

Vision 2023

Leaders driving growth

Northern Ireland Awards

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In association with



Grant Thornton

Vision 2023: Northern Ireland Awards

Vision 2023, in association with Grant Thornton, recognises the best teams backed by private equity and venture capital. The initiative recognises extraordinary companies that show vision and the lasting value that the investment and support of their investors brought in 2022, especially given the difficult climate.

Winners will comprise of 15 visionary companies nationwide recognised for competitiveness, growth, innovation and ESG commitment. Four of these companies will receive a national award, which will be presented at our Gala Dinner on 22 November in London.

In this booklet we profile the winner for Northern Ireland. Further information regarding Vision 2023: Leaders driving growth awards can be found on the [BVCA website](#).

The judging panel

Chair:

- *Jan Rutherford, Scottish Equity Partners*

Judges:

- *Dr. Manjari Chandran-Ramesh, Amadeus Capital Partners*
- *Rhian Elston, Development Bank of Wales*
- *Beth Houghton, Palatine*
- *Matt Jacobs, Livingbridge*
- *Matt Legg, Bridgepoint*
- *Ewan Mackinnon, Maven Capital Partners*
- *James Marshall, LDC*
- *Mo Merali, Grant Thornton*
- *Andrew Priest, Inflexion*



Grant Thornton's private equity team provides a full range of services to assist private equity and portfolio firms maximise their growth potential

Our integrated approach brings together a team of professionals from advisory, taxation and assurance services who provide bespoke solutions from investment through the growth phase to exit. As well as acting for private equity houses, we advise private equity-backed companies, and management teams seeking private equity investment.

Visit grantthornton.co.uk to find out more, or contact:

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Bob & Berts

📍 Ballymena, Northern Ireland

🌟 Supported by BGF

Bob & Berts is a chain of coffee shops that was established in 2013 by Colin McClean and David Ferguson with the opening of their first store in Portstewart, where the location of stores is focused on local communities, rather than busy city centres. 2023 marks 10 years in business since the first store opening and as a landmark year, Bob & Berts expect to open their 30th store. The company differentiates itself from a crowded marketplace through its 'made to order' fresh food offering, and by the rustic and family friendly atmosphere in its stores.

The company obtained investment from BGF in 2017 to accelerate growth plans and expand into the new markets of Scotland and England. The addition of BGF helped drive this expansion through both the addition of capital and the management experience BGF provided, including adding industry specialists to the board. Prior to taking BGF investment the existing management team were being spread too thin. BGF encouraged and supported the build of a professional management and actively drew on their network to find and attract highly experienced candidates to expand the team. The business now has ambitions to further accelerate their expansion into Scotland and England, with the long-term goal of having a 70-store presence across the region.

The company has managed to remain competitive due to their unique business model, positioning them between a national branded coffee shop chain and a small single local coffee shop, as they seek to offer fresh, 'made to order' food along with their coffee offerings. One of the biggest challenges in the past 12 months has been a squeeze on margin from inflationary pressures on energy and food, both key inputs in their supply chain. To adapt to this, Bob & Berts has adjusted their product offering, and embraced technology such as moving to smart menu screens from manual boards, which enables changes to be made faster and uniformly across the brand.

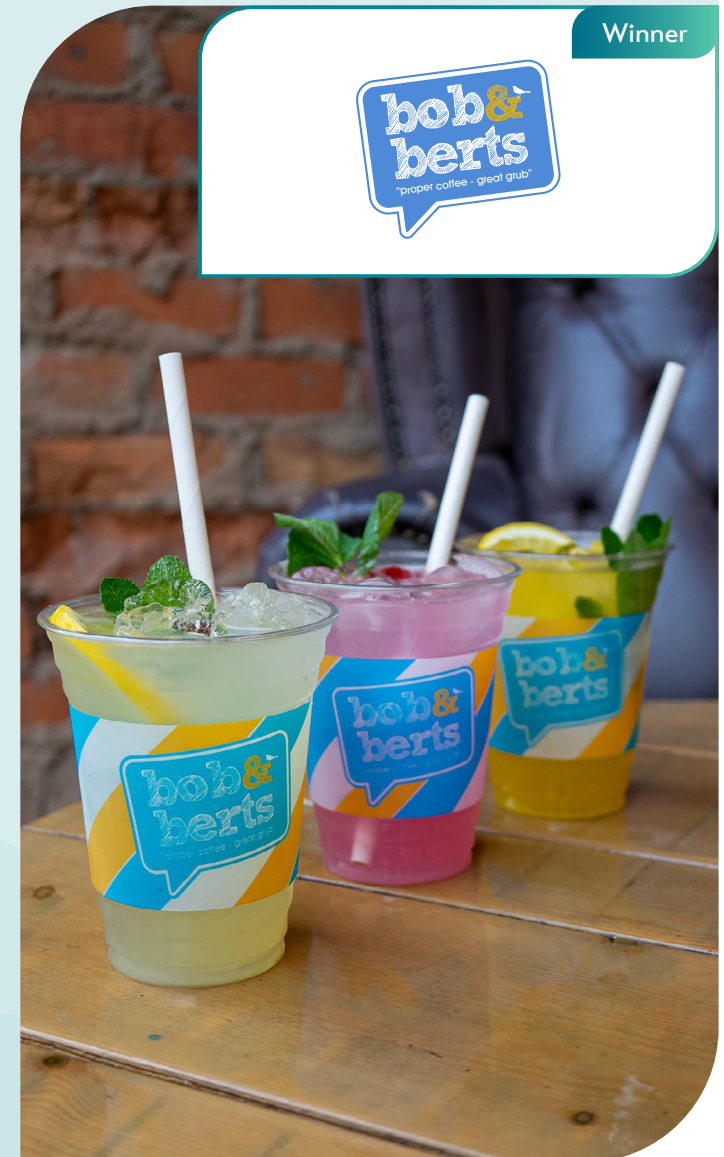


Bob & Berts

Bob & Berts saw 121% revenue growth in 2 years FY19 to FY21 which was largely achieved through geographical expansion throughout Northern Ireland, Scotland and England. In addition to its' 14 stores in Northern Ireland, Bob & Berts now have 6 stores in Scotland and 7 locations in England.

The company has been very engaged with the local community from the beginning, with each store actively sponsoring numerous local children's sports teams. Bob & Berts is engaged with the local communities and strives for locations that enable the store to be at the heart of the local community. Bob & Berts sponsors the Bob & Berts North Coast 10k and 5k annual runs and regularly raises money for local hospices. The company are also involved with Sports Academy George, a UK based charity working in the underprivileged township communities of George, South Africa. The charity seeks to provide better opportunities for the local children of the community through academics, sports, and mentorship. From an environmental perspective, Bob & Berts have transitioned into recycling their cooking oil, utilising the most sustainable takeaway cups on the market, and reducing all plastic usage significantly.

Bob & Berts has shown innovation and agility in its transition from hard copy menu's towards digitalised menu screens. This transition has allowed for more frequent product innovation, with the core menu being updated on a regular basis. The company have developed an app for food ordering and delivery, and they have further signed up to third party ordering and delivery services such as Just Eat. To support staff retention Bob & Berts created an employee app that is tailored to each employee and includes a bespoke training journey, training modules designed to be fun and interactive, along with delivering companywide news, updates, and important notifications.



Bob & Berts

Judges' comments:

Bob & Berts is a real Northern Ireland success story in a crowded and challenging market that continues to demonstrate impressive growth whilst remaining true to the values of supporting community, family, and its staff.

The judging panel praised the growth that has been achieved especially during the COVID pandemic and believes that the business tells a value driven story from an impact point of view given its strong focus on local communities.

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David Ferguson

Co-CEO said:

Bob & Berts was established with the clear objective of offering something new and fresh for local communities in what was becoming a crowded coffee market. The investment by BGF has helped to accelerate our growth based on our original vision. Having this investment has allowed us to expand into new regions as well as develop our offer and adapt through investment in technology and a strong management team. The success of Bob & Berts has been based on the ability to remain true to the original vision whilst adapting and changing the business model to navigate events such as COVID and changes in consumer demands.





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