

Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen,

It's a great pleasure to be with you here again at this years' CIPD Awards. Now in its 10<sup>th</sup> year, Nigel Wright are proud to be the lead sponsors of these awards.

The last years' regional business news has tended to focus on the difficulties of the North Sea and its North East based supply chain, as well as the closure of Redcars' steelworks. What gets far less news is the strength of the local employment market. While each individual job lost is a personal tragedy, the reality of the region as a whole is that over the last year unemployment is down and the number of people in work in the North East is at a record high.

The region continues to provide fertile ground for multinationals as well as start-ups. The mix of a skilled flexible workforce, lower property costs, less congestion combined with a beautiful environment is a winning combination.

At Nigel Wright we have had another successful year with our Newcastle and Teesside offices producing record results.

Our new investments in Aarhus, Denmark and Malmo in Sweden, have now been joined by our latest office in Gothenburg, where we are looking forward to welcoming the Tall Ships Race in September. In August we are entering a new country with an office in Amsterdam. We are dynamic proof to others what a great place the North East is to base a multinational Head Quarters.

I have had the great help of two excellent HR professionals over the last year; Lynsey Tate and Suezanne Bennett. I'd like to thank them publicly for all the help they have given me.

As the chief executive of a business that is entirely people based and organically grown, I understand the benefits of great HR support.

HR can be the unsung heroes of the business world, but not in our book. This is your night to celebrate and recognise the very best of HR in this great region the North East of England that is entirely people based and organically grown. I understand the benefits of great HR support.

I'd like to congratulate all of the finalists and wish you all an enjoyable and successful evening.