



Rachel visits the Eight Acres Hotel in Elgin to discuss 2023 visions and wellbeing.

Pictures by **Daniel Forsyth**.

THIS month's business lunch took us to the edges of Elgin, to visit the recently revamped Eight Acres Hotel.

The venue is a welcome addition to the local community after being closed for three years.

All of us were welcomed by new manager Wimpie Blatt who took over in September 2022.

He gave us a tour of the complex, and shared his grand plans with us for the well-known establishment.

Rooms have had a facelift, and communal areas have all been given a chic twist, making it the perfect location for any occasion. It hosted Christmas day dinner, and a Hogmanay Gala for locals and tourists alike.

Additionally the health club now includes strength and conditioning equipment, cardio machines, the reopened pool, men's and women's saunas, spa treatment rooms and a café.

Future plans include community celebration events, live music, work on outdoor spaces, whisky flights and even a dog exercise area.

However, Wimpie said the most important element of success is ensuring the trust of the local community.

He said: "It is super exciting to be in this role. Especially with the history of this particular hotel – it is amazing speaking to locals and hearing their memories within the building. Everybody got married here or has been to a party here some time, so there are so many memories for people here."

"For us to be a part of it and bring the

have spent a healthy amount of money to ensure that our health club is at the best of its ratings to provide for the locals.

"The rooms will always have transient people who are travelling for business and the restaurant will always have diners.

"But I think the leisure facilities are something we really give back to the community.

"For me, now, the question is longevity.

"If you look at the infrastructure immediately around us, there are a lot of retired people in our area and it is really easy for them to even walk down to us.

"So we must have a close relationship with our immediate neighbours and from an investment perspective too, the leisure centre has been a godsend to us."

The staff at the Eight Acres also received a special thank you from Wimpie.

He praised the commitment and loyalty of his staff, many of whom are connected to the hotel over several generations.

He said: "It is always about thanking my team.

"I have been in the industry for over 25 years and I never achieve without a strong team supporting me through it. They have been through thick and thin, they have been through highs and lows."

Having seen and heard about the plans for Eight Acres, we then all had the chance to sample some of the delicious food.

# BUSINESS Lunch

building back to the local community is phenomenal and I am really looking forward to it.

"I met a couple who got married here 20 years ago and they stayed here one night.

"I invited them for a free night to just come and renew their vows and see what we have done since then."

Key to ensuring the trust of the community, Wimpie said, is improving the hotel's services and making them available to the people from Elgin.

The best example of this, he said, was the newly-improved leisure facilities.

Wimpie added: "Since the launch, we

Sat down in the spacious and light-filled dining room, we were presented with a specially curated, three-course menu – all of which looked mouth-watering.

Over the course of lunch, our conversation then turned to the planning process for the next 12 months.

Joanne McCallum, business development manager at Adder Business Ltd said: "One thing we do in the first two weeks of January every year is make contact with all of our existing customers.

"We feel it's really important to check in and see what's changed in our clients'



January is often a time when people feel they want to make changes...

Joanne McCallum



The revamped lounge area is the perfect location to unwind.

businesses. January is often a time when people feel they want to make changes – or even reinvent themselves – and we know that usually has an impact on the work we do with them too.”

Aimee Walker, operations director at Moray Chamber of Commerce added: “This is the time of year that we plan all our events for the year ahead.

“We have all our events now pencilled in for 2023.

“We have networking events and business breakfasts along with other exciting plans. We sent out ‘save the

dates’ for our dinner too! It sold out in 12 hours last year.

“We are also creating a year in review document as we don’t shout about what we do enough.

Wimpie said: “It’s key that we set the tone for the year ahead. Without my team we are zero, so I make sure to empower them to run with ideas. The initial start of the year is about aligning everyone together.”

Alex Johnston, president of Moray Chamber, area manager at ACREO and helper to his wife’s business Ava Innes, said: “We look at cash forecasts



ON THE MENU

Starters

Lentil & Carrot Soup ~ Black Pudding Croquette

Mains

Chicken Supreme ~ Butternut Squash & Mushroom Risotto

Desserts

Banoffee Tart ~ Baked Apple



ACCOMMODATION



CELEBRATE



FOOD & DRINK



MEET



LEISURE FACILITIES



OFFERS



# Eight Acres Hotel & Leisure Club



is the ideal hotel choice to base yourself for a Highland adventure. Explore the mountains of Morayshire on a short holiday, weekend break or a simple night away



A hearty soup with some focaccia.



**Name:** Wimpie Blatt  
**Role:**

General manager at Eight Acres  
**Wimpie has had a diverse career in hospitality having worked in both England and Inverness. He is excited to put his stamp on the hotel.**



**Name:** Joanne McCallum

**Role:** Business development manager at Adder Business Ltd  
**Joanne has worked at Adder for four years, specialising in marketing and web design.**

## ABOUT OUR PANELLISTS

**Name:** Alex Johnstone

**Role:** President of Moray Chamber and area manager at ACREO.  
**Alex has over 20 years of experience within the construction and engineering industry.**



**Name:** Aimee Walker

**Role:** Operations manager at Moray Chamber  
**Aimee started working at the Chamber in July 2022. She works with small start ups to large-scale firms.**



and cash flows. We are now at the stage for the next level of investors and investments.

"We are looking at who's buying, who's looking, where the spend is coming from. Spend has changed drastically.

"So we are looking at that. When everything kicked off [in the economy] we did pre-buy a lot of stuff – so now it is looking at that, and working out our spends for the coming months."

Our discussion then turned to the topic of well-being. With a new year comes new intentions, so I was intrigued to find out what our guests were already implementing in their workplaces.

Aimee said: "Every lunchtime we go for a walk for an hour. It really helps us to be more productive and to focus more once we have been out.

"We started it a few months ago, and it has been so good for us.

"We motivate each other and we find that it makes a big difference for us.

"Having that break from a screen is healthy.

"We also go out for lunch or get a takeaway once a week!"

Kay Cameron, account manager at Highland News and Media, said: "Having dogs when working from home really helps.

"It means I have to take the dogs for a walk at 11 am during my coffee break.

"I find this helps me." Joanne added: "We really pride ourselves in offering a great working environment for our team.

"We actually moved into our new city centre offices in September in part so our team could work in such a beautiful area.

"We're right next to the river – ideally positioned to have walks or lunch together in a really metropolitan space.

"Our founder Abi also gets us a gym membership and lunch once a month – she is great!

"Work hard, play hard."

Wimpie's teams also get a chance to use the facilities and he makes sure that their shifts work for them.

"We look after their wellbeing by ensuring that they work the time they want to," he said.

"With staffing shortages it's about doing what works for them, rather than having to go on the hunt for new staff.

"The staff also make use of the health club facilities and we had some attend our Hogmanay gala.

"It is about curating a work place that works for them, and they enjoy."



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Aimee Walker.



All smiles during the lunch.