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Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce

The Hub
Exploration Drive
Aberdeen Energy Park
Bridge of Don
Aberdeen
AB23 8GX

T 01224 343900
E info@agcc.co.uk
www.agcc.co.uk

Affiliated Chambers
Moray

Bulletin Team



Editor

Laura Grant
T 01224 343926
E business.bulletin@agcc.co.uk



News features

Graeme Smith Media
T 01224 275833



Advertising

Kathryn Collie
T 01224 343901
E kathryn.collie@agcc.co.uk



Design & production

Andrew Taylor
T 01224 343934
E production@agcc.co.uk



Editorial support

Michelle Walker
T 01224 343907
E michelle.walker@agcc.co.uk



Editorial support

Lewis Walker
T 01224 343918
E lewis.walker@agcc.co.uk

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Transition

November's theme
Environment & Sustainability

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Our partners

As well as helping our member businesses to be better through a range of activities, the Chamber is committed to investing a significant amount of energy in moving forward the economic growth agenda and lobbying for change on key issues to create the conditions for success. Our regional renaissance.

Without the support of our Premier Partners, we would not be able to undertake much of the good work that we do. Their engagement is hugely valued and appreciated.

If you'd like to find out more contact our membership and events director, Seona Shand

T 01224 343929 E seona.shand@agcc.co.uk

Transition - extreme

THE word transition has become synonymous, particularly in this region, with energy as we look to utilise the incredible skills, research strengths and supply chain built up in oil and gas, positioning ourselves to play a leading role in the move towards net zero in the UK and around the world.

The Aberdeen city region is known globally as a place that's entrepreneurial, dynamic and innovative. A place that gets things done and we're doing so again, developing the new energy technologies that will help this to be achieved.

Floating offshore wind, hydrogen, carbon capture and storage, decommissioning, our global leadership position in subsea engineering, plans for the Energy Transition Zone - we have all the credentials. What we need now is the full backing of Scottish and UK governments to confirm Aberdeen as the country's key hub for this work and to underpin the intent with the necessary investment. We already have the £62m commitment from Holyrood to support diversification and this needs to be echoed from Westminster in the long-awaited North Sea sector deal.

And the Circular North-east work being led by the Chamber working with Zero Waste Scotland is putting the circular economy at the forefront of how businesses are planning for this carbon neutral future.

But right now, transition has taken on an even wider meaning as we seek to adapt to the many other highly significant changes and challenges facing us today. Is this what 2020 vision really meant?

Brexit, remember that? Of course it has already happened, what's on the horizon now are the real life implications.

Minister of State for Trade Policy in the Department for International Trade, Rt Hon Greg Hands spoke at the September Chamber and University of Aberdeen Business School business breakfast about the new opportunities for the UK as a global trading nation. This is exciting, however it's becoming increasingly unlikely that any trade deals with our European neighbours will be in place by the end of the year, potentially good news for our fisheries sector. But even if deals are done, this only

avoids tariffs on goods entering and leaving the country. It does not mean that we are in a customs union with the EU and from January 1, an additional 250,000,000 documents every year will be required to enable imports and exports to clear UK ports.

The risk of ignoring this will be consignments rotting in warehouses and empty shelves in our shops. This is something the Chamber can help with, so get in touch at chambercustoms@agcc.co.uk

And there's the small matter of a new way of living and working as we attempt to come to terms with the CV19 pandemic and its after-effects. This has and will continue to put huge pressure on what we considered to be social and business 'norms'.

It's important that we take stock and consider how what we have learned might improve our personal and working lives but it is also vital to avoid knee-jerk reactions that imply everything we knew and (mostly) loved before March 2020 is now bad and should be banished to the history books.

Grand and unjustified statements like 'we'll never return to the office' or 'live events are a thing of the past' run the risk of becoming self-fulfilling prophecies if repeated often enough.

We are human beings, programmed for social interaction. While Zoom conferences and Teams meetings are functional and enable information exchange, this is very 2D. The third dimension of spontaneity, creativity, relationships, white-of-the-eyes trust, mentoring and good old photocopier chit chat must not be lost.

The Chamber of Commerce is and always has been about in-person connection. We hope to see you in the flesh very soon.



Russell Borthwick
chief executive





Mackie's scoop collaboration with baking sensation

A Great British bake off finalist has teamed up with one of the UK's much loved ice cream brands for a series of classic summer recipes.

Bake off contestant Flora Shedden, 23, has created some Simple Pleasure recipes for Mackie's of Scotland ice cream and chocolate.

The collaboration came as part of Mackie's Summer of Simple Pleasures campaign with each recipe designed to make simple delicious, an ethos the family run business has championed throughout the Summer.

Flora competed in series six of Britain's most popular baking show, The Great British Bake Off and was the season's youngest contestant at 19-years-old.

HeliNOTS to aid helicopter pilots

A NEW system designed to recognise the non-technical skills required by helicopter pilots flying search and rescue missions and those who fly workers to offshore installations has been developed by the University of Aberdeen.

The HeliNOTS system outlines the non-technical skills (NTS) recognised as vital to the role of these specialised pilots. NTS are the social and cognitive skills that, alongside technical know-how, ensure safe and effective work performance. The aviation industry recognised the importance of these skills decades ago, following a series of fatal incidents.

One major UK helicopter operator is already looking to incorporate HeliNOTS into pilot training regimes.

Ever Vigilant on the road

TWO retired police officers have launched Vchauffer an Aberdeen-based luxury chauffeur business,

The target for directors Mark Cochrane and Peter Morrison is the VIP / executive and corporate area but with a reach into luxury touring and bespoke experiences.

The two have more than 60 years public service, including royalty, VIP and close protection experience. Combined with their advanced driving skills they aim to provide excellent customer service with safety and discretion at the heart of what they do.

Numerous safety measures have been implemented as a result of CV19 to ensure the wellbeing of both clients and drivers, including dedicating one vehicle to one client within a 24 hour period further to limit additional health risks.

"Our group of drivers, also retired police officers, were chosen because they have the required skills and experience to work for us and we intend to maintain those standards," added Mark.

TechX third cohort accelerator underway

THE Oil & Gas Technology Centre (OGTC) has launched the third cohort of its award-winning TechX Accelerator programme.

In a year of adapting, the designated 16 weeks will be delivered entirely in virtual form. From events to a supportive online network, this year's pioneering companies will continue to be fully supported by the TechX team and the TechX partners and mentors.

This year, Equinor joins BP and KPMG as the programme's strategic industry partners, which will work closely with the Pioneers to provide unrivalled access to technology specialists, financial experts and test facilities, as well as an opportunity to showcase their technologies globally.

Banking - do it your way

ROYAL Bank of Scotland is launching a new service which will allow customers to request how they want to be served.

The 'Banking My Way' service helps customers who need additional support by enabling them to request bespoke assistance to make banking easier.

Customers can make specific requests which could include requesting a quiet space when they visit a branch, being spoken to more clearly and slowly or even request a translator. The bank is able to tailor the service depending on individual needs. This includes a disability, bereavement, addiction or illness, however the customer doesn't have to make the bank aware of their specific circumstances and can still request additional support.



From little acorns...

WITH climate change near the top of most countries agendas the Scottish Government has targeted 2045 as its deadline for achieving net zero - when there is an overall balance between the emissions we add to and remove from the atmosphere.

However, industry may not be moving fast enough to achieve that by 2045, or even by the UK Government's target date of 2050.

There are three strands to achieving that balance:

- reducing emissions through efficiency and use of renewable electricity
- removing emissions resulting from our use of fossil fuels and industrial processes
- removing emissions directly from the atmosphere

All three activities will be required to achieve the goals.

Pale Blue Dot Energy is in the vanguard of that effort having been established to take action on climate change. The Banchory-based company now has Acorn as its flagship project and it is actively working across this challenging area. Acorn CCS is a carbon capture and storage project specifically

designed to overcome one of the acknowledged blockers to CCS deployment in the UK - the high capital costs involved in getting started.

Based at the St Fergus gas terminal, Acorn CCS can repurpose existing gas pipelines to take CO₂ directly to the Acorn CO₂ storage site deep below the seabed under the North Sea. With this important pipeline infrastructure already in place, Acorn CCS can be started with just a modest amount of existing CO₂ emissions captured directly from the gas processing units at the St Fergus gas terminal and developed quickly.

This first phase of Acorn CCS offers a low capital cost start which can be delivered within four years, establishing the critical CO₂ transport and storage infrastructure required for the wider Acorn build-out. This will include Acorn Hydrogen and the import of CO₂ to St Fergus by ships at Peterhead Port and from Scotland's industrial central belt.

When hydrogen is used it doesn't produce CO₂, just water and energy (heat and/or electricity). Low-carbon heating is recognised by the UK's Committee on Climate Change (CCC) as one of the toughest challenges for UK climate policy. Around 85% of UK households

currently use fossil-fuel based natural gas for heat.

The St Fergus gas terminal is the first landing point for around a third of all the natural gas used across the UK. Acorn Hydrogen can take North Sea natural gas and reform it into clean hydrogen with the CO₂ emissions created being safely removed and stored using the Acorn CCS infrastructure.

The first Acorn Hydrogen plant can be online by 2025 and will initially focus on blending hydrogen with the natural gas that is piped through the National Transmission System to transport the fuel into homes, offices and factories across the UK.

Charlie Hartley, an engagement strategist with Pale Blue Dot, said that the energy transition landscape had changed significantly in recent years, with government support and funding now available to allow much larger scale projects to progress which will have a faster and bigger impact.

"It has certainly developed pace over the past couple of years helped by a number of things including the CCC net zero recommendations followed by the UK Government and Scottish Government legislating on the net zero targets," she said.



“That has been a real accelerator and led organisations such as Oil and Gas UK and the Oil and Gas Technology Centre to publish their roadmaps to net zero and create a Net Zero Solution Centre. Public demand for action on climate change has had an important role in increasing the urgency for businesses to decarbonise and become fully compliant with the Paris Climate Agreement to retain the support of their shareholders and customers alike.”

She feels good progress is being made but believes industry needs to move faster to meet the net zero targets. She said there were no technical hurdles preventing it but challenges remain in the commercial and political environment. However, there has been recent movement in this area following the publication of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy’s (BEIS) response to the consultation on Carbon Capture Usage and Storage (CCUS).

While many companies are clearly deeply committed to energy transition, others still look upon it as another label in the ‘business as usual’ plan and have some considerable distance to travel. Charlie expects the early adopters to evolve and thrive but fears that there may be some businesses which either can’t transition or leave it too late.

She cited Wood as a great example of a business embracing the energy transition and where there is a shift year on year with the business portfolio diversification from carbon intensive industry into the low carbon space of renewables, hydrogen and CCS. However, she emphasised that there will continue to be important role for oil and gas, particularly in manufacturing where it is a feedstock. That is where carbon capture and storage technology comes into play because it can remove the CO₂ emissions from existing industrial processes before they can do harm in the atmosphere.

“In the current covid-impacted business environment, businesses should be thinking more creatively than the ‘head down, survival and business as usual’ mode,” she added.

“There is a real opportunity to stimulate the green economy as we come out of this covid induced recession and build some valuable additional momentum towards reaching our net zero goals.”

Innovation is vital in the drive towards net zero and at the SPE’s Offshore Achievement Awards, held virtually recently, there were two winners of the Emerging Technology Award - Tendeka and Deep Casing Tools (DCT).

Tendeka’s success was for its Filtrex remedial sand control solution which has the potential to revolutionise the repair of failed sand control completions and restore production in mature fields within the North Sea.

Tendeka was created in 2009 to bring together five unique technology providers. By combining the expertise and innovations of SwellFix, Sensornet, Well Technology, Flotech and FloQuest, a completion solutions provider was created which solely focused on optimising production. The company monitors and models the reservoir to build up a clear picture of the structure and challenges, then controls the flow to maximise recovery.

“From day one, innovation has been in our DNA,” said Gillian King, vice president for Europe, Russia, CIS and Africa at Tendeka,

“We have continued to invest in research and development as we know this is essential for us to grow and to unlock the value within the UKCS. As we all look to emerge from the CV19 pandemic, there is a drive towards a more resilient and sustainable future. The accelerator has been pressed on our responses to climate change and Tendeka aims to be part of the solution, again through innovation.

“We understand that our clients



“In August, the Oil and Gas Authority released new figures showing oil and gas decommissioning costs in the UK Continental Shelf are sitting at £48bn, highlighting a reduction of 19% since 2017.”

David Stephenson,
chief executive officer,
DCT

globally are implementing new strategies around climate change and committing to reducing their CO2 emissions. You only need to look at the front pages of the major operators' websites to see how important this is to them right now. However, we all have a part to play.

“At Tendeka, we see the energy transition as an opportunity. Many of our technologies already play a role, whether it is through reducing flaring, minimising water production/surface management, bringing shut in wells back online or identification of early downhole issues. We also try to act sustainably to increase the efficiency of our operations and minimise our environmental impact.

“Tendeka's sand control systems are designed with the highest degree of flexibility, ensuring final optimisation for well design can be performed immediately prior to the installation. Decision making on long lead items is no longer as critical and the ability to cross-utilise inventory minimises the need for back-up.

“We look forward to being part of the CCUS solution and have ambitious plans which our carbon management team is currently working on. Major steps will need to be made in our journey to net zero and technology will be fundamental to this change.”

The Emerging Technology Award recognised DCT's Casing Cement Breaker (CCB) tool, and its role in helping to make the global energy industry safer, more efficient and sustainable.

David Stephenson, chief executive officer of DCT, said: “The one-of-a-kind enabling technology was created to help global oil majors deal with problematic cement behind casing in wells which can hinder progress when decommissioning oil and gas assets.

“It has been proven to reduce the force needed to remove cement casing by around 50% with future testing expected to achieve a 90% reduction.

“The CCB has been internationally recognised by many operators and service companies including Equinor, which carried out the first field trial having been introduced to the technology by Archer and Total E&P UK who are helping to develop the tool.

“The interest in our tool from operators around the world shows just how much the industry is in need of technologies like this to make operations easier, more cost effective and safer.

“In August, the Oil and Gas Authority released new figures showing oil and

gas decommissioning costs in the UK Continental Shelf are sitting at £48bn, highlighting a reduction of 19% since 2017. With a shared objective amongst industry and government to reduce these costs by at least 35%, there is still work to be done. Innovative technologies which drive down the cost of well abandonment are crucial if we are to meet these targets.

“As well as developing smart, simple, innovative technologies which enable complete solutions across the well life cycle, it is important to us that we play our part in the energy industry's commitment to cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

“As our tools help operators to land casing on the first attempt, we are able to reduce the need for re-runs, reducing project time and preventing any delays, resulting in less equipment and personnel needed on site, which means less impact on the environment.

“Looking ahead, we will continuously bring pioneering solutions to the global energy market that not only transform operations, making them more cost effective and safer but also help to reduce the impact on the environment.”

Life-saving tech takes off

A VENTILATOR developed by space scientists at the University of Aberdeen is to be used in the fight against CV19 in Africa.

The university has signed an agreement with a medical device company in Rwanda which will assemble the ATMO-Vent (Atmospheric Mixture Optimization Ventilator) for use in hospital settings in Rwanda and neighbouring countries. The university's Planetary Sciences Group developed the device in response to worldwide efforts to produce more ventilators to treat CV19 patients.

They used their expertise in the development of life support systems for manned space missions to build the device, which uses certified and low-cost components which are commercially available for use on earth.

Quicker to build, more cost-effective and more user-friendly than any other model currently in development, the design means that it is suited for rapid deployment in healthcare settings worldwide.

This led to the agreement with the Kigali-based Medical Technology Company (MTC) Ltd, which designs and manufactures medical equipment, working closely with the University of Rwanda.

Learn how robots can increase productivity

THE University of Aberdeen has developed a new course for entrepreneurs to showcase how robotics and automation can increase productivity in industry.

Led by lecturer in robotics, Dr Elena Giannaccini, the half day event will enable participants to embrace the concept of 'Industry 4.0' and explore opportunities to modernise their technology and workforce. Dr Giannaccini hopes the course will also provide tools to approach effective robotic solutions and processes to foster efficiency, cost effectiveness, safety and conserve resources.

The course, on October 28, is designed for all levels and experiences. It will give attendees insight to the practical applications of currently available technology in bespoke industrial contexts and feature a case study presented by Peacock Technology, an engineering consultancy which specialises in solving automation challenges for clients throughout the world.

Maersk Training partnership

MAERSK Training in the UK has announced that it has entered a global partnership with Bristol Community College's National Offshore Wind Institute in Massachusetts, United States.

The collaboration is the next step in securing Bristol's National Offshore Wind Institute as the region's leader in basic safety training and basic technical training programs certified by the Global Wind Organisation.



Gillian Campbell and Jacqueline Moore

New legal advice group for overseas clients

SHEPHERD and Wedderburn has established a dedicated International Families Group in response to a surge in demand for legal advice from overseas clients wishing to relocate to the UK.

The new immigration route for British National (Overseas) citizens in Hong Kong, the CV19 pandemic and geopolitical factors have led to increased demand from individuals and families for legal advice on relocating to the UK, including immigration, buying residential and commercial property, personal tax and employment.

The International Families Group pools relevant expertise from across the largest Scottish-headquartered UK law firm, bringing together legal experts to provide a central resource to help clients start a new life and establish new businesses in this country.

Throughout the CV19 pandemic the group has supported a number of international businesses and individuals with multinational remote working arrangements, and expects to see increased demand for similar flexibility in industries where remote working is a realistic and attractive alternative to relocation.

The International Families Group is led by Gillian Campbell, a partner in the firm's private client team, and Jacqueline Moore, head of immigration.

The Barn reopens with an exhibition by paper artist

THE Barn, at Burn o' Bennie, Banchory, is re-opening its gallery doors with Fragile Nature, an exhibition by Aberdeenshire-based paper artist Stevi Benson.

Stevi's hand cut paper pieces juxtapose the strength and fragility found in natural forms. Intricate studies of plant and animal structures connect us with their beauty, inviting us to slow down, reminding us of the meditative calm that comes with focusing on nature.

Fragile Nature will run until December 5. Entry is free however advanced booking is essential.

Which skills do you think will be most in need in the year ahead?



“As a new business, not yet six months old, the CV19 crisis has already led us to adapt and `transition` how we market ourselves in the VIP / corporate and luxury tourism area. We had confidence our skills and previous police career experience would give us a USP in the North of Scotland, enabling us to provide a high quality and luxury, transportation service and by making it covid secure reassure our clients their safety is our top priority.

“In the year ahead there are various skills we believe will be needed to maintain and progress our business. Some we already have but acknowledge there is now a greater need to keep an open mind, actively seek feedback, learn from what we do and those around us and proactively look for and consider opportunities we may not have considered previously, whilst maintaining values at the core of our business.”

Mark Cochrane, *director, VChauffeur*



“Resilience, flexibility and adaptability have been key for us during such disruptive change combined with a ‘systems thinking’ mindset to advance communications, improve processes, share understanding of problems and, most importantly, solve how we face them effectively. However, the skill that I feel is most needed for the year ahead is emotional intelligence. It is often forgotten that everyone has their own personal struggles, at home and work. More than ever as we navigate these difficult, uncertain times, we need to be aware and understanding of our emotions and those of others.

“I recognise that it will be vital for me to lead through empathy, encouragement and collaboration to strengthen my workforce. Our people-centric approach is stronger than ever as we continue to support, develop and grow our people. I want to keep minds fresh, positive and motivated to face what is likely to be another difficult year ahead.”

Kevin Wyness, *director and co-founder, Escone Solutions*



“Writing proposals is going to be a vital skill. In a contracted economy, organisations have to spend and be seen to be spending, wisely and fairly. Ongoing informal supply arrangements will be harder to justify and attract more internal scrutiny. Winning in competitive spaces requires high quality bid responses which in themselves need resources and skills. Organisations with expertise spending time and effort on ensuring their proposals are of the highest quality will consistently see healthy returns on investment. Those who don’t will see their mediocre efforts return no rewards and in a vicious cycle, be incentivised to reduce the resources for proposals even further.

“In times of crisis, it’s right that organisations focus on continued service delivery to their existing clients. But long term this alone isn’t sustainable, customers don’t last forever. Developing new business is now more important than ever.”

Andrew Watson, *bid consultancy and training manager, Tenders Direct*

Rapid transition and managing change

Professor Steve Olivier,
principal and vice-chancellor,
Robert Gordon University



HISTORICALLY university leaders have almost always been scholars, with the idea that higher education is a business being viewed rather sniffily. That has changed. Although the vast majority of vice-chancellors are still scholars, there is now universal recognition that they are also chief executives, in many cases of quite substantial businesses, and their institutions need to be managed on business lines.

But the challenge is greater still, because they go beyond business too – they are broader communities, with diverse cultures and practices that are often quite alien to the commercial world. Some practices are very traditional, meaning that they can be quite resistant to change (think, for example, of the quite arcane and time-consuming committee structures).

The coronavirus pandemic has ushered in a quite spectacular period of change for all sectors, including higher education. In a very short period of time universities had to shift to remote operations to continue to deliver online learning and assessment, as well as providing appropriate support for students and staff. Businesses, per se, have also

had to rapidly adopt new practices, and those that are unable to do so have failed. While change in these uncertain circumstances is inevitable, it needs to be managed within a workable framework if it is to succeed. One of the dangers of not doing so is the negative effect of unforeseen and unintended consequences.

So, how do we manage change? There is a method titled the ‘Six Ps’ which provides a coherent structure and process for all types of organisations. Firstly, expressing your Purpose refers to briefly stating what the desired outcome is. If you are unable to do this in fewer than 15 words you are probably overcomplicating things. Next, articulating the Principles means presenting a set of values that will guide your actions, for example, relevant values that the business ascribes to. Practices are the specific actions you will take to make change happen – if these practices contradict your principles, change the practices. Participation refers to who you will involve in planning the changes, who you will consult, ideally representing those who will be affected, which ensures diversity of thought in the process. The Pre-mortem phase is a valuable thought experiment exercise for businesses, and specifically identifies risks and consequences.

Finally, Pace asks you to consider how quickly you want to effect the changes, and determines phasing, or ‘big bang’ approaches.

We all face huge challenges such as the pandemic, Brexit, and global and regional economic uncertainty. All businesses need to constantly evolve and change and the principles of the Six Ps can help them do so successfully, as it has done for Robert Gordon University. Our region is a particularly good example of the need for perhaps an entire economy to transition, both at a meta-level, and for smaller enterprises, for example the supply chain. In collaboration with businesses and our educational partners, we will be at the forefront of change and support the region’s transition.

As we head towards the ‘new normal’, whatever that may look like, the city is fortunate to have two great universities, and North East Scotland College (NESCol) adds a further significant positive dimension, capable of providing skilled and employable graduates to meet the changing needs of business and industry. After all, they are the ones who will ensure future growth and prosperity for the region.

Simple data collection app for hospitality firms

SCOTTISH Chambers of Commerce network has launched a simple solution for hospitality businesses to collect customer contact details in line with Scottish Government hospitality guidelines to support NHS Scotland Test and Protect.

The platform allows businesses in the area to securely check in their customers and collect data in line with official guidelines.

Originally developed for use by Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce, the app enables customers and visitors to check into multiple venues with one simple sign-on. The web-based dashboard allows businesses to access check-in data by venue, date and time if the data is requested by NHS Scotland Test and Protect.

Visitor data, which automatically expires after 21 days, is held centrally by the Destination Management Organisation so visitors have confidence and individual businesses don't need to worry about data protection.

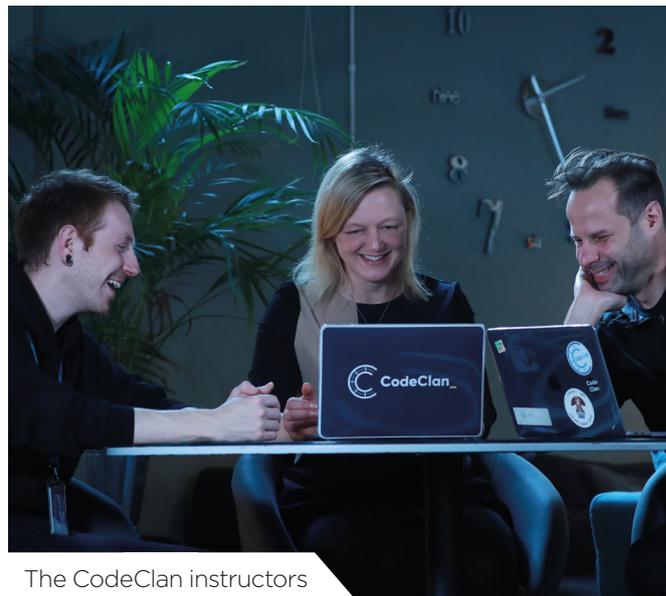
Neptune's 3D partnership

NEPTUNE Energy has formed a partnership with 3D technology specialist Eserv as part of the ongoing digitalisation of Neptune's assets, including its operated Cygnus gas platform in the UK southern North Sea.

Using 3D and artificial intelligence technologies a digital map of all three bridge-linked jackets was captured, enabling Neptune Energy to detect asset integrity issues early and plan fabric maintenance work on Cygnus.

Specialist engineers and integrity experts now have the opportunity to carry out a significant amount of their traditional work from onshore, reducing the cost and environmental impacts associated with travelling offshore. The partnership with Eserv is part of the first phase of Neptune Energy's strategy to 'digitise' its assets and processes and enables remote subject matter expert advice for offshore personnel, and virtual visual inspections and site surveys.

Neptune's UK managing director Alexandra Thomas said: "We are excited to be early adopters of such innovative technologies which can enhance the efficiency and safety of our operations, reduce costs and offshore travel, and enable greater collaboration between our onshore and offshore teams. The use of digital technologies is particularly valuable at this time, given restrictions on travel and the necessity for social distancing offshore."



The CodeClan instructors

CodeClan launches career changing training In Aberdeen

IN PARTNERSHIP with Thorpe Molloy McCulloch Recruitment, CodeClan brings its most popular course, the professional software development programme, to Aberdeen.

CodeClan is on a mission to bridge the digital skills gap. Scotland's first accredited digital skills academy has operations in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Inverness, with over 1,000 students having graduated through their immersive training courses.

The professional software development programme is the first CodeClan programme to launch in Aberdeen and will be delivered as a blend of virtual training with on-site days in Aberdeen. Starting on November 2, this training course delivers a solid foundation in key digital skills and will appeal to professionals who are hoping to rapidly reskill, change careers or boost their tech credentials.

Where a business need for software developers has been identified, this programme provides a route to access accredited training for employers, facilitating redeployment and innovation.

The first cohort of Aberdeen students will receive an intensive immersion into the fundamentals of programming in languages including Python, JavaScript and Java; apply learning using industry standard tools, processes and frameworks; develop confidence to become a professional software developer and access careers advice.



AGCC member, Findlay Leask trusts Jim Reid to deliver his vehicles so he can deliver his coffee.

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The experience is everything

Managing learning in a digital era

Austin McKenzie,
eLearning delivery manager,
Electra Learning



WHEN it comes to training and development, the CV19 outbreak has certainly brought with it a number of challenges.

Face-to-face classroom learning, for example, is not always as easy to facilitate as it was prior to the global pandemic, both in terms of the tasks required to set it up and the actual delivery of course content.

However, what we have seen instead is a huge increase in the amount of online and blended learning taking place.

Businesses are clearly making use of new technologies and the growth of cloud computing to facilitate more virtual training than ever before.

Where previously companies may have been more cautious about moving to eLearning, they're now embracing it fully and making the most of the flexibility it offers for workforces operating remotely.

Along with that, more and more businesses are using online Learning Management Systems (LMS) to manage their training activities.

These software systems enable HR managers, for example, to share information, deliver training, track

competencies, produce certificates and update learning plans, anywhere in the world, at any time. These systems can fully integrate in with others such as a Single Sign On protocol or existing HR system.

There are so many great benefits that a LMS can bring, not least the obvious cost and time savings that result from managing everything online.

Learner progress is much easier to track, while keeping content up-to-date and current can become much more straightforward and efficient. All materials are stored in one location, which means everything is really easy to access wherever people are located, and the fact the content is centralised means that it is consistent and relevant for everyone logging on.

Video, imagery and text all play a part in a LMS, making the learning process more engaging, while greater collaboration amongst teams can be achieved easily and efficiently.

Also many of the industries in which we operate – oil and gas, renewables, manufacturing and transportation, for example – continually have to meet new regulatory compliances. This is also something a LMS can

help with, with new standards being added online in a matter of minutes.

However, while eLearning and managing training via a LMS can really improve the way a company supports its team's professional development, it doesn't mean that there's no longer a role for great people too. It allows for more time to be spent doing other important tasks.

We've been in business for more than 20 years now and in that time we've seen the way training and learning is delivered change significantly, but what hasn't changed is the need for skilled and talented people to lead the way.

By combining great leadership and strong management, with new ways of working and modern technology, customers can really reap the benefits of digital change.

One thing we are sure of is that online learning is here to stay.

A whole new world

THE 'B' word almost vanished from our vocabulary earlier this year as the CV19 pandemic dominated every aspect of our lives. However, with less than three months until the transition period ends and the full impact of Brexit begins to be felt, it is now being talked about in many circles with some concern.

Uncertainty is the dominant theme and until negotiations are complete and we know whether it's deal or no deal, that will continue.

Minister of State for Trade Policy, the Rt Hon Greg Hands, has told the Business Bulletin he is optimistic there will be significant benefits for Scotland after January 1, while Aberdeen's universities are stressing the importance of the long established close links with Europe which they enjoy.

"Our new independent trade policy gives us the freedom to strike trade deals that work for businesses, industry and consumers in Scotland," said Mr Hands. "As UK trade negotiations with the US, Japan, Australia and New Zealand continue to progress at pace, it's clear that there are plenty of new opportunities for British industry abroad, including in Scotland, whether that's food and drink, energy, agriculture or

manufacturing.

"The Japan free trade agreement (FTA) will make trading easier for the 574 business in Scotland already exporting goods to Japan – and open up new opportunities for more businesses. We're going beyond the EU-Japan agreement, particularly in digital and data. The food and drink industry is set to benefit significantly from FTAs, specifically the salmon and whisky industry. Almost 68% of Britain's total beverages exports to Japan in 2019 were from Scotland.

"Scotland is also expected to be one of the parts of the UK to benefit most from a US FTA. Almost 2,000 businesses in Scotland exported goods to the US last year. We've estimated that a good deal with the US could boost the economy in Scotland by £517m in the long run. It could boost already strong trade in Scottish salmon or lowering tariffs on cashmere and clothing and support new market access for beef and lamb producers. Power generating machinery and equipment also make up over a quarter of all imports from the US to Scotland.

"Separate to the free trade agreement negotiations, the UK Government is also working hard to stand up for Scottish interests by pressing the US to remove damaging tariffs on products including scotch whisky

and textiles. While we welcome the US lifting tariffs on shortbread, which followed Secretary of State Liz Truss's visit to Washington, we have been clear that these punitive tariffs are unnecessary and harmful. The UK Government will continue to stand firm in our commitment to supporting our industries in Scotland."

Professor Paul Hagan, deputy principal and vice president for research at Robert Gordon University said that Europe has been, and always will be, an important partner for the higher education sector in Scotland.

"It is hard to overstate the value of links with Europe for funding opportunities, research collaborations and the greater diversity which European students and staff bring to universities.

"Scotland's universities contribute expertise in energy, the environment, health, security and technology and in many other areas, bringing benefits to our people, our industries and our economy, helping safeguard the future for generations to come. Over the last 30 years the country's researchers have helped build unprecedented levels of research cooperation and collaboration, and an understanding and respect among their European peers.



“While uncertainty surrounding the impact of Brexit remains, what is clear is that Scotland, RGU and many other universities have benefited significantly from European engagement.”

Professor George Boyne, principal of the University of Aberdeen, said the impact of the UK’s exit from the European Union on Scotland’s Higher Education sector will be primarily on student and staff recruitment from EU countries and access to European sources of research funding.

“Previously, EU students were funded to study in Scotland, but after this academic year new students will have to pay international fees,” he said. “In terms of research funding, we are waiting to hear about the UK government’s replacement schemes.

“Aberdeen is a European as well as a Scottish and British university and following our foundation in 1495 our links across the continent flourished for hundreds of years before the existence of the EU. Through the Aberdeen 2040 strategy, which was launched earlier this year to mark the university’s 525th anniversary, we are determined to strengthen our many successful partnerships across Europe which help us to make a positive impact on the world.”

Alan Twatt (Potato Merchants) Ltd is typical of many companies currently unable to plan for the future because of uncertainty.

Seed potatoes are grown to be replanted to produce a potato crop. Scotland is a world leader because the climate, especially in the North, doesn’t favour the aphids which spread virus diseases and the country is responsible for around 80% of UK seed potato exports.

The family owned Banff-based merchant exports around 3,500 tonnes of seed potatoes globally every year and company director Dianne Wiseman said that, as things stand, they expected there would be a significant impact on their business.

“We are pretty sure that we won’t be able to send seed potatoes to Europe after January 1 and our concern is how long it might take for new agreements to be set up to allow us to do that.”

She said the impact could be far greater for larger exporters but anticipates there will be little impact on exports to Egypt, Scotland’s main market, Morocco and Saudi Arabia.

“There might be a slight increase in tariffs in these countries but the majority of this year’s crop to Egypt

will have been shipped by mid-December so it won’t affect that but there will be exports to Morocco and Saudi early next year

“Europe is a different matter. We send to several countries in Europe and because it is an open market, we simply load them on the lorry and off they go but that will not happen after December.

“When potatoes are exported to non-EU countries they have a plant passport called a phytosanitary certificate and we imagine, although we don’t know, that once we have left the EU, phytosanitary certificates, or indeed some sort of new movement certificate, might come into play for tatties going from Scotland to mainland Europe.

“Europeans are also our competitors and if we can’t sell to the French, or anyone else in Europe, others will step in to fill the gap so it’s important it is resolved quickly.”

AFC Community Trust makes new signings

ABERDEEN FC Community Trust has marked the return to school with three new signings for its award-winning Partner Schools Initiative.

A total of 23 schools from across Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire have now signed up for the 2020/2021 season. Each school can choose from a range of programmes, offered through the initiative, which best suits the needs of their pupils.

The overall goal of this partnership, which involves AFCCT coaches working directly with pupils, parents and teachers, is to help close the poverty related attainment gap by drawing on the power of the Dons brand and a passion for football.

In the past two years, the trust has successfully worked with 14,000 children, many of whom require behavioural, emotional, and social support. The projects are run in association with schools, breakfast clubs, after-school and community clubs and other education projects and have been proven to reduce absenteeism and lateness, raise attainment levels, improve pupil health and wellbeing and encourage participation in their local communities.

Rebreather hits its century

JFD, the underwater capability provider serving the commercial and defence diving markets and part of James Fisher and Sons plc, has announced the production and delivery of its 100th Compact Bailout Rebreathing Apparatus (COBRA) system.

The award-winning COBRA system was developed to provide a simple and reliable breathing system, offering a diver up to 50 minutes of fully independent breathing gas to return to the safety of the diving bell, leading the way in functionality and innovation.

As a direct comparison COBRA provides a supply of up to 33 minutes at a depth of 120 metres, compared with approximately 7.5 minutes on conventional bailout at the same depth. Therefore, COBRA allows the diver significantly more time to return to the diving bell, providing an unparalleled safety offering to the commercial diving sector.

Following significant industry uptake, COBRA systems are now being operated in many subsea sectors including the North Sea as well as Brazil, Singapore, Australia, the Gulf of Mexico and other regions in the Far East. COBRA has also been introduced to the defence diving sector and is entering service with the Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force.



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Aberdeen Hospitality Together

Created by the industry, for the industry.

New hospitality group for unified voice

HOSPITALITY businesses in the city have joined forces to form a new sector group.

The Aberdeen Hospitality Together group has been set up by the industry, for the industry, with the main objective of working together positively with a unified voice.

The forum will be driven by local businesses in a bid to allow all premises, small and large, to collectively work together to share best practice and pledge commitment to the protection of the industry to make a major long lasting positive change.

Stuart McPhee, director of Siberia Bar & Hotel and committee member, said: "Our first priority is the safety aspect in relation to CV19 guidelines so we can ensure all venues in the city are compliant and secondly, working on rebuilding customer confidence. This has led to the creation of our new assurance scheme that all venues will adhere to but we also have plans in motion for a new customer behaviour system unique to Aberdeen and a city-wide app which will help to strengthen safety procedures. These steps will help to ensure that operators are ready to open but we need this to happen as soon as possible to ensure the sector survives."

Middle East lift for JDN

JD NEUHAUS Group has signed a long-term exclusive original equipment manufacturer partnership agreement with Sparrows Group for the Middle East market.

The German family owned manufacturer has approved Sparrows as the service provider for its hoist equipment, including for new hoists, service projects and spare parts. Established 275 years ago, JDN is the largest provider of air hoists to the offshore oil and gas industry. Its products are currently used in over 70 different sectors with 80% of its hydraulic and pneumatic hoists and crane systems exported to and 90 countries worldwide.

Sparrows expertise in lifting equipment and local presence in the Middle East will extend JDN's presence into the region. As well as servicing the region's offshore oil and gas sector, the two companies will target its onshore industries including automotive, pharmaceutical, food and mining.

A word of advice



David Jamieson,
founder,
Salus Technical

Area of expertise:

We work with our customers to help them better understand and manage the risks of major accidents within their operations in a bid to prevent these occurring and continually improve the safety of the industry. We offer three complementary services: process safety engineering support, a range of tailored and on-demand training courses; and Bowtie Master – our online software package which allows customers to visualise their risks and communicate them with their team.

What should people know:

Operators devote a lot of effort to the prevention of major accidents and, fortunately, these events are very rare. However, over the last three years, 30% of HSE offshore inspections have consistently scored either poor or very poor. This could be interpreted as a sign that a major accident may be around the corner and therefore more could be done to comply with offshore safety regulations and improve safety.

What's the biggest mistake companies make?

A lot of great work is already going on but there is definitely more that we can do. A common mistake is the failure to learn lessons from incidents, even those incidents which seem minor. Many investigations into major accidents find that there were clear warning signs that were missed or ignored. Another mistake is not engaging the workforce and listening to their input. Positive workforce engagement is to the benefit of everyone.

What's your top tip?

Nobody deliberately acts unsafely. It's incumbent on all of us to make safe working practices as straightforward as possible and to understand our risks. The sharing of 'bad news' should be encouraged as part of a physiologically safe culture, where everyone feels they can speak up without fear of negative consequences.



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Is it time to give the hydrogen economy the green light?

by Malcolm Donald,
partner - energy and corporate, Stronachs LLP



THE times they are a-changin'! Every government and energy company across the globe has been looking at ways to deal with the inevitable energy transition for long enough. Are we now finally on the cusp of fully embracing the hydrogen economy?

Joe Biden's \$2tn climate and clean energy plan in the US shows that the acceleration of cleaner energy resources is on the way sooner rather than later. Closer to home, the North Sea is better placed than most to invest now in hydrogen as a replacement for fossil fuels.

Hydrogen has long been talked up by scientists globally as a replacement for fossil fuels in industries such as road, transport and shipping but it has never quite taken off, despite the first hydrogen-powered vehicle being produced as early as 1966.

The fundamental issue is the ongoing conflict between meeting environmental goals of net zero carbon emission and the cost and infrastructure involved in developing the hydrogen economy.

As technology matures and the cost

of renewable energy as a source of producing hydrogen reduces, the larger scale industrialisation of hydrogen starts to become more achievable. The ultimate aim is to develop a supply chain that can produce 'green' hydrogen at a scale and price that the market will pay.

In order for a market for green hydrogen to be created, green must be able to compete economically with blue and grey hydrogen, which are produced from natural gas rather than renewable power and which remain more cost effective options.

A move in the market at least towards blue hydrogen is the immediate aim as it allows carbon capture and storage, however significant cost reductions need to be achieved, particularly in relation to the cost of electrolyzers in the production process.

The future does look bright however, with the Hydrogen Council predicting that the cost of electrolyzers could be 70-80% cheaper within the next five to 10 years. This would be game changing.

Although we are some way from achieving the green hydrogen

marketplace, investor sentiment is increasingly moving towards cleaner energy resources and blue hydrogen could soon serve as a transition fuel in an intermediate phase during which the supply chains needs for hydrogen to replace fossil fuels are developed.

With significant amounts of offshore wind energy coming from the North Sea in the years to come, energy companies have a clear opportunity to play a significant role in decarbonising both energy and feedstock supply, especially in relation to carbon capture and storage technology.

The future of the North Sea could well become based on the offshore production of hydrogen at a very large scale. A combination of government incentives and legislation would allow a quicker move towards a hydrogen economy in the North-east in this rapidly changing energy environment.

Stronachs

UK can lead world in net-zero energy technologies

THE OGTC has released a comprehensive roadmap setting out the critical technologies needed to deliver an integrated net-zero energy system on the UK Continental Shelf (UKCS), highlighting the major economic opportunity this transformation offers.

Closing the Gap: Technology for a Net Zero North Sea, produced by global natural resources consultancy Wood Mackenzie for the OGTC, with support from Chrysaor and the Scottish Government, sets out a technology roadmap for an integrated energy future in the North Sea.

The report outlines how accelerating the development of new energy technologies can dramatically reduce emissions, and how adopting new technologies will harness the full potential of the UK's world-class natural resources from renewable power sources and oil and gas, to hydrogen and long-term carbon storage.

Maximising the opportunities to innovate across the renewable and fossil fuel sectors could create more than 200,000 new jobs across the UK and contribute more than £2.5tn to the nation's economy by 2050. It would also create a diversified energy sector, support a new generation of highly skilled jobs and open up exciting export potential. The oil and gas sector, including its workforce, supply chain and infrastructure, can enable and accelerate the growth of the renewables sector, while renewable energy sources will be critical in supporting the oil and gas industry on its journey to net zero.

Realising this integrated vision will require £430bn of new investment to close the gap on a number of crucial technologies and accelerate their deployment. These include oil and gas platform electrification, methane leak detection and flaring mitigation; larger blades, taller towers and automated inspection technology for fixed offshore wind; optimised and standardised floating offshore wind foundation designs; and innovative hydrogen membranes and CO₂ sorbents to improve blue hydrogen yield, among others.

Colette Cohen OBE, chief executive officer at OGTC, said: "Reimagining the North Sea as an integrated energy system is essential for the UK and Scotland to achieve their net-zero ambitions. But we need to invest now to close the gap on the key technologies needed to make this ambition a reality.

"We need to digitise our offshore energy sector and solve big challenges like energy storage, infrastructure redeployment, transmission systems and cost-competitive floating wind structures. By doing this, we can create strategic advantage and valuable export opportunities." "With its decades of energy expertise, the UK has a huge opportunity to become a leading manufacturer, designer, installer and operator of net-zero energy systems.

"Leveraging our strength in oil and gas, we can also partner with the renewables sector to accelerate the delivery of the next generation of energy in the UK – and internationally. This is where governments and industry should focus investment at pace in the coming years."



Neil Cowie

Anonymous benefactor supports Fraserburgh youth

NORTH East Scotland College (NESCoL) has received a £100,000 donation to support its commitment to creating new opportunities for young people in Fraserburgh.

The contribution has come from a local business which wants to remain anonymous and will be invested immediately to develop a technology centre at the Fraserburgh Campus which will be used to expand learning and training for school groups, community organisations and students.

Robotics, 3D printing and plotting, virtual reality and other learning innovations are included in the plans. Encouraging entrepreneurship to support inclusive growth in the local economy is a key aim.

Neil Cowie, principal of NESCoL, said: "This significant funding award will allow us to move forward at pace with exciting new plans and we are incredibly appreciative of the generous donation. The benefactor and the college share a passion for the Fraserburgh community and the potential of its people."

Bancon expands its boundaries

BANCON Homes will expand its operations into the central belt of Scotland for the first time with an exclusive development of four and five bedroom homes in Strathaven.

Under planning permission granted by South Lanarkshire Council, the company's new Overton Gardens development consist of 37 bespoke detached homes.

It will be the first time Bancon Homes has created a development outside the North-east of Scotland where it has been operating successfully for more than 40 years and is currently building new homes in Aberdeen, Mintlaw and Banchory.

Earlier this month the company announced that it had also obtained planning permission for 208 homes at its Maidenraig South site in Aberdeen.

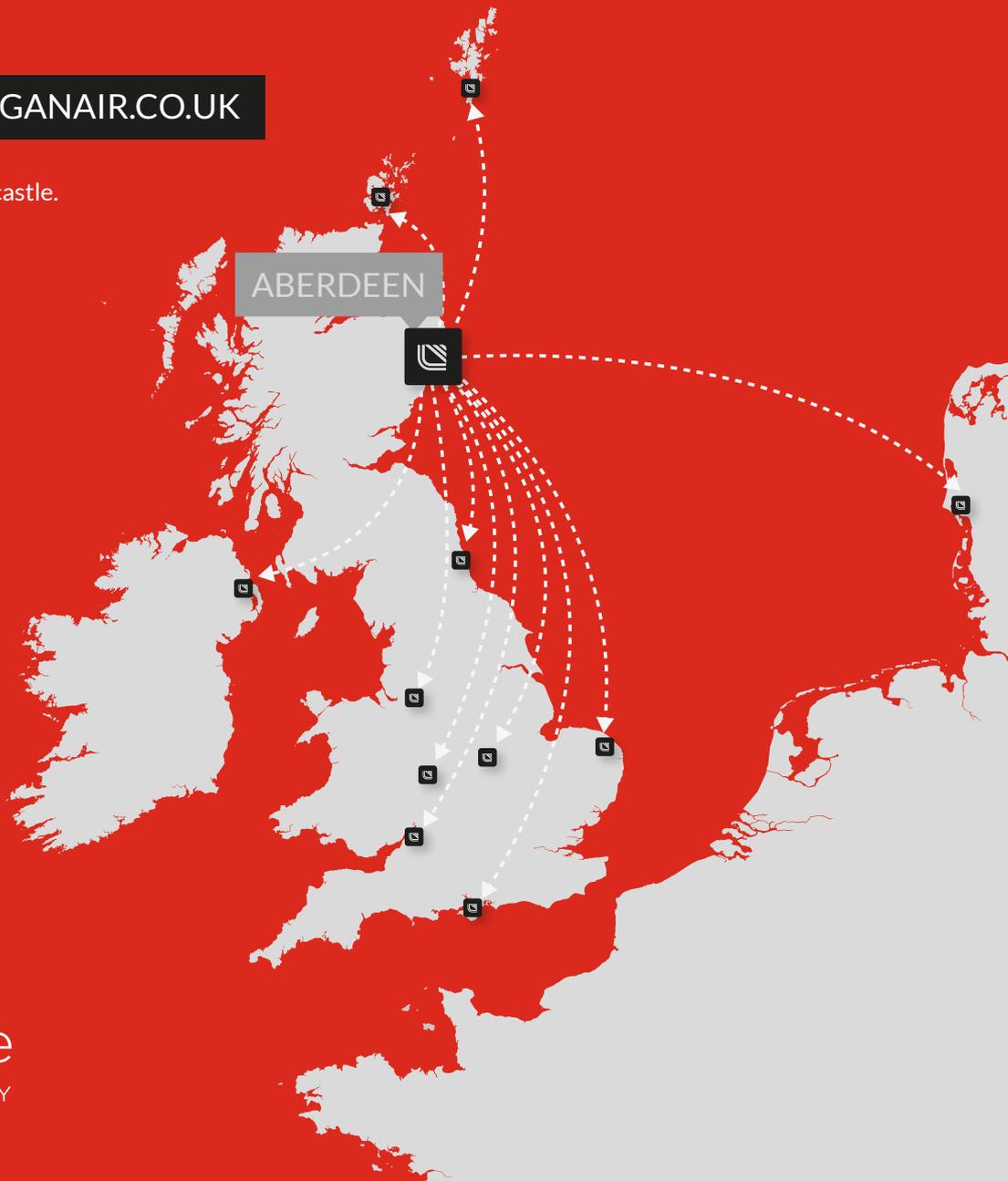
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Is working from home here to stay?

Scott Campbell,
director,
Standard Real Estate



LET me get my cards on the table. Long term working from home is not in my best interests as a director of a property company with a strong office bias in our portfolio. That aside however, I think whether working from home is here to stay is something we need to examine.

I've already seen a great deal of evidence of people keen to return to office working. From a mental health point of view many feel their work life balance is better when they have the physical boundary of home life and office life. City working may have its drawbacks but there are a great many positive social aspects to it that people do miss when they are working remotely.

Working from home is not a new phenomenon. For the past 20 years and more we have seen working from home grow at varying speeds across different business sectors. March 2020 saw it become the new normal for most of us. There is much debate about how this will change working practices going forward and there is little doubt the number of people working from home on a permanent basis will be greater as a result of CV19. However, there is still much to be said for the office environment and I believe over time we will see office life return for the majority of us.

I'm not fundamentally against working from home. I regularly do it myself but from my own experience my productivity is better when I'm in the office. For those with a proper home office productivity may not suffer but for households trying to work from the kitchen table or where couples or flat mates are all trying to work from home at the same time, it is a greater issue. If productivity suffers then the perceived cost savings from reducing floorspace may be offset by higher labour costs from needing more staff to achieve the same workload.

Some industries are better placed to embrace working from home long term and will no doubt see the opportunity to make cost savings by reducing floorspace. However, households that have operated for years with one person working from home are suddenly finding that two or more trying to work from home is a different story. Confidentiality becomes an issue where there are multiple people trying to work from the same household. Where three or four friends share a flat but work for competing firms, overheard calls or video meetings are already a major concern in the banking and financial world.

Companies where business to business networking is a crucial aspect of day to day life are already keen to

return to the office environment. Client facing businesses can survive to an extent with video meetings but 'sealing the deal' is much easier face to face. Training of staff while working from home is also a huge obstacle.

There is little doubt that the way we use offices will change and the extent of change will vary from industry to industry. Some businesses already adopting a hot desking approach won't necessarily see a large reduction in their need for space but will perhaps create additional easily sanitised meeting rooms and socially distanced working areas. Where working from home isn't completely viable for some businesses there may actually be a need for more office space to accommodate social distancing.

As a business we have already seen strong demand from private individuals seeking small offices, financed either privately or by their corporate organisation, to accommodate those without the right working from home environment and, in the coming months, I believe we will see a significant rise in demand for small cellular space and business centres. I have little doubt offices will look different over the coming years but I don't fear an exodus from our city centres.



There is no wrong path, just different experiences

Andrew McLeod FCCA,
head of resourcing,
Hutcheon Mearns Ltd



I AM often asked by candidates whether I think they have any transferable skills. The answer is simple, we all do. The difference is that some of us aren't aware of the various skills that we utilise on a daily basis.

When I look at my own career path, I started within industry before moving into practice and then into a resourcing manager position with Hutcheon Mearns focusing on financial recruitment. When making the move to EY, I was apprehensive due to not doing a full accounting degree at university. What I soon realised was that my industry based knowledge allowed me to put things into context and I could have conversations beyond accounting with senior members of the client's team. This allowed me to not only speak intelligently with the client but also the ability to educate my colleagues on what it was our client actually did.

Having demonstrated that I could build rapport quickly I was asked to support EY's Entrepreneur of the Year award programme, something I would ultimately lead in Aberdeen. This allowed me to build on my industry knowledge and report writing / communication skills.

Realising it was time for a new challenge I met with Hutcheon Mearns

within a candidate capacity and I knew early that I wanted to part of the business due to their likeminded thinking and market changing approach. Did I believe that this would be in a recruitment role? Absolutely not. However, what was clear when weighing up this opportunity was that there were a number of transferable skills that I could take from my time in industry and practice into this role and profession.

As a candidate on the outside looking in, recruitment was often seen as a dog eat dog market, with agents being prepared to bend the truth or exaggerate the opportunity for a fee. The lack of knowledge was also something that frequently irked me and my peers, often receiving job descriptions for finance disciplines that we had no experience with or desire to do. Standing back, the obvious transferable skills were professionalism, dedication and market sector knowledge. To stand tall as a qualified accountant who has worked in a number of environments and who made the sacrifices required to gain my professional qualification, I am able to demonstrate shared experiences with both candidates and clients.

Due to my considerable time in client facing roles, I have been able to develop my communication skills and develop a style that allows me to build

relationships quickly, both internally and externally. What I take from my own experiences and what I say to my candidates is that the defined career path that was either chosen for us or the one that we expected to take isn't always the best option, both from professional and personal perspective.

The workforce today needs to be more adaptable and agile than ever due to the ongoing issues associated with the CV19 pandemic. I would suggest that individuals self-analyse, take feedback on board and identify your main strengths as they will soon see that many of these skills can be re-employed into different roles, industries or professions. Ultimately there is no real wrong path. There are simply different experiences which will benefit and educate individuals to make more targeted steps in your career and life going forward.



Chop and change

IT MAY now seem an eternity away and in a different world but at the beginning of this year there was great optimism about the North-east economy.

Companies were beginning to flourish again following the oil recession, skills were in growing demand and there was still some time before the impact of Brexit, good or bad, would be felt.

Now, times have changed with a triple whammy. No one could have foreseen CV19, or that it would be the catalyst for an even bigger oil recession, and the end of our transition from the EU, well it's still not clear what that will mean.

In the HR and recruitment world things have changed dramatically. The biggest change of all being in the demand for people, according to Sarah Beaumont, head of HR at Hunter Adams, an HR consultancy business providing HR services to clients in all sectors across the UK.

"Unfortunately we are experiencing considerable cost reduction activity which is resulting in large-scale redundancies - and with that comes challenges for the future," she said.

"For instance, how do you manage downsizing while still attracting the talent you need to come into the

oil and gas industry? There is also the challenge for every organisation of keeping people engaged and motivated during a pandemic.

"Many clients are moving towards true flexible working. Previously, flexible working might have been someone requesting one or two days working from home to fit around childcare or outside pressures - but that changed overnight with the provision of extensive independence and flexibility."

She said the move to home working had highlighted benefits such as better work-life balance and reduced costs, but also raised challenges around the different ways of managing staff remotely and keeping them engaged.

"I'm a great believer that one approach to flexibility and remote working does not work for everyone. For many, the lack of work-based social interaction has led to anxiety and a loss of feeling of belonging.

"Entrants to the working world are missing out on that ad hoc informal learning from being around their peers, learning and receiving mentoring without even realising it."

Sarah anticipates that in the future the working model for many companies

may be a hybrid between office working and flexible working.

"If you spoke to people at the beginning of the pandemic I don't think anyone would have believed that such a large percentage of the workforce would still be working from home six months later but companies and employees have risen to the challenge - fast.

"Until now, the greatest barrier to flexibility was management mind-set. Yet remote working has been successful for the vast majority. Some staff including our own feel that they have never been better connected, so perhaps the past six months has given employers a different outlook. The evidence shows it can definitely work, but companies must still look at what works for them and their particular situation."

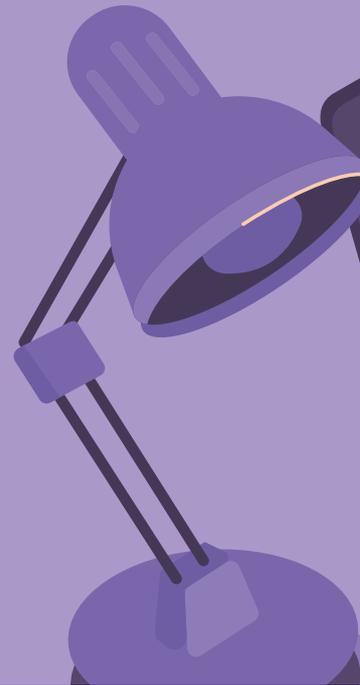
Donna Gibb of Empire HR said that while the pandemic had forced unplanned change it also offered the opportunity to 'build back better'.

"Many employees are reflecting whether they are leading the kind of lives they want to lead and whether the current model of work is working for them," she said. "The relationship of employer and employee is challenged and many organisations are looking at reshaping in order

“

“We see a big shift in people working from home and with the need for more hardware and remote support, the technology sector is definitely booming. Amazon is obviously recruiting but there are big job losses unfortunately in the retail sector.”

Darren Aggasild,
managing director,
Rose Recruitment and CV Aberdeen



to serve all stakeholders and their communities.

“The way organisations attract, retain, develop and engage with their workforce has shifted as a result of events this year. Employees too are having to reinvest time and resource into reshaping careers as they experience less job security and changing demands for differing skills.

“As the task of leaders becomes ever more complex in this changing world where mass redundancies are facing organisations fighting for their lives, managers require to develop enhanced skills around setting expectations, managing performance, communicating with impact and goal setting. Managers will be expected to be expert facilitators as they manage and communicate change using deeper skills in relationship building, listening, delegation and empowerment which will be in greater demand than ever.

“The pandemic has forced changes we hadn’t planned but also gives the opportunity to reflect on current practice. Organisations can have significant power over local policy, as change engineers and influencers of behaviour. This is an opportunity to build back better. Full employment is an important objective but healthy societies also rest on jobs that provide

financial stability and quality of working life.”

She said help for the oil and gas industry to diversify to support the low carbon energy mix of the future must now be accelerated.

With the North-east heavily dependent on North Sea oil-related activity the impact of the pandemic on the oil price will set back the area’s economic recovery just as it was experiencing a rebound from the 2014 crash.

“Part of our recovery will focus on the building of new skills focussed on future demand. Leadership skills, digital/data skills, skills to support life sciences and health industries, are demanded to fill skills gaps in the Scottish economy.

“As the UK and other offshore basins mature, decommissioning offshore infrastructure is creating new challenges for government and industry and with it new career opportunities. Demands for skills in reservoir engineering to allow access to the scale of oil and gas deposits and maximise the economic return from safely extracting them will increase.

“Skills such as leadership to drive better team results and encourage strategic thinking to foster

improvement and change and future fore-sighting skills to significantly enhance ability to succeed in an ever-changing business world, will also be increasingly in demand.

“Funding and resources to support the development of skills required by employers in a local economy still so heavily reliant on North Sea activity is imperative and with many of these skills also demanded by wider industry this will allow employees to transition their skills in the longer term supporting the recovery as business fights to build back better.”

Wendy Marr, managing director, says one of the biggest challenges her team at Genesis Personnel is seeing is the increased number of people working from home.

“Businesses are continuing to operate this way effectively and many of their staff are saying that they are more productive working from home. Many people have a commute to work and when this is removed from the equation it can mean that they are more energetic, so the likelihood is they will have a more productive day.

“Our communication style has also changed. With more and more people working remotely we are now all familiar with ‘Teams’ and ‘Zoom’ for our meetings. This, of course, is an



alternative to face to face meetings but in my opinion nothing beats real face to face contact – it’s far more personal. As things stand just now though, face to face meetings are not an essential part of business.

“This way of working is expected to continue well into next year and could be a real option for businesses in the future.

“Now, more than ever, it is important to have an up to date CV. You must try and sell yourself and create a great first impression. There are a lot of people looking for work so you must make sure you stand out from the crowd. We encourage mock interviews and offer interview prep when we are sending candidates to clients. It is a great way to gain some confidence and makes you feel prepared. Some interviews may be done via video call, so make sure you are in a comfortable setting with no interruptions. Do not do this with a messy bedroom as your backdrop.

“As the energy sector diversifies and moves towards net zero the skills and expertise gained by individuals over the years within the oil and gas industry will play a vital part in the transition.

“With Brexit also looming we may see a decrease in Eastern European workers. This is sure to impact the

seafood and hospitality industries in particular.”

Darren Aggasild, managing director of Rose Recruitment and CV Aberdeen, agrees: “The big B word – Brexit, will have a significant impact on several trades,” he said.

“I know hospitality is going to struggle to fill shifts once the borders are closed. The talent pool will also be diminished in the care and construction sectors, therefore leaving a huge gap to fill and the need for more apprentices to be trained.”

He agrees that there is a possibility that some of those left unemployed because of the CV19 pandemic might mitigate the losses but doesn’t believe they will fill the shortfall.

“While I certainly hope that might happen, I suspect there might need to be a reform of the welfare system before it does because we still see a lot of people who are on unemployment benefits and they say they don’t want the work because their benefits pay more than they would earn in certain roles.”

In amongst the gloom there are bright spots.

“We see a big shift in people working from home and with the need for more hardware and remote support,

the technology sector is definitely booming. Amazon is obviously recruiting but there are big job losses unfortunately in the retail sector.

“Before CV19 hit in March our industry was on an upward trend and we were seeing a lot of vacancies coming through. We had our best start to a year by far and we were trying to expand into Glasgow but that’s obviously been put on hold for a while. When CV19 hit we just saw the sectors shut down one by one and it was quite scary.

“We were seeing a bit of confidence coming back in the oil and gas market and started recruiting for project managers and other senior positions but these projects have all been put on hold.

“For us it’s all about diversification at the moment. We will be expanding our offering in the IT sector and are opening a healthcare division because we already supply a number of care homes through our hospitality division.

“The recruitment industry will have to pivot and go in different directions to survive. If they don’t, I doubt if they will be here in 12 months.”



The advantage of youth

THE CV19 pandemic has altered the working lives of thousands of people within a matter of months. While many office-based employers have managed to adjust with staff operating remotely and adapting to a new way of working and communicating, for others it's been a helpless struggle as revenues plummet and companies fight to survive.

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) research has found over 70,000 jobs have been furloughed in the Aberdeen city region. The government scheme ends in October and leaves a huge proportion of these workers wondering whether they'll have a job to go back to. Further research suggests that it's the younger generation that will be hardest hit by this crisis with unemployment numbers for 16-24-year olds potentially exceeding those that peaked during the 2008 financial crash.

The Youth Guarantee - No One Left Behind recommendations recently published by Scottish Government, and the recently launched UK Government's Kickstart scheme, aim to significantly alter the

worrying youth unemployment projection. While only released in early September, both recognise the urgent need for focus on young people and their potential struggle in the months and years ahead.

The Youth Guarantee recommendations and implementation plan puts significant importance and responsibility in the hands of Developing the Young Workforce (DYW), a national strategy which continues to provide pathways for young people to gain placements, apprenticeships and ultimately employment. In the Aberdeen city region, DYW North East does just that by providing the crucial link between employers and young people which allows the latter to forge the beginnings of a fulfilling career.

With opportunities increasingly limited for youths across the country, there is no more important time than now for employers to reach out to DYW in order to help both their own business and the business leaders of our future. This perspective is shared by Professor Steve Petrie, business performance director at Balfour Beatty and chair of DYW North East.

He said: "During these very challenging times, it is critical that we do not forget about our young people who still rely upon us all as employers to inspire and educate them about their future paths. Now, more than ever, employers need to step up and help guide our future talent into the world of work. If not you then who? If not now, then when?"

While the financial strain on many businesses shouldn't be underestimated, the Youth Guarantee and Kickstart schemes provide some monetary support to employers which, along with the guidance and help from DYW North East, offers the opportunity for local organisations to grow their workforce with motivated young workers without the burden of another full-time salary. Announced by Chancellor Rishi Sunak, the government will fully fund each Kickstart job - paying 100% of the age-relevant National Minimum Wage, National Insurance and pension contributions for 25 hours a week. The Scottish Government's Youth Guarantee proposal also includes financial support, particularly for SME's and third sector organisations.

DYW

NORTH EAST

The vital link connecting schools and businesses



Building on the Summer Skills Academy, DYW North East's Winter Leavers' Programme will also be rolled out soon to assist those who are leaving education in the coming months. The programme, which is currently in development, will cater for school leavers to enhance their employability skills and allow them to interact with employers prior to leaving school. This leads to the ultimate goal of enabling young people to become more confident about joining the world of work through building their confidence with a series of practical and impactful workshops. This will also lead to an enhanced CV and build momentum for their future pathway.

Further SDS research showed over 18,000 jobs were advertised in Aberdeen city and Aberdeenshire in the first half of 2020 alone, highlighting that while these are uncertain times skilled work is still, and will continue to be, required. It emphasises the need for young people to be supported and guided when leaving school and progressing through either further education or beginning employment.

DYW North East endeavours to highlight these opportunities to

leavers, showing them a clear and attainable path which benefits them immediately and, going forward, relationships with other local employers is pertinent to this.

Mary Holland, director of DYW North East, said: "For us to ensure that young people are given the maximum support and opportunity available to them, we need the partnership of employers who recognise the mutual benefits. While it can seem a very worrying time for both the younger generation and companies in the region, we can help turn the tide to create valuable opportunities that prosper into fulfilling careers that have huge advantages for all parties."

Russell Borthwick, chief executive of Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce, said: "In hard economic times, our talented young people often bear the brunt of the shocks to the labour market. This has been an issue raised proactively by our Chamber policy council since the onset of this crisis, with businesses deeply concerned about the impact on our communities and the young people affected.

"In light of the challenges we face, it's positive that we've seen some

serious initiatives from both the Scottish and UK Governments to help firms recruit and retain young workers as the risk of an employment crisis grows. The recovery from CV19 will bring fresh challenges and new ways of working. Businesses have the opportunity to take advantage of these government schemes, support their community, and bring fresh talent in to help them transform and rebuild in the months ahead."

If you're a local employer and would like to find out more about how you can help realise the ambitions of young workers in the region, the please contact the team at DYW North East info@dyw.org.uk

Track and trace your employees and visitors

LOCAL business application expert Escone Solutions has released a new contactless software solution to support organisations to track and trace employees and visitors entering their facilities.

In support of businesses returning to work and sports clubs, pubs and restaurants re-opening their doors, the digital reception solution, Escone Appoint, enables visitors to sign-in to premises safely without contact or hardware. The application-based software, powered by TAAP Visitor Book app, is a modern approach to greeting visitors, eliminating the need for pens, visitor books or touch-screens, supporting adherence to current governmental guidelines.

Director Kevin Wyness said: "Not only are businesses being asked to keep staff, customers and visitors safe but they also need to record who has entered the building and when. Escone Appoint is a cost effective and simple solution that fits the bill on all levels."

Research highlights importance of good coverage

RESEARCH from the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), in partnership with Mobile UK, has underlined the importance of good quality mobile coverage to enable firms to restart and maintain operations successfully after the CV19 pandemic.

The two organisations are calling on the government to work with industry leaders to urgently bring forward plans which will remove unnecessary barriers to improving coverage and enhancing data capacity.

The research found that nearly 80% of respondents expect to either maintain or increase their lockdown levels of mobile-network usage over the next 12 months. Over two thirds of firms have increased the usage of activities that utilise mobile networks; and 59% of firms agreed that enhanced mobile coverage and data capacity would support their business to restart operations.

The BCC, which has long-campaigned to fix areas with poor or minimal mobile coverage as part of its 'No More Not Spots' campaign, and mobile network operator trade association Mobile UK, are calling on the government to remove unnecessary barriers that continue to make it difficult to build out mobile infrastructure, such as amending the Electronic Communications Code and updating permitted development system for telecoms equipment.

The research follows a BCC survey in 2018 which found that of over 1,400 companies, a fifth said UK mobile availability did not meet their needs in accessing new and existing customers, suppliers and employees.



Ally Mitchell and Naill Benzahia

Two young talents from Hutcheon Mearns

TWO Hutcheon Mearns employees have been included in included in an Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland (ICAS) list of the Top 100 Young Chartered Accountants as part of a global competition.

The competition is ICAS' annual showcase of the best and brightest CAs in the world of accounting, finance and business and Naill Benzahia and Ally Mitchell are on the list. The selected CAs faced an anonymous and rigorous judging process focused on finding young professionals who are outstanding in their field.

ICAS chief executive Bruce Cartwright said: "I would like to congratulate all of the exceptional CAs who made it on to this year's Top 100 Young CAs list. This year's awards take place against a backdrop of the CV19 pandemic. The world will need accountants, of all ages, experience and diversity of background, as we navigate the challenging economic and personal impact of this crisis."

CHAP Group wins £11.5m of contracts

CHAP Group has been appointed to carry out several major projects securing contracts worth in excess of £11.5m.

The Westhill-based group has been selected to build a variety of social housing projects for clients including Angus Council at Clifftown in Arbroath, Castlehill Housing Association in Kintore, Grampian Housing Association in Fraserburgh; and Highland Council in Maryburgh.

These projects will call upon CHAP's decades of experience within the housing sector and join their existing social housing contract at Summerhill for Aberdeen City Council as active projects.

A £755,000 contract for the refurbishment of the National Subsea Centre in Dyce and a £348,000 contract for the replacement of boilers at Gray's School of Art in Aberdeen have also been awarded to CHAP. These projects on behalf of Robert Gordon's University follow previous CHAP projects at the Garthdee campus.

The rise of cleantech

David Millar,
technology accelerator director,
The Oil & Gas Technology Centre



2020 - penned as the year for true climate action. Ambitions raised under the Paris Agreement followed by a review of progress at the annual COP26 UN climate talks. Now all that is postponed, and attention is focused on saving lives and rescuing stuttering economies.

'Green recovery' is now commonplace, and rightly so. The trillion-pound stimulus plans will have consequences for CO2 emissions. So, it is vital that any economic return embraces the climate to make our tough climate targets attainable. It is a complex space but a key factor in delivering this is technology - especially in the energy sector.

So, could be this herald a true return and rise of cleantech to save the planet?

The cleantech market is huge and still growing - you could call it a 'Rising Tide' market. The global cleantech market is £2tn (and rising) and the UK cleantech market is around £50bn - just 2.5% of the global one. I think it's much bigger than that - at least triple.

Focusing in on the energy transition to net zero there are many technologies already being developed and tested, but a lot of them have challenges in their scalability to have any true impact. Plus, technology scale up

timelines are not in our favour - it has taken 30 years to scale up electric vehicles and solar panels even longer.

This is where new thinking and approaches are needed - entrepreneurs can play a crucial role.

When asked to name global technology hubs most people will say Silicon Valley, New York, London, perhaps even Edinburgh. Aberdeen? One day I hope.

It's increasingly likely that the next billion dollar tech company will be founded outside these big hubs. In Startup Genome Report 2019 they said: 'There Will Be No 'Next Silicon Valley'. There will be 30.'

Aberdeen has always punched above its weight. Between now and 2050 we will see oil and gas revenues decline from £24bn to £11bn, however by being the ecosystem that supports the entrepreneurs who can develop, deploy and export cleantech for the sector, there is a £49bn pound opportunity up for grabs.

One of the entities looking to supercharge the cleantech pipeline for the energy sector is TechX, the accelerator programme I run at the OGTC. We are already seeing a big shift in applications for the programme, with 50% of our final cohort this year made up of

cleantech. Unfortunately, none are from this region. Of the 33 companies supported by TechX over the last three years, only 30% are from the North-east of Scotland. Meaning we have a great opportunity to attract and retain the very best technology start-ups here in the region, harnessing true economic development impact as they scale up and create jobs. The impact on our region would be phenomenal.

Capitalising on this, we are working closely with our ecosystem partners Elevator, ONE Codebase, the Chamber, Invest Aberdeen, the City Council, University of Aberdeen, Robert Gordon Uni and others to understand our offering in making the North-east more 'sticky', so when start-ups land here, they stay here. This will require us to retain and attract talent, provide more specialised facilities (labs and workshops) and more diverse early stage seed capital funding vehicles. No easy task.

It has been a chaotic first half to 2020 but out of chaos comes opportunity and I believe this is ours.

Let's not become simply the loading point for new technology for the sector, let's make Aberdeen the home of cleantech that benefits not just our region and country....but the world as a whole.

Our responsibilities as leaders in the energy sector

Alasdair Green,
director and head of E&P,
Anderson Anderson & Brown



THE Scottish Government's announcement in the early summer of a £62m support package to help deliver a net zero future was warmly welcomed across the energy sector. Not only does this respond to and show real commitment and support to meeting Scotland's ambitious climate change targets, it also demonstrates the importance of investing in the energy sector at a time where a more traditional oil and gas industry faces the reality of longer term challenges.

Oil and gas has suffered from the double economic shock of CV19 and crashes in global commodity prices this year, both sudden and deeply damaging. The biggest existential threat and crisis facing the oil industry, however, has always been climate change.

It is widely thought that the oil industry may permanently change because of renewed commitments and heightened attention given to climate change issues. The Scottish Government's multi-million Energy Transition Fund is therefore extremely timely but it also highlights progressive activities and initiatives that have been underway for a considerable time already. It recognises that our energy industry will need to change. And it supports that through a process of

change and adaptation, we will need to protect jobs, reskill, preserve and grow talent; and nurture economic value.

As global energy leaders, it is crucial that the Scottish energy sector embraces and grasps the many opportunities of energy transition. This is undoubtedly the future and if we play our cards right, it will enhance our standing.

An energy transition process that is too rapid and one that turns its back on oil and gas too soon could return more damage than good however.

It's easy to get carried away quite quickly with some statements and beliefs declaring that this is now the end of oil and gas. Oil and especially gas, will be key to managing the transition from one dominant energy source to another. An energy transition that is too quick and shuts down oil and gas may lead to near term power shortages because we physically cannot get enough renewable energy into the system.

What is also often missed or misunderstood, is the fact that many green energy sources such as wind and solar, along with the drive to electrification of our infrastructure and transport, also have a dark side to their environmental credentials.

Firstly, there is the issue of responsible and sustainable sourcing of metals, minerals and rare earth elements. Major concentrations of the latter are often found in developing countries, such as throughout Africa where working conditions and environmental standards can be ashamedly poor. Left alone or unregulated, these issues will become huge problems for communities and our planet.

Secondly, there is the potentially overwhelming question of decommissioning and disposal of green energy technology and equipment that has come to the end of its life span. Currently for example, the only way to deal with used wind turbine blades is to bury them. It seems that serious efforts to improve one environmental problem are in danger of creating new environmental problems.

The creativity, knowledge, expertise and resilience in the Scottish energy sector is a significant global export and is something that as a nation we should take more pride in and look to enhance. Finding new and different ways of tackling a just and managed energy transition challenge through innovation and inventiveness will always create new job opportunities and better solutions than those available today across all parts of the sector, including in oil and gas.

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10 Tue
1 Day

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Explore the various customs systems, procedures and documentation

11 Wed
1 Day

Dealing with Difficult Situations

Understand the variety of personalities and determine how to alter your approach for each

12 Thu
1 Day

Communication and Interpersonal Skills

Develop effective communication techniques

12 Thu
1 Day

Negotiating and Influencing Skills

Learn tactics and skills of persuasion that lead to success

17 Tue
1 Day

Practical Contract Management

Learn the skills needed to ensure contracts add value to your business

17 Tue
1 Day

Time Management

Identify time wasting activities and manage time more effectively

18 Wed
2 day

Advanced Management Skills

Grow as a manager and improve the performance of your team

18 Wed
1 day

Renewable Energy and the UK

An essential introductory course to gain an understanding of the UK renewable energy industry.



Do you want to be able to understand and manage contracts effectively?

A breath of fresh air

THE reduction in CO2 emissions caused by global lockdown has brought a breath of fresh air amidst the struggles of the pandemic. As the economy recovers, it provides an opportunity to make that recovery a green one.

The ambition for the North-east to become a global centre for renewable energy transition positions it as the region for net zero Scotland. Opportunities for energy companies to diversify into new low carbon industries comes with support from the Scottish Government as a £62m Energy Transition Fund has been made available, alongside the new Green Jobs Fund announced in September.

As more companies and employees make the transition, they and others will need to adapt to changing industry knowledge to continue to provide support. As part of the Chamber's portfolio of new courses being introduced in 2021, we are adding 'Renewable Energy and the UK' to address this need.

An essential basic course for all those wanting to gain an understanding of the industry, it is designed to introduce you to the various types of renewable energy resources currently available by:

- Helping to explain the history and evolution of how these renewable energies have become integrated into our traditional sources for our energy needs
- Explaining how future needs will be balanced to ensure traditional resources will be phased out with 'clean energy' resources replacing them to meet the government's environmental targets
- Discovering how the UK energy industry is transforming itself to help the transition from being providers of fossil fuels to providing its technical know-how to innovate the renewables industry, making the most of the resources available

This course is ideal for companies involved in supplying and supporting the industry both directly and indirectly. It is also ideal for all new starts to the renewable energy industry including engineers, technicians, supervisors, graduates and apprentices, as well as existing staff with a limited exposure to the industry who need to update their knowledge of the basics.

For more information on this course, please get in touch with us at training@agcc.co.uk



Returning to the North-east Robin Macpherson shares his vision for Robert Gordon's College

As a guest speaker at a Robert Gordon's College event, Robin Macpherson walked out of the iconic gates, looked back at the quadrangle and said to himself, "This is a special school and I want to work here one day." Two years later, Robert Gordon's College appointed Robin Macpherson as the new Head of College.

Robin has held teaching and senior leadership roles in Scotland, the UK and overseas with experience of day and boarding schools, as well as having worked as an examiner for the Scottish Qualifications Authority, Edexcel and the International Baccalaureate Organisation. A published author in the UK and America, Robin is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, a keen advocate and public speaker in international education and a North-east Committee Member of the Scottish Council for Development and Industry (SCDI). Robin is a board member of the educational charity Remembering Srebrenica Scotland.

What attracted you to the North-east?

I grew up in the shire so living in the city is the realisation of a long held ambition. It is wonderful to be back home in the North-east of Scotland. One of the great attractions of coming here is the Gordon's community who has shown strength and support to one another through some challenging times. It's really one big Aberdeen family spread around the world.

What do you think makes the North-east special?

When you think about what makes Scotland beautiful, the North-east has it all. It is one of the most naturally tranquil places you could ever want to live in. Yet at the same time it is also a vibrant hub of energy and education, with connections that reach around the world. You don't 'miss' anything when you live in Aberdeenshire, because the region has it all.

What do you remember most about your own school days?

Growing up in Aberdeenshire, I have happy memories of my primary years at Gordon's School in Huntly with good teachers and a traditional Scottish education, which struck a healthy balance of literacy, numeracy and outdoor play. The teachers instilled a good sense of morals. I spent my secondary education at Merchiston Castle in Edinburgh as

a boarding pupil initially then a day pupil and was fortunate to have fantastic, inspirational teachers. I never imagined I would then go on to Oxford. I credit my teachers, in particular my history teacher John Begg who was also the Director of History Studies at Merchiston. He introduced me to books and ideas which really challenged me to think deeply and to develop my own world views, and this made a big difference when I went for the interview.

Tell us about your career journey?

I initially started working in restaurants and hotels as a chef before I went into teaching which was brilliant for building a strong work ethic and ability to perform under intense pressure. I moved into teaching in Edinburgh, and then was keen to broaden my horizons. I spent a summer teaching in Hong Kong and loved the challenge of international education, so I moved to Dubai as one of the original staff of a new school. I then went to Wellington College in Berkshire because I had always wanted to work in one of the big schools in the south of England to see what it looked like at the very top end. It was a revelation. The Master was Sir Anthony Seldon, and he remains one of my biggest educational influences. He made me think on a much bigger scale. During this time I went into publishing, public speaking and events management and these are things that I really enjoy doing. I learned the importance of developing networks and being actively involved in public debate. We moved back to Scotland in 2017 because I wanted my children to have a Scottish education, became Assistant Rector at Dollar Academy, and when the chance came to join Robert Gordon's I knew it was the perfect fit. It really is tailored to my experience, values and educational philosophy.

As a teacher, author and public speaker, who has influenced you?

My father has been an important role model throughout my early years as a Chaplain, teacher and public speaker. I remember watching him at an event where he described an important motto for life as "be all you can be". It has always stuck in my mind and more so now than ever before because it's the motto of Robert Gordon's College. I've already mentioned Sir Anthony Seldon, but I would add my Rector at Dollar David Knapman and leadership coach Jill Berry as

people who have mentored and moulded me. Their experience and wisdom is outstanding.

How do you like to spend your spare time?

My wife and I have two young daughters, so our spare time is always family time. We explore the beautiful parks and lovely beaches in the North-east, that our girls are huge fans of. I manage to catch the odd game of football but prior to busy family life I enjoyed golf, running and playing the guitar. I am passionate about thought leadership, the craft of learning and talent development. Reading and writing about education is a labour of love, and hunkering down for a 'writing camp' to produce a book is always a pleasure.

How would you describe Robert Gordon's College?

Robert Gordon's is a school rooted in history and has a lot of confidence in its future. It is a school that is fighting fit and constantly asking how we can do things bigger and better – we are a school that listens. We are fortunate to have the capacity, ambition and confidence to be a thought leader in education. With strong partnerships like MIT, we can provide 'deeper learning' than our national curriculum. This allows our pupils to see what entrepreneurship, innovation and curiosity look like at the highest level and gives them a sense of where they can go. We are a big, independent school and we can offer more opportunity and challenge to develop our pupils. As an independent school we also have the freedom to operate and design our own curriculum to provide a bespoke education. Scottish Independent schools have a diverse pupil population and are not elitist.

What is your vision for Robert Gordon's College?

I am keen that our school contributes to society at large and the wide-reaching influence that we have through our global network allows us to bring the wider world inside Gordon's. The emphasis we put on innovation, entrepreneurship and curiosity are essential if we are to find solutions to the problems of the 21st century. It is a common endeavour of pupils in the past and present and the history of philanthropy at Gordon's sets an example for others to follow. Our future is very much around thought leadership and shaping the world for the better.



“Robert Gordon’s College is a school with a lot of history and confidence in its future. Our future is very much around thought leadership and shaping the world for the better.”

Progress continues on plans for Peterhead's Community Campus

THE Buchan Area Committee has agreed to make a recommendation to Aberdeenshire Council's Education and Children's Services Committee that proposals for the replacement and relocation of Peterhead Academy to a new site at Kinmundy are adopted.

The education committee will discuss the proposals on October 8 and if these are formally agreed then further steps will be taken to consult on the relocation of a number of primary and special schools in the area.

Latest passenger volumes show signs of recovery

SERCO NorthLink Ferries has recorded an increase in passenger and car volumes since the move to Phase 3 of the Scottish Government's route map, as it opens its 2021 booking system this month.

From March 22 to the end of June, NorthLink Ferries provided travel for key workers as well as essential islander and freight connectivity between the Northern Isles and mainland Scotland.

Since 10 July, booking systems have been open and aligned with the Scottish Government's Phase 3 criteria for public transport, which has allowed for an increase in capacity across all services.

RGU students design 'Tiny Houses'

STUDENTS from Robert Gordon University's Scott Sutherland School of Architecture have designed a series of small, affordable houses as part of a project with Grampian Housing Association.

The students were tasked with creating three types of accommodation to cater for a single person, a couple and a small family, with sustainability and the most efficient use of energy at the core of the design.

Among the key features of the 'Tiny Houses', was the ability for self-assembly to help reduce construction costs and clever storage to maximise space in the accommodation. The designs will now form part of a competition where the public can vote for their favourite projects, with the winners decided by members of Grampian Housing Association and the academic team at Scott Sutherland School.

Dr Amar Bennadji, lecturer in architecture at RGU, said: "A tiny house movement is spreading worldwide to achieve a decent living space without the financial burden and we felt this was an ideal opportunity for our students to work on a live project which could have positive implications for the local community."

Board chairman of Grampian Housing Association and RGU lecturer, Abhishek Agarwal, said: "Through this project we are hoping that we are able to support our communities by driving the agenda for affordable, innovative and sustainable homes, but at the same time offering support for skills development in the built environment."

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Aberdeen's opportunity to lead in energy transition

Trevor Garlick OBE,
chair,
ONE Energy



THE combination of the CV19 pandemic, a sharp decline in oil demand and low gas prices have rocked the energy sector and regional economy.

For many businesses and individuals, a brighter future is understandably hard to picture but we must be optimistic. The opportunity and challenge ahead are to develop a competitive and sustainable oil and gas industry and take the lead in the energy transition.

We must ensure that we have a healthy supply chain to maintain our domestic supply of oil and gas as continued production will be essential to meet the UK's energy demands. Emissions reduction will be key to achieving net zero operations and the supply chain has a critical role to play. The oil and gas sector also offers deep understanding of the region's geology and infrastructure, and a digitally enabled oil and gas industry will be a core part of an integrated energy system, alongside wind, hydrogen and CCUS.

We have a quarter of Europe's offshore wind resources. We can turn wind energy into electricity, convert gas and water into hydrogen, and then into fuel, and use subsurface aquifers in the North Sea to store carbon dioxide. This creates the opportunity for the region to lead on energy

transition with the skilled people, infrastructure and innovation to create a world leading, fully integrated net-zero economy.

A pipeline of transition work could help sustain the energy supply chain and secure the workforce against an uncertain backdrop. The offshore wind developments that will be created by Crown Estate Scotland's ScotWind leasing round should bring opportunities. ScotWind could attract up to £8bn of investment, creating new activity for local businesses in areas such as manufacturing, digitisation and underwater engineering.

To capitalise on these opportunities and transition to net zero, we need world-class facilities. Facilities to support offshore wind assembly and high-value manufacturing, research and testing to accelerate new technologies, and a focus on training and developing people in net-zero skills.

The proposed Energy Transition Zone (ETZ) in Aberdeen, is one of several regional projects identified in the Scottish Government's £62m Energy Transition Fund and will be the focal point for this crucial activity. It will be an exemplar net zero environment and forms part of a broader green economic vision for the city and region.

The ETZ will leverage Aberdeen Harbour Board's £350m investment to create a world-leading facility that will offer combined marine and onshore support. Aberdeen South Harbour will be Scotland's largest port by berthage, with no tidal restrictions and a laydown area with the capacity for large-scale operations, including the manufacturing, assembly and integration of new offshore renewables infrastructure.

Building on our existing strengths will create long term jobs, skills and training opportunities for local people. The ETZ will include the development of a skills academy to provide training apprenticeships alongside further and higher education opportunities.

With the right investment, we can create a global centre of expertise for energy transition to support emerging and future low carbon energy activity. We can sustain and develop the local energy supply chain and enable it to capitalise on substantial national and international opportunities.

The North-east of Scotland has made a significant contribution to the UK's energy requirements in the last 50 years. Now is the time for us to also be at the forefront of the energy transition, anchor and grow a dynamic supply chain, and create new opportunities for local people.



NORTHERN STAR2021 BUSINESS AWARDS

THE finalists have been announced for the Northern Star Business Awards, Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce's celebration of business success across the region.

This year saw a record 130 nominations submitted for the 12 categories. The judging process saw a range of business leaders come together to scrutinise the entries and the winners of the 17th annual awards, held in association with principal sponsor Nucore Group, will be unveiled during a glittering black-tie ceremony at P&J Live on March 11, 2021.

The finalists in the categories are:

- **Business of the Year**
Aberdeen International Airport
Goldstar Cleaning Services
Infinity Partnership
Motive Offshore Group
- **Customer First**
Arrowdown
Grace May
Infinity Partnership
Nimbus Blue
Stompers Childcare Services
- **Driving Sustainability**
Glulam
Keenan Recycling
Legasea
Wood Recyclability
- **Family Business**
Dalriada Luxury Lodges
Greenwell Equipment
Marshall Farms
The Knowes Hotel and Restaurant
- **Going Global**
EnerQuip
Fifth Ring
James Fisher Offshore
Load Monitoring Systems
- **Inspiration from Innovation**
AISUS Offshore
Ecosse IP
Imenco
Xergy Group
- **Inspiring Futures**
Aberlour Futures Aberdeen
Bon Accord Care
Grampian Training Services
University of Aberdeen Business School
- **Making the Difference**
Charlie House
Denis Law Legacy Trust
NESS
Sport Aberdeen
- **Marketing Magic**
Aberdeen City Council - Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museum
BIG Partnership and Aberdeen Football Club
- Charlie House
University of Aberdeen
- **Rising Star**
Cumming and Co
Hudsons Catering
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Brimmond Group
Hutcheon Mearns
Taxassist
Texo Group
- **Student Placement**
BW Offshore
Kirkburn Court Care
Home
NHS Grampian
TAQA

Seona Shand, the Chamber's membership and events director, said: "This has been a very difficult year for many businesses so it has been an inspiring and invigorating process to go through the record number of entries and the many examples of bold businesses creating opportunity in the Aberdeen city region.

"While we cannot give them all an award, each of our finalists is truly deserving of recognition for their achievements and I'm looking forward to the awards night in March to help celebrate with all those entrants who have made it on to the most competitive of shortlists. You really are all winners."

Join us and help celebrate our region's success. A variety of options are available for attending. Full tables seat 10 people and are priced at £1,475 +VAT for members, £1,330 for premier partners and £1,100 for third sector organisations. We also offer individual seats at networking tables priced at £147.50.

Looking for extra brand exposure? A limited number of sponsorship opportunities are still available.

Contact events@agcc.co.uk for more information.



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High profile North-east business leaders join the Chamber board

ABERDEEN & Grampian Chamber of Commerce announced the appointment of two new non-executive directors to its board along with a number of new additions to its policy council during its 165th annual general meeting which took place at the Chamber on September 2.

Following a robust application and interview process, high profile North-east business leaders Bob Keiller and Ray Riddoch have been appointed to the board for the first time, replacing vice president Jennifer Young and John Brebner who is stepping down from the role of immediate past president.

Deborah O'Neil of NovaBiotics and Derren McRae of CBRE have been re-appointed to serve their second three year terms.

Director of AB15, Bob Keiller was appointed chairman of Scottish Enterprise in January 2016. Previously chief executive officer of Wood Group, he was responsible for the creation of PSN by manufacturing a \$280m management buyout from Halliburton in 2006 and completed the \$1bn sale of PSN to Wood Group in April 2011.

He has a Master of Engineering degree from Heriot-Watt University and is a chartered engineer. He was previously chairman of the Offshore Contracting Association (OCA), co-chair of Oil and Gas UK and former chairman of the Entrepreneurial Exchange. Awarded Entrepreneur of the Year in 2006 and 2008, he was also named Scottish Businessman of the Year in 2007 and Grampian Industrialist of the Year in 2008. In 2011 he was voted Scottish Male Business Leader of the Year at the Scottish Leadership awards.

On his appointment, Mr Keiller said: "I want to see local businesses survive and grow. The support and advice that the Chamber provides is vital and I want to help the organisation to be even more effective and have an even greater impact on our local economy."

An established energy industry leader with a career spanning 40 years, Ray Riddoch has worked for several international exploration and production operators both in the UK and overseas. He has significant experience in operations and projects and has held roles for extended periods in health, safety and environment, business development, human resources and technical audit. Over the years he has held several board positions in industry organisations and served as HRH Prince of Wales Ambassador for Business in the Community in Scotland for three years. Mr Riddoch retired as CNOOC International managing director in May 2020 and has taken up several board appointments in the Aberdeen area.

The policy council election attracted significant levels of interest and engagement with nominations from across the North-east business community, with Maggie Bochel of Aurora Planning re-elected for a further three year term.

Joining the council for the first time after having been elected by the Chamber membership are Audrey Sheal of ONE, Dan Smith of Savills, Gavin Currie of Bancon Construction, Sarah D Stuart of Ledingham Chalmers LLP, Ian Phillips of Pale Blue Dot Energy, Karri Tough of BP, Stuart McPhee of Siberia Bar & Hotel, Jim Reid of Jim Reid Vehicle Sales & Service; and Murray Whittaker of Whittaker Engineering.

Chamber chief executive Russell Borthwick said: "The policy council is representative of the North-east's business community and is in place to ensure that the Chamber team has its finger on the pulse on the key issues, challenges and opportunities facing our membership and our region. Recent activities such as our lobbying around CV19 support, the North East Now, Vanguard and Absolutely initiatives and focus on bringing clarity for local firms during this time of transition demonstrate the real difference that a proactive Chamber can make.

"Having people who are as passionate as we are about our aim of helping businesses to be better today while creating the conditions that will ensure the future economic success of the region and are keen to actively help us deliver on this will be vital as we move forward. We thank John and Jennifer for their commitment and support to the Chamber over many years and know they will remain strong advocates for the work we do. We also welcome our new board members and look forward to utilising their experience in the months ahead."

The AGM was sponsored by Ledingham Chalmers LLP.

The 2019 Annual Report can be viewed on the Chamber website.



CV19 airborne transmission – a major gap in risk control

Ed Gardyne,
founder and chief executive officer,
Safewell Solutions



THROUGHOUT 2020 the lives of everyone on earth have been completely disrupted by an invisible risk, a microbe less than 0.2 microns in size. Current data confirms 27 million cases globally with tragically 900,000 deaths.

In 1918, the world suffered a similar major pandemic: Spanish H1N1 flu. Known as the forgotten pandemic resulting from news blackouts, the virus infected an estimated half billion people causing 50 million deaths. One well documented effect of the virus was severe lung damage like CV19 and it also resulted in the closure of businesses and schools.

At the time there was a request for research into transmission mechanisms.

We are all familiar with the current CV19 risk control advice but crucially there is very little mention of improving ventilation and air purification in the workplace.

During the pandemic, governments have broadly followed the incomplete guidance of the World Health Organisation (WHO) hence the confusion regarding masks, social distancing and the clear focus on fomite transmission despite any hard evidence.

Eventually research from Professor Lidia Morawska, a physicist, endorsed by 239 scientists in July 2020, led WHO to recognise the risk of airborne transmission. She appealed to the

medical community and International bodies to recognise airborne transmission risk and advocate preventative measures.

In the UK, the SAGE group with its self-confessed academic silos and lack of physicists and engineers has always uniformly considered that fomite transmission was the primary route however in July 2020, around 100 years after Spanish Flu, they finally called for more research into airborne transmission.

My opinion from the outset, based on extensive experience in breathing air risk management was that airborne transmission should be considered as a viable mechanism for CV19 spread. This has been proven by recent research.

CV19 was well suppressed during lockdown but now as enclosed spaces are being re-occupied, the risk of airborne spread is high and very few barriers have been implemented. The government's failure to recognise the airborne route will lead to further transmission of CV19.

Safewell SafeSpace is self-funding research into systems to suppress and measure airborne spread. Calls for government support have been unheeded while billions of pounds are being lost to the economy.

We are challenged by the twin imperatives of saving lives and livelihoods; offices remain empty and people work from home. This may be

sustainable for some types of business but not all. Can online meetings fully replace human social interaction in business? How can confidence be restored?

For years we have ensured our clients breathe safe air when working in hazardous environments. Our breathing systems have been used offshore and onshore globally in multiple sectors and were recently used by a leading International company developing new ventilators.

Safewell believes that airborne CV19 transmission can be mitigated using a holistic risk-based approach to improve air quality and ventilation and create SafeSpaces in business. There is no such thing as zero risk but if we make the invisible risks more visible, we can start to manage this pandemic in a completely logical and objective way.



Angela Scott,
business development director, QHSE Aberdeen Ltd

What does your company do that others don't?

QHSE Aberdeen provides the friendly personal service of a small company with the benefits of fully qualified lead auditors, covering ISO standards such as 9001, 14001, 45001, 22000 and 27001. We also provide GDPR compliance and a data protection compliance service.

What are the most pressing challenges that your industry sector faces today and why?

Our most pressing challenges at the moment are obviously CV19 related, ie. organisations are worried about spending money at the moment and are putting off audits and compliance updates. A lot of our clients have postponed training courses due to staff working from home and unsuitable training conditions. However, throughout this we have received enquiries from new customers looking to gain certification to enhance their business, so we have just employed a new member of staff.

What is the hardest lesson you have learned in your career to date?

The hardest lesson I have learned in my career is to try and not take things too personally. Business is business, customers will come and go and I find it difficult if we lose a customer because they choose to take on a full time member of staff to replace our services. I should turn it around to be a positive that we have assisted and trained them to the point that they can take over and continue without us.

What is the most valuable piece of business advice you have ever received?

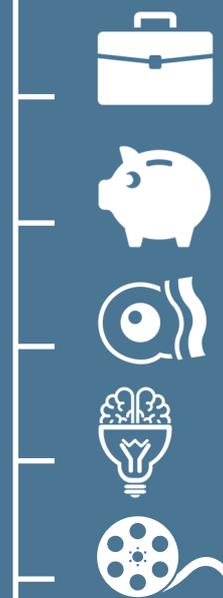
The most valuable piece of advice I have ever received was 'plan, write down your thoughts'. This is so true. It is very easy to think you know where you are going as a business until you find you have been so busy working you haven't got very far! This is our own advice now and we follow it: Plan, do, check, act - repeat.

What's been your proudest career achievement to date and why?

Right now is my proudest career achievement to date. We started this business due to my partner Dave being made redundant in a downturn in 2015 and have managed to build up our vision of showing companies how to implement ISO management standards to improve their business. We have worked with some fantastic companies from one-man bands to international corporates giving us experience of different size organisations and in such a diverse range of sectors.

If you could make one thing happen tomorrow that would benefit North-east Scotland, what would that be?

It has to be regenerating Union Street in Aberdeen, create employment and making it a place that locals and tourists alike want to visit. Aberdeen has had a great oil and gas history but unfortunately this has not benefitted the city centre.



Quick fire round

What was your first job?

Office junior in a scaffolding company

When would you like to retire?

When I think our business can run without me

What did you have for breakfast?

Special K with red berries

Who, or what, inspires you?

I love a success story and there are so many people who have come from nothing, worked hard and became fantastic entrepreneurs

What's the last book you read / film you saw?

'How to wreck your business' by Stuart Mason



Nicola Alexander

Bethan turnover leaps

ABERDEENSHIRE based independent customs consultancy, Bethan Customs Consultancy, has celebrated its fifth birthday with a 69% rise in turnover, a new appointment and an expanding client base.

Despite the challenging commercial landscape, Bethan has adapted is on track to achieve a six-figure projected turnover for 2019-20. During the past year it has secured 16 new contracts with clients in the food and drink, automotive, construction and retail sectors.

The independent consultancy based in the Colpy Business Park in Oldmeldrum, has also appointed a new compliance executive, Gus Firth, who brings their team to six permanent staff. Gus joined them from HMRC and the Home Office, where he worked latterly as a border force officer, with particular expertise in marine traffic and customs control at heliports.

Managing director Nicola Alexander said: "When I established the business five years ago, I could scarcely have imagined we would be in the position we now find ourselves. Our growth has been very organic, largely due to the spread of our reputation as clients recognised the value of our services and recommended us.

"Longer term we have lots of exciting plans and aspirations to expand our geographical reach and embark on more specialised project work, while continuing to support our clients."

SME Spotlight



Marcus Nisbet,
director,
Specialist Resource Solutions

When was your business established?

2015

What does your business do?

Social care provider, supporting adults with various conditions / support needs in the community to live as independent a life as possible. Some individuals require support a couple of hours a day up to full time 24 hour support.

What sort of companies do you do business with?

We work alongside local authority, NHS, various suppliers, recruitment agencies, universities and colleges.

What is the biggest challenge facing your business at the moment?

Covid - and all the guidance changes alongside personal protective equipment procurement.

And the biggest opportunity?

To work closer with the local community as well as having the social care sector being recognised as an essential service within our communities.

What are you most passionate and proud of when it comes to your business?

The positive outcomes our service users achieve from our staff supporting them, locally and international.

What has been most valuable to you as members of Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce?

Bite-size easy to understand updates about relevant legislation affecting small businesses.

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EIC Day serves as reminder of the special relationship

Stuart R Broadley FEI,
chief executive office,
Energy Industries Council



LAST month the EIC celebrated 25 years since opening its first overseas office in 1995, in Houston, with the city mayor proclaiming the anniversary as 'Energy Industries Council Day', a wonderful reminder of our close trading ties.

The EIC has been helping UK businesses to diversify and export to the US and globally since 1943, now the UK's largest energy trade association. As companies adapt to life with CV19, with no magic pill likely anytime soon, leaders are considering more exporting to kickstart growth but they are cautious.

The UK left the EU on January 31 2020 and is fast approaching the end of its 11-month transition period. Both sides say there are still significant areas of disagreement. If no trade deal has been agreed and ratified by the end of the year, then the UK faces the prospect of tariffs on exports to the EU, our largest trading partner. Free movement of people will end and businesses trading with the EU will have to follow new rules. No one believes we are ready for a no-deal.

One of the silver linings of EU exit is the prospect of a huge new UK-US Free Trade Agreement, but any

FTA deal seems wholly dependent though upon the outcome of the upcoming US Presidential election.

The US election is also important for the oil price. If Joe Biden is elected, it's conceivable that he will move quickly to limit shale production on federal land and perhaps impose new shale production taxes on private land. If this were to happen, surely oil prices would rise sharply. Biden also is a proponent for accelerated renewables and energy transition.

Scheduled for November 1-12 2021 in Glasgow, COP26 (Conference of the Parties) is the 26th UN Climate Change Conference and will attract more than 100 heads of state, including hopefully the US President, and 30,000 delegates.

What a timely opportunity for the Prime Minister and First Minister to put their differences aside and stand on the COP stage and pitch to the world how the UK and particularly North-east Scotland are uniquely positioned to bring new decarbonisation technologies to life, to demonstrate global leadership, and ultimately create new multi-billion industries that will be the future wealth creators for businesses and especially exporters.

Currently though, US oil company

CEOs look on wryly at the moves made by European oil company CEOs to decarbonise and de-oil their businesses, stating that energy transition 'will not happen on their watch'. Consumer pressure seems to work better in Europe than in the US but this will change when the economics of energy transition are more compelling?

Government sentiment matters and we need to wait and see if COP26 will be the stage where the UK government chooses to reduce its support for hydrocarbon industries. The strong view of industry is that it is far too early to do this, for fear that the supply chain will suffer, and critical capability will be lost forever, slowing or even preventing home-grown energy transition. We hope government heeds this advice.

In these unprecedented times of change and uncertainty, we can still focus on protecting our special relationships.



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October



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8:30 - 9:45
Online

Maximise Your Membership

Do you know how to take full advantage of being a Chamber member? It can be a little overwhelming knowing where to start so we've developed our maximise your membership events to help enlighten members about key information and ensure that their organisation and its employees are fully briefed on the benefits it can provide, from the free 27/7 legal helpline to raising your company's profile. Free to attend and a great way to kickstart building your Chamber contacts. Also good for anyone thinking about joining, to get a taster of engagement with the Chamber.

November



It's been a milestone year for HR professionals, sign up today to make sure you are across the key issues. Speakers include Caspar Glyn QC.

12 Nov

8:30 - 10:00
Online

Employment Law Webinar

The popular Annual Employment Law Conference, held in partnership with Scotland's leading employment law advisers Burness Paull LLP and Pinsent Masons LLP, has been reformatted this year to an online webinar. Hear about the latest in employment law from a range of legal experts.

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 Burness Paull

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From TUBSTalks to new business opportunities, this free to attend event could provide the boost your business is looking for.

18 Nov

P&J Live

The Ultimate Business Show

The one-day, must-attend North-east business show is back. The Chamber believes it has always been important to support businesses in North-east Scotland but never more so than now. Whether you're looking to pick up local produce, source a new partner or find a new service provider, The Ultimate Business Show has been a sell-out since its inception. Now in its fifth year, join us and network in the 3D world, meet and support local businesses and attend a free TUBSTalks to gain insight and tips to support your growth.

Don't want to miss out?

Sign up to the Chamber's monthly e-newsletter by emailing info@agcc.co.uk and we'll make sure you are always across the latest news and events.

THE ULTIMATE BUSINESS SHOW 2020

NOVEMBER 18, P&J LIVE



Join us on November 18 and explore the diverse offering of organisations from hoteliers and airlines to business support firms and so much more.

The one-day event will look a bit different this year but it will still provide the platform for bringing together local and national brands across a range of sectors, creating the perfect opportunity for you to raise the profile of your business, connect with potential new customers, source products or services locally, save money and keep our regional economy buoyant.

Delegates can also drop into one of our six 30-minute TUBS Talks taking place throughout the day and immerse themselves in the latest thinking as a range of inspirational speakers share their perspective on ways to support the growth and development of local businesses.

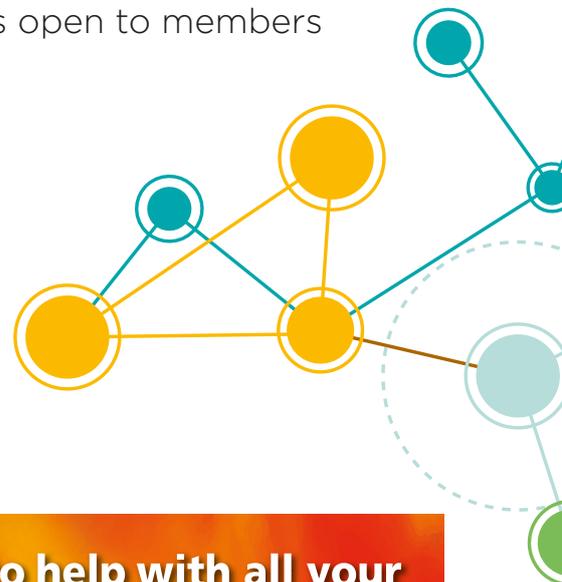
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Jamie Purves

Training provider Survivex has appointed a new general manager to oversee day-to-day operations and support key training management service clients. Jamie Purves joins from drilling contractor, Valaris, where he was regional training and competency manager responsible for personnel working in the North Sea and Norway regions.



Robbie Ross

Aberdeen-headquartered IT company Converged Communication Solutions has appointed a leading cybercrime and cyber security expert with Police Scotland as its new chief security officer. Robbie Ross has joined the independent IT firm to support the delivery of its cyber security service and provide leadership on the subject.



Laura Main

Aberdeen-born star of the BBC's Call the Midwife, Laura Main, has been appointed as a patron of The ARCHIE Foundation, which supports Aberdeen Maternity Hospital through its Friends of the Neonatal Unit. Laura plays Shelagh Turner in the popular BBC TV Show, which has been running since 2011.



Michelle Smarsh

KPMG has invested in talent in Aberdeen as it prepares to open the doors to its new Marischal Square offices. In the firm's audit team, Michelle Smarsh (pictured) has been promoted to director, while Simon Smith becomes associate director in restructuring and Armen Balasanyan has been promoted to audit manager.



Jake Robertson and Michael Robertson

Tidy Green Clean, the leading environmentally friendly commercial cleaning business that operates on a franchise model, has welcomed two new key members of the senior team to the business. A new regional director (specialist services) Jake Robertson has joined the team, alongside Michael Robertson as Tidy Green Clean's first business development manager. His role is to develop national and regional business opportunities that can then be deployed at a regional franchise level by TGC's regional directors and their teams. The appointments come at a critical moment for the company as many of its clients are looking at ways to manage their office mobilisations after lockdown.



Keith Robertson and Rob Hancock

Audio visual brand communication agency AVC Immedia is delighted to announce the appointment of Keith Robertson as operations director for its Aberdeen base. His appointment less than a year after AVC Immedia's international expansion into the United States and shortly after several contract wins across the UK, including an agreement for 3D animation content worth a six-figure sum. The Newbury-headquartered company, which employs nearly 30 people across its offices, has also appointed Rob Hancock as senior 3D animator.

AAB appoint new payroll director

ANDERSON Anderson & Brown LLP (AAB), one of the UK's leading independent firms of chartered accountants and business advisors, has announced the appointment of a new director of payroll and taxes. Stuart Law joins AAB's payroll and employment taxes team to support ongoing growth, with a focus on London and the central belt.

Having spent his career in the professional services environment, Stuart brings significant experience and a wealth of knowledge to AAB. He joins AAB from Mazars where, as head of UK payroll services, he led the client relationship teams across Glasgow, London, Birmingham, Liverpool, and Milton Keynes.

His appointment follows two key managerial appointments, Debbie Barker (Edinburgh) and Farzana Uddin (London) in the payroll team earlier this year. These key appointments to the payroll and employment taxes team enables AAB to build further advisory capacity to support its data driven payroll arm.

Three additions to the board at Jim Reid

FAMILY-RUN car dealership Jim Reid Vehicle Sales & Service in Kintore has announced three additions to its board of directors. Husband and wife team Jim and Gail Reid invited sales manager and son-in-law Phil Buchan, daughter Laura Buchan and their son Liam Reid to become directors.

Phil has been with the company for more than 11 years and has worked his way through the ranks. His wife Laura, qualified midwife, has been working part-time with 'Team Reid' balancing this with bringing up their young family. Liam will continue as an aeronautical engineer with Babcock at the same time as bringing a fresh pair of eyes to the business.



Gary McEwan and George Yule

Honorary professors of entrepreneurship

THE University of Aberdeen has honoured two prominent Aberdeen businessmen in recognition of their contribution to entrepreneurship and the local community.

George Yule, managing partner of BGE Consulting and former vice chairman of Aberdeen Football Club, and Gary McEwan, chief executive of Elevator, have been appointed honorary professors of entrepreneurship.

Their main role will be to support students, as well as help the university create partnerships with local and national businesses with the aim of increasing the institution's entrepreneurial focus.

New chair in post at CRA

CLIMATE Ready Aberdeenshire (CRA) has welcomed the appointment of Sam Long as the new chair of its steering group. Sam has lived in Aberdeenshire for more than 20 years. During this time, he has worked in the oil and gas sector, primarily on environmental-related topics such as decommissioning and decarbonisation and was one of the first environmental advisors in the industry.

Want to raise your profile?

If you have new appointments or promotions in your business, we want to hear about them. Send the details, along with a high resolution image, to bulletin@agcc.co.uk and your business could be in a future issue.

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