

**Carol:**

Our title sponsor, Nigel Wright Recruitment, sponsor this prestigious award. As you know Nigel Wright is celebrating its first 25 years in business this year, and the Awards committee would like to extend its congratulations to Nigel Wright for this achievement. I'm sure you will all join me in congratulating them for the work and service they have provided to the region, over the years.

The outstanding achievement award is an annual prize presented by the Awards committee, in conjunction with Nigel Wright. This award is given every year to an individual who has shown significant achievement over the years, within the region, and has made an outstanding contribution to their business and the local economy.

When selecting this year's winner, the committee, in consultation with Nigel Wright's Senior Consultants were also looking for someone who has demonstrated determination, excellent leadership skills and integrity, in the way they run their business and develop their employees and team in general. Someone we can all look up to within the region, as a leader within their sector.

Last year's winner was of course Paul Walker, who we heard from earlier tonight, and I would like to invite him back to the stage to present the award together with Richard Morgan from Nigel Wright, who will tell you a little bit more about our winner. Richard, Paul, welcome!

**ACTION: Paul & Richard to stage.**

**Richard:**

Thank you Carol for that introduction and kind words; it certainly is an exciting year for Nigel Wright. We are proud to have been involved with the North East Accountancy Awards since its launch in 2007 and sponsoring the Outstanding Achievement Award is also a great honour, as it is always presented to a successful and distinguished business leader, within our region. This year's winner is no exception.

When Nigel founded our business in 1988 he was a chartered accountant, and we originally specialised in local finance recruitment. We have grown significantly since then, and diversified into other specialist areas and sectors, but the core finance team, on which the business was originally established, still recruits top finance and accountancy professionals, into a wide range of businesses and organisations in the North East. During the last two and a half decades we have been privileged to support many talented individuals through their careers, and continue to be astounded by the wealth of talent the finance profession in this the region, has to offer.

Our winner this year qualified as a chartered accountant with Arthur Andersen, where he worked for nine years, before joining a Manchester based Property Company. He went on to be a Director of Reg Vardy plc between 2001 and 2006, where he was first appointed as Finance Director and then Managing Director, in 2005, until the sale of the business to Pendragon plc in 2006. He founded his current company in late 2006, together with two business partners, which currently employs almost 3500 people, and has an annual turnover in excess of £1.2 billion. In May 2013, the Group completed a £50m Equity Placing and announced the £31m acquisition of Farnell Land Rover, in Yorkshire.

He is a member of the Economic Affairs Committee of the Confederation of British Industry and a keen supporter of Burnley FC, and I'm sure you'll agree, a worthy winner of this year's Outstanding Achievement Award. If you have not guessed it by now, it is with great pleasure that I announce the winner of this year's Outstanding Achievement Award to be Chief Executive Officer of Vertu Motors plc, Mr Robert Forrester.