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Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce

The Hub
Exploration Drive
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Bridge of Don
Aberdeen
AB23 8GX

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

Affiliated Chambers
Moray

Bulletin Team



Editor

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



News features

Graeme Smith Media
T 01224 275833



Advertising

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



Design & production

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



Editorial support

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



Lewis Walker

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

March's theme
The Economy

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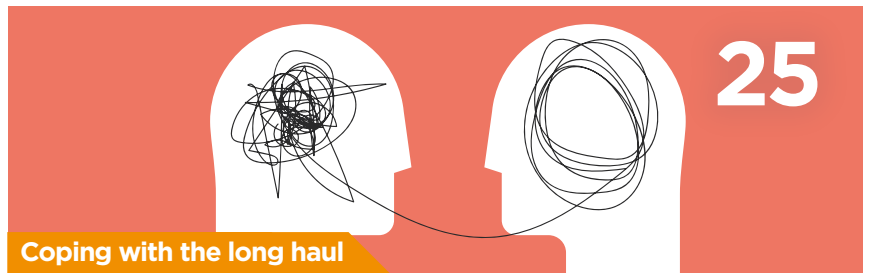
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Our partners

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

Groundhog Day or a new start?

WELCOME to 2021 and the first Business Bulletin issue of a new year. But will it be a good one or just an action replay of the last?

As you read this, the chances are we will still be gripped in CV19 lockdown and beginning to understand the impacts of our EU exit on supply chains and the availability of goods on shelves.

The common thread is that business continues to bear the brunt of the decisions taken and implemented by our politicians.

And you can't shake the feeling that either they don't fully understand the impact of the resulting chaos on companies, jobs and livelihoods or worse, just don't care. The phrase 'we appreciate the capacity of business to adapt' used in announcing the tightened restrictions seemed unapologetic. In fact, almost dismissive.

In contrast there is sympathy, rightly, for our young people and the effects of this on their education. But we need a vibrant private sector to create the jobs they will fill in the future.

The Developing the Young Workforce initiative hosted by the Chamber is being significantly expanded enabling greater levels of engagement with regional businesses to provide enhanced outcomes for our young people. Find out more at dyw.org.uk

January and February are often the most difficult months of the year in terms of trading and cash flow for many businesses and the actions we continue to see could be the straws that breaks the back of many that have been clinging on hoping for better things in 2021.

These are tough times for most companies. And this includes the Chamber, with many of our key income streams cut off or severely limited. The support of you, our members, is appreciated and vital in enabling us to continue the work we do ensuring the voice of our business community is heard and acted on in the corridors of power.

Our position has consistently been that support schemes are no substitute for a fully functioning economy. But for as

long as this remains restricted we will continue to call on our governments to substantially step-up levels of meaningful cash support to ensure that otherwise vibrant and viable businesses make it out the other side.

Many column inches have been given over to the impact on businesses but the lifeblood of our companies are their people. Despite increasing usage of technology, the simple fact for employers is that achieving meaningful staff inclusion is much more challenging in a virtual environment.

The idea that homeworking somehow increases productivity is just not true in many cases. We are human beings, programmed for social interaction. While Zoom and Teams meetings are functional and enable information exchange, this is entirely 2D. The third dimension of spontaneity, creativity, relationship-building, white-of-the-eyes trust, mentoring, team development and water cooler conversation must not be lost.

Studies tell us that the isolation resulting from previous pandemics has led to large numbers of people withdrawing from the outside world and finding it challenging to rebuild their networks. And there are estimates that for an unfortunate minority, perhaps 10 to 15%, life will not return to normal, due to the impact of the pandemic on their mental wellbeing.

The organisations that recognise and act on these challenges will be those well placed to attract and retain the best employees as we rebuild our economy.

The Chamber is and always has been about in-person connection and we stand ready to support the people and companies of the North-east in getting back to business.



Russell Borthwick
chief executive





Ian McCarlie

Pinsent Masons advises on wind farm sale

MULTINATIONAL law firm Pinsent Masons has advised Red Rock Power Limited on the sale of 50% of the Inch Cape Offshore Wind Farm development and subsequent joint venture with ESB.

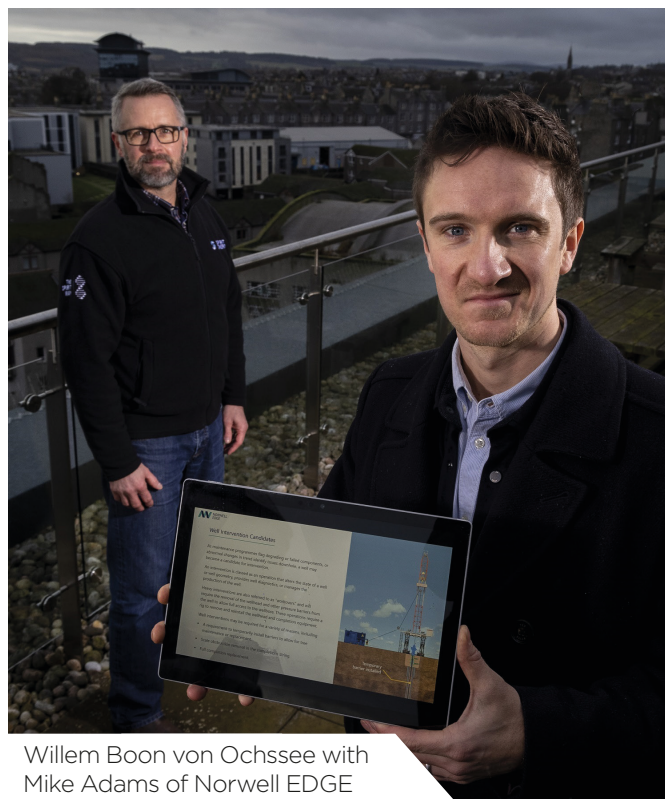
Once complete, the wind farm will generate approximately one gigawatt of electricity, powering up to one million households, and be one of Scotland's largest single sources of renewable energy. The project envisages up to 72 turbines located 15 km off the Angus coast and will connect to the National Grid at Cockenzie, East Lothian.

The team at Pinsent Masons was led by energy partner Ian McCarlie and corporate legal director Brian Thumath with support from the firm's construction and regulatory specialists.

Sustainability award for airports

THE efforts of AGS Airports, which owns Aberdeen International, Glasgow and Southampton airports, in working towards a more sustainable future for aviation have been recognised by the global sustainability organisation Global Real Estate Sustainability Benchmark (GRESB). Described as a mission-driven and investor-led organisation, GRESB provides standardised and validated environmental, social and governance data to the capital markets.

Aberdeen and Glasgow received a five-star rating for their sustainability performance and both were recognised as 'airport transport sector leads'. Glasgow, Aberdeen and Southampton were ranked first, second and third respectively within both the UK and European Transport: Airport Companies categories. In the same worldwide category, Glasgow was ranked first, Aberdeen second and Southampton sixth.



Willem Boon von Ochssee with Mike Adams of Norwell EDGE

Operators collaborate with e-learning firm

A NEW collaboration that brings two major operators together with a leading energy e-learning firm is aiming to raise standards and improve training levels across the UK and wider North Sea oil and gas sector.

The joint venture between Spirit Energy, Neptune Energy and Norwell EDGE will deliver a digital well Integrity training programme based around Oil and Gas UK's (OGUK) well lifecycle guidelines and Norwell EDGE's own technical e-learning technology.

The training will enable the operators to deliver a standardised course of e-learning for well integrity, similar in concept to the Minimum Industry Safety Training, across their international workforce. The goal of the collaboration is to help boost knowledge and standardisation in safety-critical areas such as well integrity, with the hope additional operators will join the initiative over the next 12 months.

Willem Boon von Ochssee, principal well engineer at Spirit Energy said: "The benefits of a wider programme of well integrity training is something Spirit Energy has been promoting for a while now and, with the change in how we are all working, we recognised the need to accelerate the move to a digital platform.

"The idea for a 'common' well integrity programme satisfying the OGUK guidelines came out of a well integrity workgroup discussion and it was something we were very keen to see move forward. We hope that by improving access to well integrity training and promoting the concept of standardised well integrity training it will positively impact the ability of our personnel to work safely and help keep our wells safe."



Motoring ahead for the 2021 season

FOLLOWING a tough 2020 CV19 affected season, Alford based four-star visitor attraction Grampian Transport Museum has been awarded a grant of £221,000 from the Museums and Galleries Scotland (MGS) Recovery and Resilience Fund.

The money will help the museum through the winter and to reopen for the 2021 season better ready to meet the challenges of caring for the environment.

Curator Mike Ward said: "Despite all the challenges of this year the museum opened in July with CV19 safeguards in place. Our staff have been excellent in coping with the new measures and systems and their efforts have been recognised by visitors' comments on TripAdvisor which have been greatly appreciated. The support from our friends, followers and members during the foreshortened 2020 season was excellent but without this grant winter was looking very bleak.

"The MGS grant has enabled us to recover now by covering our winter running costs whilst also planning for a lower cost and more environmentally friendly future, more resilient to meet future challenges facing the tourism sector.

"It is important to remember that the museum is not about the building or the grounds, it is about what we do, housing and caring for an historically important collection of artefacts and interpreting them in an historically correct but fun and entertaining way for visitors of all ages. The museum has an important educational role and we very much enjoy bringing the history of land travel to life in the minds of our visitors in a topical and relevant way."



Manfred Vonlanthen

Evolution leads to new brand for Swire

SWIRE Oilfield Services has unveiled a new corporate brand as the business continues to embrace the current energy transition.

It has changed its name to Swire Energy Services after more than 40 years' operating in the oil and gas industry.

The move follows a period of diversification for Swire during which it has evolved from the world's largest supplier of specialised offshore containers to the oil and gas market, to an integrated provider offering additional and complementary solutions including aviation, integrity and chemical services.

The company also now operates in industries other than oil and gas, including marine and offshore wind and has set its sights on growing its market share in both.

Manfred Vonlanthen, Swire Energy Services' chief executive officer, said: "We have continually evolved our business through both organic growth and acquisition. As a result, we have expanded our service offering on a global basis to ensure we continue to meet the demands of our customers. This next step is undoubtedly an exciting moment in the history of our company as we become a fully integrated service provider, playing a significant role in the energy transition."



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Producing results

IT HAS been estimated that around half of the UK workforce is now working from home, driven there by CV19 and the need to socially distance. But are they really working, or are they watching daytime TV, hanging out the washing, taking the dog for a walk or browsing social media on their office laptops?

And does it really matter what they are doing, or when, if they successfully complete at least the same amount of work as they would in the office from 9 - 5?

How can employers be sure what their staff are doing and should they be checking up on how long they spend at their desks, how long it takes to reply to an email and which websites they are visiting?

Home working brings many additional challenges and research has shown that 80% of those in the UK who have had to make the switch believe it has had a negative impact on their mental health.

More than a third feel they always have to be at their computers to respond quickly and not being in the physical presence of colleagues makes them feel unable to take a break and step away from their workstations. A quarter say they are

finding it difficult to cope with the mental challenges of loneliness and isolation from colleagues.

But are they more productive and how do you ensure that your staff are not working too much at home rather than too little?

Perhaps the most quoted research on home working productivity was carried out by Stanford University's Professor Nicholas Bloom who conducted an experiment with 500 of the 16,000 employees of China's largest travel agency, Ctrip. The chief executive officer was interested in

The study lasted two years and showed a productivity boost among the home workers equivalent to a full day's work. The research revealed they worked a full-shift, or more, were never late or left early, found fewer distractions making it easier to concentrate at home, they took shorter breaks, and had fewer sick days and less time off.

giving employees the work-from-home option because office space in the company's Shanghai HQ was supremely expensive and because employees had to endure long commutes to work because city living cost too much.

Two groups of 250 employees were selected with one continuing to work at the HQ and the other working at home. The home workers had to have a private room, suitable broadband and have been with the company for at least six-months.

The study lasted two years and showed a productivity boost among the home workers equivalent to a full day's work. The research revealed they worked a full-shift, or more, were never late or left early, found fewer distractions making it easier to concentrate at home, they took shorter breaks, and had fewer sick days and less time off.

Another bonus for the company was reduced rental because less office space was required. However, more than half of those who elected to work from home changed their minds about doing it 100% of the time because of feelings of isolation.

The Fraser of Allander Institute surveyed over 500 businesses in October to understand their views



on the impact of home working. It found that only 10% believed it had improved productivity in their organisation. The majority also thought it had made performance management of staff more difficult and had a negative impact on workplace innovation and collaboration.

So, there are clearly strong pros and cons to home working and there are even digital tools on the market which can be being used to monitor staff by taking screenshots of desktops and laptops remotely and noting login times and active screen time.

However, it is not technology which would be considered by Sheryl Newman, the award-winning chief executive officer of Appetite for Business, a Microsoft 365 consultancy which helps clients achieve the most from software and run their businesses more effectively.

Her company has a proven track record of making significant improvements in productivity, but on software which monitors details like when staff take breaks or how quickly they respond to emails.

She said: "Why on earth would any company want to use that? Good leadership is what leads to good productivity and part of that is trust.

You shouldn't be assessing people by how long they are at their desk but by their results by setting deliverables and making sure these deliverables are being made."

She said the business world has changed dramatically because of CV19 and people now realise that having a flexible way of

“

"Why on earth would any company want to use that? Good leadership is what leads to good productivity and part of that is trust. You shouldn't be assessing people by how long they are at their desk but by their results by setting deliverables and making sure these deliverables are being made."

Sheryl Newman,
chief executive officer,
Appetite for Business

working, perhaps a hybrid working environment, is the new way forward.

"People will require much more understanding of collaborative tools and how they can work to support their businesses because that is the future - we are not going back to what it was before.

"A number of our clients and colleagues have seen an 80% reduction in admin time by automating business processes. We did research with a client pre-covid and saw staff saving up to an hour a day, so five hours a week, by being more efficient and actually understanding what software they have got and how to use it to their advantage. We worked with a client recently where a subset of 200 users saved 193 days a year, which is big numbers."

She said if people understand their technology there can be dramatic improvements whether they are working at home or in the office.

"In an office if someone doesn't understand something they may ask a colleague - so that's two people trying to work out how to do it and sometimes these wasteful costs are not seen.

"We do a lot of work helping people



with data migration into an online 365 system and recent research revealed that if you don't have your information stored correctly you will be paying one in five people a salary to just try to find information. That's a scary thought.

"When people are working at home you need to manage them differently and set expectations differently to be able to achieve the results you need. We set tasks with a deadline time or date and I will say to my team: 'At the end of the day these tasks need to be achieved. How you do it and when you do it, I don't really mind as long as customers' needs are met.

"It works really well for me because people don't always work 9-5. Some are better in the afternoon while others work better in the evening. As long as you allow people flexibility, but with clear guidelines and expectations of delivery, they work especially well. I think if a company is having to monitor everything its staff is doing there is something fundamentally wrong with the business."

The launch of one successful technology designed to support remote working was accelerated because of CV19. Three years before the pandemic and its transformative impact on culture, work and life,

the digital platform Proteus, with the capability to revolutionise how companies' resource and deliver projects was conceived.

Colin Manson, co-founder and chief executive of the remote working tool said: "We'd been working on our initial idea of a digital platform for around three years. Although we had always planned to launch this year, the pandemic and subsequent lockdown accelerated the shift to remote working, which Proteus was designed to support, and therefore it became more imperative and relevant to fast-track its roll-out."

Proteus is a cloud-based operating system which can transform the way in which businesses work and how they source and use talent to resource and deliver projects. Simplifying the management of projects from proposals through to invoicing Proteus drives significant efficiency improvements. By connecting companies with the talent they need, as and when they need it, and making remote working as effective as being in the office, it maximises utilisation rates but minimises costs.

Originally designed to meet the specific challenges facing oil and gas companies in resourcing complex and demanding engineering projects, the digital operating system is suitable for

any company in any sector including renewables, financial and legal.

Colin said: "If the crisis has taught us one thing, it's that remote and flexible working is possible. Employers who were opposed to flexible, remote working have been forced to concede that it can work. Smart companies will be exploring how they can maximise this shift in behaviour to save costs, slash overheads and in turn, increase productivity and profit.

"Proteus really does offer that fully remote experience. If you've got an internet connection you can be at work. Not only does this make reaching employees a doddle, but it also offers your hard-working team a more flexible office environment alongside adaptable and easy to view project plans. The result? A happy workforce who can enjoy a work-life balance that suits them - without productivity taking a hit."

Which attributes do you most like to see in a colleague or employee and why?



“Operating in the communications sector it’s a people business so the attributes I have always look for is first and foremost the ability to communicate and hold a conversation with good eye contact, enthusiasm, comfortable with who they are, good listeners and the ability to always add value to the customer’s needs.

“Over my career I have tended to lean toward ‘wounded animals’ people who perhaps need a second chance, no real education to speak of, a bit unhinged and hold a bit of risk but full of promise - not always a good strategy as I have found to my cost at times, perhaps I see a little bit of myself in these traits! The overriding attributes for me are sincerity, reliability, honesty and a team player attitude. It is important to be yourself but be prepared to accept subtle changes that will improve your overall value. Oh, and dress as you want to but always have clean shoes and minty fresh breath.”

Spencer Buchan, *managing director and co-owner*, Quantum Digital – Scotland



“One of the greatest attributes I most like to see in a colleague or employee is adaptability. Within accountancy and taxation practices we are constantly dealing with changes to legislation, therefore adaptability is extremely important. Of course, we all have to keep up with technology and changes in the digital world, and this has been particularly relevant in our industry in recent years, however, our business and the people working in it adapted to the changes to ensure that we were a step ahead of our competitors and could continue to offer our clients the most up-to-date service delivery.

“With all the challenges that we are facing at the moment in respect of CV19 being adaptable is an essential trait as we all look for ways to deal with our day to day working life. Modern work environments change quickly and drastically. If you want to stick it out for the long haul, you need to be prepared to meet those changes with a positive attitude.”

Stuart Beaton, *client manager*, SBP Accountants & Tax Advisers



“Aside from possessing the appropriate skills and talent for their role we look for people who’ll slot comfortably into our wider team. Honesty, a positive attitude and a passion for what they do are also key but pretty much a given. The ability to communicate and collaborate effectively is also really important as we often work in multiple teams and that’s become paramount as we’ve adjusted to working remotely over the past year.

“We also look for colleagues with different viewpoints - our team is comprised of individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds and it’s these differences that allow us to approach problem solving and push boundaries from a variety of interesting angles. Humility is another important attribute we look for in employees and colleagues. It’s important to the company as a whole as we’re renowned for being very approachable and down-to-earth.”

Colin Leonard, *founder*, Design and Code

**NORTH EAST
SCOTLAND
COLLEGE**



FLEXIBLE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FUND

ACCESS TO FREE TRAINING FOR NORTH EAST EMPLOYERS

Fresh incentives for SMEs are among the new elements of the package of support available through the recently announced 2020/21 Flexible Workforce Development Fund (FWDF).

North East Scotland College has been allocated £1.879 million to deliver training in the region, with applications open now on a first come first served basis for organisations keen to take advantage of the funding.

Apprenticeship Levy paying employers can access training up to a maximum value of £15,000 – this funding is not restricted to apprenticeship training and can be used for any employee.

Levy-payers can also nominate up to two of their supply chain companies to receive all or part of their allocation or can include supply chain company staff in training they have identified as a collective priority.

An SME that is not a levy payer can also now access support through the scheme, with up to a maximum of £5,000 of training available.



An employer that is both a Levy-payer and an SME can apply through the Apprenticeship Levy funding stream or the SME funding stream, but not both.

North East employers can choose from a range of established NESCol courses or can request a course tailored to specific needs.



Neil Cowie, NESCol's Principal and Chief Executive, said:

"The social and economic impacts of Coronavirus are still being felt across the region and the College is committed to playing a central role in the North East's recovery."

"Training and upskilling will be vital in the months and years ahead, helping to ensure we have a resilient and adaptable workforce that is equipped to meet the challenges being faced in all sectors."

"The Flexible Workforce Development Fund is an important resource for employers and opens up a comprehensive range of training opportunities."

"The additional funding in place this year is very welcome and will support expanded provision at this crucial time. We look forward to working with employers to help meet their needs in 2021."

Training in areas including business and management, health and safety, digital skills and engineering is on offer – with bespoke courses also available across the College's curriculum.

Options for online class delivery are possible for many courses, with NESCol's distance learning programme developed to provide skills for employment, including personal and professional development, and accredited qualifications.

Training must be contractually agreed by 31 July 2021 and must have started by 31 August 2021.

Find out more at www.nescol.ac.uk/fwdf
or email IainCocker@nescol.ac.uk



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NESCollege



Rob Swanson

Industry award for CALA's Rob

A NORTH-EAST site manager is celebrating an industry award win from the National Home Building Council (NHBC).

CALA Homes' Rob Swanson, site manager at the housebuilder's Milltimber Manor development in Aberdeen, has been awarded the Seal of Excellence award, following his Pride in the Job award win earlier in the year.

This award is the second stage of the NHBC competition and is in recognition of a site manager's commitment to delivering high quality results and achieving the highest possible standards in the house building sector.

It is the first time that Rob has been awarded the title for this CALA development and he is one of the thirteen site managers across Scotland to receive the Seal of Excellence this year.

Two new contracts for LOC Group

LOC Group, the international marine and engineering consulting firm, has been awarded new contracts with SBM Offshore to act as Marine Warranty Surveyor (MWS) on two of their Floating Production Storage and Offloading (FPSO) projects.

The FPSOs will be deployed offshore Brazil and Guyana. LOC will provide MWS services for the transportation and installation operations relating to the FPSO on one of the projects and the FPSO topsides on the other.



McGregor joins NRG Group

WELL integrity, engineering and project management specialist, the NRG Group, has acquired a majority stake in Aberdeen-based well engineering and drilling recruitment firm McGregor Consultants.

The deal paves the way for growth through their combined synergy with planned expansion into new global territories and sectors for both companies.

McGregor Consultants will become an NRG Group company but continue to trade under the same name. Based in Golden Square, the business currently has a headcount of six, including founders Jo McGregor and Angie McGregor, who set up the company in 2006. They will retain a share in the business and remain as directors.

Family-owned NRG Group comprises of NRG Well Examination and NRG Well Management and was founded by chairman Andrew Mackay in 1988, becoming the largest well examiner globally and providing well engineering and project management services for operators worldwide.

Granite Noir returns with digital programme

GRANITE Noir, Aberdeen's crime fiction festival, will return this month as an online celebration of the very best of home grown and international crime writing.

The digital programme will offer both live and pre-recorded author conversations, panel discussions, creative workshops and events for young people and will run from February 19 to 21. All events will be free to view.

Granite Noir is inspired by the Granite City – its history, its atmosphere and its strong sense of place – and produced by Aberdeen Performing Arts on behalf of partners Belmont Filmhouse, Aberdeen City Libraries and Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Archives.

Aberdeen Performing Arts chief executive Jane Spiers said: "This has been a challenging year not only for live events but also for the publishing industry. Granite Noir is a showcase for the very best in Scottish and international crime writing and also for the city of Aberdeen, and we wanted to follow on from the tremendous success of the 2020 Festival, even if we can't welcome live audiences to our venues."

The value of data-driven decisions

AFTER the strangest and most difficult year which most businesses will ever face, how are your employees coping?

They may not have been in the office for months, possibly working with colleagues they have never met in the flesh and with whom they are trying to build real relationships via digital platforms.

Most importantly, how engaged are they with the company and its aims and aspirations?

Given the enormous challenges which have had to be overcome during 2020 it is quite likely that carrying out employee engagement research was not high on the priority list for companies, particularly those which don't have the internal resources to carry out such work.

Kirsten Irvine, research team leader at the Chamber, believes there has never been a more appropriate time to research what's happening in your workforce: "2020 was really difficult for businesses and employees obviously faced challenges throughout the year, whether being required to work from home or continuing to go into the office throughout the pandemic," she said.

"Many may also have been facing

furlough or even redundancy. These things can be very stress inducing and can cause a lot of anxiety so it's very important for employers to take the time to listen to employee concerns and make sure they are adequately supported.

"A company's workforce is going to be essential to its recovery and growth and making sure skilled

“

"In a downturn in the economy, businesses are often facing serious financial difficulty and struggling to generate revenue and profit, so it's understandable that they may lose focus on employee engagement, but in the months ahead this will be very important."

Kirsten Irvine,
research team leader,
Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber
of Commerce

employees are retained and kept engaged and feeling valued will be critically important.

"In a downturn in the economy, businesses are often facing serious financial difficulty and struggling to generate revenue and profit, so it's understandable that they may lose focus on employee engagement, but in the months ahead this will be very important.

"The main long-term objective of conducting employee research is to improve the company in some way and there could be a number of specific drivers behind that. It could be, for example, to improve staff morale, the working environment, productivity or efficiency.

"Ultimately every company will have its own specific reasons for conducting employee research but overall the results should help to identify problems and guide the direction of an appropriate action plan, and when that is done well you should expect to see improvements in employee engagement.

"There are numerous studies which show that engaged employees deliver substantial benefits for their employers including increased productivity and profitability, reduced absenteeism and



improved staff retention. With employee engagement playing such a significant role in company performance, it should be a top priority for all companies. But some companies won't have any formal or tangible measurement of how engaged their employees are, which makes improving it quite difficult to do. Conducting formal employee research is a great starting point for this and will provide valuable benchmark data to measure changes over time.

"Most companies, apart from very large ones, won't have the internal resources to manage a comprehensive and reliable survey themselves and then find the time to convert that data into usable and actionable information. If an independent and unbiased third-party conducts the survey it gives a little bit more assurance of data protection and confidentiality and it will also increase the reliability and accuracy of the findings simply because employees are more likely to be objective and honest in their feedback."

Kirsten explained that most often these surveys are quantitative and involve a series of carefully crafted objective questions which provide data which can be analysed to provide valuable insight on your

employee engagement levels.

"Quantitative surveys are useful in capturing measurable data and metrics that can be easily tracked over time and help to identify common problems based on numerical evidence. This will be beneficial in setting priorities and key actions in your strategic plan.

"However, businesses may also benefit from capturing some qualitative data to obtain further detailed insight and more understanding of the reasons behind the data. This type of data can also

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“The Chamber has carried out two successful surveys for us which has enabled us to continue with internal surveys to help achieve continuous improvement.”

Fiona Douglas,
office and finance manager,
VisitAberdeenshire

be gathered in an online survey by incorporating some bespoke open questions which provide employees with the opportunity to comment and give direct feedback, or this could be acquired via interviews with staff if this method is preferred and is appropriate for the workforce.

"In addition to employee engagement research, we also carry out sector-specific research for a variety of industries, customer research designed to identify, measure and track the key drivers that influence your customers' behaviour, and economic impact analysis which can help to inform your priorities, develop your case to investors and measure how well your initiatives perform."

VisitAberdeenshire is one organisation benefitting from employee engagement research. Fiona Douglas, office and finance manager, said it had allowed them to focus on areas with potential for improvement which they might not previously have been aware of. They commissioned the Chamber to carry out the first of two surveys in 2017.

"I thought it was something we should do to obtain feedback and understanding from the team as to how they felt the organisation was being run and to highlight



any changes they wanted to see implemented,” she said.

“The Chamber has carried out two successful surveys for us which has enabled us to continue with internal surveys to help achieve continuous improvement. The surveys contained approximately 40 questions to measure staff satisfaction across a number of areas which allowed us create our people strategy for the following year, focusing on any areas which scored lower.

“We have been lucky and have always had a very good response rate and also a very good overall engagement score and following the first survey we passed the results to an external HR consultant to help us understand the results and shape our response and actions.

“We looked at five main areas – management and leadership; internal business environment; recognition and development; commitment and motivation; and employer-employee relationship. We ask the team to work through a series of questions rating them across a 1 to 10 scale. We now have data from the previous years so we can see where we have moved forward, or declined, and identify areas of improvement and the areas we still need to work on. We have seen positive increases

in certain areas, through targeted improvement actions, that we maybe hadn’t performed so well in.

“We always include a couple of open-ended questions at the end of the surveys which ask which two things the team would improve on in the organisation and the two best things about working for the organisation. You are giving people the opportunity to share their views and opinions in the open-ended questions, which provide you with valuable insights.”

Fiona said following the success of the Chamber surveys she has carried out a number of internal surveys with a recent focus on the pandemic.

“I think this type of research will be particularly valuable in the months ahead as we hopefully come out of this pandemic. It is important to get views from the staff on, for example, how they are finding working from home and what their thoughts are about returning to the office.”

If you would like to find out what the Chamber’s research experts could do for you, email research@agcc.co.uk

Workforce quiz

1. To what extent are engaged teams more profitable?
 - a. 10%
 - b. 16%
 - c. 21%
2. What proportion of employees worldwide are not engaged or are actively disengaged in their job?
 - a. 35%
 - b. 65%
 - c. 85%
3. What proportion of British workers are engaged at work?
 - a. 11%
 - b. 22%
 - c. 33%
4. To what extent do highly engaged teams report lower absenteeism?
 - a. 16%
 - b. 28%
 - c. 41%
5. Which region has the highest level of employee engagement?
 - a. Middle East / North Africa
 - b. US / Canada
 - c. Australia / New Zealand

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Ian Kirk

Half of company given to employees

AN INTERNATIONAL leader in the provision of creative solutions for the oil and gas completions market has marked its third anniversary by giving almost half of the company to its employees.

Westhill-based Vulcan Completion Products (VCP) has launched an Enterprise Management Incentive (EMI) to give its employees shares in the company through an HMRC-backed scheme which aims to help smaller, independent businesses attract and retain the best employees as they work to realise their corporate potential.

As well as including current members of staff in the UK and overseas, the VCP project has one eye on the future and includes shares which have been set aside for the additional members of staff who are expected to join the ranks as the company continues its ambitious growth plans.

Despite ongoing economic challenges posed by the CV19 pandemic, the company has experienced a sharp upturn in business during the last few months with international markets in particular showing encouraging signs. This has prompted the VCP team to sharpen its focus on key emerging overseas markets such as South America where two local offices have just been opened to position the company close to its growing client base in the region.

President Ian Kirk said: "The ethos of fairness which drives our current structure has been something I have strived to achieve throughout my career, and formalising it in this way is something I have wanted to do for a very long time. The ongoing CV-19 pandemic is a stark reminder of how important it is to look after people so the time is absolutely correct to put this in place.

"Between us, the VCP team has more than 200 years of combined expertise and the model of the business very much centres around celebrating and capitalising on that level of knowledge and experience, rather than being driven by volume.

"Employees are the heart and fabric of the company and it's crucial that they feel part of its evolution through the unique outlook this set-up gives them. Creating this co-operative environment undoubtedly brings people together in a fair and transparent way which correctly rewards loyalty and works hard to hold on to good people as we grow together."

A word of advice



Catriona Spendlicek,
Involve HR LLP,
Client manager/senior HR advisor

What's your area of expertise?

Providing customer focused, comprehensive and pragmatic HR advice and support to clients is my area of expertise. I have a breadth of understanding and first-hand experience in dealing with all sorts of people matters and during my career, I have developed a deep insight into employment legislation and how it impacts on the world of work. Our team specialise in providing clients with a wide range of HR support to deal with everyday operational HR matters to project related and strategic activities such as training and development, restructuring and change management.

What should people know?

It is easy to feel overwhelmed when it comes to effective employee engagement. It is important to support your workforce but it does not always require a complex strategy. Often a simple, short but frequent approach works best when managing people, particularly in the current climate where so many of us are working from home and physically distanced from our colleagues. Managers should remember to encourage direct one-to-one contact and take the time to listen and support as much as possible.

What's the biggest mistake companies make?

During these evolving challenging times, it is easy to forget to check-in with teams on a regular basis, particularly as the changes are so fast paced and have not been experienced before. However, despite the increasing strains on work-life balance and mental wellbeing, the biggest mistake is poor communication. Don't let conflicting priorities and deadlines get in the way of speaking with your staff. Make it your number one priority.

What's your top tip?

Although the world has grasped virtual communications with both arms, they cannot replace the benefits of human interaction to ensure communication is consistent and meaningful. Take the time to speak with your staff one-to-one. Find the right balance of communication that ensures employees feel trusted as well as supported. By setting clear expectations, trust your team to work remotely without the need for constantly checking up on them.

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Employment tribunals - interim relief

by Annika Neukirch,
senior solicitor - employment, Stronachs LLP



MANY employers have never been involved in employment tribunal proceedings before, and even fewer are familiar with a type of remedy that a tribunal can award a claimant called 'interim relief'. In simple terms, if an interim relief application is made and is successful, a claimant remains on full pay until the final hearing is decided. Even if the claim is unsuccessful, the claimant does not have to repay the money they have received. This, of course, makes it very appealing to claimants.

Interim relief is currently only available for a very small number of unfair dismissal claims, including where the alleged reason or principal reason for the dismissal was that the employee was a member of a trade union, made a whistleblowing disclosure or carried out activities as a health and safety representative. However, the scope of cases for which interim relief is available may widen in the near future.

Tight time limits apply to interim relief applications, as they must be submitted together with the employment tribunal claim form

within seven days of the employee being dismissed. Once an application has been received, the tribunal fixes a preliminary hearing to decide whether interim relief should be granted. Again, timescales are tight and employers only have to be given seven days' notice of the hearing. The test for granting interim relief is whether the employee is likely to succeed at a full hearing. To determine this, the tribunal will look at documentary evidence and may also hear from witnesses.

Due to the tight time limits and the limited cases for which interim relief is currently available, few of these applications are generally made. However, the scope of interim relief may be set to expand, with an English case on this point, *Steer v Stormsure Limited* UKEAT/0216/20, likely to go to the Court of Appeal in the coming months.

The claimant in that decision had argued that it is unlawful under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) that interim relief is not available in cases involving discrimination and victimisation. The Employment Appeal Tribunal (EAT) agreed, stating that no

justification had been provided as to why whistleblowers, for example, should have access to this remedy while claimants complaining of discrimination should not.

Although the EAT does not itself have the power to declare that a piece of UK legislation does not conform to the ECHR, given the importance of this point and that the EAT effectively agreed with the claimant in principle, it seems very likely that this case will go to appeal.

If this appeal is successful and the legislation on interim relief is found to be incompatible with the ECHR, we can likely expect a significant widening of the availability of interim relief and potentially an increase in the number of applications made. Given the tight deadlines involved (as noted above, employers may only receive seven days' notice of a hearing for interim relief), this may pose significant challenges to employers.

Stronachs



BioHub construction starts

THE transformational £40m BioHub project to double the size of North-east Scotland's high-growth life sciences company cluster will move into its main construction phase in the new year.

The new-build, 69,000sq ft BioHub on the Foresterhill Health Campus will provide specialist support programmes and dedicated laboratory, collaboration and office accommodation for established and growing life sciences businesses, start-ups and spinouts. It will also be a focal point for international partnerships and investor engagement.

Companies, researchers, clinicians and academics in Aberdeen are at the forefront of high-value developments in biologics and new therapeutics, digital health and medtech, all built on a strong culture of collaborative innovation. BioHub will accelerate commercialisation in the sector to address modern health challenges, including CV19, improve patient outcomes and change how healthcare is delivered. BioHub will anchor innovative businesses and jobs in the region and support the growth of the national health economy.

Caribbean contract for TEMS

TEMS International, a provider of environmental management and compliance services to oil and gas exploration and production companies, has been awarded a major contract for work in offshore Trinidad and Tobago.

The independent oil and gas service firm, which is headquartered in Aberdeen and has offices in Houston and Kuala Lumpur, is providing its continuous environmental compliance and drilling performance management services onboard two rigs in the waters off the Caribbean islands.

The contract is with a major international oil and gas E&P company and is worth a high six-figure sum. TEMS International engineers will work alongside rig personnel to ensure drilling operations adhere to or surpass local environmental regulations, while also improving the efficiency of drilling operations.



Landmine clearance can make oil and gas industry safer

NEPTUNE Energy has formed a new partnership with worldwide humanitarian landmine clearance organisation, The HALO Trust, to improve safety performance within both organisations.

Neptune teams will demonstrate its systematic approach to incident management, root cause databases and learning review techniques, gained from decades in the oil and gas industry, to its counterparts at HALO. In turn, HALO will share how their use of training and supervision supports positive behaviours and practices among teams clearing landmines and other unexploded ordnance from areas affected by war.

Neptune's Group HSEQ director Kick Sterkman said: "While the day-to-day work our organisations carry out may be fundamentally different, we both operate in high-risk environments that require strong focus, a skilled and well-trained workforce and where there is absolutely no room for complacency.

"We are committed to the protection of all our people and those we work with and this partnership provides Neptune and HALO with a unique opportunity to learn from one another, share lessons about the development of a strong safety culture and further enhance safety within each other's organisations."

Don't let fire incinerate your business

Craig Cooper,
managing director,
Safetynet



IN SCOTLAND around 50 people are killed each year by fire, and over 2,000 are seriously injured by fumes or burns. And businesses which experience a serious fire rarely survive.

As an employer, you have a legal requirement to reduce the risk of fire, by carrying out a fire risk assessment, training your employees and keeping your fire assessments and fire safety prevention measures up to date.

But it is not always easy to recognise fire hazards. At home, cooking is arguably the biggest risk but what about at work? Surprisingly, waste materials are one of the biggest hazards – piles of boxes in a corner, paper left around photocopiers, overloaded shredding machines. If ignited, paper and cardboard will spread fire easily. Electric heaters can also be a big risk in the workplace. A chilly employee who leaves a heater unattended, unstable or close to combustible materials could more than wreck your business.

Faulty electrical equipment is the most common cause of workplace fires. Overloading sockets, poor wiring, old and broken equipment can all lead to sparks that can be devastating if near furnishings or other combustible materials. For this

reason, Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) is essential.

Whilst machinery faults can cause fires, the most dangerous item in the workplace is no doubt the human. Inadequate housekeeping, forgetfulness and smoking can lead to fire. Poorly trained employees can block ventilation, spill flammable liquids or improperly use machinery. Unfortunately, working in a hurry, and ignoring correct procedures can be a major health and safety risk.

The Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 calls for regular fire assessments to be carried out in the workplace. Firstly, identifying all the potential hazards is the key, followed by the various groups of people at risk – including visitors and the public – and how they will safely escape in the event of a fire. Employers are then required to evaluate and then remove or reduce the fire risk. Up to date records must be kept, and a regular fire assessment plan put in place.

The employer is also responsible for making sure employees are trained in safe working practices, and where there are more than five employees, a record should be kept of the fire risk assessment. Online risk assessment plans are a useful tool which can be made available to all employees in

addition to physical fire emergency action plan.

Keeping employees engaged in health and safety is just as important if they are working at home. New regulations for all homes to install smoke detectors and alarms were due to come into force in February 2021, but this has been delayed to February 2022. However, employees should be encouraged to take responsibility for their own health and safety and undertake fire risk assessments at home and check smoke alarms regularly.

Safetynet has extensive experience of conducting fire risk assessments in large and small organisations and can advise on home working safety. Our experts will carry out an audit and identify where issues may lie, then work with you to produce a succinct and easy to use fire plan. Fire can be deadly – stamp it out.



First outdoor nurseries by Halliday Fraser Munro

SCOTTISH architecture and planning practice Halliday Fraser Munro has developed the first outdoor nurseries of their kind in the country to help create progressive early learning provision.

Delivering on the increasingly popular concept of learning through open play, Halliday Fraser Munro has completed a number of innovative new-build nurseries and reconfigurations of existing facilities to reflect the latest educational thinking.

In line with The Scottish Government's commitment to increase funding for early learning and childcare (ELC) from 600 to 1,140 free hours per year, Halliday Fraser Munro recognises the need to develop new spaces for youngsters across Scotland.

The firm is working with Aberdeen City Council which has embraced the opportunities offered by learning through open play and has developed outdoor nurseries in Duthie Park and in Hazlehead Park. The children attending spend all their time outdoors, exploring in nature with landscaped learning areas.

David Halliday, managing director of Halliday Fraser Munro, said: "It's a huge privilege to be shaping the future of the next generation. ELC spaces are invariably the first places children spend any significant time outside the home so it's an environment that will shape their destiny. The new extended provisions also mean that some children will be spending a substantial part of their early lives in these spaces."

Pentagon wins Equinor contract

PENTAGON Freight Services Plc based in Dyce has been awarded a three-year contract for provision of global freight forwarding and associated services from Equinor (UK) Ltd. Pentagon Freight will provide the full scope of integrated local, national and international freight forwarding services in support of Equinor's logistics activities.

Omniscient 'shatters glass ceiling'

AT THE annual Oil & Gas UK Awards, Aberdeenshire-based Omniscient Safety Innovations Ltd, which specialises in workplace mental health solutions, won not only the Business Innovation SME award but also the Audience Voted award with more than 3,000 votes.

Owner Brett Townsley said he and his team were humbled and amazed to have won the awards and reflected on the importance of the win in terms of the shift in the industry. "We are absolutely staggered," he said. "At no point did we expect to win as we are not what you would class as typical innovation winners of OGUK awards, however we are massively grateful.

"This is a glass ceiling moment which has now been shattered and opens the way to real fundamental change in how we care for the mental health of all those in the industry. This validates the work we do in preventative workplace solutions for mental health and sets the standard for workplace mental health in the industry. Our goal has always been to remove the stigma of mental health and create preventative, proactive systemic solutions and this is a huge moment in those terms. We look forward to supporting industries of all types which recognise the need for improvement in 2021."

Rebranding for Solids Control Services

SOLIDS Control Services has rebranded to Separo to showcase a range of separation and filtration services.

Separo has expanded over recent years leading to the formation of three divisions - Solids Control Services, Industrial Waste Services and Wastewater Treatment Services.

Andrew Crutchley, chief operating officer, said: "We started our business offering services centred around the treatment and conditioning of drilling mud for the oil and gas industry in the North Sea from our bases in the Netherlands and UK."

Expro Australian success

EXPRO Group Australia Pty Ltd, a subsidiary of Expro International Group Holdings Ltd, has secured a major contract for its innovative subsea riserless well intervention (RWI) solution, supporting Chevron Australia.

The five-year contract is for the supply of light well intervention vessel services for the Chevron-operated Gorgon facility.

The RWI system, which was launched at the Offshore Technology Conference (OTC) last year, provides a reliable wire through-water integrated solution for carrying out cost effective intervention and/or abandonment operations on all types of subsea wells.

Inspiring young talent and growth at Keenan Recycling

Claire Keenan,
collections director,
Keenan Recycling



AS AN award-winning commercial food waste collection company, we have experienced significant organic growth through our geographical expansion which has been complemented by the knowledge and experience brought by our young and enthusiastic workforce.

We're not only passionate about tackling food waste but also about providing opportunities for young people with a chance to gain valuable business experience in a fast-growing company. This arrangement works both ways because we can learn a lot from their inquisitive minds too.

Young professionals tend to learn varied skills through courses or day to day use of technology, often bringing a fresh perspective to the business with a knack for implementing different kinds of software and data. We've found in recent years that it benefits the business to really harness this skillset and use it to our advantage. This, in turn, offers great business experience for young individuals.

Last year, one of our employees, Georgia Williams, showed a real talent and interest in digital marketing, having already touched on the subject during her BSc Communications and Media Studies at Robert Gordon University (RGU). Georgia joined the business in 2019 in a transport administrator role and quickly impressed the wider team with her proactive attitude and strong work ethic, so we were really keen to further invest in her talent and passion.

We've become increasingly aware of the importance of a digital presence, with more people going online for information. It helps form trust between clients and offers a much more responsive method of communication through the likes of instant chat functions, and interactions on social platforms.

We spent considerable time looking for the best course to develop Georgia's knowledge in this area. Thanks to her natural ability, she has been able to produce content that is directly relevant to our customer base.

Over the last year, Georgia has been splitting her work responsibilities with studying, undertaking a digital marketing modern apprenticeship through QA, one of the UK's leading tech skills organisations, and has now transitioned to a full-time digital marketing coordinator role.

In addition to developing and nurturing the talent from within Keenan, we have also established a partnership with RGU, offering various placements and opportunities for those interested in business operations.

During 2020, we provided a placement for student, Katherine Henderson, who joined as part of her third year BA (Hons) Business Management degree.

Katherine has shown an interest in the logistics side of the business and is currently working in a transport administrator role, which requires key skills in not just logistics, but

also administration, analytics, communication, and accuracy.

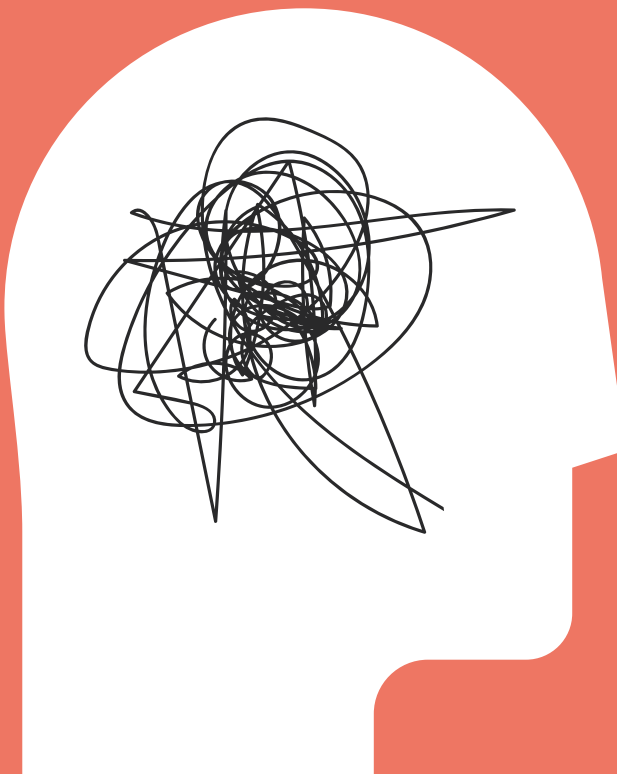
It's a great source of satisfaction for us to see the development of placement students as they begin to grow in confidence in the workplace. Business degrees are very widespread, so we feel it's important for students to explore a variety of roles during their time with us. This usually includes internal training mixed with on-the-job learning, which really boosts knowledge and understanding of the work they are doing.

Additionally, two more students from RGU will be joining us this month to help the team on a large scale six-month project which will require strong analytical and research skills from the students, as well as being able to work in a timely and productive manner.

I'm a firm believer that we can learn as much from young professionals and students as they learn from us. Sometimes you need someone to come in fresh to offer a different perspective, and a completely new idea, or way, of doing things.

At Keenan, we're passionate about continuing to provide more opportunities for young people to help them and our business thrive. At the same time, we're committed to seeing our own internal employees progress and develop.

Coping with the long haul



THE CV19 pandemic has dramatically changed almost every aspect of our lives creating not just unprecedented physical health problems but raising anxiety levels at home and in the workplace, bringing major mental health challenges.

As it became clear that enforced home working was destined to last not just for weeks but many months, companies addressed the more obvious hurdles of remote communication and the physical conditions in which their employees were forced to operate.

However, they must also ensure the mental welfare of staff, with many concerned about their jobs. For those facing redundancy the stress is obvious but for those managing the redundancies it can also be enormously stressful, particularly if in the unique circumstances of working from home without supportive colleagues alongside.

Euan Smith, partner and employment law specialist at Pinsent Masons said it is unsurprising that many employees are experiencing high levels of uncertainty, worry and stress, while those with pre-existing mental health conditions may find that these are being exacerbated. "The coronavirus pandemic has

touched every part of our society with social distancing, stay-at-home measures and restrictions on travel. In the workplace, employees have been displaced and are working from home, many have been furloughed and others will have doubts about future employment.

"Against this backdrop employers should recognise the risks that work-related stress can pose and that their general duties to take reasonable care for the health, safety and wellbeing of their workers and others are not relaxed due to the current crisis."

He said that Pinsent Masons' diversity and inclusion specialist consultancy, Brook Graham, was increasingly asked by clients to advise on strategies for supporting employees through this most challenging period and beyond.

"Putting in place support mechanisms and creating a culture where employees feel able to share challenges with mental health should enable employers to identify the risks and to devise and adopt strategies to manage them.

"Pinsent Masons was one of the first firms to join leading banks and law firms in developing the Mindful Business Charter (MBC), which is

aimed at improving the mental health and wellbeing of employees by eliminating unnecessary workplace stress through improved working practices.

"The charter recognises that certain types of stress can be avoided through small adjustments in our working behaviour and by adopting some MBC-inspired principles during the coronavirus pandemic, businesses can support staff in a variety of ways" Euan said these include:

Staying connected – when we are in physical isolation, keep everyone connected and engaged. This can be done simply by setting up regular calls or videoconferences during which teams are encouraged to listen and understand how their colleagues are coping, as well as to provide informal support.

Staying bound – while 'smart' meetings have proved their value, it is important to retain a sense of team bonding via less formal non-work-related virtual hangouts. Take advantage of the technological breakthroughs and consider holding coffee chatrooms and remote social sessions.

Staying flexible – we all have our different preferred methods of communication. Some may prefer



emails to phone calls, while others may prefer instant messaging. Discuss with colleagues upfront their preferred method and be conscious of the impact of your working patterns on others.

Staying mindful when working with others - for instance, we should show our understanding and compassion for working parents who are struggling with different roles during this critical period. Be transparent where possible when negotiating deadlines.

Staying yourself - it is important to switch off, recharge and connect with yourself and your family and friends. Be respectful of the right of others to do the same.

“Employers will be very familiar with the importance of maintaining a healthy and safe working environment for their staff,” he added, “That legal obligation would also extend to protecting the mental health of those employees and that should not be overlooked, particularly during this pandemic.”

Burness and Paull partner Tricia Walker highlighted how, if people had known back in March that this is how we would be working almost a year on, they might have planned it differently.

She said there are a whole litany of things to consider in relation to protecting people’s mental and physical health and although all the usual desktop assessments which would be carried out in the workplace might be more challenging, from a legal perspective there is still a requirement for employers to make sure people are safe.

“Some aspects of this have almost been like emergency response - just trying to deal with things as best you can in the circumstances and recognising that nothing is perfect and nothing is going to be perfect. However, as the pandemic continues, working arrangements need to continue to be reviewed and re-evaluated.

“We have asked people to look at whether they have the chairs, desks monitors and other hardware they need for where they are working. It might be particularly difficult for younger trainees who could be sharing a house and have just a bedroom and are sharing living and kitchen space. Everyone has their own particular challenges.

“The key thing throughout all this for me has been the importance of communication. Understanding what challenges people face in working safely and efficiently and ensuring

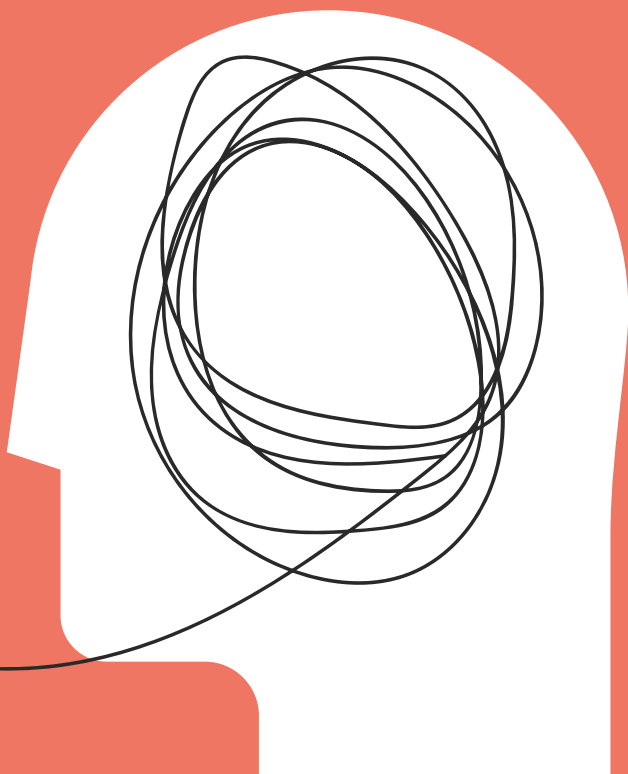
that staff know we are there for support.

“We must also make sure that people are properly assessing their own workstation and having communication about the basic things that you would almost take for granted in a workspace environment of confidentiality and workplace setup. However, it’s quite difficult to monitor things like people working too many hours and having comfort that they are actually looking after themselves.

“Many clients are making redundancies and redundancies are stressful at any time but right now there is the additional stress of knowing that it might be much more difficult to find another job. Where possible, employers making redundancies should make sure that appropriate employee support is available.

“Ordinarily an employer would be inviting the employee to meetings and sitting them down and talking about why, sadly, the business is having to make redundancies and why someone has been selected. Currently, those conversations are having to be had virtually, rather than face to face, which is not always easy.

“Redundancies are always stressful



for managers effecting the redundancies too, because no one enjoys making people redundant. There is certainly more stress at the moment because numbers are higher in an already stretched oil industry.

“Aberdeen has been through a number of rounds of redundancies before this pandemic and managers are having to make further large numbers of redundancies in an already slimmed staff. Support should be provided for managers too, which might just come in the form of personal advice from HR or being able to speak to colleagues who are having to do the same thing.

“Scoring your team is never a pleasant experience and sometimes asking ‘How did you approach this?’ and actually being able to information share challenges/difficulties with some of your colleagues can help. For anyone just sat on their own at their desk in their living room it can be quite overwhelming. Where possible, make sure there is support available and someone to speak to.”

At oil and gas exploration company Spirit Energy, employee wellbeing has become a central part of the company’s culture. Work was already in progress at the start of 2020 and was accelerated as the CV19 pandemic took hold, centred

around the company’s three pillars of wellbeing – mental, physical and financial.

“We already had a growing focus on supporting our teams where we could in these areas,” said Susan Grayson, Spirit’s director of diversity and inclusion (D&I), resourcing, talent and learning and development.

“That focus only became more acute as many of our people started working from home – while it comes with many benefits, we wanted to help our teams guard against the risks of becoming isolated or reduced physical activity in lockdown.”

Partnering with experts in these areas has been a core part of Spirit’s approach – an online platform for financial health, a company which monitors all aspects of physical health and recommends improvement plans; and a confidential mental health coaching service which approaches mental wellbeing in the same way personal trainers help gym-goers build on their physical health.

Susan said support for Spirit teams’ mental wellbeing had also been driven by the dedicated D&I function and the Network, the company’s employee-led organisation which advocates inclusion across groups focused on areas like gender balance,

developing professionals, ethnicity and working parents.

“The Working Parents Group for example has been a strong advocate for flexible working – a trend we were already building into our working patterns at Spirit but something which has really come under the spotlight during the CV19 pandemic,” she said.

“We were one of the first signatories to NHS Grampian’s Pick Me Up project – a campaign to offer staff as much flexibility as possible to collect their loved ones from hospital when they are ready for discharge – and across our business, encourage our teams to work at times to suit them, where possible and practical.”

Susan added that Spirit wanted to continue to build on its offering, and via engagement surveys is seeking feedback from employees both in Aberdeen and across its operations on what is working well and what can be improved.

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Hunter Adams new recruitment arm

HR CONSULTANCY Hunter Adams has launched a new recruitment arm, Hunter Adams Recruitment.

Hunter Adams has supported clients with recruitment for a number of years, deploying its internal team to support clients with direct hiring. Now, building on that successful track record, the company has decided to expand this side of the business.

Headed up by Eilidh Robertson, the new recruitment operation will serve clients throughout the UK across various sectors and disciplines.

This development follows a successful year to date for Hunter Adams. The home working phenomenon has enabled them to adapt their business model, now supporting clients in all corners of the UK on a remote basis.

Hunter Adams founder, Dean Hunter, said: "With the markets starting to pick back up again, we're confident that the new recruitment business will be a success. We have a very experienced and well-connected team from multi-discipline backgrounds, and this, combined with the fact we have historically been an HR business first and foremost, we feel will give us an edge over many of our competitors."

Nutrient package increased production

A PILOT test on a North Sea platform undertaken by Organic Oil Recovery (OOR) has increased production by 25,000 barrels and helped record the biggest measured oil output in more than five years from the tested well.

The pilot, on CNOOC Petroleum Europe Ltd's operated Scott platform approximately 187km North-east of Aberdeen, involved the team injecting specially prepared nutrients into a single well producer to activate resident microbes deep in the reservoir.

After being shut in for a number of days, the well was turned back on and production from the well increased to a level not seen for over five years. The cost of the pilot was paid back in less than a week and CNOOC and its partners achieved a return on investment of more than 1,000%. CNOOC, which operates Scott, and its partners are now studying the results with a view to proceeding to an injector-producer treatment in 2021.

The CNOOC pilot test is one of a number of trials that OOR is undertaking in the North Sea, Middle East and Asia. It is estimated that approximately 65 per cent of global oil reserves will be left in the ground as they are difficult to access.

The technology - developed by Titan Oil Recovery Inc in California and brought to the North Sea, Middle East and Asia by Hunting Energy Services - has been used on more than 52 oilfields, across four continents and has increased production on average by more than 92% with a success rate of 94%.



Award for Charandeep's voluntary work

CHARANDEEP Singh, deputy chief executive of the Scottish Chambers of Commerce, received a Special Recognition Award at the inaugural Hogmanay Pride of Scotland Awards.

He was honoured for his work with The Sikh Food Bank which delivered 100,000 meals for shielding and vulnerable households through the CV19 pandemic.

Supported by a 50-strong team of Sikh volunteers, Charandeep led the delivery of meals and food parcels to families across Glasgow as well as in Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen.

Dr Liz Cameron, director and chief executive of Scottish Chambers of Commerce said: "Charandeep is a truly influential force in Scotland breaking barriers in business and in charity. His incredible passion, dedication and commitment to helping others has made a real difference to communities across Scotland."

Standard Life becomes Pawprint Pioneer

WITH the ongoing pandemic, how people currently work and live has changed dramatically and therefore so has its carbon footprint. While the emissions from offices and business travel have reduced, the majority of people are now working from home and creating emissions from increased energy use there.

Standard Life Aberdeen has estimated that its employees carbon emissions from working at home could represent up to 60% of its overall 2020 carbon footprint. That is why the global investment firm has partnered with eco-tech business Pawprint, a company set up in 2019.

Pawprint seek the most climate conscious businesses to join its Pawprint Pioneers Program and take the lead on the climate change. As a Pawprint Pioneer, Standard Life Aberdeen will initially target a representative sample of 500 colleagues around the world to use the Pawprint for Business app, an online tool which helps users measure, understand and reduce their carbon footprint.



**Aberdeen &
Grampian
Chamber of
Commerce**



**UNIVERSITY of STRATHCLYDE
FRASER OF ALLANDER
INSTITUTE**



Economic turmoil across oil and gas sector, according to latest Chamber survey

REDUCED activity levels, project cancellations and workforce cuts as a result of the coronavirus pandemic have slashed business confidence across the UK's oil and gas sector, the latest industry snapshot shows.

The 32nd Oil and Gas survey, conducted by Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce in partnership with the Fraser of Allander Institute and KPMG UK, asked firms about the initial impact of CV19, how they expect activity to recover and how recent events have influenced industry views on future facing issues like the energy transition and the UK's exit from the EU.

The findings, which cover the six months to October 2020, provide a stark illustration of the economic turmoil which has resulted from the CV19 pandemic with confidence across the industry now as low as during the global industry downturn in 2015.

Just 13% of contractors are working at or above optimum levels in the UK Continental Shelf compared to 47% a year ago, with 82% predicting a decrease in their revenue in 2020. A total of 23% of contractors report cancelling projects as a result of the

coronavirus outbreak, with a further 34% putting activities on hold.

More than three quarters of businesses (78%) are less confident about activities going forward, while only 1% are more confident. This net balance* of -76% compared to the +46% recorded a year ago and significantly below the 10 years average net balance of +15%. Worryingly, 58% of contractors expect the outlook to worsen in 2021, with licensees and operators reporting similarly low confidence levels both now and in the year ahead.

The challenges faced over the past year are also reflected in reduced levels of production and exploration related work. The net balance reported for production related activity has dropped significantly, falling from +43% in 2019 to -47% in this latest survey. When asked a year ago what contractors were expecting for 2020, a net balance of +46% had been anticipating an increase, however the results now indicate an expected decline over the next year.

While businesses typically report higher levels of optimism about their international activities, the latest results mark the lowest recorded levels of confidence in global markets in the history of this survey,

the longest running report of its kind in the UK. Since the same period in 2019, optimism dropped across almost three-quarters of contractors (70%) with 48% forecasting a further decline in the year ahead.

The reduced levels of activity and confidence have also negatively impacted employment levels, with approximately half of contractors surveyed reporting a decline in their workforce, 22% of which report reductions which equate to more than 10% of their workforce. While the extent of the current reductions to the total workforce is not as severe as the levels reported in the 2016 downturn, around a fifth of surveyed firms said they expect to make further reductions in 2021.

The value of the Government's CV19 support schemes is illustrated in the report, with over three-quarters of firms utilising at least one of the schemes on offer, with particularly significant use of the furlough scheme. A total of 83% of contractors furloughed employees in 2020, affecting 35% of the workforce on average.

Martin Findlay, senior partner at KPMG in Aberdeen, said: "From the significant oil price decline, which started earlier in the year, to a global pandemic, and localised lockdown in



Aberdeen, the oil and gas industry has, once again, endured profound challenge and uncertainty. However, there is room for some optimism. The industry, unlike so many others, is incredibly resilient and frequently deals with instability and challenge.

“Climate change and diversification – once seen as a threat to the industry – also offers new opportunities and our findings suggest the sector is starting to embrace change. As technology and innovation improve, driving down the cost barrier and driving up the return on investment, we can expect to see further moves into new greener spaces as the industry goes through a slow, but steady transformation.”

The findings do show an increase in the proportion of firms actively diversifying their operations outwith oil and gas, rising to 49% in this survey compared to 25% reported a year ago. A total of 57% say they are considering accelerating their plans in response to the CV19 pandemic. Lack of experience and skills within organisations has now advanced from prior surveys to become the most frequently cited blocker by firms in the sector, with 49% of respondents highlighting it as an issue.

When asked how optimistic firms were about the long-term future of

Aberdeen as an energy hub, almost a quarter (23%) report being not at all optimistic, compared to just 9% in 2019, with a further 27% reporting being only slightly optimistic.

Shane Taylor, research and policy manager at Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce, said: “Over the course of this year we have seen drastic and unpredictable disruption to business globally due to CV19, combined with the collapse in oil and gas prices. Although government support has had clear value in supporting firms and jobs through this challenging period of suppressed demand, the only sustainable way to give businesses and workers clarity is a clear route to heightened levels of activity in the future.

“The declining trend in the positive outlook for the future of the Aberdeen city region as an energy hub also emphasises the need to see rapid progress in some of the key projects which will underpin the region’s ability to transition successfully, such as the Energy Transition Zone. The Chamber has argued for specific funding for the sector and we’ve already seen the Scottish Government commit £62m towards an Energy Transition Fund focused primarily on projects within the North-east which will support these ambitions.

“As we look towards the future, we need to see meaningful progress on allocating this funding and bringing these key projects on stream. A clear way to achieve this progress would be the UK and Scottish Governments coming together with industry to finalise the terms of a place-focused North Sea Transition Deal, one which sets out a pathway to ensure that the oil and gas industry and the skills and talent in the communities that power it act as key contributors in the aim to reach net zero.”

The full report is available from the research hub on the [Chamber website](#).



Rebuilding the North-east's connectivity

Mark Beveridge,
operations director,
Aberdeen International Airport



SINCE taking up the role at Aberdeen International Airport I have been working alongside our many business partners as we set out a recovery from what has been the biggest downturn ever experienced in the aviation industry.

The pandemic has had a huge impact on the airport which, like airports throughout the UK, is operating at a fraction of its capacity and it will take years before we fully recover.

At Aberdeen, you will be aware we kept our airport open throughout 2020 to support crucial lifeline services to our communities in the Highlands and Islands, for ambulance flights, the distribution of much needed medical supplies and to serve the oil and gas sector. We have also supported the incredible work being done by the NHS and key workers with a NHS testing centre at our airport.

The success of the airport and the region are intertwined and my focus is on rebuilding the connectivity on which Aberdeen's internationally-focused economy is so dependent.

In response to the UK Government's Union Connectivity Review our industry has made it quite clear that the government's agenda of improving connectivity between the nations of

the UK will not be possible without aviation.

Aviation is central to any UK economic recovery post CV19 and the government must actively support the need to link all regions of the UK domestically and internationally that will help to increase trade and boost potential trade.

The introduction of a Regional Connectivity Fund and the abolishment of Air Passenger Duty are two levers government could pull to help aid our sector's and the economy's recovery. We continue to call on sector specific support and the introduction of a robust testing regime by the Scottish Government.

The test to release scheme which was introduced in England in December was welcomed by the aviation industry which described it as a step in the right direction that offered light at the end of the tunnel. At this time there is no similar testing strategy in place in Scotland. We cannot afford for Scotland to be left behind.

Despite the pandemic we did have some welcome news that easyJet is relaunching the Aberdeen to London Gatwick route later this year. We are well aware this was an extremely

popular and important route for the North-east and I'm looking forward to welcoming it back to Aberdeen.

It will be a slow, gradual recovery at the airport but what won't change is the role of aviation in driving the economy. It is crucial we provide the connectivity like Gatwick, which will drive growth, employment and prosperity.

This region also has great offerings including boutique hotels, great places to eat and concert venues like P&J Live, which even in a short space of time was able to attract some fantastic, high quality events like the BBC Sports Personality of the Year.

When it comes to recovering from CV19, the North-east is in it together and at Aberdeen International Airport we are ready to play our part.

Recovery, not short term response

Shane Taylor,
research and policy manager,
Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce



THE pandemic response has hit business and the overall economy hard but the North-east of Scotland particularly badly.

Unemployment in the area more than doubled between March and September and looking at notified potential redundancies, Aberdeen city alone accounts for 30% of all Scottish notifications, over 7,600 jobs.

Scotland-wide data from the ONS meanwhile highlights that over 35% of hospitality firms have less than three months of cash in reserve and over 15% have little or no confidence that they will make it through the Spring.

We appreciate the business support measures put in place by UK and Scottish governments however more focus must be placed on recovery rather than just short-term response. The Chamber has written to all MPs, MSPs, relevant Ministers, Cabinet Secretaries and local authority leaders setting out the key concerns of the business community and the actions we believe will give firms a chance of coming out the other side and kick-starting our regional and national economies.

It starts with creating the conditions to protect businesses and save jobs. Governments should engage in urgent dialogue with the Chambers of Commerce network to provide early clarity to our business communities on the future direction of business support to enable forward planning and avoid mass closures and redundancies in Q1 & Q2 2021.

At minimum, this should provide:

- Clear sight of the future direction of

- the furlough scheme post-April 2021
- Uprating grant support schemes to reflect the closed nature of the economy
- Providing certainty by removing major cliff edges to business by extending key reliefs and tax incentives such as the 5% VAT rate for hospitality and business rates reliefs.

We believe the Scottish Government should approach the upcoming Scottish Budget with the aim of holding the current CV19-related rates exemptions for retail, hospitality and aviation in place. These reliefs should be phased out over several years to allow these hardest-hit sectors space to recover.

We would like to see a refreshed rates relief scheme for North-east Scotland up to 2023, reflecting that rateable values were already out of step with economic conditions before the CV19 crisis. And we would like an ambitious, in-depth independent review of the NDR system to succeed the Barclay Review, unconstrained this time by the principles of revenue neutrality.

In addition, businesses need a transparent and meaningful path to resuming business activity post-pandemic. Surveys of our members show that over 75% do not believe that the Strategic Framework provides the ability for companies to plan ahead.

When published, we entitled the framework a 'blueprint to go backwards' and have seen little evidence to suggest this wasn't correct. The business community also remains puzzled around the weighting given to economic factors and harms

in the decision-making process.

Our members believe our governments should:

- Aim to put in place policies which minimise future uncertainty for business
- Publish a meaningful plan for re-opening the economy setting out a clear timetable with specific reference to the reopening of vital sectors like offices, hospitality and live events
- Set out clearly the weighting given to economic data and harms when making decisions on restrictions
- Provide clearer definitions of 'essential business' and 'work from home where possible' that are sympathetic to issues such as connectivity, facilities, family circumstances, mental health and other factors
- Learn lessons from the issues around the roll-out of the testing programme in 2020 to ensure that the vaccination programme is delivered at pace to allow normal economic activity to resume urgently.

Hand in hand with this are the steps needed to enable the North-east to be at the forefront of national economic recovery, from the energy transition and our journey to net zero, to our regional connectivity and how we reinvent our cities to ensure their future.

As your Chamber, we are committed to supporting business today while helping create the economic conditions for the future success of the region. The steps outlined here are merely a taster, you can however read the letter and our recommendations to government in full on our website.

February



Knock the socks off 2021 by increasing your efficiency at meetings.

17 Wed
1 Day

Understanding Export and Export Documentation
Demystify what's involved to save time and money

17 Wed
1 Day

Essential Supervisory Skills - via Zoom
Bridge the gap between doing and supervising

18 Thu
1 Day

Diversity, Inclusion and Bias in the Workplace
Explore the benefits of a diverse workforce

19 Fri
2 Hours

Making the Most of any Meeting - via Zoom
Whether they are virtual, face-to-face or a hybrid of both

23 Tue
½ Day

Resilience Survive and Thrive
Understand your strengths and increase your resilience score

23 Tue
½ Day

Taking Notes and Minutes
Record meetings effectively and accurately with high quality minutes

24 Wed
1 Day

Customs Procedures and Documentation
Understand how to navigate the various customs systems, procedures, and documentation

24 Wed
1 Day

Reviews and Appraisals
Assess performance constructively and increase reviewee's motivation

25 Thu
1 Day

Letters of Credit - methods of payment
Ensure your Letter of Credit is not rejected and compare payment methods

March



Understanding importing rules and regulations has never been so important. Keep your business moving with this informative course.

2 Tue
2 days

Finance for Non-Finance Managers
Gain an understanding of many aspects of finance and how it impacts business

3 Wed
1 day

Import Procedures, Inward & Outward Processing
Avoid pitfalls when importing, understand methods of claiming relief

4 Thu
1 day

Supervisors Next Steps - via Zoom
Improve techniques and add new areas of awareness and understanding

4 Thu
1 day

Maximising Sponsorship Revenue
Maximise your sponsorship sales and obtain great results

4 Thu
1 day

Stakeholder Engagement and Relationship Management
Identify and engage with stakeholders to build effective and lasting relationships

9 Tue
1 day

Digital Transformation
Learn how to future proof your business

9 Tue
2 hours

Bullying and Harassment: Turn Negative into Positive
Understand the legal ramifications of bullying and harassment

10 Wed
1 day

HR for Non-HR Managers
Understand responsibilities and techniques in relation to HR requirements

11 Thu
1 day

Coaching Conversations
Learn how to coach others to improve and be their best

16 Tue
1 day

Improve your Professional Confidence
Promote a positive and confident self-image in a professional manner

17 Wed
1 day

Customer Service Excellence
Discover the techniques to excel at customer service

17 Wed
½ day

Understanding the Oil and Gas Industry
Gain an understanding of the basics of production and processing

18 Thu
1 day

Performance Management
Establish processes to improve employee performance in line with organisation objectives

New year, new opportunities

WELL, that was a year that we didn't expect. As a training team, how have we developed?

This time last year I'm not sure whether we knew what Zoom was but now, having investigated Microsoft Teams, Cisco and Blackboard, we know that it's the best tool for us to pivot the delivery of our classroom based training to a digital audience. The platform allows us to publish polls and create break-out rooms, offering a seamless online experience.

We discovered that delivering a presentation to hundreds of people online, many of them internationally based, is actually not quite as difficult or as daunting as we initially anticipated.

It seems you can indeed teach an old dog new tricks and we are planning our schedule of courses for 2021 taking into account some of these new delivery methods.

Some new courses lend themselves to an espresso kind of delivery, short, sharp, and delivering a buzz of knowledge. We can do these shorter sessions at a time to suit organisations or even having our public schedule a bit more 'out of hours'. Lunchtimes are not always productive and a lunch and learn where you do not need to travel and find a parking space may be a great use of the middle of the day and set you up for the afternoon.

New subjects for next year include Managing Meetings Well. We've all had to learn to use

digital meeting tools and many of us have managed to get to grips with the technicalities but found it hard to keep 'normal' meeting etiquette on track. Many of the visual cues we rely on during the face-to-face meetings are not there while meetings drag on, concentration is often lost and many of the action points are not picked up or reported on in minutes after the meeting. This course will help you address that.

It would be almost impossible to not have noticed slotted into news bulletins the reporting on wider issues regarding bias, bullying and equality. Early last year we developed an in-house course rolling out to organisations in two-hour sessions ensuring all employees were aware of the legislation as well as their companies' policies and ethos including personal responsibilities. This will also be available as an espresso session, meaning even very large organisations can get the message across quickly and include remote locations resolving geographical issues and constraints.

Our exit from the EU very often ended up losing momentum because of the challenges with the pandemic but we have been able to help very many organisations to be exit ready as well as point them towards the funding still available to ease their business more knowledgeably towards customs compliance and new regulations.

Susan
Training team leader





NORTHERN STAR2021 BUSINESS AWARDS



Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce

THE Chamber is committed to celebrating business success. The winners of the 17th annual Northern Star Business Awards, held in association with principal sponsor Nucore Group, will be unveiled at the end of March.

The finalists in the categories are:

- **Business of the Year**
Aberdeen International Airport
Goldstar Cleaning Services
Infinity Partnership
Motive Offshore Group
- **Customer First**
Arrowdown
Grace May
Infinity Partnership
Nimbus Blue
Stompers Childcare Services
- **Driving Sustainability**
Glulam
Keenan Recycling
Legasea
Wood Recyclability

- **Family Business**
Dalriada Luxury Lodges
Greenwell Equipment
Marshall Farms
The Knowes Hotel and Restaurant
- **Going Global**
EnerQuip
Fifth Ring
James Fisher Offshore
Load Monitoring Systems
- **Inspiration from Innovation**
AISUS Offshore
Ecosse IP
Imenco
Xergy Group

- **Inspiring Futures**
Aberlour Futures
Aberdeen
Bon Accord Care
Grampian Training Services
University of Aberdeen Business School
- **Making the Difference**
Charlie House
Denis Law Legacy Trust
NESS
Sport Aberdeen
- **Marketing Magic**
Aberdeen City Council – Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museum
BIG Partnership and Aberdeen Football Club

Charlie House
University of Aberdeen

- **Rising Star**
Cumming and Co
Hudsons Catering
Nucore Group
Taxassist
- **Staff Matter**
Hutcheon Mearns
Taxassist
Texo Group
- **Student Placement**
BW Offshore
Kirkburn Court Care Home
NHS Grampian
TAQA

Driving Sustainability sponsored by



Family Business sponsored by



Going Global sponsored by



Inspiring Futures sponsored by



Making the Difference sponsored by



Rising Star sponsored by



Staff Matter sponsored by



Student Placement sponsored by



Principal sponsor



Associate sponsors





Andy Turner, David Tawse and Szilvia Goncalves

Nimbus Blue launches new security and risk division

NIMBUS Blue, an Aberdeen-based IT managed services provider has launched Nimbus Red, a cyber security and risk consultancy. Nimbus Red provides more visibility to security risk for businesses and helps them to assess, remedy and manage those risks.

Nimbus Blue recently marked 10 years in business and managing director, David Tawse said: "From talking with businesses, there is often an assumption that their IT provider is taking care of security. But in truth, IT providers often live on the technical side, naturally, and what they're missing is the people and process elements of security. This is the gap in the market that Nimbus Red fills."

Szilvia Goncalves joins Nimbus Red as information and cyber security consultant.

FreshMex expands to Nottingham

ABERDEEN'S Tex-Mex street food restaurant has signed a partnership with Deliveroo to open the first FreshMex Deliveroo Editions kitchen in Nottingham.

FreshMex, which began life in 2015 at local farmers' markets, has claimed the title of Scotland's most ordered dish on Deliveroo for the past two years with its burrito and picked up the 'Pop-Up to Prime time' award at Deliveroo's first ever restaurant awards last year through customer votes.

Robbie Moulton, co-founder and director said: "Dark kitchens have seen a major rise in the hospitality trade across the UK and we have become increasingly aware of them. It's a brilliant way to expand our brand and allows us to get our fresh, quality food to as many people as possible - it's an incredibly exciting opportunity for FreshMex which I am confident will provide a strong footing for further growth."

The Aberdeen firm's team numbers grow from 25 to 40 with the addition of the new kitchen in England which was expected to open in January.



Fiona Buchanan

£40bn of deals for Shepherd and Wedderburn

SHEPHERD and Wedderburn's banking and finance team advised clients, including banks, funds, financial institutions, alternative lenders, public bodies, corporate borrowers and sponsors, on deals with a total value of more than £40bn to October 31, 2020.

Fiona Buchanan, head of banking and finance said the positive deal volume illustrates the banking and finance team's effectiveness in winning new mandates from new and existing clients, including for a number of high-value debt capital markets deals.

"We saw an immediate shift during the initial lockdown towards advising both lenders and corporate borrowers in relation to government-backed schemes such as the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS), the large business equivalent (CLBILS) and the Covid Corporate Financing Facility, as well as conventional restructuring of debt packages," she explained.

"Beyond that, our clients have also remained active in the clean energy, healthcare, technology, retail, real estate and financial sectors, reflecting the strength of the firm's expertise in these sectors of critical importance to the economy, particularly as we turn our attention to emerging from the CV19 pandemic."

Double gold for Absoft

SAP consultancy Absoft has received two Microsoft Gold Partnership awards, making it one of the software giant's most highly accredited independent IT support providers of data management and software development.

Absoft has been awarded the gold status for its cloud-based and data analytics services, based upon its provision of outstanding technical capabilities, implementation of Microsoft solutions and levels of customer care across its portfolio of SAP support services on Azure, Microsoft's cloud computing service.



Elizabeth Gammie

RGU's Business School accolade

ROBERT Gordon University's (RGU) Aberdeen Business School has been named Business School of the Year at the Times Higher Education 2020 Awards.

The school has been recognised for its business-connected learning, teaching and the innovative approaches of its staff. Professor Elizabeth Gammie, head of Aberdeen Business School, said: "To win this accolade is a huge achievement for all involved and it demonstrates the commitment and quality of teaching and provision within the school to provide top quality work-ready graduates.

"ABS is continually recognised for its worldwide excellence in teaching, research, curriculum development and student learning and we are proud to be one of only 5% of the world's business schools to have achieved AACSB accreditation. The school has worked tirelessly to provide innovative online learning and ensure our students are supported while receiving a top quality education."

Aberdeen-based Ffolkes opens Lowestoft hub

ABERDEEN-BASED UK ships agency and marine support business Ffolkes Offshore has continued its expansion with the establishment of a services hub for the East Anglia coast region at Lowestoft.

The facility, based at Lowestoft Enterprise Park, will support existing and new client activity across the ports at Felixstowe, Great Yarmouth and Harwich.

Ffolkes Offshore is an independent, full-service ships agency and marine support company, providing logistical services to the offshore maritime and energy industry. The company started in December 2016 and has grown from two members of staff to 16.

It has recruited an initial team of three for the new office led by experienced marine services professional, Andy Surplice, as operations manager.

£500m of decommissioning deferred

AS THE oil and gas sector continues to deal with the effects of CV19 and the collapse of commodity prices, OGUK's 2020 Decommissioning Insight report has revealed the decommissioning industry, though resilient, has not escaped the impact of the unprecedented conditions.

Given the major disruptions and challenges of 2020, OGUK conducted an additional interim survey of operators in June 2020 to provide deeper insight of the impact of CV19 on decommissioning activity. This showed that continuing market uncertainty has led to around £500m of decommissioning expenditure previously scheduled for 2020-22 being deferred.

OGUK's supply chain and operations director Katy Heidenreich said: "All parts of the oil and gas business are experiencing reductions in cash flow and decommissioning is no different. We've seen a 30% reduction in expenditure from £1.47bn in early 2020, to around £1.08bn but despite these pressures, the sector is in no rush to decommission.

"While many projects have been able to continue, we are also expecting to see reduced activity across all areas of decommissioning over the next three years. During 2020, our hard-pressed supply chain demonstrated both resilience in delivering the roster of projects that have gone ahead this year, but also continual performance improvement in terms of cost and efficiency."

Visit Lathallan virtually

LATHALLAN School has launched interactive Zoom tours to allow prospective pupils and parents to view the school from the comfort of their own home.

Lathallan offers places for children aged six weeks to 18 years at its nursery, junior and senior school in Johnshaven. Prospective parents can currently have a physically distanced tour of Lathallan's expansive 60-acre grounds with pupils able to join the school at any point of the academic year, subject to availability in that year group.

However, where it's not possible to visit Lathallan in person, parents will now be offered an individualised Zoom tour by the school's admissions officer Nicola Harrison. Zoom tours take place during the school day and all visitors will be offered the chance to meet virtually with Lathallan headmaster Richard Toley.

All Energy moves dates

REED Exhibitions Limited has announced that All-Energy, the UK's largest annual renewable and low carbon energy exhibition and conference - and the co-located Dcarbonise - will now take place on August 18 and 19, 2021, at the Scottish Event Campus (SEC).

Skills for life

Brian Reid,
general manager,
Wood RecyclAbility



IT MAY seem to some that the circular economy is a relatively new concept whereby we better manage waste streams routinely produced as part of our everyday lives. However, at North-east social enterprise, Wood RecyclAbility, it was recognised a couple of decades ago that recycling waste wood would not only reduce waste to landfill but also afforded the opportunity to offer training and skills development to adults who required additional support.

Created from a partnership between Enable Scotland, Shell UK Ltd., Aberdeen City and Shire Councils, the award-winning social enterprise, a 'not for profit' limited company, is located in Pitmedden, Aberdeenshire on a five-acre agricultural site. With a purpose-built workshop and yard, practical work experience and training is provided for people with additional support giving them the chance to experience a real workplace setting, in addition to supporting the circular economy.

Our team of 35 service users including those who face neurological challenges are involved in all aspects of the business.

Waste wood is ideal for providing a broad range of working experiences.

They are supervised and trained by a staff of nine to break up, de-nail, sort the wood and then to process for recycling. This provides service users opportunities to develop skills commensurate with their potential capability, so whilst some are limited to basic tasks others develop their joinery skills.

A total of 468 manhours are facilitated every week for service users, they have opportunities to work with hand and power tools, gaining satisfaction from being able to construct various products.

In line with our vision of broadening the waste recycled at the site, whilst providing additional worthwhile development activities for service users, various diversification opportunities have been explored and the organisation now recycles hard plastics too. This is sorted then baled or chipped before being sold on to manufacturers for processing into other products.

The next project to further develop new training opportunities along with providing an additional income stream to support growth will see the cultivation of the remainder of the site, planting an orchard comprising several hundred apple trees of various varieties. Not only will this offer a new

range of training/work experience but it will additionally contribute to the general effort of combating climate change.

To our service users, Wood Recyclability offers a lifeline - an alternative to a life in care and one which also gives them invaluable life skills by enjoying interaction with fellow service users, staff and visitors. From this experience, they are able to gain confidence, a sense of purpose, a feeling that they belong and that they make a meaningful contribution.

It is the hope that some will be able to move into proper employment once trained and indeed, some have. Others are even able to live independently. But for all, Wood Recyclability is the centre of their world, their extended family.

Regional partners unite



AN INITIATIVE to increase employment opportunities in Aberdeen and the North-east has been launched by partners from across the region.

The project is part of the Aberdeen City Council socio-economic rescue plan, which was created in response to the impact of CV19. Enhancing access to learning, training and business start-up support is at the heart of the collaborative approach.

Led by the council, the campaign brings North East Scotland College, Robert Gordon University (RGU) and the University of Aberdeen together with national agencies, business organisations and community groups.

The partnership includes Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce, Aberdeenshire Council, Business Gateway Aberdeen City and Shire, Elevator, Opportunity North East (ONE), Skills Development Scotland and the Aberdeen Employability Training Providers Forum.

Throughout January and February the spotlight is turned on opportunities for upskilling, retraining and enterprise support ranging from part-time and distance learning options to free short courses, full-time studies and entrepreneurial programmes.

Aberdeen City Council co-leader councillor Jenny Laing said: “The human cost of the pandemic has been heartbreaking and the economic cost is also significant. The business landscape and employment market has been impacted in many different ways in the past 12-months and it is vital we work collaboratively to ensure that 2021 is a year of opportunity, in the face of continued challenges.

“Innovation and diversification are more important than ever in our regional economy. To support that positive change, learning and training will be crucial as the workforce adapts and evolves. We look forward to working with stakeholders to increase awareness and access to the huge range of options that are open to all.”

Under the campaign banner ‘New Year, New Skills, New Start’, advice and support will be offered to key groups identified as part of the Socio Economic Recovery Plan - from school leavers taking their first steps towards employment to adults returning to education and training with a view to upskilling for career progression or retraining to enter a new sector.

Neil Cowie, principal of North East Scotland College, said: “The College is pleased to be working alongside our partners to help drive economic

recovery in the region. The impact of the events of 2020 is still being quantified and it is clear we will continue to see the effects for some time to come. The social and economic consequences must be addressed, with learning and training crucial to ensuring all those we serve have the tools to succeed.

“We are all very aware of the difficulties faced by the region and its people - but it is important we do not lose sight of the opportunities. New and exciting roles in emerging sectors are already coming to the fore and as a College we are equipped to respond to the needs of individuals and of industry in the year ahead.”

Russell Borthwick, chief executive of Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce, said: “Making sure the next generation has the skills to power the sectors and careers that will drive our regional economy is at the heart of creating a strong future for the North-east. Hand in hand with that, through things like the Transition Training Fund, is the need to support the existing workforce to take advantage of the opportunities that exist and we are pleased to bring the voice of the business community into this partnership initiative.”



Steve McNally,
director / head of IT, McNally Recruitment

What does your company do that others don't?

We provide a bespoke service in sourcing professionals and finding opportunities within the IT and energy sectors throughout Scotland, the UK and with an international reach.

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

The change from face-to-face contact to remote is the biggest challenge as so much is learned and relationships formed with meeting people in person. However, with the use of online technology you can at least have a face-to-face meeting, even if you're not physically in the same room.

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

Not to overstretch yourself and to be realistic in what can be achieved, whilst at the same time pushing yourself to getting the best result.

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

Being honest and professional at all times and to deliver on your promises.

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

Despite the numerous sales awards and large contracts won over the years, opening up a second office in Aberdeen to focus on the energy sector is my proudest moment, as it shows ambitions of growth.

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

Expanding my offices in Aberdeen and employing local people.



Quick fire round

What was your first job?
Insurance agent

When would you like to retire?
65

What did you have for breakfast?
Oatbran pancakes and sausages

Who, or what, inspires you?
My wife Aneta and daughter Lily, as I want to provide them with the best standard of life possible.

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



Kenneth Simpson

Grant to uncover history

NORTH-EAST social care charity VSA has been awarded £160,000 from The National Lottery Heritage Fund to deliver a project which will bring to life the heritage of social care in Aberdeen.

The charity, which marked its 150th anniversary last year, will be gathering stories to showcase the history of social care in Aberdeen since 1870 and would like families from across the North-east to share how VSA may have helped family members past or present.

The project will share these stories through various platforms during the next couple of years, including public art, crafting, postcards, booklets of stories, school toolkits, and the charity also hopes to hold an exhibition showcasing their heritage journey.

VSA has already opened its archives and archivist, Wendy Smithers, has been collating stories from the 150-year history of VSA.

Kenneth Simpson, chief executive of VSA, said: "VSA has been caring for the people of Aberdeen for 150 years and supported generations of your families through two world wars, the Spanish Influenza pandemic, and the Aberdeen Typhoid outbreak. We are delighted to have been awarded this grant to help us discover stories which may have otherwise been lost."

Shepherd and Wedderburn accolade

SHEPHERD and Wedderburn has been ranked a Top 75 employer in the Social Mobility Employer Index 2020, demonstrating the firm's ongoing commitment to fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace.

The index, operated by the Social Mobility Foundation, assesses UK employers across seven key areas: their work with young people, routes into the company, how they attract talent, recruitment and selection, data collection, progression, experienced hires, and advocacy.

A word of advice



John Rhodes,
OD4G,
Owner and lead consultant

What's your area of expertise?

OD4G helps companies implement modern, digitally enabled learning and development strategies and solutions that drive real-world performance improvements. We utilise modern technology to make solutions effective, as well as cost and time efficient.

What should people know?

Traditional approaches to staff training can no longer keep up with today's pace of business. People need to learn new skills, adapt to new ways of working, and leverage new technologies faster than ever. Today's digitally enabled approaches go beyond delivering training courses. Now, point of need digital resources, social learning, immersive experiences, and personalized solutions are just some of the enablers that really impact employee performance.

What's the biggest mistake companies make?

Not investing in people development. To a point I can sympathise though. Traditional approaches are slow, expensive, and calculating ROI can be like nailing jelly to a wall! However, this can result in a disengaged workforce that struggles with change, is slow to adopt new technologies, and loses critical organisational knowledge and capability when their best people leave.

What's your top tip?

Speak directly with employees about their training and development needs and do it on a regular basis. Don't just discuss which training courses they'd like to attend. Focus on helping people improve their capabilities through peer support, job aids, coaching and providing a safe environment to practice new skills.

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The new normal for international trade

Liam Smyth,
director of trade facilitation,
ChamberCustoms



AS IF grappling with a global pandemic wasn't hard enough, businesses also need to get their heads around an entirely new set of trading arrangements now that the transition period is over.

It's been a gruelling four-and-a-half years to find an agreement with our neighbours in the European Union.

Though a welcome breakthrough, the announcement of the Brexit deal came significantly later than most businesses had hoped for and, as such, much of the Christmas period was spent digesting what firms needed to do and how to implement the changes in time.

The task for business is formidable. There will be a significantly higher level of customs declarations (from 55 million at the end of 2020, to almost 300 million this year) and associated administration and cost for businesses (estimated at around £7bn per annum). Indeed, the government's own revised Border Operating Model, a guide to how trade will work after the end of the transition period, plainly states that 'custom declarations are complicated.'

Help on hand

That's where we come in. At ChamberCustoms we've put significant effort in to helping businesses prepare for the new procedures, paperwork and declarations that they now need to do when trading across the border.

Our fast-growing team of almost 150 are helping almost 1,000 businesses across every sectors. Many businesses from the Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber are accessing our services to ensure their goods are cleared quickly and their businesses can continue operating smoothly.

All businesses should be thinking very carefully about their own state of readiness, including assessing the stability of supply chain and preparedness of partners. While there are areas where the BCC is calling for more information - on rules of origin, for example - the government website is awash with new information and guidance on how to make trade work now that Brexit is behind us.

Whether it's the movement of goods or data, taxation and insurance, or supply chain disruption, the BCC's

End of Transition Checklist sets out many of the areas you should look at and plan for, including links to helpful guidance.

Your business is not alone at this time of change. For more than 160 years, the British Chambers of Commerce has supported UK business and remains expert in trade matters. Get in touch if your business requires assistance to navigate a new trading normal.



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Balancing the impact of CV19 with driving the country's economic recovery is a priority for Westminster but what does the Budget mean for you?

4 Mar

8:30 – 10:00
Webinar
£20 for members
£30 non-members

UK Budget Breakfast

Coming amidst an unprecedented global pandemic, on March 3 Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak will set out the next phase of the economic plan to tackle the virus and protect jobs.

What do the measures announced mean for North-east businesses at a practical level?

Join us for our annual 'morning after' debrief to hear insights from EY experts Derek Leith, global oil and gas tax lead and Aberdeen tax partner; and Bob Cardno, director of business tax advisory, designed to decipher the impact and help you understand what the Budget means for you.

Have your questions at the ready.

12 Feb

Online
Free

Maximise your Membership

What support does your business need right now? Are you clear on how to get the most out of the Chamber resources at your fingertips?

Get to know us and your potential new business partners of the future at this interactive discussion in which you tell us what's important to your company – or pitch to other new Chamber members – and we provide a forum for knowledge-sharing, idea-generating and networking while connecting you with the experts across the Chamber team to help you take the next steps.

Free to attend, come ready to join in.



The premier event for Europe's oil and gas industry, make sure you have a seat at the Chamber's high profile breakfast to kickstart your 2021 show.

7 Sep

7:30 - 9:30
P&J Live
£55 for members
£75 non-members

Business Breakfast - Energising the race to net zero

Regarded by offshore exploration and production professionals as Europe's premier energy event, SPE Offshore Europe attracts attendees from around the world to hear insights, share knowledge and promote the technology needed to keep the upstream sector moving into the future.

As part of the keynote programme, Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce is delighted to once again host the high-profile breakfast event on the opening day of the 2021 show.

Speaker details to follow. Places are limited at this event which is traditionally a sell-out.



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Hannah Donaldson and Gonçalo Pinto

Core29, the Aberdeen-based technology and business improvement consultancy, has appointed Hannah Donaldson as senior business analyst and Gonçalo Pinto as business intelligence and data analyst. Hannah previously worked as a senior analyst in corporate finance in the energy sector and has six years of experience as a performance analyst in asset management. Gonçalo is originally from Lisbon, Portugal, where he studied software development and brings with him seven years of experience in areas of software development, working with SharePoint and data analytics.



Gillian Carty

Gillian Carty has been elected chair of Shepherd and Wedderburn LLP. She will chair Shepherd and Wedderburn's board, working closely with her fellow partners and Andrew Blain, Shepherd and Wedderburn's managing partner, to chart the firm's strategic direction over the next three years.



David Wilson

Johnston Carmichael has appointed a new office head to lead its team in Aberdeen. Audit partner David Wilson has responsibility for driving forward the firm's national strategy in the local market, leading and engaging the local team in a collaborative way and connecting its client base to the talent in the firm.



Neale Fraser

AMS Global Group has welcomed a senior industry leader to its marine tech team as it widens its service offering to a growing client base. Neale Fraser has joined AMS Marine Tech as dynamic positioning (DP) and mission equipment manager. He has more than 25 years' experience in DP, mission equipment and marine electrical engineering services.



Steven Clark

Steven Clark has joined Capito as team leader in its Aberdeen office. Responsible for managing a team of four break-fix engineers who provide service delivery to client NHS Grampian, the team's main duties are to install and repair a variety of IT hardware which is predominantly done on-site in hospitals, surgeries and offices.



Graeme Kinghorn

Apex Industrial Chemicals Limited has appointed Graeme Kinghorn as its commercial director, the first of several strategic decisions to allow it to cope with increasing demand for its specialist chemical products. Graeme has spent the last 15 years in senior finance roles in the construction sector and is also a trustee of Aberdeen based charity Mental Health Aberdeen.



Ken MacDonald

Ken MacDonald, a dispute resolution expert from law firm, Brodies LLP, has been re-elected to serve a second term as president of The Society of Advocates in Aberdeen. A specialist in disputes and international arbitration, he is the first president in more than 40 years to have his term extended by election.



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Carole Innes

KPMG has set its sights on further growth in Aberdeen following a new senior appointment in the city. Carole Innes will head up the firm's business development strategy, with a particular focus on the energy sector and privately-owned companies serviced by KPMG's growing private enterprise business. She joins with more than 35 years' experience.



Greig Brown

Aberdeen Considine has strengthened its national financial services team with the appointment of Greig Brown as mortgage operations director. Greig joins from Mortgage Advice Bureau in Scotland where he was head of operations. In his new role he has overall responsibility for all mortgage operations and mortgage advisers across 19 offices.



Jacqui Dougray and Liane Munro

Johnston Carmichael has added to its leadership team across Scotland with eight promotions – including a new director in its Aberdeen office. Gillian McColgan jointly manages the corporation tax team. In recent years she dedicated much of her time to managing the delivery of corporate tax services to a portfolio of globally operating businesses and entities within multinational groups.

Other recent appointments

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Recently launched Quantum Digital Scotland has appointed **Richard Tinto**, owner and director of Tinto Architecture, to the board as a non-executive director. He joins recent non-executive appointment **Barry Booth** of software specialists Intellicore to the Quantum Digital Scotland board of directors.

Inspire PTL has appointed a new chair of its board as well as three new trustees following its 2020 AGM. The new chair is **Gillian Thomson** who has been on the board for six years, latterly serving as vice chair. She is joined by **Francis Neill** of Ziebel, **Caroline Laurenson** of TL Tech Smart Home Solutions and **Nick Gray** of NGFD Services.

Independent energy services company AGR has appointed **Scott Paton** as head of finance for its UK, Mediterranean, and Africa operations. Based in Aberdeen, he will report to Andrew Stannard, AGR's executive vice president UK/Med/Africa Regions. He's joined on the back of a 25-year career in finance, much of it based in the North-east and in the oil and gas and maritime sectors.

Want to raise your profile?

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



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Adrian Watson, Jenny Laing, Stuart McPhee and Tony Cochrane

Unique track and hospitality system for Aberdeen

ABERDEEN'S hospitality businesses are being encouraged to sign up to a new track and trace system to keep venues safe and give customers peace of mind as the city continues to respond to the CV19 pandemic.

Created in collaboration with business owners and management and backed by Aberdeen City Council and business improvement district, Aberdeen Inspired, the 4Entry system is now live.

The system, which will rely on hospitality venues and customers registering, offers a one-time registration which, unlike other QR systems, puts venues in control to ensure that every customer or patron has signed up. Customers also benefit from the one time sign up, and unique QR code, ensuring a fast and entry to their favourite premises.

Adrian Watson, chief executive of Aberdeen Inspired, said: "This is a great example of hospitality coming together to create and deliver an innovative solution that ought to provide the necessary reassurance that safety lies at the heart of all that we do in continuing to provide the very best customer experience possible through these challenging times."

Dales to decommission nuclear cargo vessel

DALES Marine Services Ltd, an EU List approved supplier of vessel decommissioning, will shortly be decommissioning MV Oceanic Pintail at its dry dock facilities in Leith.

MV Oceanic Pintail, a world-class nuclear cargo vessel operated by International Nuclear Services (INS), was launched in 1987 and has served the UK nuclear industry for the last 33 years.

Peter Buchan, operations director for INS, said: "It was crucial to us that the winning bidder was able to do so in a safe and environmentally-friendly way. We set out rigorous standards, which had to be met, including a target that 98% of the vessel being recycled."

DYW appoints new employer school coordinators

DEVELOPING the Young Workforce (DYW) North East has strengthened its links with all secondary school across the Aberdeen city region with the recruitment of eight new employer school coordinators.

Focused on implementing a programme of employer engagement that increases pupils' career awareness and skills development, the new recruits will provide on the ground support to boost employer engagement and partnerships and facilitate opportunities for young people.

The expanded team will action requests for employer input from partners and work with the schools to enhance employer engagement in the curriculum, while also ensuring any young person identified as requiring additional employers' intervention is supported.

DYW bridges the gap between employers and education to help ensure positive career opportunities for young people. Investment in the employer school coordinators is part of the Scottish Government's response to the economic recovery from CV19 and delivery of the Young Person's Guarantee.

Mary Holland, director of DYW NE, said: "Young people are among the hardest hit by the coronavirus crisis with unemployment numbers for 16-24 year olds potentially exceeding those that peaked during the 2008 financial crisis. With 32 secondary schools across the region to partner with, the new additions to the team will allow DYW to add further value to both educators and the business community but, most significantly, to ensure young people are given the maximum support and opportunity available to them in order to continue into fulfilling careers."

Azets recruits 142 school leavers and graduates

AZETS Group, the fast-growing global accounting, advisory and business services group, has recruited 142 graduates and school leavers as part of its national drive to invest in the next generation of young accounting talent across the UK regions bringing its total student population to more than 900.

Investing in the next generation of talent is a key strategy for the Azets Group, as it looks to expand its offer and continue to deliver a high-quality service locally to businesses across the UK.

The company is able to offer a varied career path for joiners, with the option to work across different parts of the country and to specialise in different aspects of the accounting and business advisory offer, from general practice and tax to corporate finance, trade and restructuring.

The graduate and school leaver intake will be spread across all of the Group's UK offices, the largest UK network of local accounting and business advisory offices.

Work starts on Montrose windfarm base

CONSTRUCTION has started on the operations and maintenance base at Montrose Port which will service the Seagreen offshore wind farm.

Scotland's largest offshore windfarm construction project to date will create up to 60 jobs based at the port, as well as a further 60 on MHI Vestas offshore service operations vessel.

Montrose Port was selected by SSE Renewables as the preferred location for the maintenance base for the 114-turbine development last October, bringing investment and jobs to the local area for the 25-year life of the project. Located at the port's South Quay, the base will include two storey operations building, repurposed warehouse, 50m high communications mast and a pontoon for crew transfer vessels travelling to the Seagreen site.

Chief executive of Montrose Port Authority Captain Tom Hutchison said, "This is a significant milestone for Montrose and we're delighted to see work started on the base. This 25-year commitment from Seagreen will ensure the ongoing investment and redevelopment of our existing facilities at the Port in line with our remit as a Trust Port. "It also demonstrates our consistently flexible approach and long-term diversification strategy, as well as offering an outstanding opportunity for the local supply network."

Start-up tackles risk assessments

AN ABERDEENSHIRE headquartered start-up has launched a new software solution aimed at enhancing and streamlining the risk assessment process across the energy industry and beyond.

The recently published HSE 2019 Offshore Statistics revealed that the number of poor or very poor inspection results has reduced to 26% but it remains the case that one in four inspections found that the issues in question didn't meet the relevant minimum safety requirements.

Process safety firm, Salus Technical, has developed Bowtie Master with the intention of helping organisations to understand and manage the risks of major accident hazards, thereby reducing the incidence of these. A cloud-based application, Bowtie Master facilitates the building and sharing of bowtie diagrams. While bowtie diagrams have been in use for a number of years as a risk assessment tool across a range of industrial sectors, this new, intuitive software offers unprecedented capabilities to design, collaborate on and share these diagrams across disciplines and organisations.

As well as oil and gas, Bowtie Master can be used across a wide range of major hazard industries including aerospace, rail, construction and cyber security.



FortyTwo and SNAP form partnership

AFTER working together on a number of projects during 2019 and 2020, like-minded Aberdeen-based studios FortyTwo and SNAP are making their strategic partnership official — and in doing so, hope to encourage more collaboration between creative organisations in the North-east of Scotland.

In the past year, FortyTwo and SNAP have worked together on a number of projects, including campaign work for opticians group Duncan and Todd, a brand film for new spirit Outlaw Rum and a new strategy, brand identity and website for SNAP themselves — a close, collaborative process that only served to further solidify their working relationship.

Mark Kemp, founder and managing director of FortyTwo said: "This commitment to work together has many benefits for all involved, including our clients, and we're really excited to make it official. Through this strategic partnership, we're now equipped to offer a more integrated approach to our brand and video work — therefore providing our clients with a more vibrant visual brand and more ambitious content.

Will Farquhar, founder and creative director at SNAP, said: "This partnership marks the beginning of a new and exciting chapter for our businesses that brings with it a plethora of new opportunities both for the team and, more importantly, our clients.

"It's a close association that represents not only our ongoing joint commitment to producing great work for our clients across the country, but also our shared ambition to help nurture and grow the creative industries in the North-east of Scotland from the grass roots up."

Welcome to the Chamber

8848 Restaurant

Based on Aberdeen's Union Street, specialises in authentic Indian and Nepalese cuisine. 8848 was the winner of the 'Best of Aberdeen' category at the 2016 Scottish Curry Awards and runner-up in the 'Best Indian Restaurant' category at the 2016 Scottish Entertainment and Hospitality awards. 8848 can seat up to 75 people in its restaurant, while it also has a private function room with its own bar.

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