completes, or we become accustomed to providing the basic outline and expecting the AI to provide all of the juicy details. It's important to strike a balance between leveraging AI tools for efficiency and maintaining our own creative and cognitive abilities.

All of that being said, generative AI is here to stay. Whether you choose to use it to your advantage or not – it's important to keep an open mind towards this technology and be mindful that AI should remain a valuable tool rather than a crutch that hinders our growth and development.

**For more on Laura's thoughts on AI and its impact on marketing keep an eye on our blog.**

**“It's important  
to strike a balance  
between leveraging AI  
tools for efficiency  
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own creative and  
cognitive abilities.”**

**SOME OLD-  
FASHIONED  
THINGS LIKE  
FRESH AIR AND  
SUNSHINE ARE  
HARD TO BEAT.**

**NOT OUR WORDS, BUT THE WORDS OF LAURA INGALLS WILDER.**

# UNPACKING THE CHALLENGES: WHY DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION EFFORTS IN THE HOUSING SECTOR STILL LAG BEHIND



LAURA WILLIAMS



“Digital transformation’ is a phrase that seems to have been around for a long time, with increasing digital adoption among tenants a familiar and recurring challenge for most housing associations. While we applaud the clear commitment across the sector to better engage with and serve their audiences, the approach and methodologies utilised are regularly compromised by a lack of digital understanding. Sometimes implementation is inconsistent, budget is a challenge, occasionally there is a lack of vision but, most often and more importantly, there is a lack of knowing what’s possible.

At Spindogs we recognise the will of the sector to engender change, and are focused on not only providing first-class digital solutions, but on holding your hand while you get there. Understanding your audiences, their pain points and online behaviours is the crucial, but often overlooked, first step on the journey. How can you begin to serve your tenants effectively without understanding how they engage with technology, adapt to their accessibility needs or their preference for a more familiar language?

We have seen housing associations make strides with digital tenant engagement and investors, when they have started from an audience-centric position. When combined with technical expertise, user-focused functionality and brand-led experiences, the results are dramatic. Tenants feel a greater connection with their housing association, their ability to quickly find appropriate content is increased, and the need for more traditional (and time-consuming) communications is significantly reduced. Resulting in tenant satisfaction and an increased confidence from investors.

This report confirms the adoption challenges that the sector is facing, but what is both concerning and reassuring is that many of the challenges you are facing are consistent sector-wide. You are not alone, and the success stories demonstrate that, with the right approach, successful digital transformation is within your grasp.”

Daniel Lewis - Strategy Director, Spindogs





Against the aftermath of the pandemic and the backdrop of a cost of living crisis, housing associations are now more eager than ever to seek out ways to cut costs, generate additional income and find efficiencies within their existing business models. To the expert, digital transformation is a natural fix for many of these issues, but for those heading up housing associations, facing daily challenges, and needing support and insight to roll out digital strategies, it is a far more overwhelming prospect.

During the Housing Expo 2022 and 2023, we sought to understand what the key digital challenges delegates were anticipating over the next 1-3 years. Through one-on-one discussions, we identified crucial hurdles that the housing sector experienced in its digital transformation journey including financial, data and technology, and accessibility.

This report examines the barriers to adopting digital transformation in more detail, including further external research data and case studies, to help us all understand what pressures housing associations continue to face as tenant demands and investor expectations grow. It also offers a helping hand, based on over 18 years of experience in the housing sector, to getting started.

#### **ADDRESSING FINANCIAL CHALLENGES: BUDGET, FUNDING AND RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS**

Our conversations with delegates revealed that the key financial concerns were as follows:

1. **Budget**
  - Lack of funding
2. **Time and resource**
  - Shortfall of resource holding back digital transformation plans

We looked at wider industry research to dig deeper into the concerns raised by the delegates at Housing Expo 2022 and 2023. An Inside Housing survey in partnership with Futr (2021) revealed that nearly a third (32%) of respondents felt a 'lack of investment' was the main barrier

holding back digital transformation plans. In the first instance, housing associations are faced with an immediate lack of funding and budget constraints. Time and resources remain extremely expensive and indeed rare commodities. More than half (54%) of the respondents in the same survey cited a lack of internal digital skills and resources as holding back digital transformation plans.

Remote working is an area experiencing noticeable progress and impact, influenced by the pandemic and the growing focus on sustainability. The financial implications of this shift are evident, as landlords are increasingly interested in promoting flexible work arrangements to reduce costs and carbon emissions. Platform Housing Group, a catalyst for change in the housing sector, serves as a prime example. Previously operating nine offices in 2018, they now operate with just two in 2023, resulting in annual savings of approximately £900,000. The pandemic has not only spurred the transition to remote working but has also revealed additional benefits in terms of environmental impact. Platform estimates a remarkable 77% reduction in staff mileage claims by eliminating commuting to offices, a trend positively impacting workplaces throughout the UK and will continue to do so with hybrid working options here to stay.

Source: <https://www.socialhousing.co.uk/insight/saving-space-the-financial-impacts-of-the-working-from-home-model-69393>

#### **DATA AND TECHNOLOGY: DATA ACCURACY, LEGACY SYSTEMS AND CULTURAL BARRIERS TO TECHNOLOGICAL INTEGRATION**

Technology concerns were as follows:

1. **Technology and data**
  - Access to real-time data
  - Concerns regarding inaccurate data
  - Dated technology
  - The need for a single source of truth
  - Lack of integration of new technology



## 2. Skills and training

- Knowledge gap with new technologies
- Lack of access to training

## 3. Organisational culture and structure

- 'Resistance to change' culture

Data is key for housing organisations in making spending decisions. It is commonly accepted by housing associations that the data required to present an appropriate business case for digital transformation rarely exists. Looking at data from Futr, 32% of people said not enough good data and a lack of investment held back digital transformation plans. But many ask the question whether it's the case of it not existing or whether it is the fact data isn't appropriately collected in the first instance. At the same time, there is often a lack of knowledge on the options surrounding digital transformation for housing associations. Respondents to our questions specifically cited a lack of information around how to build digital transformation projects 'safely', particularly when looking after valuable data and not disrupting existing ways of working too much. 8% of respondents to Inside Housing's survey in association with Futr said they have yet to develop or put in place a strategy, but it is their intention to do so. 48.57% of respondents to the same survey said a lack of good quality/robust data held back digital transformation plans.

In the case of Halton Housing, when the association considered access via any device and from anywhere, it found 82% of customers have access to the internet themselves and a further 7% have access elsewhere. Thus it wasn't necessarily about the means to access the data, it was about Halton Housing ensuring it was delivering information to its tenants in appropriate formats and locations - particularly mobile.

In Inside Housing's research in collaboration with Futr, 80% of respondents said they have seen an increase in resident demand for digital products in the past 18 months. This is a key milestone for landlords in ensuring they don't get left behind and respond in the best way possible to staff and tenant demands.

Feeding into financial concerns, the cost of delivering training for new digital systems was cited as an issue for those at Housing 2022 and 2023. The concern therefore is not only in driving digital transformation initiatives but the subsequent costs associated with bringing an entire organisation, and its clients, up to speed on new systems.

There is limited evidence to suggest social housing landlords are taking a strategic approach to their use of data, but most acknowledged opportunities created by proactively managing a tenant insight process to reduce cost and improve service provision as part of a continuous improvement approach. A report by CIH 'Going digital', cites the use of data modelling to predict the likely impact of policy change on tenants and their organisation's financial viability.

What housing associations find is that their systems frequently don't talk to each other. In Inside Housing's Capita report 'Behind the Curve', 25% of housing associations say they use six systems or more to manage processes and at the same time a cultural problem of "it's how we've always done it" exists as a further barrier to change or integration. Likewise, despite the aforementioned stats of tenant internet access, only one quarter of tenants are fully using digital systems, with 50% of tenants not digitally included at all.

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# “Looking at data from Futr, 32% of people said not enough good data and a lack of investment held back digital transformation plans.”

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## ACCESSIBILITY: INCLUSIVITY, ENGAGING VULNERABLE GROUPS AND THE DIGITAL DIVIDE.

Our conversations with delegates revealed that the key accessibility concerns were as follows:

### 1. Accessibility and inclusivity

- Making the user experience barrier-free and user-friendly for all demographics, including people with disabilities
- Making content accessible to everyone
- Engaging vulnerable members of society

### 2. Tenant engagement and support

- Improving onboarding and interaction
- Engaging tenants and improving response times
- Providing different content for different demographics i.e young families, the elderly.

### 3. Communication and outreach

- Getting key messages out via social media
- Enhancing communication channels.

Accessibility remains a hot topic alongside an eagerness for housing associations to offer a service that is as user friendly and non discriminatory as possible. It still remains that tenants are at the mercy of traditional working patterns with residents not being able to contact landlords beyond these times to report issues that wouldn't be considered an emergency. Similarly, tenants are demanding increasing choice in how to contact their landlords. Housing associations continue to strive to offer different content for different demographics whilst doing their utmost to engage and interact with all tenants equally and fairly. Where this falls down however, is it can all too often prove to be one way. CIH reports that 82% of housing associations have less than 50% of their current services available via self-serve. Clients instantly lack autonomy or the independence to access services they continue to crave. This further adds to the issue of tenants feeling alienated and it is proving harder again for housing associations to engage with them.

From an equality and diversity point of view, some housing associations are working harder to specifically engage an elderly demographic and access to digital resources may come less naturally to this group, therefore before training is given on a new system, it would be a big job in itself to break down immediate barriers to adoption. Families, especially those

with limited resources, often encounter difficulties in obtaining the necessary tools and technologies for digital connectivity. The cost of devices, internet services and relevant training can present significant barriers for these families. Consequently access to digital resources may not come as naturally to them, further widening the existing digital divide. Considering these factors is essential to address the immediate barriers to digital adoption that groups such as vulnerable people or those from disadvantaged backgrounds face. Housing associations must consider this and take proactive measures such as providing necessary resources and offering affordable access to technology, giving every tenant equal opportunity to engage with digital resources.

## THE NEXT STEPS TOWARDS DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Digital transformation is not just nice to have, it's a necessity and a crucial step for housing associations to improve their performance, meet customer expectations, and stay competitive in a fast-changing environment. However, embracing digital requires a clear strategy and understanding and commitment from senior leadership, therefore involving the board from the outset is essential, as they can provide the necessary oversight, guidance and resources to make digital transformation happen

To formulate a digital strategy, it's important to ask the right questions and address key issues. The questions listed below provide a helpful framework to guide the conversation and ensure all relevant aspects are considered. By answering these questions, the board can gain better understanding of the opportunities and challenges presented by digital transformation, and develop a roadmap that aligns with the organisations goals and priorities:

1. What will it take to meet our customers' digital expectations?
2. Do our business plans reflect the full potential of technology to improve our performance?
3. Is our portfolio of technology investments aligned with opportunities and threats?
4. Do we have the capabilities required to deliver value from the technologies?
5. Who is accountable for digital and how do we hold them to account?
6. Are we comfortable with our level of digital risk?



In addition to these questions, it can be useful to involve external stakeholders, such as tenants and experts who can provide insights and best practices from other organisations. Furthermore, it's also important to communicate the digital strategy to all stakeholders and ensure they are engaged in the process. This can help build support and momentum for the transformation journey, and lead to better outcomes and benefits for all involved.

The digital landscape has shifted quickly and tech capabilities and tenant expectations are changing just as rapidly. Digital transformation strategies ultimately need to ensure housing associations have a better, tenant-centric, digital user experience - that means that repairs get fixed on time, rent balances are displayed at the swipe of a finger, and answers can be found without having to pick up the phone. This opens the door to better internal operations, more effective communication with tenants and drives efficiencies through closer operational relationships.

It all starts with finding the right digital partner with the credentials and expertise to power your journey. Spindogs has helped some of the UK's front-running housing associations overcome individual challenges, including Yorkshire Housing, Notting Hill Genesis, United Welsh, and Southern Housing. Together, we've eased pressure points, given tenants the ability to self-serve, initiated cost savings, better utilised resources, streamlined tenant journeys and created bespoke systems to directly produce solutions to specific problems.

To find out more about our work with Housing Associations, take a look at our Housing Association sector page, download our Housing Sector paper or get in touch. We'd love to chat about your challenges and how we can help shape the future of your housing associations through digital transformation. We encourage you to experience a digital partnership the way it should be.

**“Organisations that are not afraid to interrogate what already exists, can challenge and be challenged, end up with much more robust and clear strategies for their website. I've also seen some great insights come from organisations who speak to their own customers to understand their needs and what they respond well to. Planning and preparation are key – and content should never be an afterthought!”**

Hannah Cook, Programme Manager, Spindogs

**IF THERE WAS  
EVER A MOMENT  
TO FOLLOW  
YOUR PASSION  
AND DO WORK  
THAT MATTERS,  
THIS IS IT.**

**NOT OUR WORDS, BUT THE WORDS OF SETH GODIN.**



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### **DIGITAL IS AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING WE DO**

Get in touch to learn more about partnering with Spindogs.

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# DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

## UMBRACO 7

Umbraco End-of-Life deadline date is 1st September 2023. If your website is currently running on version 7, we cannot stress enough how important it is to have a plan in place to upgrade very soon.

## SOCIAL HOUSING STRATEGY FORUM

The event provides pioneering views on the existing and forthcoming challenges in the sector, with discussions focused on tangible solutions to these development areas. Liam will be attending on our behalf. This will take place on 25th-27th September 2023.

## AUTOMOTIVE MANAGEMENT LIVE

Automotive Management Live welcomes motor retail managers from across the UK to shape the future of the industry and network with peers and suppliers. Which takes places on the 9th November 2023. Cat and Andy will be attending, say hello if you're there!

## HOMES UK

HOMES UK is the largest free-to-attend conference and exhibition of its kind. Bringing together over 4,000 housing sector professionals to discuss how to build and maintain high-quality, sustainable homes in communities where people will thrive. 22nd-23rd November 2023 - London

## BLACK FRIDAY

Black Friday is on 24th November 2023. Give yourself enough time to prepare and plan your Black Friday campaigns.



# WE'RE HIRING

Looking to take the next step in your digital career? We're hiring across departments and would love to hear from you, more details can be found on our careers page [www.spindogs.com/careers](http://www.spindogs.com/careers)

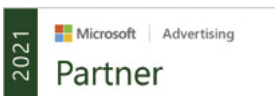


# PROUD TO RETAIN THE FOLLOWING CERTIFICATIONS



HM Government  
**G-Cloud**  
Supplier

As a G-Cloud supplier, we have been approved to provide IT and software services throughout the UK to public sector customers within the UK government's G-Cloud framework.



Being a Microsoft Advertising partner gives Spindogs opportunities to nurture and grow our intelligent search and digital business, access to the Microsoft community and technical experts, and recognition for our work with Microsoft Advertising.



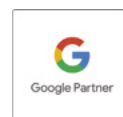
Umbraco Gold Partners are officially Umbraco-certified and take an active part and interest in the development of Umbraco as a CMS.



Cyber Essentials is a Government backed scheme that helps to protect against a whole range of the most common cyber attacks. Certification gives you peace of mind that your defences will protect against the vast majority of common cyber attacks.



We are a Memberwise Recognised Supplier. We are also taking part in the Memberwise Digital Excellence (2021) Research Project and have become digital excellence champions.



Google Partners is a marketing programme for agencies that manage Google Ads accounts on behalf of businesses. Achieving Partner status means that we have demonstrated Google Ads skills and expertise, delivered client revenue growth and sustained and grown its client base.



# DIGITAL IS AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING WE DO



For nearly two decades we've evolved alongside the latest technologies to create bespoke digital solutions for a variety of sectors. This includes building new websites, developing intuitive systems and taking established businesses to the next level with transformational rebrands.

We work with global clients in housing, education, automotive, professional services, membership and transport – to name a few!

We care about the same things our clients do – brand visibility, lead pipeline and the bottom line. In essence, realising client success is what gets us out of bed in the morning – your success is our success.

#### **GET IN TOUCH**

To learn more about partnering with Spindogs, get in touch with our Business Development team:

**E: [info@spindogs.com](mailto:info@spindogs.com)**

**T: 02920 480 720**



**BARK**

Until next time...



