



## Odd numbers

From CV19 to our EU exit, how does it all add up?

## Inward investment

Shaping a bright future for the North-east

## Human contact

Getting back to life in 3D

# Got your number



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## Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce

The Hub  
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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



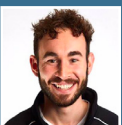
#### Design & production

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



#### Editorial support

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



Lewis Walker

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

Cover image  
Numbers

September's theme  
Transition

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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](mailto:seona.shand@agcc.co.uk)



# Do your numbers add up?

**HOW many versions of forecasts and reforecasts have you seen since March? Finance professionals are used to accuracy, consistency and relatively predictable planning cycles, not the unclear economic conditions and unknown timeframes of a global pandemic.**

For many, the lifelines from government that we lobbied hard for as a network were the only thing keeping businesses afloat in the initial phase - but many are still not out of the woods almost three months on from the lockdown beginning to ease.

For a large number of organisations survival mode is still the order of the day. However, as we navigate our way through each day, week and month, we still need an eye on the horizon. Where are the opportunities coming from? What can we do to improve or change our goods and services for the better? How can we not only survive but revive and, ultimately, thrive?

Planning has and continues to be difficult because none of us have ever done this before. So as business owners and financial planners, we have to remember that it's okay to say we are making it up as we go along because, well, we are. No-one has all of the answers.

While it is important that we are able to pivot and respond to what is happening as well as try to second guess the new norm - remember we had established and successful businesses prior to this happening - we need to be cautious that we don't make knee jerk reactions and effectively throw the baby out with the bath water.

Establish a clear view of your starting position, develop a range of scenarios based on your operational plan and then plot a direction of travel. By determining the best actions and moves, and identifying trigger points, you will have a clearer route forward.

We must also remember it isn't doom and gloom for everyone. Many organisations are doing better than they had ever imagined. As a region we are still investing billions in our future and there are many success stories out there if you choose to look for them.

As a species we love the illusion of being in control and we want to get back to normal life - but when has life ever been 'normal'? We are human beings not human doings and for many there has been a lot of 'doing' over the last few months.

The move to homeworking and adoption of different technologies, though not planned, has largely succeeded but we are now finding that people are tired of the endless virtual meeting experience. We are social creatures and many are craving and asking for increased interaction. As we move back into in-person events and training, the ability to have a conversation with a real person in the flesh and the opportunity to do face-to-face business with one another again will be welcomed by many.

Embedding new ways of working isn't limited to the technical aspects of how we do business however. People have worked together in local communities and supported each other in ways they hadn't before. Never has it been more important for us to continue to work together and forge new partnerships.

Often out of crisis we find ingenuity, innovation and enterprise. These will be key ingredients when it comes to managing your business successfully in the months and years ahead.



**Sue Stephenson,**  
*financial director,*  
Aberdeen & Grampian  
Chamber of Commerce





Sheryl Newman, founder and chief executive of Appetite for Business

## Appetite for success

AN AWARD-WINNING Scottish technology consultancy has been named as one of the UK's 30 highest performing learning providers.

Appetite for Business has been commended by the Learning & Performance Institute (LPI), the UK's leading learning and development organisation, for the second year running, as part of its top 30 eBook.

The Aberdeen-based company was praised for its 'exceptional' performance. In addition, Appetite has been accredited as an LPI gold standard learning provider for the eighth consecutive year and, in the process, recorded perfect scores across all criteria.

## ASET develops 70 new courses during shutdown

THE ability to be responsive, agile and to support the energy sector's evolving needs will be crucial to the national and regional economic recovery as the ASET International Oil and Gas Training Academy ramps up provision following the enforced coronavirus shutdown.

The Aberdeen-based academy is a subsidiary of North East Scotland College and provides a wide range of training for the oil and gas, engineering and construction industries in areas including process, maintenance engineering, electrical, ex hazardous areas, emergency response and marine.

It has reopened with strict social distancing measures and procedures in place to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of students and delegates, staff and visitors. During closure more than 70 new courses were created for delivery covering everything from production trade testing, renewables and the environmental sector to transferrable skills to support energy transition.

Delegates from a variety of companies have returned to training and the latest cohort of more than 50 industry apprentices is being enrolled.

## Construction restarted on wellbeing centre

CONSTRUCTION has restarted on a £3.2m state-of-the-art mental wellbeing centre for North-east charity VSA.

The construction of the new wellbeing centre in Aberdeen had to be delayed because of the CV19 pandemic.

The new 20-bed mental wellbeing residential facility will support adults with a range of mental health illnesses on their journey to recovery.

Kenneth Simpson, VSA's chief executive, said: "This is undoubtedly one of the most challenging periods any of us have had to face but for many people already living with a mental health condition, it is starting to have a profound effect. So, we are delighted that we have been able to start construction again on our new mental wellbeing centre, making this facility a reality and changing the lives of people who need our support for the better."

The charity hopes to have the wellbeing centre open later this year but needs the help of the North-east to reach their remaining target of £500,000.

Jennifer Mitchell, director of external relations for VSA, said: "Now more than ever we need your support. It is a really difficult time for many households and businesses across Aberdeen but if people can step forward to make a donation or fundraise in aid of VSA this would be fantastic and greatly appreciated by the vulnerable people whose lives we help change."

## Core29 will assess progress on your digital journey

CORE29, an Aberdeen-based technology and business improvement consultancy, has announced the launch of a new digital maturity assessment to support organisations with their digital growth and innovation.

Jaye Deighton, director at Core29, said: "We're delighted to launch our new offering to help companies understand where they are on their digital journey and how to maximise technology to improve business performance.

"Many companies don't know where they are on the digital road map and struggle with legacy systems, manual data handling and areas of potential security breaches. Our new easy to follow assessment gives companies a real picture of their digital landscape and provides clear recommendations to achieve their business objectives.

"The first step of the digital maturity assessment involves an independent review of the client's existing organisational technology and digital capability, followed by bespoke recommendations to improve the future direction of their digital strategy. The assessment identifies areas where small and smart investments can be made to have an immediate impact."

# 2020 in numbers

**THE deepest recession since at least the Great Depression of the 1930s offers a seldom seen opportunity for substantial change which could lay the foundations of long-term economic prosperity, according to a leading economist.**

However, Jeremy Lawson, chief economist and head of the Aberdeen Standard Investments Research Institute, cautions that we are currently walking a very narrow recovery path which has many twists and turns.

He points to the level of UK GDP in May being 25% below its February level as evidence of the devastating impact of the coronavirus, but mostly the responses to the pandemic and the attempt to suppress its spread.

"It's not just the lockdowns themselves but there is a lot of evidence that individuals were starting to curtail spending and movement before they were initially asked to do so," he said. "It's therefore very important to take that into account in conditioning your expectations for any recovery because, if people don't feel safe they will restrict what they do, even if they are allowed to do it."

He said that as well as being historically deep, the recession has

also been historically brief with all the contraction taking place in March and April followed by a modest improvement in May which has been picking up through the summer.

The improvement has been driven by the government removing restrictions on different types of activity and individuals becoming less fearful in their own interactions.

However, while a recovery may be underway, the key questions are how fast it will be, how durable it will prove and how much long-term damage will it have done?

"The speed of the recovery is going to be influenced by the speed with which restrictions on activity can sustainably relaxed," he said. "The United States has provided a warning of what happens when you remove restrictions too early when the virus hasn't been properly suppressed. It has shown how quickly things can get out of hand if there is a disconnect between public health guidance and the type of activity that is permitted.

"From the UK's perspective the government has to walk a tightrope between opening the economy enough, and quickly enough, to engender recovery but not so quickly as to significantly increase the risk of a

second infection wave, particularly in autumn and winter.

"Another key factor is the fiscal policy and most of the government intervention to support the economy has been on the basis of 'slowing down the financial clock during the period in which the economic clock was either stopped or slowed down.'"

He explained that if the UK government had not stepped in with the furlough scheme and other lending schemes to businesses which continued to have financial obligations like payroll, rent or interest payments, it would have led to mass insolvencies and a much larger increase in unemployment. It could have resulted in not just a short-term severe economic shock but a depression and financial crisis.

"However, as the economy opens up, it is clear some of the impacts of the crisis will last a long time. The government is aiming to gradually wean the economy and employers off state support but if that is done too quickly there is a risk they will be asked to meet obligations before the economy can sustain them and before it is really clear what the long-term consequences are.

"For example, we know there is



going to be structural damage to the international tourism sector but will the level of tourism in three years be 3%, 10% or 20% below its previous trend?

“We don’t know the answer and it will be heavily dependent on what happens with a vaccine. If a safe efficacious vaccine can be rolled out by early next year then you would be feeling much more optimistic about the potential for normalisation than you would if no vaccine becomes available. So if you unwind fiscal support before knowing the answer to that question, you could precipitate the very long-term damage you are trying to avoid. Again, like on public health, there is a very difficult balancing act between gradually phasing out the support and doing so only at a speed which is appropriate given the uncertainty and the fragility of private sector demand.

“Phase out the furloughs too quickly while private sector labour demand is weak and fragile then we could see a surge in the unemployment rate. If the support for these people who become unemployed is inadequate then that cyclical short-term unemployment can turn into long-term unemployment and that can have a devastating consequences both economically and socially.

“It is a difficult balancing act and it is going to be a long path back to normality. The world which emerges at the other end is likely to be very different and the government has a critical role in determining just how much long-term damage is done and what type of society emerges on the other side.

“If all these health responses and fiscal policies are calibrated properly then you can minimise the long-term damage and position the country and economies for future success. Get them wrong by say, failing to rotate from support payments to genuine stimulus, or not investing enough in infrastructure, education or skills; or doing so in a way that is inconsistent with long-term climate objectives, then the economy will emerge weaker and less sustainable at the other end. That undermines society more generally and can playback into a less stable political environment. The phrase I use is ‘we are at the end of the beginning not the beginning of the end.’”

The North-east faces particular challenges because of the slump in the oil and gas price with the general consensus that the prices are likely to remain subdued for some time. Jeremy said climate change is also driving down the economy’s dependency on fossil fuels, in the

transportation sector in particular, and there will be a need to transition towards a much greater reliance on electrical vehicles.

“Most of the modelling suggests that the transition to a low carbon economy can occur at relatively modest near and long-term aggregate economic cost. However, the North-east is very dependent on existing fossil fuels so from a Scottish Government and a local government perspective, part of the focus has to be on what new comparative advantages can be developed locally so there is a future beyond fossil fuels.

“They should also try to harness the expertise that exists in energy production and innovation and try to develop a comparative advantage in cleaner energy production either in renewables or carbon capture and storage.”

The North-east has to think about less of an oil and gas future and more of a low-carbon energy future.

“The good news is global oil demand is not expected to peak until 2035 or thereabouts so this transition is not going to occur in a year or two. If public policy and local investments are pointed in the right direction there are opportunities because there is a very



educated workforce in the North-east and the latent potential can be harnessed to point to an economy less dependent on fossil fuels.”

Jeremy admits it is hard to feel very optimistic right now but said: “It is within our power to build a more resilient, more sustainable and fairer economy. The UK, and Scotland, had significant structural growth challenges before this crisis - things weren’t perfect - so this is an opportunity to address these. The political opportunity to make really substantial change doesn’t come along very often and another phrase I use is ‘never waste a crisis.’”

He looks back to his native Australia to provide an example.

“Australia in the 1970s and early 1980s had become a ‘basket case’ where economic growth was very weak, unemployment and inflation were high and industry was trapped behind a tariff wall and had little dynamism. After the 1982-83 recession it would have been hard to be hopeful about Australia’s future but what took place was an enormous structural reform programme. Every component of the economy - labour markets, products markets, privatisation, tariffs, the financial sector - underwent some form of reform. The benefits were

not immediately recognised and times were difficult in the late 80s and early 90s recession as well. However what followed was almost 30 years of uninterrupted growth until the current crisis. So the benefits of that reform agenda lingered for decades and played a critical role in Australia experiencing some of the strongest growth in living standards of any advanced economy after 1993. Sometimes it is darkest before the dawn but there is an opportunity and it must be seized. Is it going to be? I don’t know, but there is an opportunity and if they get public policy right then there is possibly a brighter future than what we have been through for the last 10 years.

“As if managing the recovery from the CV19 pandemic and recession were not enough, the UK Government is also tasked with negotiating a trade deal with the EU that minimises disruptions to the local economy while creating opportunities to negotiate new agreements with other countries that opens access to their markets.

“Unfortunately, the UK has set itself an incredibly short deadline to reach this agreement, particularly with the two sides not seeing eye to eye on issues like fishing rights, level playing field provisions and dispute resolution procedures.”

Although the UK Government continues to insist it is prepared to walk away from negotiations if the EU does not make at least some concessions on these issues, Jeremy cautions against a ‘no deal’ exit from the EU.

“The EU is by far the UK’s largest trading partner. The limited trade deal the two sides are currently negotiating will already cause at least some long-term damage to the UK economy, but ‘no deal’ would be even worse. No trade agreement with the US or any other country could make up for the loss of access to European markets. At a time when the UK recovery is already fragile, a breakdown in negotiations would be a blow that most businesses could do without.”

PDC Systems Ltd is now in its 28th successful year having been established by Richard and Patricia Cowling when he was made redundant from the oil industry in the early 1993 recession.

The business has grown into a leading global supplier of Combined Pressurisation Fire and Gas CPF<sup>®</sup> Control systems and in 2008 moved to the new purpose-built premises in Kintore from which it operates.

The EU exit is, Richard says, a fairly



55.01

11.08

minor concern given all the other challenges which the company is now facing.

“Although we work in all sectors, we are predominantly oil and gas and we were just coming out of a five-year downturn which caused major unemployment in the sector.

“We started to climb out of it in September/October last year and hired one new employee and were looking to hire another in February – and then came coronavirus.”

He said his team of seven had managed to continue to work on orders to which they were committed “but like everyone else we don’t know what tomorrow will bring. It is difficult to speculate because none of us know exactly which direction all this mess is going to go.

“Around 60-80% of our business is international including the Middle East, Far East and China with the latter accounting for around 15% and we don’t know what impact the current situation will have on that market.

“The EU exit is a fairly minor concern but it is there in the background. How it is going to work is still a bit of a mystery to all of us. There will be numerous new borders and we

have been promised that everything will be speeded up through customs. If that’s all in place it shouldn’t make any difference to transport but I wouldn’t be confident it will happen. I have seen queues of people at passport control in the past and would worry that same problem might arise again.

“There is a lot of uncertainty about everything at the moment and we should all remember that the Brexit vote was for the UK not individual areas.”

Coronavirus dealt a double blow to Colin Anderson, managing director of Peterhead-based The Crab Company (Scotland) Ltd. The company was established three years ago by Colin, who has a wealth of experience in the fishing industry and Asia is the main destination for the crabs, lobsters and razor clams it exports.

“CV19 has had a major effect because it hit us twice - first in China and then when it arrived in the UK,” he said. “There have been continuing challenges like the resurgence in Hong Kong and the closure of the Beijing fish markets when traces of the coronavirus were found on salmon chopping boards. However we are continuing to do our best to mitigate the circumstances and as we have done our homework, we are probably

in a better position than some in learning how to continue to ship.”

The company, which has one vessel about to go into service and plans for a second if it is successful, ships from the UK and Holland to maximise the Asian market.

Colin expects Britain’s departure from the EU to be mainly advantageous.

“It should lead to better quotas and access for shellfish and fishing in general,” he said. “The negatives are that they might slap tariffs on our goods going into Europe where we will continue to work with our partners and where we hope to expand but at the moment CV19 is our biggest challenge.”





## A message to the world from the Harbour Board

ABERDEEN Harbour Board has made 'a bold statement of intent' by launching its new digital brand.

For more than nine centuries, Aberdeen Harbour has adapted, innovated and evolved to the world around it, most recently investing in the construction of the £350m South Harbour, a transformational step-change in how the port will operate into the future.

Once complete, the expanded Aberdeen Harbour will offer world-class facilities to connect customers to the global marketplace in new ways and secure the city's place as a leader for energy transition and economic diversification.

Michelle Handforth, chief executive, said: "This is more than a new brand. It is a bold statement of intent, showing the world that we are ready and able to deliver on our ambition for Aberdeen to be at the leading edge of energy transition, global maritime trade and international business connectivity.

"We aim to be the greenest port in the UK, playing a pivotal role in what will be a transformational period for our region. Our visual identity plays a significant part in telling this story. Our new brand encapsulates and honours our unique history, whilst representing our modern and innovative view of the world."

## RGU launches business support initiatives

ROBERT Gordon University (RGU) has launched two new online initiatives, 'RGU Knowledge Bites for Business' and a suite of upskilling online short courses, to support businesses as they deal with the economic challenges of CV19.

RGU Knowledge Bites for Business is available to everyone, with a particular focus on providing insights and thoughts to support companies as they start to recover post-lockdown.

The platform shares expertise from the university community, comprising free-to-access short videos, articles, mini-courses and live interactive webinars designed to provide practical support for businesses now, as well as sharing how RGU's services can support in the future.

## Office market performance encouraging

IN THE second quarter of 2020, office take-up in Aberdeen totalled 32,847sq ft, a drop of 69% from the same period in 2019, according to research by real estate advisor CBRE.

The company says this brings the take-up total for the first half of the year to 211,293sq ft, which is encouragingly still 42% up on the first six months of 2019 and a further 5.5% up against the five-year average of 192,630sq ft.

Like Edinburgh and Glasgow, the quarter witnessed a record low number of deals with just eight transactions. Deals included a 16,212sq ft letting for Expro at Kirkhill House in Aberdeen Business Park, Dyce plus 6,079sq ft on the 8th floor at The Silver Fin Building.

Supply in the city currently sits at 2,497,981sq ft, down 11.6% from the first half of 2019.

Derren McRae, managing director of CBRE's Aberdeen office, said: "As we are seeing across various markets, take-up levels for Q2 in Aberdeen have been impacted by CV19 and the resultant effect on oil price. However, whilst there has only been 32,847sq ft of office lettings in the quarter, two out of town office buildings totalling 124,663sq ft were sold to investors/developers.

"Despite what people may expect to be challenging market conditions in the North-east, we are encouraged by the level of current market activity with five live requirements equating to approximately 370,000sq ft of potential future take-up."

## American test for innovative Aberdeen company

AN ABERDEEN-BASED oil well technology company has reached agreement with a US heavy oil producing operator to conduct a pilot test in a well to be equipped with a revolutionary in-the-well oil recovery device called THOR.

The US oil producer, Santa Maria Energy of Santa Barbara, California, will use a new leading-edge product developed by Cavitas Energy, a Valor Energy Group company, which is based in Bridge of Don.

The two companies have agreed to test its innovative Thermal Heavy Oil Recovery (THOR) system in an onshore heavy oil well later this year.

THOR is an in-the-well device powered by electricity which heats passing water as it is injected into a heavy oil reservoir to increase oil production. Traditional methods use steam produced at the surface and pumped into the reservoir with appreciable heat energy losses. However, the injection of steam has been successfully used throughout the world to aid in the production of viscous heavy oil mainly from relatively shallow hydrocarbon bearing reservoirs for over 70 years.

THOR technology is an industry first which promises to significantly improve an already successful technique.

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# The Aberdeen economy will sustain

**Dr Nick Phillips,**  
*principle consultant,*  
SNF Oil & Gas



**WE ARE all too aware of the cumulative impacts of financial recession, oil price wars and now CV19 has had on the prosperity and growth of the oil and gas industry. Those of us who have been around for a while, myself included, have seen the rollercoaster nature of oil and gas and the constant change as a result to combat these changes.**

Once again we are at crossroads, and no less Aberdeen, as the industry seeks to recover and move from the red into the black. Some of the challenges are not new, ie. to reduce cost and optimise performance, now there are added 'opportunities' in the reduction of our carbon footprint, net zero targets and transitioning to an 'energy' industry. All are essential to the future of the industry and also the Aberdeen economy but the latter are vital to our planet. As major stakeholders we all have a responsibility to champion that change which indeed many are doing today, including SNF.

For many years SNF has been at the forefront of developing expertise and technology to optimise oil production through chemical technology and engineering, frequently investing well ahead of the market to develop facilities that compliment improving

supply chain, lowering costs and reducing risk. SNF's global leadership for enhancing oil recovery has come through collaboration with operators supporting them to achieve both productivity and cost targets. As the industry moves forward, we firmly believe that through innovation and a continuation of collaboration we can help our customers as they make the transition to alternative operating models whilst achieving their net zero targets, with SNF technology proven at reducing energy demand and CO2 emissions.

A lesson I learned very early in my career was that collaboration yields far more than just sales, it develops a community of trust. For the oil and gas community to succeed in Aberdeen, or indeed anywhere, historical barriers need to be broken down and a new level of collaboration achieved where there is more sharing of knowledge and resources.

Having lived and worked in Aberdeen for many years I know that this is possible. Since its birth in the mid 70's Aberdeen's oil industry has been at the forefront of innovation and change and I am confident it will lead the charge as we transition to an energy industry over the coming years.

One of the most valuable piece of business advice that I was given many years ago was that no matter how high you get in your career you must never lose sight of the fact that you are not irreplaceable and that you are part of team. If I look at my own career my proudest achievements are watching those that I have hired grow and develop their careers, many now taking on the challenges that balancing the need for oil with a transition to an energy industry brings.

If I could make one thing happen tomorrow that would benefit the North-east Scotland, it would be to improve diversity and balance the gender gap of women in leadership positions. It is as a proven fact that the more gender balance and diversity, the more successful and profitable companies are.

Looking to the future, our industry needs both. Look at your own company, how well are you positioned?



# What investment would you like to see made in the North-east?



“It would be good to see investment in bicycle lanes. The lack of them has become particularly noticeable over the last few months during lockdown. They would enable people to cycle to work and get out and about safely.

“I am a keen cyclist but I would never cycle to work. I live in Portlethen and cycling to our old office would have meant me biking on one of the busiest roads in town. We are working from home just now but once we are back to our new office in Albyn Place, it’s still not easy to cycle safely. We love going out cycling as a family but we have to travel to the old railway line or out of town where it is safer to do so.”

**Donna McWilliams**, *managing director*, Electra Learning Ltd



“I feel the city must invest more in the wellbeing and mental health of residents of all ages. I have seen children as young as three terrified of everything having been at home for months with no contact with other children. I’ve seen teenagers and young people struggling to find their way in life through lockdown and older people missing out on simply communicating with others on a daily basis.

“Before lockdown, authorities were closing down community centres and libraries while centres for young people have been slowly shutting due to austerity. Now more than ever, we need to support our young people so they have safe places to socialise with each other. I would like to see investment in creating safe environments across the city where people of all ages can build confidence in socialising once again.”

**Julie Wood**, *director*, Greenwell Equipment Ltd



“The North-east is home to advanced infrastructure for logistics, an excellent airport with growth potential and a multitude of excellent facilities for meetings, trade, storage and manufacture. Whilst we have several fantastic industries here, international buyers must have direct routes to trade with the UK and Scotland. Aberdeen needs to ensure that it continues to attract international trade opportunities to the region. Focusing on the export of local products and supply chain is essential but we must also explore and support the potential for Aberdeen to become a key UK hub for import. It will be particularly applicable after the end of the Brexit transition period.

“Trade routes between EU and other countries must become established, and with Aberdeen playing a primary role it would alleviate the inevitable pressure and possible backlogs at the current UK ports and airfreight routes. The completion of the Nigg Bay port would factor into this and should be a priority for investment. In addition to trade, the support of the hospitality and tourism industry is vital.”

**Ross Gatt**, *business development manager*, Aisus Offshore Ltd



Professor Gary McEwan

## Elevator collaborates with world leaders

BUSINESS support organisation Elevator has announced a collaborative technology partnership with world-leaders in low carbon energy.

Ricardo, a global engineering, environmental and strategic consultancy, and Productiv, a clean engineering product development specialist, have joined as sector delivery partners to bolster Michelin Scotland Innovation Parc's (MSIP) Sustainable Mobility and Low Carbon Innovation Accelerator, which Elevator was recently appointed to deliver.

The newly formed strategic partnership will involve Ricardo and Productiv providing independent industry insight to participants on the programme, enabling each to tap into in-depth technical know-how and resources. Through a hands-on approach, joint efforts will concentrate on supporting the next generation of entrepreneurs who are focused on developing sustainable mobility, clean transport and low carbon energy solutions.

Professor Gary McEwan, Elevator chief executive officer, said: "The shift towards low-carbon technologies has been accelerated following the sharp decline in oil prices earlier this year, it is clear that the fight for net-zero for future generations is high on Scotland's agenda.

"The combined strengths of this new partnership will bring leading edge technical expertise to boost the development of technologies or services aimed at reducing carbon emissions at a time when a need for change is unequivocal."

## Going the distance for Anchor

HUNDREDS of charity supporters have completed an epic virtual mileage challenge during lockdown, raising more than £45,600 in the process.

More than 650 people took part in Friends of ANCHOR's Going the Distance initiative, which took place throughout June.

The charity launched the appeal in the hope of covering the 2,600 miles which encircle the area - Aberdeen city and shire, Moray, Orkney and Shetland - where the organisation provides support for cancer and haematology patients. By the end of the month, the participants had clocked up more than 95,100 miles - lapping the original target 36 times - equivalent to travelling around the world over three-and-three-quarter times.

Many participants were from the North-east of Scotland but others involved were in Switzerland, Spain, Texas, Dubai, Dublin and Iraq.

## OGTC's first virtual hackathon

THE Oil & Gas Technology Centre (OGTC) has launched its first virtual hackathon event - Code[Less] - in partnership with Microsoft.

It will take place from September 21-24 and will involve 75 participants teaming up to solve one of the challenges set, without using coding, to raise awareness of the demand for automation and innovation in the energy sector and the push towards a net zero economy.

Using information from data partners Offshore Renewable Energy Catapult, the Oil and Gas Authority and Intelligent Plant, 15 teams will spend the first three days using Microsoft Power Apps to solve their allocated challenge. The event is free to enter and open to individuals, who will be placed into a team, or established groups.

Code[Less] welcomes those with a range of capabilities and understanding of hackathons - coding experience is not essential. Participants will be given the opportunity to upskill and receive masterclasses on Microsoft's technology as well as mentoring from the company. They will use this knowledge and their expertise, combined with creative ideas, to showcase the solutions found.



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# Reasons to be cheerful 1, 2, 3

**GOOD physical and cultural infrastructure is vital for communities to prosper and in the North-east there are a host of major projects underway which will help the reboot the beleaguered economy as it emerges from CV19.**

The new Aberdeen bypass has proved transformative by reducing journey times and congestion and is expected to generate an extra £6bn in economic benefits and create around 14,000 jobs over the next 30 years. However, major rail and marine infrastructure projects are also taking place.

Scotrail is starting work this year on an £8m redevelopment of Aberdeen station which will improve facilities for customers and staff. Last year work to replace the glass roof at the station was completed by Network Rail Scotland and the refurbishment project will be carried out in stages and is expected to take around a year.

The station's retail facilities will be improved, the taxi rank area will be upgraded and cycle parking will be enhanced, the visibility of the ticket office will be improved and the first class lounge will be relocated to create additional high value retail areas. In addition, the entrance will be improved as will the connectivity with Union Square and Aberdeen city centre; and staff accommodation will be redeveloped with additional operational staff areas created to allow for future growth.

The redevelopment is taking place as more services, seats and faster journeys are gradually being delivered. Kirsty Devlin, ScotRail head of projects, said: "The investment we are making in the North-east - in the redevelopment of Aberdeen station, the Aberdeen to Inverness improvement programme and in Inter7City trains connecting Scotland's seven cities - means it's an exciting time for this part of the country."

Bill Reeve, Transport Scotland's director of rail, said: "We know the more we make rail an attractive, safe and secure transport choice, the more people will consider using the train as an alternative to the car. I look forward to seeing further progress as soon as conditions allow."

Not too far away Britain's oldest business, Aberdeen Harbour, is preparing for the future.

The new £350m South Harbour will significantly increase opportunities for existing customers and open the door to new markets.

Michelle Handforth, chief executive officer of Aberdeen Harbour Board, said: "South Harbour is the largest project of its kind in UK Trust Port history and it is key to securing the future economic prosperity of the North-east and the rest of Scotland.

"On completion, the expanded Aberdeen Harbour will offer unrivalled and world-class facilities to connect

customers to the global marketplace in new ways and ultimately secure the city's place as a leader for energy transition and economic diversification.

"Aberdeen Harbour is a central key element in the region's ambitions to become a recognised world-leading energy transition hub. Our aim is to deliver green port infrastructure at scale, acting as an enabler to other industries, including the oil and gas and maritime industries in achieving their net-zero targets. We also want to become a national test site for the development and supply of low carbon fuel solutions, including electrification and hydrogen, whilst supporting the circular economy in action.

"Adding to this, the complementary development of the Energy Transition Zone adjacent to our South Harbour development and our own green port initiatives, and our ambition to become one of the greenest ports in the UK, becomes all the more attainable. We're one of only two Eco Ports in Scotland but we want to take this further and have our hearts and minds set on becoming a centre for ideas, putting Aberdeen firmly on the map as the home of energy transition."

Aberdeen City Council was extremely busy during the CV19 lockdown to ensure the city is in the best possible shape to emerge from the lockdown but it has not taken its eye off the infrastructure needs.





Councillor Marie Boulton, Aberdeen City Council's Capital Programme convener, said: "These will play a huge role in transforming our city centre and they have taken on additional significance as pivotal in our recovery from the pandemic.

"We have already seen the tremendous success enjoyed by Aberdeen Art Gallery following its multi-million redevelopment and, had it not been for the impact of CV19, the gallery would have been on course for record annual numbers. Preparations are underway for its safe re-opening and we look forward to welcoming back the much-loved BP Portrait Award as well as being the only Scottish host of the prestigious British Art Show in 2021.

"The £25.7m Union Terrace Gardens project is currently being taken forward as part of the City Centre Masterplan and will greatly improve access, amenity and activity when completed. Key project elements include elevated walkways, new pavilions, event space, play facilities, and extensive planting to increase biodiversity within the much-loved park which will have a key role in attracting visitors into the city centre.

"The £3.8m restoration of the 16th century Provost Skene's House is another major masterplan project that will form a major attraction in the city centre once complete. We anticipate huge local interest, and from further afield, in the Hall for Heroes which will

celebrate the great and the good of Aberdeen's history and will include exhibits on world-famous Aberdonians such as Denis Law and Annie Lennox.

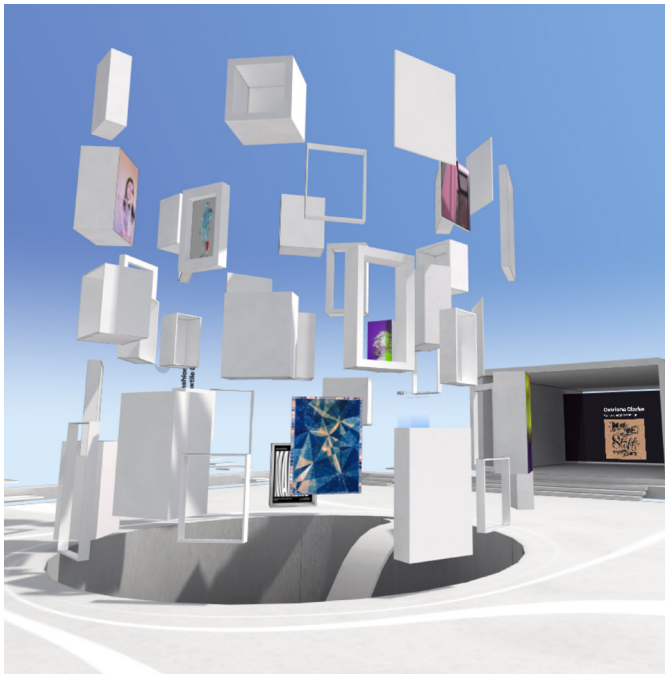
"The City Centre Masterplan also includes the complete transformation of Queen Street in the city centre's east end in an ambitious £150m redevelopment project which will see over 300 homes, public service office space, retail offerings, high quality public space and cultural assets provided over the space of six years. This hugely important revitalisation of the area is aimed at making the area an attractive place to live while increasing the population and vibrancy of the city centre. Again, initial works were underway until the pandemic and, as with all the other projects, have now resumed under Scottish Government guidance on physical distancing

"Our ambition for all of these projects is for them to act as catalysts for the regeneration of Aberdeen city centre as a place to live, do business, relax and enjoy. We think local people and tourists alike will be impressed with what they see and also with the resilience the city has shown in meeting the challenges of an economic downturn and global pandemic head on."

Such is the importance of infrastructure projects that international law firm Pinsent Masons has launched a resource to help the sector better deliver global mega infrastructure projects through joint ventures (JVs).

Pinsent Masons partner, Vincent Connor, said: "The stability of the world's economy relies on enhanced infrastructure which is increasingly being delivered by JVs. However, JVs in the infrastructure sector are more often than not formed due to the capacity to deliver projects, rather than the best capability to do so. The capability of businesses to deliver these projects is increasingly under pressure due to their increased scale, complexity and the integration of technology. Often, there is less consideration of the inherent conflicts within JVs or the opportunities arising from getting the JV better structured, more efficiently engaged and better incentivised.

"At a time when global mega infrastructure projects are consistently costing more and taking longer to deliver than initially approved, this first-of-its-kind resource outlines best practice for JVs. It gives parties the tools to develop successful structures, plan their tax and shareholder arrangements, consider regulatory issues across jurisdictions such as competition law and financial crime, build partnerships for success through leadership and cultural considerations, and to plan sensibly for the worst case by addressing termination provisions and how best to handle disputes between JV partners."



## Gray's degree show goes virtual

IN RESPONSE to the CV19 pandemic, Design and Code partnered with Robert Gordon University, Gray's School of Art and Look Again to create an entirely virtual environment for the 2020 Degree Show.

The show provided an innovative and unique platform for this year's Gray's School of Art graduates to showcase their honours year work to a global audience, attracting visitors from as far as Australia and the United States. The virtual event, which launched on the attracted more than 4,000 visitors on opening night.

The immersive environment featured 150+ 3D spaces including communal areas and a club hosting a selection of Aberdeen based DJs. Each graduate was given the opportunity to curate their own individual custom-built space using tutorials and editing software provided by Design and Code.

Colin Leonard, Design and Code director, said: "Allowing graduates the freedom and flexibility when curating their spaces was our main focus. It was important to give them an opportunity to spend time in their virtual space and really make it their own."

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## Sellafield contract for Peterson

INTERNATIONAL energy logistics provider Peterson has been awarded a major contract from Sellafield Limited to support operations in West Cumbria.

Under the four-year contract Peterson will continue as the operator of the Control Tower and Security and Distribution Centre (S&DC) at Lillyhall on behalf of Sellafield Limited. The scope of work includes managing inbound logistics, warehousing and secure distribution of goods.

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## Major investment in ROVOP

ROVOP, the UK's leading independent provider of cutting-edge subsea remotely operated vehicles (ROVs), has announced a multi-million-pound investment by its shareholders Blue Water Energy, the energy investment firm, and BGF.

Aberdeen-based ROVOP, which has bases in Houston, Dubai, the Netherlands and Singapore, is known for being one of the truly international, dedicated providers of underwater vehicles with a market-leading fleet that uses the latest technologies.

The investment secures ROVOP's long-term future and ensures the company can continue to provide the services it is renowned for.

Alongside the investment, ROVOP is also announcing the appointment of a new senior management team. David Lamont is stepping down as chief executive officer and will be replaced by Neil Potter who has extensive experience in the oil and gas industry and has spent 18 years of his career at board level, including successful senior roles at Dominion Gas and TWMA.

Maurice McBride will join ROVOP as non-executive chairman and brings over 40 years' experience in the oil and gas industry to ROVOP's board. Maurice has spent more than 23 years in non-executive director roles.

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## Help for farmers advances

A RESEARCH project at Robert Gordon University (RGU) which explores the mental wellbeing of Scotland's farmers is moving forward to develop and test a suitable intervention, hand-in-hand with farmers, to support their mental health and wellbeing now and in the future.

A team of researchers from RGU's School of Health Sciences, NHS Grampian Public Health, NFU Scotland and a local farmer, have been working with the farming community to explore their experiences of mental wellbeing and to co-design an intervention aimed at enhancing the wellbeing of the farming population.

Professor Kay Cooper, one of the team's leaders, said: "We know that farmers and farming communities are facing significant uncertainty and improving the mental health and wellbeing of farmers and their families is crucial. "We have been working with the North-east of Scotland farming community over the past two years to explore issues surrounding mental health and wellbeing in the farming community. This has resulted in some suggestions for services/interventions to support farmers and the farming community with mental health and wellbeing.

Before we develop these further and test them out locally, we are interested in finding out what farmers and the farming community think of them. We will use the results of this survey to further develop and then test out a suitable intervention, with input from members of the farming community throughout."

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Fiona Rae, depute chief executive of CFINE, Neil Carr and Gary Bruce, directors, AMS Global Group

## AMS Global Group delivers virus disinfection

MARINE and safety specialist AMS Global Group has enabled Aberdeen charities to continue delivering essential services to the local community throughout the lockdown period by offering its state-of-the art disinfection service for free.

AMS has delivered a full weekly disinfection treatment using its AM71 service for CFINE, one of the North-east's most important social enterprises. The AMS disinfection service has ensured CFINE has been able to safely maintain the delivery of emergency food and other essential items, which has seen unprecedented demand since the lock down was put in place.

Neil Carr, director of AMS Global Group said: "When the pandemic hit it became apparent to us that our disinfection systems would be critical to the operations of key charities and other organisations in the city and we wanted to help."

Fiona Rae, deputy chief executive of CFINE said: "AMS has provided an invaluable service throughout CV19 ensuring our premises and vehicles have been disinfected on a weekly basis. All this work has been carried out free of charge and we are hugely grateful to the team at AMS for their support during this difficult time."

## Help train a generation of lifesavers

GRAMPIAN Training Services is appealing for businesses to support free first-aid training in primary schools in Moray and also have their staff trained free.

GTS is looking for companies to help train a generation of life savers. The company says Aberdeen and the Grampian area is very diverse including the city and a rural setting. This means that the emergency services, despite their best efforts, are not readily available in every community and the longer the delay until help is given, the greater the risk.

Funds have always been tight, with the PTA's having to balance first-aid training against playground improvements, library resources etc. The CV19 pandemic has made this worse as the PTA's have not been able to hold the usual fundraising activities such as summer fairs.

To relieve pressure GTS has launched an appeal for businesses to support the first-aid training in these primary schools while also receiving free statutory first-aid training for their staff. To help contact enquiries@grampiantrainingservices.co.uk

# A word of advice



**Zoe Ogilvie,**  
director,  
BIG Partnership

### Area of expertise:

PR and marketing.

### What should people know:

Now is not the time to cut back on PR and marketing. Marketing must be seen as fundamental to business success, not simply as a 'nice to have'. It's about increasing sales and awareness, as well as changing behaviours and protecting reputation. With business purpose shifting to social purpose in the CV19 world, making that link between purpose and employee engagement or purpose and reputation is critical.

### What's the biggest mistake companies make?

Not aligning the marketing strategy to the business strategy. Without crystal clear objectives it's difficult, if not impossible, to measure results. Also, not recognising all the specialist skills and disciplines that make up the marketing mix. Whether it's PR, stakeholder engagement, social media, digital marketing, design or video, it's highly unlikely that an in-house marketing person or small team will possess all these.

### What's your top tip?

Don't measure outputs, measure outcomes. Only then can a real return on investment in marketing be measured in pounds and pence.

Would you like to see your branding here? Contact [kathryn.collie@agcc.co.uk](mailto:kathryn.collie@agcc.co.uk) to find out about advertising opportunities with the Business Bulletin





# HMRC preferential creditor status restored

**Dr Gordon MacClure,**  
*restructuring partner,*  
Johnston Carmichael



**HMRC'S secondary preferential creditor status was restored on July 22 2020 when the Finance Act 2020 received Royal Assent. This makes HMRC, once again, a priority creditor to pay when a company goes into administration or liquidation after December 1 2020.**

As a secondary preferential creditor, the priority of payment will now apply to certain taxes that HMRC collects, in this case VAT and PAYE and NIC. HMRC will remain an unsecured creditor for other taxes such as corporation taxes.

It was originally intended for HMRC's preferential status to be restored from April 6 2020, but this was delayed as part of the UK Government's early CV19 business support measures to help businesses through the challenging lockdown period.

Another of the support measures introduced was the VAT Deferral Scheme which was designed to assist businesses with their cash flow during the CV19 crisis by allowing them to defer until March 31 2021 the payment of VAT which would have normally become payable between March 20 and June 30 2020. In addition, HMRC was also encouraging businesses to make use of Time to

Pay arrangements for amounts due, or about to become due, for PAYE/ NIC and corporation tax and, as a consequence, many companies will now be carrying a significantly higher level of debt due to HMRC than may have been the case five months ago.

It has however been confirmed that HMRC will become a secondary preferential creditor from December 1 2020 and, therefore, all amounts due to HMRC for VAT and PAYE/ NIC at that date will, on an insolvency, will be a priority for a company to pay, before any floating charge holder, which is normally the bank, or unsecured creditors. As a result, there now appears to be a danger that this combination of events could trigger some of the potential insolvencies which VAT Deferral Scheme and other support measures were designed to avoid.

It is possible that HMRC will in the future take a more aggressive approach to pursuing arrears because their preferential status may provide them with a greater prospect of recovery but, politically, that appears unlikely at least in the short term. However, that may not be the case for the banks and other lenders who hold a floating charge as they will see the value of their floating charge security significantly eroded and that

will almost certainly impact on their willingness to lend, or continue to lend, to companies at a time when many businesses have a greater need for cash than ever before.

Given all of this, it's easy to see how some business owners may feel the best option is to put the company into liquidation or administration before HMRC's preferential status comes into effect on December 1 2020 to reduce the likelihood of lenders looking to directors personal guarantees to recover their lending to the company.

If you are one of those businesses, you will want to ensure that you only take such action as a last resort and after all other options have been considered. There are steps you can take now to get some breathing space, a clear view of your position and hopefully start feeling a little lighter. It all comes down to communication and planning and the earlier you act, the better.



Allan Liddle, development officer Osprey Housing Group and John Main, managing director Morlich Homes

## Osprey gives Moray a housing boost

WORK begins soon on 10 new Osprey Housing Moray affordable homes in the heart of Elgin.

The Osprey Alba Place development, due for completion in summer 2021, comprises four one-bed cottage apartments and six three-bed villas in a terrace design emulating nearby former mill workers' homes.

The project is the first in the town for Osprey since completion of the Reiket Lane development in 2009 when the social landlord was known as the Moray Housing Partnership. The main contractor for Alba Place is Morlich Homes and this marks the fourth collaboration since Osprey launched its current Moray development programme in 2017.

Osprey Housing Group chief executive Glenn Adcock said: "Alba Place is a milestone development for us as it's not only our first project in Elgin for more than 10 years, but all these properties have been designated as affordable rented housing. They will therefore remain in Osprey's exclusive ownership and will form an important part of our portfolio of affordable rented homes."

The new homes are being built on the site of the original Elgin workhouse, of which all that remains is a wall that formed the entrance to the workhouse grounds.

## A signal of the times

CORPORATE film company, signal2noise, has refreshed of its brand identity including a name change to signal.

The Aberdeen-based company has been producing award winning films and animations for a decade. This change had been in the pipeline for some time but was completed during the CV19 lockdown.

Senior producer Jamie Baikie said: "2020 has been challenging for everyone, especially our clients. For us, the lockdown has been a time to re-evaluate what we do and bring clarity to our service. Our work is clear, clever and compelling. We wanted our new visual identity to reflect that."

## Cash is no longer king

COVID19 is changing the way SMEs take payments, with the use of cash payments having halved and online card payments rising by a quarter during the pandemic, according to the latest independent research from Close Brothers Asset Finance.

"The combined effect of lockdown restricting people's movement and shops having shut their doors has necessitated a change in behaviour," said Neil Davies, chief executive office Close Brothers Asset Finance and Leasing.

"Even with the relaxation of lockdown measures it's unlikely we'll see a return to levels of cash usage we saw pre-lockdown; we anticipate the use of online payments will continue to surge as people rely more on online transactions for their goods and shopping."

Cash usage has dropped by 45% across all industries surveyed, with traditional cash-handling sectors, retail (52%) and services (44%), showing strong falls.

Using less cash holds little fear for business owners, with only a combined total of 10% saying it will make them feel either 'unsafe' or 'very unsafe'. The two primary challenges SMEs think they will face by using less cash in their business are online security and technology failure.

## Gold award for Aberdeen City Council

ABERDEEN City Council has been awarded a Gold Award in the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS). The scheme encompasses bronze, silver and gold awards for employer organisations which pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to defence and the armed forces community and align their values with the Armed Forces Covenant.

The council becomes one of only 127 employers across the United Kingdom to receive the Gold Award, having previously achieved a Silver Award in 2017.

## North Sea's first fully remote platform inspection

FUGRO has delivered the first fully remote inspection of an oil and gas platform in UK waters, 250km east of Scotland, using a remotely operated vehicle (ROV) and Fugro's state-of-the-art remote operations centre (ROC) in Aberdeen.

In a first for the UK sector, the platform's entire jacket structure was inspected remotely.

Fugro originally intended to trial the remote inspection provision during the campaign. However, when only one offshore inspection engineer was able to mobilise to the platform due to CV19, inspection engineers based at Fugro's ROC in Aberdeen stepped in and delivered the whole project remotely to stay on schedule.





## Mooring specialist anchors seven figure contract

A GLOBAL marine services and mooring specialist has secured a seven-figure contract with an international drilling contractor in the Caribbean.

Interocean Marine Services Limited, a Rigmar Group company, was awarded an integrated contract for the design, procurement and installation of two tri-catenary mooring systems.

The work is already well underway. The design identified the mooring equipment, which was purchased on behalf of the client and shipped to the work site, and a team of four marine and engineering personnel from Interocean's Aberdeen headquarters are overseeing the installation and commissioning of the mooring systems in a challenging offshore environment.

Interocean is currently working across the globe with projects underway in the UK sector, the Mediterranean and Caspian Seas, the Middle East and Asia-Pacific regions. Rigmar Group chief executive, Keith Nelson said: "Despite these difficult times our personnel are working hard with both customers and suppliers to meet tight deadlines in a very competitive market."

## Move to contactless payments

AS MORE businesses across Scotland take steps on the road to recovery, research from newly launched 'Tyl' has demonstrated the scale of the acceleration towards contactless payments.

More than two thirds, (69%) of businesses registering for the Royal Bank of Scotland's Tyl payment service since the start of UK lockdown are adopting card payments for the first time. This compares to 53% for the rest of the UK.

The shifting preference for payment options which minimises human contact and ensures social distancing looks set to continue as a fundamental shift in the way we do business and make payments in the wake of coronavirus. This is driven both by consumers, mindful of their own exposure to the virus, and by businesses keen to meet these needs and adopt the new staff and colleague safety precautions required as part of government guidelines for re-opening.

## Major SDI contract for Elevator

ELEVATOR, one of Scotland's leading business support organisations, has won a significant contract from Scottish Development International (SDI), the international arm of the Scottish Government and Scottish Enterprise.

Elevator will support SDI with its International e-Trade Framework, delivering worldwide training and one-to-one advice to businesses across Scotland which aspire to trade internationally. The contract is for two years with a possible extension for a further two years.

In addition, the support organisation will run networking events to coordinate international business support initiatives aimed at increasing international growth knowledge and business-to-business networking opportunities.

Professor Gary McEwan, Elevator chief executive officer, said: "This contract is of great strategic importance to us. It comes at an opportune time and signifies our strong commitment to support businesses as they look to identify new opportunities in this fast-growing sector."

## Arrow acquires Altinet

ARROW Business Communications Limited has acquired IT security and storage service provider Altinet Ltd.

Altinet is based in Leeds and works with a wide range of global vendors to provide market leading solutions.

Following the recent investment by MML Capital Partners, Arrow is rapidly evolving its IT offering and the fast growing Altinet business provided an ideal first acquisition in the next phase of Arrow's growth. All the directors and employees of Altinet have remained and will work within the Arrow group.

## NASA technology for Skene House

SKENE House Serviced Apartments has become the first in its sector to trial an innovative system which uses technology developed for NASA to achieve the highest levels of hygiene and cleanliness.

It is trialling the Room to Breathe cleaning process from Glasgow-based Insite Group as an additional level of cleanliness to maximise guest reassurance. The multi-step system is believed to be the only one of its kind and uses technology originally developed by NASA to purify air and apply antimicrobial coatings to surfaces.

Charles Skene of Skene House Serviced Apartments said: "As lockdown eases, guests and clients are looking for as much safety and certainty as possible to increase their travel confidence and we feel that the partnership of Room to Breathe's innovative system and Andersen Caledonia's testing protocol provides that."



Hannah Miley and Toni Shaw

## Swimmers take the plunge at ASV

AS ORGANISED sport starts to return, Aberdeen Sports Village (ASV) is working with some of Scotland's top swimmers and divers to help them plunge back into their training.

The world class sporting facility has been closed since March 20 however performance swimmers, divers and their coaches were given access to the Aquatics Centre pools in August as part of the gradual easing of restrictions. ASV was the first in the UK to allow divers back into the pool.

The move follows lengthy discussions with Scottish Swimming, which is keen to get athletes back in the water for their rigorous training plans, as they look ahead to next year's Tokyo Olympics and other performance competitions.

ASV is one of the first facilities in the UK to begin supporting competitive athletes again, and measures are being taken to ensure that the venue is in line with the current safety guidelines from the Scottish Government and Scottish Swimming.

ASV chief executive Duncan Sinclair, said this was the latest step in a phased re-opening plan: "ASV is used by a number of British and Scottish performance swimmers and divers so this is a further opportunity for us to test our CV19 procedures safely and cautiously.

"Behind the scenes we have been working on a detailed plan to make sure we have effective, practical measures in place. The Scottish Government has moved into phase three of its recovery plan and we are hoping that we will be permitted to open our facilities more widely in the weeks to come."

## Electra enters the charts

IT CHANGE management and learning specialist Electra is one of the top 30 highest-performing learning providers of 2020 according to the UK's Learning & Performing Institute (LPI).

Using benchmark data from its global accreditation programme, the LPI said the 30 businesses highlighted in its latest report achieved its highest overall KPI scores over the past 12 months.

Electra, which is based in Aberdeen, Scotland and Calgary, Canada, provides an end-to-end IT change service, from consultancy and training to eLearning development and learning management system hosting.

## Caribbean contract for Interocean

GLOBAL marine services and mooring specialist Interocean Marine Services Limited, a Rigmar Group company, has secured a seven-figure contract with an international drilling contractor in the Caribbean.

The company was awarded an integrated contract for the design, procurement and installation of two tri-catenary mooring systems.

The design identified the mooring equipment, which was purchased on behalf of the client and shipped to the work site. A team of four marine and engineering personnel from Interocean's Aberdeen headquarters are overseeing the installation and commissioning of the mooring systems in a challenging offshore environment.

## Mooring specialist anchors seven figure contract

THE University of Aberdeen has risen four places to be ranked 11th in the UK for overall student satisfaction in this year's National Student Survey (NSS).

The NSS is carried out by the Office for Students (OfS) on behalf of the UK funding bodies and is the largest student feedback survey in the world. As well as capturing student views on the overall quality of their undergraduate degree, the survey gathers students' responses to a series of questions relating to academic support, learning resources, teaching, organisation and management, and assessment.

Survey results show that University of Aberdeen students have ranked the university across a number of aspects of the NSS. These include being 11th in the UK for overall satisfaction, a rise of four places; 9th in the UK, a rise of 10 places, for 'staff are good at explaining things'; 4th in the UK for 'I have been able to access course-specific resources - e.g. equipment, facilities, software, collections - when I needed to'; and 6th in the UK for 'I have had the right opportunities to work with other students as part of my course.'





# The return of 3D

**WHILE the virtual world has proved a godsend during the coronavirus crisis, for many it doesn't come close to matching the experience of face to face meetings for doing business. On November 18 the opportunity to welcome back the 3D world will come at one of the first major events of its kind since lockdown - The Ultimate Business Show.**

The show is now well established in the North-east business calendar and draws together a diverse range of local and national brands from all sectors including tourism, food and drink, retail and professional services.

"The Ultimate Business Show creates the perfect platform for our members and local businesses to source products and services locally and help keep our regional economy buoyant," said Seona Shand, membership and events director of Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce.

"This year has been tougher than ever and it was clear from the feedback from a webinar we held that, particularly for small and medium-sized businesses, there is a real need for people to meet face-to-face in order to do business because the virtual world just isn't the same.

"It doesn't operate the same, it doesn't feel the same, you can't capture people's body language and enthusiasm and, of course, there can be technical challenges. At The Ultimate Business Show people will have the chance to safely meet and, while they may not be able to shake hands as they would normally do, they will be able to see the person in front of them smile, be able to read their eagerness to do business and have a real conversation which is very much in the 3D and not the 2D world."

“

**"At Converged, we say it all starts with a connection, with that first connection preferably being face-to-face. From there we can chat about other connections - Internet and telephone - and the need for good cyber defences."**

**Neil Christie,**  
managing director,  
Converged Communication  
Solutions

The show, which has come to be known affectionately as TUBS since it was launched in 2016, is free to attend and open to members and non-members.

However, visitors will have to register and may have to book a time slot, depending on the government guidelines in place at the time.

"That may work to the benefit of stand-holders," said Seona. "The indications are that it is going to be as popular as ever and if we do have to allocate time slots it will enable them to talk to a large number of people arriving evenly throughout the day and will avoid missing out on anyone as a result of an influx around lunchtime, for example.

"As usual we will have up to six 'TUBS Talks' during the day when visitors can hear from inspirational speakers about their latest thinking on different ways to support the growth and development of businesses.

"The Chamber team will also be on hand to provide support and discuss any challenges such as the direction of their business or internationalisation."

She also offered reassurance about safety measures being taken.

# THE ULTIMATE BUSINESS SHOW 2020

NOVEMBER 18, P&J LIVE

“We have been working really closely with P&J Live where they are in the forefront with policies, procedures and activities which will go beyond the minimum requirements. We are likely to be one of the first indoor exhibitions in North-east Scotland because we understand better than most other organisations what businesses need, particularly small and medium sized.

“The government guidelines which are in place in November will be used as a base and we will go well beyond the minimum requirements.”

Neil Christie, managing director of Converged Communication Solutions, is just one of those keen to return to the 3D world of business.

“Over the past few months, technology has been hugely important in our lives. It has kept us working at our kitchen tables, coffee tables or whatever impromptu desk we’ve created and ensured we’ve stayed connected with family and friends,” he said.

“As much as Zoom calls, Teams meetings and Google Houseparty have allowed us to conduct meetings or speak to friends from afar, it’s not the same as seeing someone in person. Everyone has also realised the

importance of having robust Internet connections.

“At Converged, we say it all starts with a connection, with that first connection preferably being face-to-face. From there we can chat about

“

**“We are looking forward to and have enjoyed welcoming guests back to the hotel and delivering the traditional hospitality experience we’re known for in a way that’s still possible. I believe it is now more important than ever that hotels provide exceptional customer service, providing a sincere personal touch through service, rather than handshakes.”**

**Peter Walker,**  
managing director,  
Maryculter House

other connections – Internet and telephone – and the need for good cyber defences.

“As we move into this new normal and tentatively get together, safely distanced, TUBS 2020 will be an excellent opportunity for us all to connect, catch up and remember how good it is to chat in person.”

Peter Walker, managing director of Maryculter House, shares that opinion.

“We are looking forward to and have enjoyed welcoming guests back to the hotel and delivering the traditional hospitality experience we’re known for in a way that’s still possible. I believe it is now more important than ever that hotels provide exceptional customer service, providing a sincere personal touch through service, rather than handshakes,” he said.

“Over the past few months, virtual meeting software has proved itself to be crucial, something we will look to use more frequently in the future to save travel time. However, technology has its place, and it is inspirational to see the way it has allowed businesses to transform their service, yet in my opinion, you cannot beat traditional networking or face-to-face interactions. With that in mind, Maryculter House has been working





hard behind the scenes to stay true to its traditional hospitable roots and implementing added health and safety measures to put the customer's mind at ease and keep our staff safe."

Emma Bellu, fundraising manager at Aberdeen Cyrenians, said: "We're really looking forward to chatting to people face-to-face again and sharing some of the incredible stories we have from our work during lockdown. There's been a huge amount of change so it will be interesting to talk about everyone's experiences in 2020.

"The pandemic has given us a unique opportunity to 'Build Back Better' and transform community spirit into a lasting change for good. With many now returning to the office, we're keen to hear how teams are coming back together after furlough or remote working. We'll be sharing opportunities for partnerships and offering our expertise in crisis prevention, mental health and wellbeing support; and money and housing advice for staff impacted financially.

"We want to help support the amazing business community who have supported us, share our experience in building strong and resilient workforces during this unprecedented time, and engage

teams with our mission to give everyone a safe place to call home." Clark Integrated Technologies has supported scores of business during the pandemic, enabling them to use digital solutions to adapt to the challenges presented, and as such recognises the value of maintaining good connections.

It has worked with organisations to set up systems enabling staff to work from home, facilitating functions like the easy sharing and collaboration on documents and projects, as well as video conferencing and team meetings and aiding general communication among staff working from different locations.

"We've supported numerous businesses to respond to new needs, introducing new ways of working that, pre-coronavirus, simply weren't on their spectrum," said managing director Austen Clark.

"It shows what can be achieved with a can-do attitude, just as the organisers of The Ultimate Business Show are doing in planning their upcoming show.

"With so many events, shows and gatherings having been cancelled in the wake of CV19, it's great that this one will be going ahead."

The past six months have been a time of turmoil and disruption so opportunities which enable the region's business sector to come together and link up are a significant step in the right direction.

Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce's drive to hold The Ultimate Business Show provides a signal of hope and determination of moving forward with fresh optimism.

That's the view of Derek Mair, partner at Aberdeen chartered accountants and business advisers Hall Morrice.

"We've always enjoyed being a part of The Ultimate Business Show and that will very much be the case again this year, a year which has been dominated by extraordinary challenges for all businesses," he said.

"We're pleased that we will have this opportunity to connect with organisations again, restoring a semblance of normal life, or at least the new normal life."

## Subsea Expo set for February

EUROPE'S largest underwater engineering event, Subsea Expo, is shaping up to what could be the sector's first, large scale exhibition and conference following lockdown where delegates will be able to meet and network face to face. More than a third of the exhibition floor space has already been booked for Subsea UK's annual three-day exhibition, conference and awards dinner.

Approaching its 16th year, the show will be held for a second time at Aberdeen's P&J Live venue from February 23. This year's event attracted 185 exhibitors and more than 6,600 delegates.

The 2021 event will focus on the resilience being demonstrated by organisations as they emerge from the double impact of coronavirus and the low oil price and accelerate their energy transition strategies by embracing a green recovery to support a lower carbon future.

Neil Gordon, chief executive of Subsea UK, said: "The economic repercussions of the global pandemic have pushed companies to reevaluate priorities and pivot their capabilities to safeguard their future. As well as examining their own sustainability credentials to support the race to net-zero, firms are redirecting their technologies and expertise towards the growing renewables market and the wider Blue Economy.

"As the offshore energy industry extends its reach into offshore wind, hydrogen and the development of carbon capture, utilisation and storage, sharing knowledge and identifying opportunities will be key to future success. Subsea Expo 2021 offers a platform for companies to find out about opportunities in new and emerging markets, showcase their capabilities to existing and potential customers and network with their peers."

## New OGUK forum for SME's

A NEW forum dedicated to helping small and medium-sized businesses navigate the downturn has been launched by OGUK as it continues to help the sector stimulate a recovery.

The representative body's continuous improvement team has launched the forum amid concern that a growing number of smaller companies may not survive the current economic pressures and the fallout from the CV19 pandemic.

As part of industry's Efficiency Task Force, which aims to promote a positive and progressive business culture, the SME forum will give participants access to OGUK's existing business support guidance and initiatives, as well as an opportunity to shape the agenda.

The forum will provide an opportunity to identify and address issues in the SME community, and offer the chance for participants to collectively develop solutions which work for them and support individual needs.



Mark Rushton, managing director of STC Global, and Insiso managing director Arrash Nekomam

## CV19 monitoring app

TWO Aberdeen-based firms have joined forces to launch a mobile screening app for businesses to monitor employees for any CV19 symptoms and respond swiftly to any concerns.

The Tracepass app has been developed by software firm Insiso in partnership with problem-solving company, STC Global, drawing on their respective expertise in the fields of digital technology and training and safety. The firms have jointly invested an initial £50,000 creating the screening platform and bringing it to market, while pledging further investment in continued research and development.

Easily accessible on mobile devices, the app requires users to answer a series of straightforward multiple-choice questions – which can be customised by individual businesses – to determine whether they are displaying any of the common symptoms of the CV19 virus on a daily basis. The data is then fed back to a central response team who will identify any trends, analyse and act quickly where needed to protect the workforce and contain the spread of infection.

## BCC responds to ONS GDP figures

AFTER the publication by the Office of National Statistics of the GDP figures for Q2 2020, the British Chamber of Commerce's head of economics Suren Thiru said: "The UK suffered an historic contraction in economic activity in the second quarter as the coronavirus closed large parts of the economy. The dominant services sector suffered particularly badly in the quarter, with consumer-focused firms hit hardest by the pandemic.

"With restrictions steadily easing, the second quarter is likely to prove to be the low point for the UK economy. However, the prospect of a swift 'V-shaped' recovery remains remote as the recent gains in output may fade over the coming months as the economic damage caused by the pandemic increasingly weighs on activity, particularly as the government support measures wind down.

"Against this backdrop, bold action is needed to immediately inject confidence back into the UK economy."



# What will travel look like in the future?

Have your say on the next Regional Transport Strategy

**On Wednesday, August 5 2020, Nestrans launched its next Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) for a 10-week period of consultation. Nestrans 2040 is a long-term strategy for the areas of Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire which will shape transport policies and actions for the next 20 years.**

The new strategy takes a different approach to that of its predecessors, with a focus on supporting behaviour change to 'lock in the benefits' of the infrastructure and investment delivered by the previous strategy, including the AWPR and rail enhancements.

This draft strategy has been developed in the context of a complex policy landscape and rapidly changing society. In 2020, we face unprecedented challenges on a global, national, and local basis. The far-reaching impact of CV19 has created considerable uncertainties about the future, demanding short-term changes to how our society works, which may impact on the longer-term.

Tackling the global climate crisis means we must ensure that we are taking immediate steps to reduce the impact of our choices on the planet. The oil and gas downturn has affected our local economy and transport demands. Our transport strategy must help us address the needs of our economy, by placing increasing emphasis on an energy transition to low carbon and sustainable energy, reducing our net carbon emissions to zero; it must prioritise actions that enable short-term and longer-term economic re-building and growth, as well as demands for better connectivity. At the same

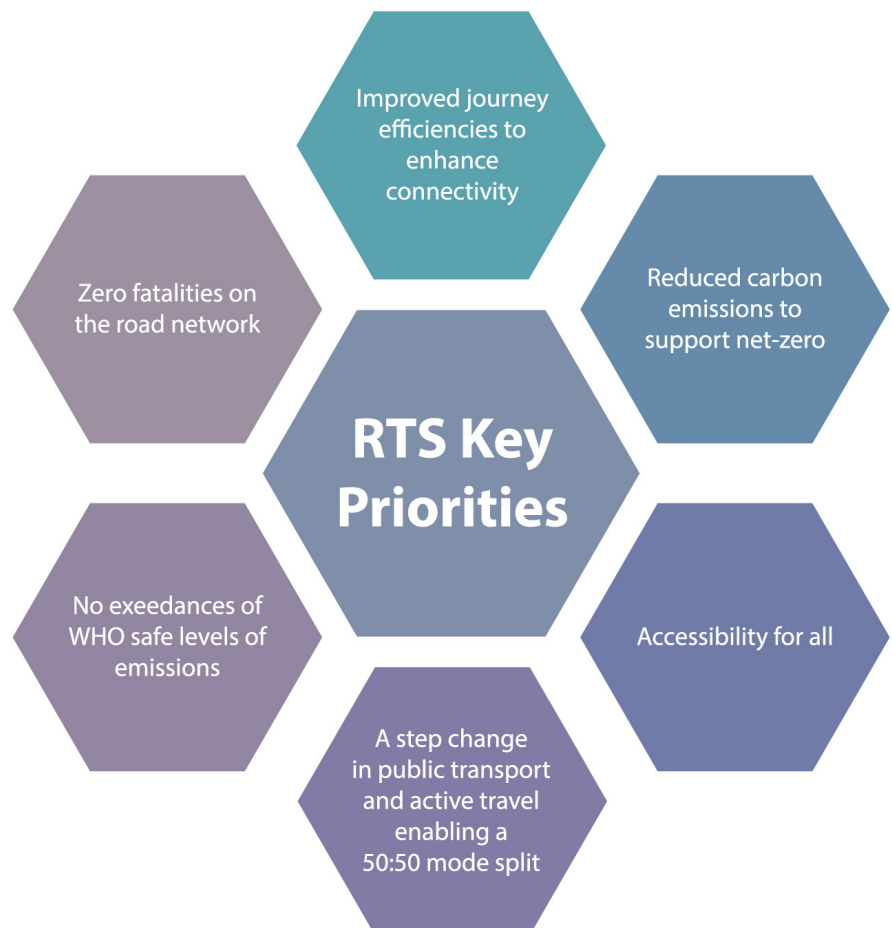
time, we must also address pressing environmental concerns, and wider health and social issues.

Over the past year, Nestrans has been working in partnership with local councillors, MSPs, MPs, key stakeholders, groups and individuals to develop a draft strategy. The plans are ambitious, achievable and evidence based, yet flexible to a changing and uncertain future. Consultation took place in 2019 on a range of discussion papers and the City Region Deal Strategic Transport Appraisal has provided a sound evidence base for

the policies and actions contained within the draft strategy.

The strategy sets out six key priorities for the North-east to 2040. These provide a clear statement of intent on what the strategy is aiming to achieve over the longer-term and sit within the context of four overarching pillars ensuring alignment with Scotland's National Transport Strategy:

- Equality
- Climate
- Prosperity
- Wellbeing





The key schemes and measures included with the draft strategy are grouped under six key headings:

### 1. City centre re-imagining

1. Supporting a city centre Low Emission Zone with the primary focus to reduce levels of vehicle emissions that are harmful to human health;
2. Strengthening of Aberdeen's City Centre Car Parking Strategy, incorporating charging, enforcement and extending controls, to ensure it delivers on demand management policies and supports sustainable travel choices;
3. Investigation of revenue-raising options through managing the demand for car travel, including Workplace Parking Levy or other charging options;
4. Development of proposals for an Aberdeen Rapid Transit scheme, initially on four key corridors, linking to Aberdeen Airport and Park & Ride sites; and
5. Implementing City Centre Masterplan and Roads Hierarchy proposals to dissuade through traffic from city routes, substantially reduce traffic in the city centre and deliver an effective network of pedestrian, cycle, bus, and rapid transit proposals.

### 2. Increasing the number of people travelling actively for health and the environment:

1. Implementing safe and segregated active travel connections which enable walking and cycling to be the norm for short journeys;
2. Through speed reduction measures and traffic management, ensure that towns and cities are suitable and attractive for walking and cycling;
3. Provide access to cycling, including

hire schemes, education and training, to enable all who wish to travel actively the means to do so; and

4. Travel planning support for individuals and employers.

### 3. Alternative Energy Region:

1. Positioning North-east of Scotland at the forefront of alternative energy technology developments;
2. Enabling the region to be an exemplar for hydrogen transport;
3. Facilitating a move to electric vehicle technologies and leading the move from petrol/diesel to zero-emission transport; and
4. Embracing emerging transport technologies, such as connected and autonomous vehicles.

### 4. Enhancing connectivity through fit-for-purpose road links:

1. Supporting Transport Scotland's proposals to dual the A96 from Aberdeen to Inverness;
2. Campaigning for enhancements to the A90 Aberdeen-Perth, including a by-pass around Dundee and grade-separation of junctions;
3. Working with Transport Scotland to upgrade the A90 north of Aberdeen, including dualling between Ellon and the Toll of Birness, junction upgrades including roundabouts at Toll of Birness and Cortes as well as safety and reliability enhancements to Peterhead and Fraserburgh; and
4. Safety and reliability improvements on A944, A947, A93, A92 and A98.

### 5. Addressing the challenges of rurality:

1. Ensuring digital opportunities are maximised to reduce the

dependence on travel to access services and jobs; and

2. Seeking to enable equity of access to education, employment, health and other key services across the region.

### 6. Cross-Rail and InterCity Rail enhancements:

1. Reduced journey times, improved reliability and service enhancements on InterCity rail routes;
2. Ensuring a frequent and reliable Cross-Aberdeen local rail service;
3. Delivery of new stations where appropriate to improve connectivity to the rail network; and
4. Providing opportunities for growth in railfreight.

The success of the strategy's schemes and measures depend on one another. Successful delivery will need input from a range of partners in a clear and co-ordinated way.

We are keen to receive comment and input from the North-east's business community, as well as wider stakeholders and the public, on the content of the draft RTS to 2040 to help inform the development of the final strategy.

The draft strategy and supporting documents, including the Strategic Transport Appraisal, are now available for consultation. A virtual public exhibition will run for the course of the consultation, allowing people to drop-in, view plans and share feedback around the clock.

The consultation will run from Wednesday August 5 until Friday October 16 2020. Full information on the draft Regional Transport Strategy, and how to take part in the consultation, is available at [www.nestrans2040.org.uk](http://www.nestrans2040.org.uk).



## Study finds no risk from ibuprofen

A NEW study conducted during the height of UK hospital admissions from CV19 has found that the regular use of painkillers including ibuprofen, naproxen and diclofenac did not increase the risk of death from the disease.

Published in the Journal of Clinical Medicine, the study is the first to report on routine non-steroidal inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and their impact on patients hospitalised with CV19 in eight UK hospitals.

The study's authors drawn from the University of Aberdeen, Cardiff University, King's College London and UK health trusts and hospitals, say considerable uncertainty regarding the use of common NSAIDs and their effect on CV19 has remained.

Professor Phyo Myint, senior author of the study, from the University of Aberdeen, said: "There has been much speculation about the potential role of non-steroidal inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), which increase the expression of angiotensin converting enzyme 2 (ACE2), a molecule which sits on cell surfaces within the body and acts as the doorway for CV19 to enter. Our study looked specifically at hospitalised patients with CV19 infection in UK hospitals during the peak of the initial wave of the epidemic."

The researchers assessed the outcomes for more than 1,200 patients admitted to eight hospitals around the UK and found no clear evidence that routine NSAID use was associated with higher CV19 mortality.

## Brodies 20% growth over two years

SCOTTISH and top 50 UK law firm Brodies LLP has continued to make progress for the year to April 30, 2020, reporting a 7% increase in turnover to £82.0m (2018/19: £76.9m). This amounts to 20% growth in the last two years and marks the 10th consecutive year of progress for the firm:

Profits before partner distributions were £38.5m, up from £37.4m the previous year; cash balances increased from £21m to over £25m; and overall headcount in the last 12 months grew to 728 from 689, an increase of 6%.

Brodies managing partner, Nick Scott, said: "We experienced strong demand for our services this year and we are grateful to all of our clients - businesses, organisations and individuals, in Scotland, the UK and overseas - for their continued support. We place great emphasis on the resilience of our firm because we know that at times like these clients want to turn to advisers in whom they can have absolute confidence."



Yekemi Otaru, Mark Ingram and Sarah Downs

## Joint venture for specialist sales recruitment

TWO North-east firms, Doqaru Ltd and Real Talent Matters Ltd, have launched, Doqaru Search, a joint venture which offers specialist sales recruitment.

Sarah Downs, co-founding director at Doqaru, said: "After working with over 50 businesses across the energy and technology sectors, we found a gap in the marketplace for a specific sales search offering. Using our processes, we can cut 96% of the mistakes made when hiring salespeople and sales leadership."

Using predictive data-driven insights, Doqaru Search will combine tried and tested technology, sales experience and recruitment expertise.

Mark Ingram, managing director at Real Talent Matters added: "I've worked with many businesses which have wasted a lot of time, effort and money on hiring salespeople who don't work out. This offering will support executives to find the best sales talent as a tailored fit for their business. The evolving sales landscape and the new 'distance economy' means that many salespeople need to work remotely. It is crucial to make sure that you have the right team in place. The tools we use can help identify who is best-suited to remote working and the required support."

## Well-Safe contract for Orca

ORCA Oceanic Systems Ltd has been awarded a master services agreement for the provision of dive system support and engineering services for Well-Safe Solutions onboard the Well-Safe Guardian semi-submersible decommissioning rig.

Mike Masson, OOS's managing director, said: "We have been working with well-safe extensively over the past eight months assisting in securing a saturation system and associated equipment and now to continue to get the opportunity to install and commission the system is a further endorsement of the professionalism and capabilities of the Orca Oceanic systems team."

# At the vanguard of positive change

by **Moray Barber**,  
*partner,*  
EY



**MARY Garden - world renowned operatic soprano, the Madonna of her day. Thomas Blake Glover - a key figure in the industrialisation of Japan, who helped found the shipbuilding company which was later to become Mitsubishi. James McBey - self-taught artist who became best known as an official war artist for the British Government and whose work is displayed globally.**

Three very diverse individuals all with one thing in common - they hail from the North-east of Scotland. I wonder what they would make of us, and of the region, today if they could see us now?

Aside from their local heritage, they are all connected by their drive, curiosity and focus on what was in front of them - their 'eyes up' approach, rather than 'eyes down'.

It is this kind of focus that attracted me to Vanguard. The Vanguard initiative aims to challenge norms and inspire new ways of thinking in order to write the next chapter in the success story of the Aberdeen city region.

As we enter the next phase of Vanguard's lifecycle, in a world changed immeasurably by CV19, it is worth reflecting on what our region might look like if we all adopt an 'eyes up' approach to our next chapter.

The need for bold thinking is frequently used whenever change is needed. Sometimes we do need innovative, bold thinking. However, sometimes we also need small, incremental ideas and baby steps forward that can ultimately make a lasting difference.

For me, the volunteers involved in the next phase of Vanguard should be thinking about both of these things as they adopt the mindset of those people that Disney calls 'Imagineers', people with creative ideas who can get things done. Vanguard might not always be best placed to deliver some of the ideas that come from the initiative but I have no doubt the people involved have the energy to generate those new ideas, large and small and to take forward those that they can.

When people accept the world is evolving around them, that can often be the time to turn the obstacle in their path into fuel, to see it as an opportunity to do something different. To stop being reactive and to get involved in making a positive change.

The region has made some great strides in recent years and this extraordinary time has given us twists, turns and yet another painful blow to our economy. That said, if we can adopt an 'eyes up' approach - accepting the challenges we face

and find new ways to work around them - we continue Aberdeen's march towards a new 'better'.

Now should be the time to help create the next Mitsubishi. To ensure culture is at the heart of the region by making it accessible to everyone through delivery in our open spaces. By documenting and championing our past to inform our future path. I think that's what Mary, Thomas and James would like to see us do.

Do you want to get involved in Vanguard?

Visit [www.agcc.co.uk/supporting-our-region](http://www.agcc.co.uk/supporting-our-region) to find out more.



# Health and safety – not just ticking boxes

**Craig Cooper,**  
*managing director,*  
Safetynet Scotland



## **TAKING care of your employees is the most important job a business owner has.**

Over the past few months, my colleagues and I have been kept busy helping businesses make sure that they are doing everything they can to avoid any risk to employees. It's not about ticking boxes – it's about saving lives.

In 2018/19, 147 people in Great Britain lost their lives to workplace accidents. Nobody expects to get injured at work and employers are legally and morally obliged to do whatever they can to protect their workforce.

But health and safety can have a reputation for being a hindrance, time-consuming and sometimes irrelevant. It needn't be that way. Modern health and safety systems should be slick, open and effective.

### **Working safer**

Operating procedures are vital, particularly when it comes to hazardous tasks. Identifying risks, highlighting correct techniques and procedures, and documenting these will ensure each task is completed in the same, safe manner. Having documented, safe systems of work avoids employees rushing or taking short cuts, which can lead to mistakes and accidents.

### **Detailed documentation**

When all employees have access to risk assessments, operating procedures, training information, PPE and COSHH requirements, workers are much more likely to behave in a well-guided, safer manner. Safetynet clients, whatever their location or discipline, log onto an online documentation system which keeps accurate records and highlights upcoming training/legal requirements.

### **Keeping up the training**

As humans, we can become complacent and forget important aspects of our jobs. Formal, ongoing training is important no matter the discipline, but in a hazardous environment regular updates are vital. Filing cabinets overflowing with years' worth of training certificate and manual records become less effective as a company grows. Up-to-date software will automatically highlight training requirements for large numbers of employees, dramatically reducing the risk of error.

### **Avoid surprises with internal auditing**

Prevent the panic of an on the spot HSE investigation or the last-minute running around after a three-day warning of a HSE official visit by conducting regular internal audits. The perfect way to test the effectiveness of

your HSE procedures and identify any opportunities to improve, audits are a fast, cost-effective way to give you peace of mind that your HSE systems are fit for purpose.

### **Keeping staff engaged**

Health and safety is for everyone. The recent pandemic has proven that looking after the health and safety of everyone around us is the most effective way to keep us all safe. By working with professionals, and employing easy to use, simple systems, your health and safety procedures will be respected and understood.

We have moved on from a few posters in the kitchen. Today's modern workplace has regular health and safety communications, with simple to access and navigate online portals.

Working in a safer manner, keeping records of procedures and risks, regular training, ongoing assessment and ensuring staff buy into health and safety will all contribute to a healthier and safer environment for you and your very important employees.



Andrew Mills, chief executive officer of ITI Operations Limited

## Servelec Controls rebrands to ITI

SERVELEC Controls has rebranded to Innovation Transforming Industry (ITI) to put it in a prime position to help deliver a green, clean and digital future for industry's largest owner operators.

Servelec Controls has previously operated under various ownership and brands. The transition to ITI will provide the company with the opportunity to fully align previous acquisitions, focus on its core strengths and identify areas of investment and growth under a common purpose and strategy.

As one of the UK's largest fully independent systems integrators, the company, with strategic locations across the UK, has been supporting critical national infrastructure for almost 50 years.

ITI will continue to deliver transformation through innovation, enhancing the future of industry through digital intelligence and industrial automation, increasing safety and security.

## Swire's first major onshore inspection contract.

ABERDEEN-based global offshore container solution provider Swire Oilfield Services has been awarded its first major North Sea onshore inspection contract.

Materials and logistics management specialist, ASCO has appointed Swire to provide sea-fastening and inspection services to its clients across the Central North Sea. The scope of work also includes welding services and the supply of rigging gear and will be centred around ASCO's south base in Peterhead.

Swire Oilfield Services has extended its testing and inspection capabilities in the region and recently hired several experienced test engineers, as it continues to move towards becoming a complete services provider.

## Businesses need further support to cope with further lockdowns

A SURVEY by the Scottish Chambers of Commerce has found the vast majority of businesses in Scotland are doing their utmost to retain staff in the coming months despite high levels of concern over the risk of further lockdowns and phased withdrawal of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

The survey confirmed recent official employment statistics, with only a small proportion (11%) having made staff redundant since measures to stem the spread of pandemic came into force. However, the number of employers who believe they will continue to avoid redundancies starts decreasing over the coming months. Almost three quarters (74%) expect they will retain their staff in the next three months. However, this reduces to 68% as the Treasury's furlough scheme comes to an end in October.

A significant majority (63%) of businesses are concerned about the need to drive up demand, indicating ongoing challenges in restoring sufficient consumer confidence to boost the economy.

Over half (56%) have indicated rising costs of doing business, such as rental costs, business rates and general taxation as a significant concern. Having to make premises CV19 secure will have also contributed to the rise in costs while facing reduced capacity and lack of trade at the same time.

While government support will have supported levels of cashflow, over half of firms (56%) report lower levels of cashflow compared to one month ago.

Dr Liz Cameron, chief executive of the Scottish Chambers of Commerce said: "We fear a reckoning as some companies, particularly in tourism, hospitality and retail decide it is no longer viable to restart or continue in the coming months. We must achieve a balance between looking at long-term ambitions and strategies for growth alongside concrete action in the months ahead to ensure we retain as many businesses and jobs as possible. It is not one over the other.

"For those sectors which remain closed or have just resumed operations recently, helping them back to work and restoring consumer confidence as quickly as possible is crucial to their immediate survival.

"Scottish businesses have already demonstrated that we are adaptive, innovative and resilient, but the challenges we face over the next few months, potentially years, warrants a response from government that is just as substantial.

"We cannot just play at the edges - we need to harness the resilience, the ambitions and the skills of business and political leadership to fundamentally rethink how we ensure Government at all levels become more interested in working with businesses."



# October



An essential basic course for all new starts to the industry, or those looking for a refresher. The course will help you understand offshore installations, subsea production facilities and onshore support requirements.

- 1 Thu**  
1 Day  
**Emotional Intelligence for Business**  
Develop situational awareness and influence outcomes
- 1 Thu**  
1 Day  
**GDPR Essentials**  
Demystify the new regulation and principles in a digital landscape
- 2 Fri**  
1 Day  
**Letters of Credit – Methods of Payment**  
Ensure your letter of credit is not rejected and compare payment methods
- 6 Tue**  
½ Day  
**Understanding the Oil and Gas Industry**  
Gain an understanding of the basics of production and processing
- 7 Wed**  
1 Day  
**Essential Supervisory Skills**  
Bridge the gap between doing and supervising and become confident in delegating tasks
- 7 Wed**  
1 Day  
**Reviews and Appraisals**  
Assess performance constructively and increase motivation
- 8 Thu**  
1 Day  
**Making Meetings Work**  
Establish how to plan and deliver effective meetings
- 10 Thu**  
1 Day  
**Personal Effectiveness**  
Improve your self-management by changing the way you work
- 27 Tue**  
1 Day  
**Presentation Skills**  
Deliver a dynamic and motivational presentation confidently
- 27 Tue**  
1 Day  
**Digital Transformation**  
Learn how to future proof your business
- 28 Wed**  
2 Day  
**Essential Management Skills**  
Become equipped with the knowledge and skills required of a manager
- 28 Wed**  
1 Day  
**HR Business Partner - Masterclass**  
Explore key HR topics and feel confident in taking HR to the next level
- 29 Thu**  
1 Day  
**Budgeting and Planning – An Introduction**  
Learn how to establish and maintain budgets
- 29 Thu**  
1 Day  
**Maximising Sponsorship Revenue**  
Get the most from your sponsorship sales and obtain great results for your clients

# November



Do you want to become a more confident, convincing and credible presenter? This highly interactive course will help you achieve your goal.

- 3 Tue**  
1 Day  
**Motivation and Delegation**  
Make delegation more efficient, understand different styles and how to adapt
- 4 Wed**  
1 Day  
**Presentation Skills**  
Deliver a dynamic and motivational presentation confidently
- 4 Wed**  
1 Day  
**Supervisors Next Steps**  
Improve techniques and learn about dealing with different situations within a team
- 5 Thu**  
1 Day  
**Assertiveness at Work**  
Learn to communicate your point of view without causing conflict
- 5 Thu**  
1 Day  
**Business Development Accelerator**  
Develop a powerful strategy to drive sales
- 10 Tue**  
1 Day  
**Essential Supervisory Skills**  
Bridge the gap between doing and supervising and become confident in delegating tasks
- 10 Tue**  
1 Day  
**Project Management – The Fundamentals**  
Understand the principles of project management and the complexities of scale
- 11 Wed**  
1 Day  
**Building Effective Teams**  
Understand what makes a great team and how to build one

As an accredited Chamber of Commerce, we offer a range of export training courses recognised by the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) National Accredited Trade Training™ curriculum. These courses will equip businesses with a highly skilled workforce ready to take on international markets and prepare for exiting the EU and the new customs procedures.

The National Accredited Trade Training™ programme includes nine centrally accredited modules covering a core export skills curriculum. These modules are mapped to Level 2 NVQ and provide invaluable basic skills for small and large companies alike. These courses have been designed to be suitable for both experienced and novice exporters.

In order to succeed, candidates must demonstrate knowledge of the subject which is assessed by external examiners. On successful completion of the module each candidate receives a BCC accredited certificate and completing six of the eight modules (exams) merits a special presentation of a Foundation Award in International Trade.

For further information on the certification and grant funding available please email us at [training@agcc.co.uk](mailto:training@agcc.co.uk)

#### Introduction

- Beginners Practical Guide to Exporting

#### Intermediate Courses

- Understanding Export and Export Documentation (2 exams)
  - Customs Procedures and Documentation (1 exam)
    - Import Procedures (1 exam)
    - INCOTerms 2020 (1 exam)
- Methods of Payment and Letters of Credit (2 exams)
  - Preference Rules of Origin (1 exam)
  - Inward & Outward Processing (1 exam)

#### Supplementary Advanced Courses

- Understanding Commodity Codes
- UK Export Controls & Licensing





# Adapting to the next normal in the food and drink industry

**Derek Mair,**  
*partner and head of food and drink,*  
Anderson Anderson & Brown



**2020 has served up unprecedented challenges to the food and drink sector though the agility, innovation and resilience demonstrated by many Scottish businesses has been one of a few positives.**

One fundamental consequence of lockdown restrictions and health and safety concerns has been a change in consumer behaviour. Despite the best efforts of supermarkets to implement social distancing and with consumers spending more time at home, we have seen a sharp rise in delivery direct to the consumer.

This change in behaviour has presented multiple opportunities for Scottish food and drink businesses. We have seen first-hand when working with our clients how businesses are adapting and using technology to either open up new revenue streams or revolutionise their business model and operations.

We are finding that mid and long-term growth strategies are being accelerated to take advantage of immediate opportunities and, in some cases, simply to survive. However, innovation and investment require significant thought and we would always suggest speaking with your advisor before taking action, such as the following examples:

- The successful implementation of direct sales across many food and drink sub-sectors such as agricultural businesses delivering

meat and fresh produce to local households, bars and restaurants delivering takeaway food, as well as retailers operating a delivery service while their doors remain physically closed

- A catering client successfully applied for the Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLs) to accelerate their growth plans and to invest in new technology which enabled them to sell their fresh produce products using contactless payment and to a wider client base
- A hospitality client has used the downtime to develop a large outdoor seating area, enabling them to re-open to the public at an earlier stage than before and increasing their capacity with and without social distancing
- Alcohol retailers becoming distributors for wine and spirit companies offering online tasting sessions via video call platforms

Innovation, from the development of product ranges to modifying operational processes, has been essential for businesses responding to the challenges presented by the coronavirus. It goes without saying that in the current climate cashflow and working capital requirements have been under greater scrutiny. We encourage owners and management teams to be mindful of potential R&D tax claims. Several of our clients have successfully applied in recent weeks which provided a welcomed boost

to their working capital and cashflow during these unprecedented times.

For businesses in the hospitality and tourism sectors, the temporary reduction in the VAT rate from 20% to 5% until January 2021 will hopefully provide a welcome stimulus. With the reduced rate applying to supplies of food and non-alcoholic beverages for consumption on-premises, hot takeaway food and beverages, hotel and holiday accommodation and entrance to certain attractions, many businesses in the hospitality and tourism sectors will hopefully see increased consumer demand.

These government measures have certainly helped steady-the-ship but now businesses need to be more forward-looking. We have been working with our clients to modify projections and review internal processes to ensure the right information is being used to make the right decisions and to formulate business plans for the short and mid-term to ensure their businesses are scalable and commercially sustainable.

Technology has also benefitted clients' internal processes. Businesses using cloud accounting for instance have seen the benefit of being able to monitor their financial position using real-time information, enabling them to have a stronger grasp of their cashflow and working capital.



**Ian Kirk,**  
*president, Vulcan Completion Products*

**What does your company do that others don't?**

We specialise in the design, manufacture and application of a specialist range of innovative equipment for the energy sector from bespoke centralisers, reamer and guide shoes to float equipment, cement plugs and cable protectors, namely cementing and completion equipment. VCP has an unrivalled track record of success, where the emphasis is on providing a quality service which consistently exceeds the expectations of clients. We sell directly to IOCs, major players and headline service companies. Additionally, the company is represented globally by a network of sales distributors and agents in over 25 countries.

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

For many investors, the oil industry isn't deemed to be 'fashionable' as an attractive investment opportunity so that makes securing investment very challenging. In spite of our initial frustrations however our autonomous funding stream has meant we now have true independence because we are not tied to anyone or anything.

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

If you have truly innovative products they are at risk of being copied – even the biggest and best of companies will copy your products and then think they can walk over the small guys knowing the costs of litigation. Innovation usually comes from the thinkers, not from aggressors.

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

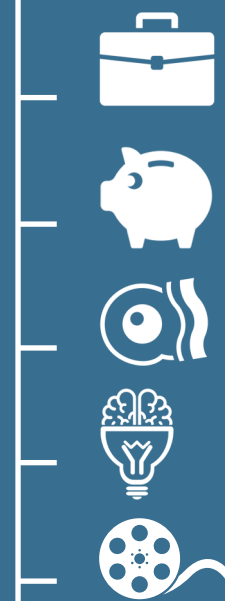
Always make important decisions and re-read important emails after you've slept on them and before you press the button, literally or figuratively.

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

Winning a Queens Award for Enterprise with our last company changed perceptions about the importance of trademarking and branding and made the organisation a globally recognised brand. It enabled us to create a specialised market and benchmark carefully – and it paved the way for the subsequent creation of Vulcan Completion Products to benefit from all that experience when it was set up to fill a gap in the market. I am also very proud that VCP is not just my business and that it has very much been set up as a workers' co-operative of sorts. We recently issued company shares to all employees because it is important to reward people for what they do, rather than just being a company, which employs people.

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

In my experience, the strategies of encouraging start-up businesses are often not consistently followed through with access to necessary infrastructure such as correct SME funding. I believe that our country needs to look at future opportunities that not only create employment for the few but also focus on medium-sized opportunities where companies can support a larger number of people.



# Quick fire round

**What was your first job?**  
A paper round

**When would you like to retire?**  
Never

**What did you have for breakfast?**  
Porridge

**Who, or what, inspires you?**  
My kids

**What's the last book you read / film you saw?**  
Blade Runner (original)





Construction Director Stephen Jarvie and managing director Mike Naysmith

## CALA homes delivers new road for Cults community

CALA Homes (North) has completed construction of a key new road for the Cults community, which is now open to traffic.

Craigbank Drive, connecting Craigton Road and Kirk Brae, was outlined in the Friarsfield Development Framework and is set to ease congestion and improve accessibility in the popular area.

The road has been created by the developer as part of its ongoing work in the area, including its current Cults Park and Craigton Mews developments.

Mike Naysmith, managing director at CALA Homes (North), said: "We are very pleased to deliver this key piece of infrastructure to the Cults community and look forward to seeing it improve traffic flow and connectivity in the area.

"We have been creating new neighbourhoods in Cults since 2012, and in fact built homes here as far back as the 1970s, so we have very strong ties to the community. We're proud to deliver the new link road and continue our contribution."

## Scientists head to Falklands on peat study

SCIENTISTS from the University of Aberdeen will travel to the Falkland Islands as part of a £230,000 research project to help better understand the impact of peatland fires on global CO<sub>2</sub> levels.

The project will use innovative techniques to study how the frequency, extent and intensity of burning in peatland fires affects the ability of peatland environments to store carbon.

While covering just 3% of the earth's surface, peatlands are globally important ecosystems and store twice as much carbon as the world's forests, mitigating the effects of climate change by taking greenhouse gases out of the atmosphere.

However, peatlands are becoming more fire prone, thus reversing this effect by rapidly returning carbon to the atmosphere as CO<sub>2</sub>. Understanding the extent to which this happens is crucial in measuring the resulting impact on global CO<sub>2</sub> levels.

## Financial aid accessed by local firms

COMPANIES across the North-east of Scotland are benefiting from the Scottish Government's business support package.

The Scottish Government created a support package for businesses in Scotland affected by CV19 and enterprise agencies worked at pace with VisitScotland and Creative Scotland to design and deliver two short-term funds: The Pivotal Enterprise Resilience Fund for vulnerable Scottish SMEs deemed vital to local, regional and national economies; and the Creative, Tourism and Hospitality Enterprises Hardship Fund for tourism, hospitality and creative industry businesses.

A total of 3,656 awards have been made to companies across Scotland equalling around £145.3m.

Chief executive of Scottish Enterprise, Steve Dunlop, said: "It is not an easy time for many businesses and Scottish Enterprise is working hard to provide funding, advice and resources to ensure businesses not only survive, but thrive now and in future. The support from the Hardship and Pivotal Enterprise Resilience Funds has allowed companies across a range of industries to continue to trade. We will continue to work alongside Scottish Government and partners to focus on a fair, sustainable and jobs-focused recovery and play a critical role in rebuilding Scotland's economy."

Dean's of Huntly received £150,000 from the Pivotal Enterprise Resilience Fund (PERF). The firm produces premium shortbread and has operated with safety measures in place during recent months, starting back initially with a small team and gradually increasing staffing numbers in line with social distancing guidelines and utilising staggered shift patterns.

Managing director Bill Dean said: "The funding is a welcome boost to help gear Dean's back towards full production. We won't see pre-covid normality for some time but at the moment support like this helps to give businesses confidence."

ANM Group's digital strategy has been used to full effect during the coronavirus pandemic as the business has taken forward online livestock and machinery sales using a blended approach as it has had to limit physical customer numbers on site.

Chief executive of ANM Group, Grant Rogerson, said: "It has been a very challenging time for businesses but drawing on the talents of the team at ANM we have continued to operate safely and give confidence to our customers and members.

"The knowledge and technology to enable our online sales is something we had been developing and perfecting for a number of years, working in partnership with the University of Aberdeen and Scottish Enterprise. We have really used it to its full effect during this pandemic and as such we have pioneered the system that we will continue to incorporate into our operations going forward."

## ARCHIE'S hill challenge

STAYCATIONS have never been more popular and as Scotland continues to gradually open up after lockdown people are showing a greater than ever appreciation of the simple pleasures in life. Local children's charity The ARCHIE Foundation hopes its latest campaign will help encourage people to explore and enjoy Scotland's great outdoors and perhaps even set themselves an ARCHIE Challenge.

The inspiration behind this latest campaign comes from longstanding supporter of The ARCHIE Foundation, Dr Paul Fettes, who together with friends and family completed a 15 day relay to conquer all 130 of Scotland's highest mountains in the summer of 2015. Their accomplishment led these remarkable mountains to become known as the 'Archies'.

"If Munro were alive today he wouldn't come up with a list of mountains over 3,000 feet. What would be the point? There are no feet on the maps", stated Dr Fettes as he began planning his unique challenge. "Quite simply, what separates mountains is a difference in height. The height drop between a mountain and its surroundings is the best way to measure this."

While bagging an Archie may not be on everyone's bucket list, The ARCHIE Foundation believes everyone has a hill in their head that they would like to conquer and is encouraging people to invite friends and family to sponsor them to reach the summit of their own personal challenge, helping to raise much needed funds to help support local sick children. For more information visit [www.archie.org/events/hillchallenge](http://www.archie.org/events/hillchallenge).

## Neptune Energy confirms significant discovery

NEPTUNE Energy and its partners have announced the commercial discovery of oil at the Dugong well (PL882) in the Norwegian sector of the North Sea, the largest discovery in Norway so far this year.

The volumes are estimated to be in the range of 6.3 - 19.0m standard cubic meters (MSm<sup>3</sup>) of recoverable oil equivalent, or 40 - 120 million barrels of oil equivalent (boe).

In addition, the Dugong discovery has significantly de-risked another prospect in the licence estimated by Neptune at 5.2m standard cubic meters (MSm<sup>3</sup>) of recoverable oil equivalent, or 33m boe. This brings Neptune's estimate of the total resource potential in PL882 to as much as 153m boe.

Neptune Energy is the operator of the Dugong licence with a 40% ownership interest.

Neptune Energy's managing director in Norway, Odin Estensen, said: "This is a significant discovery and strategically important for Neptune Energy in this region. It underlines our commitment to continue investing in activities in the Norwegian sector which is an integral part of our geographically-diverse portfolio."

## Sport Aberdeen offer bike maintenance scheme

A LOCAL charity has become the first in Aberdeen to sign up to the 'Scotland Cycle Repair Scheme', a free bike repair and maintenance service funded by the Scottish Government and delivered through Cycling UK.

Adventure Aberdeen, part of award-winning charity Sport Aberdeen, recently launched its new in-house bike maintenance service and will now be offering limited free places, alongside its full offering, to those who may not usually have access to these services.

The charity has secured funding through the 'Scotland Cycle Repair Scheme' which aims to remove barriers such as cost while encouraging active travel; allowing more people to take part in cycling through access to free bike maintenance.

The Scotland Cycle Repair Scheme offers free cycle repair and maintenance up to the value of £50 per person and welcomes all cycles; adult's and children's bikes, e-bikes and non-standard cycles (tandems, tricycles, handcycles and side-by-side cycles).

Repair and maintenance work will take place at Adventure Aberdeen Kingswells. Details of how to book a place and a full list of services available, with prices, can be found at [www.sportaberdeen.co.uk/adventure-aberdeen-bike-workshop](http://www.sportaberdeen.co.uk/adventure-aberdeen-bike-workshop)

## OGUK welcomes action towards net zero

OGUK has welcomed the publication of the OGA Energy Integration Project report which reinforces the focus of industry to work together in developing clean energy systems to deliver its net zero ambitions.

At the same time, OGUK is also discussing a transformational sector deal with the UK Government, which will also set out how the UK's oil and gas industry will play its part in supporting a green recovery that attracts investment, jobs and supports the supply chain.

Commenting on the report, Deirdre Michie, chief executive at OGUK, said: "The OGA's Energy Integration Report confirms the huge contribution of this industry to unlocking the UK's low carbon energy future and what can be achieved through collective action.

"With confirmed government, regulatory and industry support, the essential building blocks are in place and the energy transition is now no longer an ambition - but happening in real time.

"We already know the powerful combination of this sector's skills, capabilities and infrastructure are advancing new technologies on the road to net zero, with some key projects already underway."



## CALA submits plans for third phase

CALA Homes (North) has submitted a planning application to Aberdeen City Council for 85 properties which would form the third phase of its Oldfold Village development in Milltimber.

The development is one of CALA's flagship communities in the North-east, with more than 100 families having already moved into its first two phases. In its entirety, Oldfold Village is anticipated to create 550 homes plus a new primary school and commercial elements.

The development is located off North Deeside Road in a semi-rural pocket of Milltimber.

Ross MacLennan, land director at CALA Homes (North), said: "We have submitted plans for the third phase of our Oldfold Village development, another major milestone in delivering 550 new homes in Milltimber. The first two phases have been extremely popular and it is wonderful to see the development already becoming a neighbourhood. We're eager to see the third phase add to this flourishing new community."

## Tilbury expansion for Wilson James

WILSON James, the leading provider of specialist construction logistics services, has announced that it has expanded its warehousing and consolidation capacity into the Port of Tilbury, London's major port. The new facility augments the company's existing London Construction Consolidation Centre (LCCC) and helps it to meet the evolving needs of its growing customer base, which requires construction material and equipment to be delivered to site in ever-shorter timeframes.

"Put simply, the Port of Tilbury ticked all the boxes", said operations director Keith Winterflood. "As well as being strategically located and boasting state-of-the-art facilities, it makes importation of overseas goods easier for us. Just as importantly, in addition to the excellent transportation links by road and rail, we can improve sustainability across our operation through the use of barges on the River Thames and other waterways."

## New partnership launches return to work service

IN ORDER to help employers support their employees return to work safely, Concept Promotional Merchandise and Prospect 13 have joined forces to deliver 'Under one Roof' a safe return to work integrated service which not only reinforces safe social distancing but also aids improved employee communication.

The service includes a return to work online consultation to understand specific business requirements, strategic employee communication plan and implementation, a range of branded and customised products; and social distancing signage.

# SME Spotlight



**Claire Forbes,**  
*managing consultant,*  
Response Consultants

### When was your business established?

The company was founded in 1995 by my father, Mike Forbes, and we are currently celebrating our 25th year in business. I joined the business part-time in 1999 when I went to university, then full-time when I graduated in 2004.

### What does your business do?

We provide emergency response and crisis management training, exercises and consultancy services. We help organisations plan and prepare their response for worst case scenarios which are normally safety related incidents. Our primary focus is on people and ensuring organisations understand that.

### What sort of companies do you do business with?

We have worked with over 100 companies in over 18 countries and consulted in many more. The majority of our work is in the energy industries but we have also worked with many other industries. Emergency response and crisis management is transferable to every industry as the basics remain the same, people must come first.

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

Technology. We realised in February that CV19 was going to have an effect on our business, so we were prepared for lockdown and had moved our training courses online. However, each of our clients prefers a different training platform, so we try to accommodate and learn the new software. It is also more difficult to train people virtually as you don't receive the same non-verbal feedback from attendees.

### And the biggest opportunity?

Surprisingly, technology! The world has become closer, and we have already seen an increase in overseas enquiries and attendance on our training courses. Most companies have embraced online training and found it easier to organise attendance.

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# It's time to explore the world

by **Lorraine Neish**,  
*export documentation team leader,*  
Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce



## **DESPITE the uncertainty over our exit from the EU, Scotland remains open for business and this is something we want the world to know.**

One country which has long been of significant importance and will continue to be going forward is Norway. Not just our nearest international neighbour, it is a sophisticated and established market with which we have a long and trusted trading relationship.

It goes without saying that there are substantial opportunities to grow international trade and investment between Scotland and Norway across a range of sectors and industries but for companies operating in the energy sector, it offers a rich seam of potential for firms with high quality products and services to offer.

The Norwegian economy is dominated by the offshore oil and gas sector, which accounts for about 25% of economic activity. Crude oil, natural gas and electricity transmission account for two thirds Norway's exports. According to current estimates, Norway has enough oil for the next 50 years, and gas for the next 100 years.

Last year saw a record number of oil and gas fields producing in the country. Most were major developments, including the start-up of Johan Sverdrup, the third-largest field on the Norwegian continental shelf. Vitally, the Norwegian Petroleum

Directorate (NPD) projects the country is moving towards a further production boost, with 2024 expected to rival activity levels last seen 20 years ago.

Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce is partnering with ONS 2020 on a market overview event, providing the opportunity for companies on both sides of the North Sea to explore synergies and potential new business ventures in the energy, technology, engineering and advanced manufacturing sectors.

The event is being supported by the Norwegian British Chamber, the Greater Stavanger Partnership, World Energy Cities Partnership, AREG and Aberdeen City Council. Following the overview, Scottish companies can apply for B2B meetings as part of a virtual trade mission to Norway taking place later this month.

We will also be helping North-east companies explore potential new business opportunities further afield.

Cushioned between Venezuela, Brazil and Suriname at the northern end of South America, a chance offshore oil discovery by ExxonMobil in 2015 has transformed Guyana into a lucrative new frontier of crude oil prospecting.

Now among the world's top 20 oil reserves and the second highest in terms of potential among unexplored basins, the country's 6.6 million-acre Stabroek Block is the largest crude discovery of recent years.

With rapid exploration underway across the region, Guyana's domestic companies do not have the ability, skills or infrastructure to provide the broad range of services required. The country therefore offers a wealth of new business opportunities for Scottish energy companies with high quality products and services.

AGCC and our partner Georgetown Chamber of Commerce are hosting a market overview event on September 10, providing the opportunity for companies to explore synergies and potential new business ventures in the oil and gas manufacturing and technology sectors.

It will include insights from a range of speakers about the immediate need for Scottish firms in these sectors to partner with indigenous companies. In addition to providing equipment, services and manufacturing abilities, training programs to increase the capacity of firms in Guyana to provide these services are likely to be highly successful.

Once again, we will be connecting businesses from both countries after the event for deeper, one to one conversations.




If your business is ready to step into new markets, to increase its international footprint and grow, as your Chamber, just remember, we're here to support you.



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# September



**Opportunities abound for Scottish oil and gas firms in Guyana. This market overview is the first step to finding out what it could mean for your business.**

## 10 Sep

14:00 – 15:30  
Online

### Explore the Market: Guyana – Scotland

The 2015 discovery of oil in Guyana confirmed the existence of huge recoverable reserves in this part of the world and has since transformed the country's economy. The oil industry is now calling for the skills, technology and infrastructure found in Scotland to form partnerships and joint ventures. Join us for an overview of the Guyana market and discover opportunities for your business to partner and grow in a new market. Following the overview, companies can apply for B2B meetings as part of a virtual trade mission.

## 16 Sep

8:30 – 10:00



### International Markets Business Breakfast

Navigating international markets can be difficult, even in the best of times. Join us as we consider the impact the coronavirus and the UK's transition out of the EU will have on importing and exporting as we move into a new era.

## 23 - 24 Sep

Online

### Norway B2B meetings

Part of a virtual trade mission. Times will be allocated to delegates after the matching process.

## 29-30 Sep

Online

### Guyana B2B meetings

Part of a virtual trade mission. Times will be allocated to delegates after the matching process.

# November



## 12 Nov

Online

### Employment Law Webinar

This highly popular annual event, held in partnership by Scotland's leading employment law advisers Burness Paul LLP and Pinsent Masons LLP, is a must-attend for busy HR professionals. It features a dynamic programme of presentations, industry updates and guest speakers.

**Make sure you are equipped with the information, know-how and skills to deal with the demands of 21st century employment law.**

## Don't want to miss out?

Sign up to the Chamber's monthly e-newsletter by emailing [info@agcc.co.uk](mailto: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.

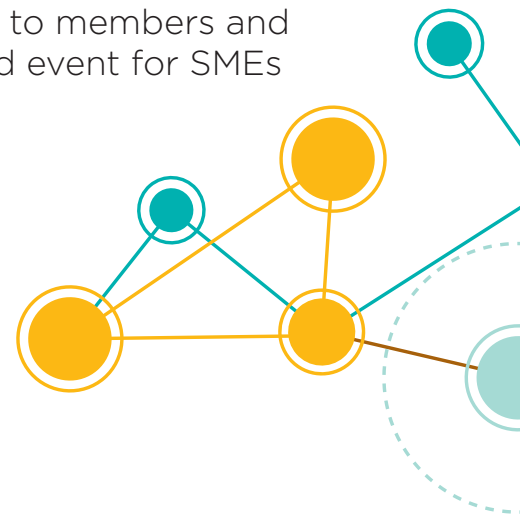
The Ultimate Business Show is **free to attend**, is open to members and non-members - and is shaping up to be a must-attend event for SMEs looking to reconnect post CV19.

Book your stand

Find out about sponsorship

Register for a TUBS Talk

[agcc.co.uk/events](http://agcc.co.uk/events)



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### Kevin Maclver

Aberdeen Football Club's finance director Kevin Maclver has been appointed to the board of directors. A qualified accountant with 30 years' experience, he joined the club as finance director in 2018. Since taking up the role, he has been involved in the Cormack Park project, the change of status from a public to private company and the US investment in the club.



### Joaquim Gomez

Joaquim Gomez has joined Aberdeen Cyber Security as its first cyber security analyst. Joaquim will be responsible for the security, installation and maintenance of core IT systems across its customers environments. He joins the company at an exciting stage as it grows its offering, capability and position within the North-east of Scotland.



### Sian Lloyd Rees

OGUK has appointed a new vice co-chair to its board as the sector makes moves to recover from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and low oil and gas prices. Sian Lloyd Rees, UK country manager and SVP of customer management at Aker Solutions, has been appointed as OGUK's new contractor vice co-chair.



### Louise Andrew

Charlie House has appointed Louise Andrew chief executive officer. A former corporate lawyer with 18 years' experience both in-house and in private practice having held senior roles for British Energy Group plc, KCA Deutag and John Wood Group plc, more recently she held the role of chair and interim CEO at Transition Extreme Sports Limited.



### Scott Michie

Xergy, the company behind revolutionary digital platform Proteus has appointed a former Dons striker to grow sales across the UK. Scott Michie, who played between 1999 and 2004, joins the new start-up technology firm as business development director. He will be responsible for the strategic planning and delivery of sales across the UK.



### Brannon Kuykendall

Crane Worldwide has appointed Brannon Kuykendall as chief information officer. Kuykendall has successfully led technology teams ranging from start-ups to Fortune 500 enterprises and has a diverse experience in software development, cyber security, compliance, cloud computing, artificial intelligence and more.



### Robin Macpherson

Robert Gordon's College has appointed Robin Macpherson as head of college. Robin has held teaching and senior leadership roles in the UK and overseas with experience of day and boarding schools, as well as having worked as an examiner for the SQA, Edexcel and the International Baccalaureate Organisation.



### Mark Johnson

Converged Communication Solutions has appointed Mark Johnson IT delivery manager to enhance the service, support and advice it offers to SMEs. Mark has extensive experience having worked in the IT sector for 35 years. He will work with clients to explore opportunities for making IT, internet connectivity, telephony and cybersecurity changes within their organisation.



**Lisa Law and Sarah Lilley**

Brodies LLP has appointed specialist private client and family lawyers, underlining its commitment to growth in the Highlands and Islands. Lisa Law, who has more than 12 years' experience, joins as a director. She specialises in wills, power of attorney and guardianship, as well as trusts and executries. She is an accredited specialist in incapacity and mental disability law and is a notary public. Sarah Lilley, who has joined as a senior associate, has practised family law exclusively for the past 12 years. She is trained in the collaborative method of dispute resolution, is an accredited specialist in child law and a notary public.



**Euan Bruce**

Euan Bruce is the first male volunteer join the charity MISS (Miscarriage Information Support Service). Euan will primarily support male partners affected by baby loss in support groups and one to one sessions, as well as other future activities. The charity hopes having a male support volunteer will encourage more men to speak up.



**Stewart Argo**

Stewart Argo joins the BIG Partnership as an associate director following six years as an associate director at Weber Shandwick where he led a wide variety of corporate and public sector accounts. Prior to that, he had 15 years' experience at NHS Grampian, SEPA and Edinburgh Council, having started his career as a journalist with BBC Radio Scotland.



**Sylvia Nicoll**

Sylvia Nicoll has been appointed Brio Retirement general manager. She started nursing training when she was 17 and worked across Dundee, Angus and Perth before entering the private care sector as a care home manager and then as a quality auditor. Latterly she was regional manager for a care home company covering homes across the North-east.



**Harris Simpson**

Following an increase in customer requirements in attaining Management System ISO Standards and new contract wins, QHSE Aberdeen Limited has strengthened its consultancy team by the appointment of Harris Simpson as a QHSE Advisors. Harris has experience from working in textiles and oil and gas in addition to his Law and Management degree.

## 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](mailto:bulletin@agcc.co.uk) and your business could be in a future issue.

# Welcome to the Chamber

## **Abilitynet**

For over 20 years AbilityNet has helped ensure the digital world is inclusive for disabled and older people at home. We are a nationwide charity with a local presence through our 300 UK-wide volunteers. Our volunteers provide 1-1 tech support to disabled and older people in the local community, fixing IT problems, offering advice, setting equipment up and showing them how to use it.

**T** 08002 269545

**W** [www.abilitynet.org.uk](http://www.abilitynet.org.uk)

**E** [chris.grant@abilitynet.org.uk](mailto:chris.grant@abilitynet.org.uk)

**C** Christopher Grant, community relationship officer

—

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**C** Bob Christie, managing director

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**C** Duncan Watson, General Manager

—

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**C** Brian Lynas, CIO Infoquick Europe

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## **My International Office**

Providing consultancy, training and contacts to companies looking to do business in Africa. With a focus in Nigeria and Ghana and clients across education, oil and gas; and government. We physically take individuals and businesses to market, set meetings and appointments; build itineraries, support visa applications and logistics, train the workforce going to market, travel safety advice, hotel and transport bookings. MYIO also manages students funded by scholarships studying in the UK from across Africa.

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**W** [www.myinternationaloffice.co.uk](http://www.myinternationaloffice.co.uk)

**E** [jamie@myio.org.uk](mailto:jamie@myio.org.uk)

**C** Jamie Hastings, director





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