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April's theme

Media & Communications

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Chamber Talk

Hello – and welcome to the March issue of the Business Bulletin.

This month we are focused on the economy. Who is doing business together, where are the opportunities for growth and how are firms using some of the emerging tools and practices at their disposal to adapt their strategies and position themselves for long-term success?

Even before CV19 a transformation was underway in how people did business. The global pandemic has accelerated some technological developments and necessitated others, from secure online payment platforms to contactless methods, both small and large firms alike are embracing fintech and introducing the most effective tools for both themselves, their staff and their customers.

In this issue we speak to a company whose technology is transforming the way employees can view and receive their salaries, allowing them to see what they earn as they earn it and draw down the wages they have already made, removing the wait for a monthly payday.

Like its predecessor, 2021 is shaping up to be a year of macro-issues for the economy but at a micro-level, you can find out what's happening in the Blue Toon and see how it is investing in order to carve out a bright economic future for itself.

And we also delve into the world of mergers and acquisitions. With the severe disruption to normal commercial activity we've experienced putting many deals on the back-burner in recent months, dealmakers are feeling optimistic about the future so we asked the experts what it takes to make your company attractive to investors.

As commercial director at the Chamber, I know just how important it is for organisations to raise their profile, make new connections and keep doing business with each other, regardless of any restrictions they face. While we can adapt in many ways, there are still some things there is no substitute for.

I learnt recently that the UK events industry is worth around net £70bn with the majority of this made up from conferences and meetings as well as exhibitions and trade fairs. We currently live in the world of 2D: Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Hivebrite, Wonder.me, Cisco Webex Meetings, GoToMeeting...the number of platforms is literally endless, but it's not the same as being in the 3D world.

Until recently we were hosting over 150 events a year, bringing around 7,000 people together to learn, network, connect and win business. They met in person. Hands shook. Coffee cups rattled. Business cards were exchanged, along with smiles. It's not the same in a virtual world, despite everybody's best intentions.

Don't get me wrong, it's been great to allow us to continue to meet with our clients, supply chain and staff. I've finally got to see some people face to face that I hadn't before and I do like a sneaky peak round a politician's house but I, along with so many of our members, can't wait to get back to the 3D world where conversations flow seamlessly, products can be viewed, information can be shared and rapturous rounds of applause are heard.

The Chamber team is going to be at the forefront of running 'in person' events as lockdown eases (while still adhering to all government guidelines, naturally) and, we know from our members feedback, that it can't come too soon for many of you.

Together we remain part of 'Team Aberdeen', working to make a positive difference to this region and our members support and engagement is hugely valued and appreciated. Working together we can achieve what we could not individually and it's only with the support of our members that we can do this work on behalf of the wider business community.

Enjoy.

Seona Shand

Seona Shand
commercial director





Nigel Filer, chief operating officer

Scottish Enterprise funding for Xergy

XERGY, a new tech start-up behind a cloud-based system that can help companies get ready for tomorrow's economy through digital transformation, has secured £425,000 grant funding from Scottish Enterprise.

The funding will enable Xergy to invest in the development of its revolutionary digital platform, Proteus, which can transform business operating models and boost profits by reducing costs and increasing efficiencies. With an easy-to-use work management system at its heart, Proteus enables collaboration with teammates working from anywhere, optimisation of data and simplified workflows on even the most complex engineering projects, allowing a genuine freelance culture to flourish.

Xergy has already invested £3m in developing Proteus but the Scottish Enterprise funding will be used to add further innovations to the platform, creating new roles for software developers in Scotland.

Nigel Filer, chief operating officer at Xergy, said: "Coming hot on the heels of funding from the Scottish Enterprise Early Stage Growth Challenge Fund, this latest funding underlines their investment in our success and their confidence in Proteus to help digitally transform companies in Scotland."

SMEs focused on environmental sustainability

THE majority of Scottish SMEs remain focused on improving their environmental sustainability despite CV19, according to Bank of Scotland's Commercial Banking Business Barometer.

More than half (56%) of Scottish SMEs said becoming more environmentally sustainable is important to their business – just 13 points fewer than the proportion that said the same in 2019 (69%).

Despite the challenges of the last year and the disruption caused by the coronavirus pandemic, more than half (68%) of Scottish SMEs have continued to work to become more environmentally sustainable in the past 12 months.

Almost a third said they have invested in energy efficient equipment or machinery (28%) or made alterations to their premises to make it more energy efficient (27%).

Meanwhile, a fifth (20%) have used suppliers which source environmentally friendly products and services, while a similar proportion (17%) introduced policies and incentives to help employees reduce their carbon footprint.

When it comes to Scottish SMEs' sustainability drivers, pressure from customers (20%), long-term costs savings (19%) and firms' corporate social responsibility policies (14%) are the top three factors.

Dales contract means jobs

SHIP repair and maintenance company Dales Marine Services Ltd has won a four-year contract with Caledonian MacBrayne (CalMac) for 19 vessels.

Dales Marine's certified technicians will be undertaking vessel upgrades and afloat maintenance across the 19 CalMac vessels with the majority of the work being carried out at the Dales Marine Greenock dry dock facilities.

Greenock will provide a 24-hour service and berth space. The last eight months have seen significant improvements in the Greenock facilities by way of over a £1m investment in the yard.

To support the new contract, Dales Marine Services has pledged to expand its current apprenticeship programme, which stands at 46 apprentices across the group, undertaking to employ a further four apprentices, for every year of the CalMac contract.



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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

Excuse me, anyone listening? This is an economic emergency too

THE Centre for Economic Performance recently suggested that up to 900,000 SMEs, accounting for 2.5 million jobs, are at risk of imminent closure in the first few months of this year.

Did that get your attention? If we fail to take the right decisions now and implement them with urgency, the outcome will be years of different physical and mental health, social and economic challenges that will dwarf those seen so far. This is the stark reality.

We can rebuild but red tape has to be cut and real pace introduced. Sacred cows must be challenged. It's not ok to take emergency action in dealing with the immediate crisis but return to accepted norms as we come out the other side.

At a recent Chamber roundtable with a senior government minister, it was said in response to a member question about the crippling impact of business rates on this region in particular, that it was not appropriate to interfere with the independent assessor process. Yet it has been perfectly acceptable to interfere with tens of thousands of independent businesses by instructing them to turn their lights out for an infinite period.

Yes infinite. As I write still no timeline, no visibility of reopening for businesses that are closed or with their operations severely limited. A process being determined solely at the pace of those concerned only with public health.

Ironically, the most dangerous time for many affected businesses will come in the aftermath of eventually being able to reopen but with cash flow challenges and demand not restored to previous levels.

As Adam Marshall, director general of the British Chambers of Commerce, said: "Businesses don't just need support during the darkest days of the pandemic, they need support when they're battling to reopen successfully and rebuild their demand. Governments and financial institutions must recognise that businesses need fiscal help and forbearance through the whole of 2021, even if vaccines allow a spring or summer reopening of the

economy. When a runner finishes a marathon, you give them warmth and sustenance, not just abandon them to their fate. It should be no different for the businesses that have done so much to keep going through the most difficult period in living memory."

We do need government to play the long game with unprecedented investment in infrastructure and skills. And there must not be a cliff edge for support schemes, recalling of loans before businesses are in a position to repay and a raft of immediate tax increases to mitigate the cost of our response to the crisis.

First, we had the B word and wished something, anything would replace it in the headlines. Careful what you wish for as 12 months ago came the C word. And the impacts of both Brexit and CV19 are now wreaking carnage on our business communities. As attention shifts to May's Holyrood polls, we cannot afford for it to be a single issue election. 100% of everyone's focus and energy has to be on supporting our economy to recover.

As in any challenging period, businesses and places that come out the other end most strongly are those that adapt and innovate while not losing sight of their core strengths and long term strategy. We will be in a highly competitive environment as we seek to secure the projects, investment and people that will drive our recovery and future ambitions.

On behalf of our members, the Chamber continues to play a central role in the design and delivery of our regional economic strategy with a focus on energy transition, circular economy, skills, our shared positive narrative and promoting a culture of local procurement.



Russell Borthwick
chief executive



Tech support

EVEN before CV19, a transformation was underway in how people did business but the global pandemic has accelerated some technological developments and necessitated others.

Scottish entrepreneur David Brown's fintech start-up, Hi, was developed out of the belief that the conventional payroll process benefits neither the employer nor the employee.

Hi's unique system, which has secured the backing of a global investment firm with more than \$50bn of assets under management, releases capital for the employer and allows employees to access their earned money weekly, with real-time pay the vision for the future.

He said the CV19 pandemic had shone a spotlight on the importance of working capital for employers to maintain payroll.

"Payroll doesn't help employees because the wait for the end of the month forces many into payday lending, or predatory lending as I call it, paying extortionate rates to borrow against something which is actually legally theirs, the wages they have already earned," said David.

"It also doesn't help employers who need to find a large chunk of money

each month to pay their staff, eating into cash reserves and making growth difficult.

"Hi set out to discover if payroll could be configured in such a way that it could be externally financed and deal with both issues, either together or independently. It is reinventing pay. We offer a unique way to release working capital by deferring payroll using external finance whilst making pay to employees more frequent. This improves the financial resilience and wellbeing of companies and their people, at the same time.

“

“Businesses need to adopt technology that both supports cashflow and offers solutions that are safe and convenient for customers”

Clare Richardson,
area director for SME Banking
in Aberdeen and the North-east,
Bank of Scotland

“Our technology transforms the way a company's employees can view and receive their salaries, allowing them to see what they earn as they earn it. It enables staff to draw down the wages they have already earned, weekly, removing the painful wait for the monthly payday.”

He explained that the employer will be charged for the financing of payroll to access working capital and there will also be a small charge to the employer per employee for providing them with access to weekly pay, which can form part of a firm's employee benefit and retention schemes.

However there will be no charge to the employee. “It is their earned money and we believe they should not be charged for it,” added David.

Businesses are also being encouraged to adopt new technological developments to meet other changing demands.

Clare Richardson, area director for SME Banking in Aberdeen and the North-east at Bank of Scotland, said that contactless payments had surged as the as CV19 pandemic had impacted consumer behaviour.

“Businesses need to adopt technology that both supports

cashflow and offers solutions that are safe and convenient for customers," she said. "During the first lockdown in March, cash withdrawals fell by as much as 50% as more people took extra precautions around making contact with bank notes and coins.

"Research from Lloyds Bank around securing cash and working capital through CV19, revealed that supermarkets saw e-commerce surge by 78% year on year in April. The average value of contactless transactions also increased from £8 to £15. Over the past six months the use of pin pad payments has also become less frequent as people try to avoid touching surfaces in line with government guidance to help stop the spread of the virus.

"In a move to support the uptake of contactless payments, the contactless transaction limit was increased from £30 to £45 in April 2020. The Financial Conduct Authority is also reviewing the possibility of increasing this limit to £100. However, some consumer-facing businesses will have products or services with a higher average transaction value where alternative solutions may be required. From secure online payment platforms to contactless methods, we're here to help both small and large firms introduce the most effective tools for both themselves and their customers.

"For example, at Bank of Scotland we offer a pay-by-URL option that allows merchants to send a payment URL in an email, through a WhatsApp message, in a QR code or as a link added to an invoice.

"This makes it easy for customers to pay in a socially distanced and secure way and supports cashflow by encouraging quick payment. It also removes the need for businesses to invest in potentially costly e-commerce platforms.

"Another option is using app-based payment methods. For example, some fuel filling stations now offer motorists an app that allows customers to refuel and pay from the comfort of their own car. Previously driven by ease and convenience, this method now also delivers a socially distanced solution that minimises contact with others during the pandemic.

"At Bank of Scotland, we work closely with our clients to support them as digital is increasingly favoured over traditional payment methods. Businesses should consider these changes as opportunities and embrace technology to provide better experiences for customers that will be sustained well into the future. Adopting contactless solutions also delivers effective social distancing

to reassure both customers and employees."

Acumen Financial Planning is using digital platforms to open up the world of financial planning advice to young professionals through its sister company 'Beanstalk' which is led by chartered financial planner Jenny Madhoo.

"Our core services are accessed entirely by digital channels, as opposed to traditional financial planning services," said Jenny. "This is a fresh approach to providing independent financial advice for young professionals, whether they are focused on one short-term goal or in need of a more detailed review.

"Our mission is to share the many benefits of financial planning and advice with those at the start of their money journey, by offering affordable and accessible services, and a supportive helping hand to a new generation.

"We can give socially-conscious young professionals the opportunity to benefit from professional help and advice while treating them with respect and kindness as the future of society and the economy.

"Clients benefit from the full support and many decades of expertise



across the entire group but using methods they are familiar with. It is delivered through a mix of an online portal, Zoom meetings and digital signature software, so it is paperless.”

It’s most in-depth service is ‘Money Management’ which helps clients take their first steps into the world of investing without the heavy cost.

“We started work on Beanstalk pre-covid and it was in development for about a year. CV19 provided an excellent practice ground for us to see how people responded to a remote service and we have been greatly encouraged.

“It’s a personal service and you still get a financial planner’s human brain on the other end giving you individualised advice, but in a remote operation. I am based in Aberdeen but I can speak to people all over the UK, or from anywhere in the world if they are UK residents who are away from home.”

Graham Bridgeford of James Milne Chartered Accountants says the firm has also seen a change in the way people and businesses manage their finances. “Whilst there are still undoubtedly people who wish to keep paper records and will always appreciate seeing their accounting records and tax documents in

physical folders, more and more are turning to electronic alternatives, he explained.

“At James Milne, we established a client portal in 2019, which enables our clients to securely upload their accounts and tax information to us. During the first lockdown, unsurprisingly, we saw a dramatic increase in the number of clients wishing to use our portal. Firstly,



“Having a secure way of two-way communication has allowed us to respond to our clients’ needs and requirements, in a time where speed and efficiency has been important, during this time of a squeeze on everyone’s finances.”

Graham Bridgeford,
managing partner,
James Milne Chartered
Accountants

everyone was asked to stay home so dropping into one of our offices in Aberdeen, Inverurie or Banchory was no longer an option for them but secondly, our offices were closed. The secure portal allowed us to continue to receive, process and communicate with our clients.

“Having a secure way of two-way communication has allowed us to respond to our clients’ needs and requirements, in a time where speed and efficiency has been important, during this time of a squeeze on everyone’s finances.

“In the same way as we have all become used to having meetings online, using technology to manage business finances has now become a normal part of life, although we look forward to meeting clients face to face one day soon.”

What action is most important in 2021 to boost the regional economy?



“I think one of the key actions is going to be lifting travel restrictions. The local economy has a strong base in tourism and there are many people from around the globe who have made the North-east their home. The travel this generates brings much needed money and investment into the area. In the short term the lifting of travel restrictions will allow people to ‘staycation’ which we all know they are desperate to do.

“Looking further ahead we need the international visitors to carry out their business here in the North-east and access everything we have to offer. As a result of our architectural designs at home and abroad we generate income from throughout Europe which is spent here in the North-east. Lifting travel restrictions will allow us to grow our business with our partners throughout the UK and Europe thus allowing our people to continue supporting the local economy.”

Mark Taylor, *managing director*, Cumming and Co, architects



“It is my view that that as a business community we need to communicate more effectively and share information in order to get the best possible results. There is a lot of talk about ‘energy transition,’ ‘carbon capture,’ ‘life sciences clusters’ and ‘renewables.’ This is great but the reality is that the messaging and jargon is fuzzy and as a business community, and in my case the property industry, we simply don’t know what this means. The message needs to be clear and concise.

“My first ask is that those in power simplify the messaging. For example, what is an ‘energy transition zone?’ I know it is an idea for a piece of land adjacent to the new South Harbour but what exactly is it? Is it an industrial estate adjacent to the new harbour, which is a perfectly sound idea, or is it another ‘Energetica corridor’ which was a mirage that no-one understood and delivered not a single building or job? My second ask is that someone, somewhere, takes a sledgehammer to the business rates system in the UK. It is simply not fit for purpose and is now delivering outcomes that are unforeseen and are environmentally unconscionable.”

Eric Shearer, *partner*, Knight Frank



“I think that it is obvious to say that the vaccination programme is going to be the most important action to save and boost the economy. I have noticed a severe drop in confidence which needs to be rebuilt in order to encourage more people back to the workplace, into the city and surrounding areas and this programme is the obvious solution to allow this to be reintroduced.

“I would also like to see some support for the commercial property sector which, in relation to business rates assistance and relief, has been neglected. I understand that there has been assistance provided for other industries that have not been able to remain open or to trade however we are also affected in the same way and have large office space, meeting and training rooms and car parks that have had no relief from the business rates demand.”

Freya Eardley, *operations director*, Waterloo Quay Properties



Specialist Resource Solutions

Bespoke Complex Care

Specialist Resource Solutions, a bespoke complex care organisation headquartered in Aberdeen delivering care and support to people with varying needs on a 24/7 basis, offers a variety of services providing meaningful fulfilment for both individuals and communities.

Established in 2015, the local firm uses positive relationships and connections to encourage and provide social inclusion and participation which enhances the lives of many across the area.

Its general services include:

- Social and community participation and inclusion
- Linking in with groups, activities and social events
- Skill and personal development
- Personal care and medication management
- Healthy lifestyle and wellbeing
- Build and maintain friendships and relationships

Specialist Resource Solutions' services has been more important than ever as we all navigate the 'new normal' and look forward to a post-CV19 world. Helping people through the pandemic by promoting positive mental health, providing support and offering tailor-made health and activity plans has been core to the organisation's business strategy.

There are four key areas of support and services which help to meet their objectives: the allotment, creative short breaks, day occupation and engagement in work.



Growing skills

Having access to an allotment allows the support team to teach users the minutiae behind growing fresh food. From budgeting costs, preparing the soil and planting seeds right through to producing fresh food, there is an abundance of social and educational skills taught. The allotment is a garden project as part of their North East Community Support service and also includes the potential of work placements Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire.

Re-energising

The organisation also offers the opportunity for carers and clients in care to be supported throughout the process of booking a short break for when much-needed rest and respite is desired. Specialist Resource Solutions take the hassle away by planning and booking personalised trips, allowing those in need to relax and feel fulfilled and re-energised.

Stimulating connections

Existing relationships with community groups extends the opportunity for more virtual activities, pertinent in the current climate, such as art, drama and music. This builds local connections and lends itself to improving personal skills and relations, supporting the growth of cognitive stimulation.



Boosting employability

As well as placement opportunities through the allotment initiative, there's also further work offerings within the business which can help people become engaged, enriched and better equipped for future employability.

These areas of support, combined with the core services of caring for those suffering from poor mental health, Autism and those simply aging and losing independence, funnel into Specialist Resource Solutions' wider key objective of supporting individuals to reach their full potential.

Referrals can be made through specialist-resourcesolutions.co.uk to discuss opportunities of care, whether that be to organise a short break or to be advised on health support.

As a bespoke care firm, no ask is too niche and anyone interested is encouraged to get in touch.





Scott Taylor of Maersk with VSA chief executive Kenneth Simpson

Maersk forms partnership with VSA

MAERSK Training has announced a commercial partnership with North-east social care charity VSA to help support mental wellbeing in the workplace.

Mental health conditions affect more than one in three people in Scotland, becoming one of the most talked about health issues in today's society.

After gaining feedback from clients regarding a lack of mental health first aid courses available in Aberdeen, Maersk Training took the decision to gain accreditation from one of the UK's largest awarding bodies for two courses: 'Understanding Mental Health in the Workplace' and 'Mental Health First Aid in the Workplace'. Both are regulated and nationally recognised courses, specifically designed to raise awareness of the signs and symptoms associated with common mental health conditions related to the workplace and advise how best to offer support and guidance to colleagues.

Approximately half of the course cost per delegate will be donated directly back to VSA to help towards the charity's campaign to transform mental health care in Aberdeen. The charity plans to open a purpose-built facility in the city centre later this year to help adults on their journey to recovery.

AFC signs Health Shield for three years

ABERDEEN Football Club has renewed its health and wellbeing partnership with Health Shield for a further three years, following positive results for both organisations and for Dons' fans.

Health Shield, which is committed to helping people lead healthier and more productive lives, initially signed up to support AFC and the AFC Community Trust (AFCCT) for two years through a partnership launched in 2018.

The new three-year, six figure deal, will build on the success of the first two years with both organisations committed to making a positive difference to the health and wellbeing of fans and the wider community, while raising awareness of Health Shield and its work as a leading health and wellbeing provider.

Drillmar expands with V.Ships alliance

ABERDEEN headquartered oil and gas recruitment specialist Drillmar Resources has announced plans to expand its global recruitment and crew management capabilities through a strategic alliance with V.Ships Offshore.

With access to V.Ships' international offshore marine service offering, the alliance will support Drillmar in extending its global footprint, while V.Ships offshore will add further specialised drilling and well services capability to its portfolio.

V.Ships Offshore is part of global ship management leader V.Group with over 35 years' experience in managing crew and vessels in multiple marine and offshore sectors. V.Group has access to an international network of more than 44,000 crew, covering all areas of ship management and crew management.

Raymond Bruce, managing director of Drillmar, said: "The alliance between Drillmar and V.Ships will allow both organisations to benefit from decades of mutual experience spanning both recruitment and the industry sectors we each serve."

Two major contracts for signal

DIGITAL media production company signal has won two significant contracts to produce films for Aberdeenshire Council and ORE Catapult, supporting the promotion of local and national economic development.

Aberdeenshire Council has awarded signal the production of a series of films promoting an array of activities and value delivered by their European funding programmes and Community-led Local Development (CLLD) programmes in Aberdeenshire since 2014.

The CLLD programme aims to support the sustainable development of rural and fishery communities in Aberdeenshire. signal will create 22 films including 18 case studies profiling development projects ranging from improving community amenities and boosting local businesses to creating opportunities for people with disabilities.

activpayroll's second French office

ACTIVPAYROLL, the global payroll and tax compliance specialist headquartered in Aberdeen has launched a second French office in the city of Orléans.

It will serve as an accompanying hub to activpayroll's existing office in Paris and will allow the company to continue to support existing and new French domestic customers, in addition to supporting international customers with French based operations and employees.



World first for hydrogen buses

THE world's first fleet of double decker hydrogen buses has been officially launched into service in Aberdeen.

Run by First Bus in a project led by Aberdeen City Council, the hydrogen buses represent a major step forward in reducing climate change, as cities across the world witness how far innovation in the transport industry has come.

The zero-emission fleet emits nothing more than water from its exhausts as the fuel is made from just wind and water. Furthermore, plans are in place for Aberdeen to make its own hydrogen to power the buses, making it an even greener energy source for the local community.

The start of the first of the zero emission buses on their service routes also underlines the city's role as the energy capital of Europe and shows its commitment to the transition of green energy from oil and gas as part of the city's Net Zero Vision.

Tendeka and Northern Solutions sign Alaskan services agreement

A NEW collaborative agreement has been signed that will see Northern Solutions Alaska LLC represent global completions specialist Tendeka in actively promoting sales, installation, and services of its completion products and technologies in the region.

The two companies have previously worked together on several projects in Alaska which contributed to the introduction and ongoing success of Tendeka's FloSure Autonomous Inflow Control Devices (AICD) and most recently its new PulseEight Electronic Ambient Valve (EAV) technology in Prudhoe Bay.

Paul Guilfoyle, Tendeka's business development manager for Canada and Alaska, said: "This mutually beneficial arrangement, although in the works for some time, has even more significance today as we adjust to find new ways of working. Tendeka's regional team and the combination of local experience and support from within Alaska, will ensure that together we can continue to meet the technology requirements of Alaskan operators."

Robert Gordon's pupils win Techfest project

PUPILS from Robert Gordon's College have taken first prize at TechFest's digital adaptation of its STEM in the Installation project, thanks to their problem solving and teamwork.

The team, known as RGC Energy, consisted of seven S6 pupils. Sponsored by CNOOC International, the project focused on transitioning to reduce carbon emissions as much as possible, as part of a global movement towards net zero.

The aim of the initiative was to offer pupils an insight into the project management, engineering and design elements involved in the energy sector, at an industry standard.

Using CNOOC International's Buzzard platform as inspiration, pupils from Robert Gordon's College, Banchory Academy, Cults Academy and Kemnay Academy were challenged to reduce the amount of gas import required to provide electricity.

Fiona Heinonen, CSR analyst at CNOOC International and one of the senior judges in the competition, said: "We were impressed with the high standard of contributions from the teams at the 2020 STEM in the Installation challenge. All pupils displayed promising talent and skills, and we hope this project has inspired them to consider a career in the energy sector of the future."

Aubin Group's \$16m contracts

AUBIN Group, a leading developer and supplier of chemical solutions to the energy industry, has secured contract wins valued at more than £12m.

The deals involve the firm developing and delivering a range of its specialist products to clients, including a five-year extension to an existing contract with an Oman-based energy services firm and a number of new agreements with oil and gas companies in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Wood signs \$120m China contract

WOOD, the global consulting and engineering company, has secured a contract valued at over \$120m with Sinopec Hainan Refining and Chemical Limited Company to provide engineering, procurement and construction services to expand its refinery development in the Hainan Free Trade Zone in South China.

Once completed, the ethylene renovation and expansion project will produce up to one million tonnes of ethylene derivatives and refined oil on an annual basis and is expected to boost economic growth in China's downstream sector by more than 100 billion yuan (\$14.1bn). Output from the Hainan FTZ will serve ethylene demand across China and globally.



Feeling blue

AN INITIATIVE has been launched to breathe new life into the centre of Peterhead, Aberdeenshire's biggest settlement.

Invest in Peterhead aims to change the perception of the 'Blue Toon' and attract new businesses by identifying the opportunities and gaps in the local economy and promoting available properties to potential investors.

The initiative is being supported by Aberdeenshire Council and led by Rediscover Peterhead, the business improvement district (BID) for Peterhead town centre.

Councillor Norman Smith, chair of the council's Buchan Area Committee and Peterhead Development Partnership, said: "There is a tangible transformation going on across the North-east and that is demonstrated by some very strong investment figures and ever-developing economic opportunities.

"As the largest town in Aberdeenshire, Peterhead is highly entrepreneurial, with many micro businesses and SMEs which add huge value to the economy and are complemented by large employers in a range of sectors such as engineering, marine, energy, textiles, and food and drink. I am confident Invest in Peterhead will

bring even more investment to the town centre."

Leslie Forsyth, manager of Rediscover Peterhead, said: "For me Invest in Peterhead (IIP) is really about telling the positive story of Peterhead. The town has a strong local economy, underpinned by the energy sector and fishing, and the people and supply chains which sustain those industries.



"It is a successful area, an area which should be attractive to people looking to invest in property and in businesses. It has been striking during this challenging period that eight or nine new businesses have been started locally, including a £2m investment in the new Arc Cinema."

Leslie Forsyth,
manager,
Rediscover Peterhead

"It is a successful area, an area which should be attractive to people looking to invest in property and in businesses. It has been striking during this challenging period that eight or nine new businesses have been started locally, including a £2m investment in the new Arc Cinema.

"This is a collaboration between the local authority, key stakeholders, property agents, local investors, entrepreneurs, and Rediscover Peterhead. This is its great strength – it brings people together to promote this. There are clear signs that if you invest in this town you will get a return on that investment."

Leslie said Peterhead was going through the same issues as almost every town centre in the UK, albeit it had not been as badly affected as some. He had been very encouraged by the response since the launch in December but much work had gone in before that.

"It's been about two years to get to this point and we are now in the active marketing stage and are investing quite heavily in social media to bring the message as simply and straightforwardly as we can about the opportunities available to outside investors and local investors who are just as important.



Photo credit AberMedia. Imagery was taken prior to the current CV19 restrictions

“There are a number of very prominent buildings in strong locations which for one reason or another have been empty, in some cases for rather too long. We want to make people aware of these and re-energise interest in that portfolio of opportunity.

“One of the key things is that this is a collaboration. All too often in other places people who are interested in a new idea or in taking over a property face too much bureaucracy and too many hurdles. We will be working together to make sure that everything joins up – information about how to go about getting planning permission, information about where money might be available to support investors and other sorts of support which might be available.”

Peterhead councillor Diane Beagrie, vice-chair of the council’s Buchan Area Committee, said: “We can be in absolutely no doubt that this has been a very tough year for all of our businesses – whether that has been in retail, leisure or hospitality.

“However, we are seeing very real and welcome green shoots of economic recovery in our town centre and beyond which gives us real confidence for the future. I am delighted with the early interest in this initiative and we have a great team working on this.

“We are facing very difficult times just now and the future is very uncertain for all our local business. We need to offer all the support we can to ensure more and continued investment in our town. Peterhead has a great community and I look forward to seeing how this develops in the coming years.”

The initiative has been welcomed not just by those businesses in the town centre. Mark Stevenson, sales manager of Gillanders Motors Ltd on the outskirts of the town, said:



“Peterhead has still got that wonderful community. People still help each other and will never see folk stuck. Its maybe a bit old fashioned but sometimes old fashioned is not a bad thing.”

Mark Stevenson,
sales manager,
Gillanders Motors Ltd

“Business rates and riding overheads make it more challenging for small business to survive and that results in empty properties which reduces the traffic through an area. A busy town centre is critical to small rural towns. It is so important for a town to have that point of community, that point of focus.

“A vibrant centre helps businesses wherever they are in the town. Small businesses invest more into their own community than they do anywhere else. Every pound spent in Peterhead goes back into the Peterhead community, whether it is in wages or tax for local government. The more we spend further afield and online the less of our own money comes back into the community.

“Peterhead has still got that wonderful community. People still help each other and will never see folk stuck. Its maybe a bit old fashioned but sometimes old fashioned is not a bad thing.

“Peterhead town centre has easy parking, the harbour is just a one minute walk from the town centre and you have easy access right the way round the area to the outlying businesses which are two minutes on the bus or a 20 minute walk so it’s not a difficult town to navigate.”

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Exchange



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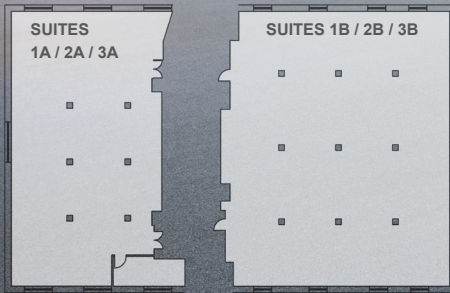
In addition to a reduced deposit requirement members will benefit from a 0.75% interest rate reduction.

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*Standard Real Estate Ltd will provide a guaranteed loan facility conditional only on payment of deposit and compliance with normal Money Laundering and Identity Requirements. The offer is available to private individuals, Limited Companies, Partnerships and Sipp Purchases. There are no Bank/Lender legal fee - commission payments – or survey fees involved – simply the Deposit and monthly payments involved - all loan interest rates are fixed for the 12 year term – the term can be reduced if desired. Deposit level can also be increased to reduce monthly payments. SDLT Will still apply to purchasers if applicable. The purchaser shall be responsible for their own legal fees and other normal purchasers costs in the transaction. Your property ownership will be at risk if you do not keep up your loan payments for the term of the loan. VAT may be chargeable on the purchase price, however providing the purchaser is VAT registered and conditions met this should be reclaimable.





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Scott Campbell

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Standard Real Estate Ltd

Merchant Exchange		PRICE	NORMAL DEPOSIT REQUIRED (25%)	AGCC SPECIAL DEPOSIT LEVEL (20%)	MONTHLY GUARANTEED LOAN FACILITY PAYMENT NORMAL 5% FIXED 12 Years	MONTHLY MEMBERS WITH REDUCED DEPOSIT MEMBERS DISCOUNT RATE 4.25% FIXED 12 YEARS
1ST FLOOR						
Suite A	2,236 sq ft plus one secure car parking space	£300,000	£75,000	£60,000	£2,115	£2,162
Suite B	3,515 sq ft plus one secure car parking space	£420,000	£105,000	£84,000	£2,961	£3,026
2ND FLOOR						
Suite A	2,271 sq ft plus one secure parking space	£295,000	£73,750	£59,000	£2,080	£2,126
Suite B	3,487 sq ft plus one secure parking space	£350,000	£87,500	£70,000	£2,468	£2,522
3RD FLOOR						
Suite A	2,151 sq ft plus one secure parking space	£315,000	£78,750	£63,000	£2,221	£2,270
Suite B	3,130 sq ft plus one secure parking space	£360,000	£90,000	£72,000	£2,539	£2,594

A Deed of Conditions with an annual charge to cover common costs and insurance will be entered into with the other owners in the building thus ensuring the property is professionally managed and maintained protecting your asset – each owner will have voting rights so the actual owners are in control. The loan in respect of the purchase will be an unregulated/unadvised private loan on normal commercial terms between Standard Real Estate Ltd and the purchaser. The purchaser is recommended to take full legal and financial advice before entering into a commercial loan facility. Subject to identification checks and availability.

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Jonathan Nesbitt Tel. 01224 597531 / 07771 923401
jonathan.nesbitt@fgburnett.co.uk



Graeme Nisbet Tel. 01224 597532 / 07900 205206
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Is flexibility the key to your future?

by **Jaclyn E P Russell**,
partner and head of private client, Stronachs LLP



STARTING the year in lockdown presents us all with another opportunity to try and get round to some of those tasks that usually slip further down the to-do list. But, taking time to sit down and really think about what we want to happen after our deaths and who we want our assets to pass to is not something that naturally rises to the top of that list.

Making a will can seem like a demanding and possibly daunting task, especially if the assets in an estate are constantly changing or family circumstances are uncertain. Instead of putting things off, why not explore whether a more flexible structure of will may open up future planning opportunities for you and your family?

Where there's a will ... there's often more than just one way

When we think of a will, we usually think of a document which contains very specific instructions setting out who is to receive what, after we die. However, I often see situations where this type of will simply does not work for the family circumstances.

Business owning clients might find themselves in a situation where one child is involved in the family business and the others are not, but there is a desire to try and equalise all of the children.

With the nature of the business ever changing, it can be impossible to outline at the time of making the will, exactly how that end result might be achieved. Particularly without affecting the future of the business. Alternatively, parents may wish to pass on a family business to one of their children, but at the time of making their wills, the children may be young and it is too early to understand which of them might be interested.

Put your trust ... in a trust?

A flexible, or discretionary will can often be the answer. This type of will allows the entire estate to fall into a trust upon a death. Trusted family members, friends or professionals can be appointed as trustees to manage the trust. Your trustees ultimately decide which of your beneficiaries receive the estate, based on a detailed letter which you prepare and keep updated. This allows them to react to

family circumstances, changes in tax rules and fluctuations in asset values.

The trustees are able to deal with your estate in line with your wishes whilst having the flexibility to reorganise the distribution of your estate in a more tax efficient way, or in a manner which ensures the future operation of a business.

Discretionary wills can also be helpful where there is a family member who might be in receipt of means tested benefits. The structure allows assets or cash to be paid out as and when it is possible. This avoids a situation where someone receives a large lump sum payment which might push their income over the level at which benefits would be paid.

Don't put off something that could be done today. A well-structured will really can be the key to the future for you and your family.

Stronachs



Tymor managing director Kevin Moran

Innovation cuts cost of deadweight audits by 75%

ABERDEEN headquartered maritime technology and consultancy business Tymor Marine has launched an innovative digital technology designed to improve the efficiency, cost and operational impact of performing statutory deadweight audits on commercial and naval vessels.

Once installed, Tymor's new system, called DeadW8.net (DW8), will reduce the cost of future deadweight vessel audits by up to 75%. The greatest benefits will be realised by larger vessels, including oil and gas FPSOs, cruise ships or warships which have bigger crews and multiple changes in deadweight that are not always obvious, but the system is applicable to any vessel operator wishing to streamline work, improve efficiency and reduce cost.

Tymor is planning a commercial roll-out of DW8 during 2021 and the company has already received its first order from an international offshore drilling contractor.

Strategic partnership for LMS

LOAD Monitoring Systems Ltd (LMS), Aberdeen based global leader in intelligent lifting products and load measurement systems, has announced a 'strategic partnership' and investment by Austrian based pewag group – one of the most established chain manufacturers in the world with innovative lifting related products.

The shareholding and collaboration will strengthen each company's unique capabilities and will increase product portfolios to expand customer support across diverse industry sectors worldwide.

First occupier for Aberdeen One

TITAN Investors has secured the first occupier for its new 20-acre logistics park Aberdeen One.

FedEx has pre-let 43,500sq ft on a 15-year lease. Under the development agreement an existing 70,000sq ft warehouse will be stripped back to its structural frame and extensively refurbished, with new offices and yard facilities allowing FedEx to take occupation in July 2021.

Aberdeen One provides the gateway to the Altens Industrial Estate, Aberdeen's main south-side industrial location, and is the first dedicated logistics park to be developed in Aberdeen. Titan Investors acquired the site from Total in 2018 and demolished the old office facilities to generate 20 acres of future development opportunities.

Neptune awards Cygnus contracts

NEPTUNE Energy has awarded integrity management and fabric maintenance contracts worth \$6.5m for its operated gas production platform, Cygnus, to Oceaneering and Stork.

Oceaneering will supply integrity management services covering pressure systems, structural, pipeline, erosion management and offshore inspection services.

Oceaneering will work closely with Stork which will deliver fabric maintenance and scaffolding services for Cygnus, located in the UK Southern North Sea.

The contracts are for three years with two one-year options to extend.

RGU's free short courses available

ROBERT Gordon University is launching the next phase of its portfolio of free short courses to support the skills needs of individuals and workforces of Scotland.

The university is offering 125 fully funded places on its 'Introduction to Data Science with Python' short course, which is focused on providing individuals with the skills to thrive in a data driven economy.

This course will look at the main techniques and issues involved in data science, introducing Python as a tool for working with data, which is a highly sought-after skill. The course covers ethical and legal issues alongside the practical application of the data science lifecycle stages (data cleaning, transformation, analysis, visualisation and reporting).

The funded places are supported through the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Upskilling Fund and priority will be given to those that are currently unemployed or where their job is at threat.



Mark Walker and Gareth Innes

TWMA moves to accommodate growth

SPECIALIST drilling waste management company TWMA has secured new headquarters in Aberdeen to support business growth and deliver remote operations for its customers.

The company is relocating its global headquarters to the Aberdeen International Business Park in Dyce. The office space has been designed to bring greater flexibility with teams together in one open-plan space. TWMA has taken an 8,050sq ft floor area, with approximately 60 people moving to the new office.

The new premises will also include a 'real-time centre' which will live stream data from TWMA's TCC RotoMill projects around the world.

Gareth Innes, chief engineering and commercial officer at TWMA said: "This move underpins our growth plans and reflects our commitment to delivering quality solutions to our customers. The relocation creates a first-class collaborative working environment, which will help us to continue building our in-house capability to deliver new technology and improve our services."

Wood in new agreement with Spirit Energy

WOOD, the global consulting and engineering company, has entered into a new agreement with Spirit Energy to partner on the delivery of late life solutions for the Morecambe Bay gas fields, one of the UK's largest gas accumulations.

The five-year consolidated services contract, valued at \$130m, will involve Wood leveraging its experience and capability in late life asset optimisation and management to extend field life, lower costs, and reduce late life carbon intensity across the Hub's offshore assets in the East Irish Sea and the Barrow onshore gas terminal on the North-west coast of England.

Bold new logo and website unveiled

ELECTRA Learning has unveiled its new brand identity and redesigned website, representing the core values in what they do and who they are.

Donna McWilliams, managing director, said: "At Electra Learning we are well known for our unique approach to delivering creative change management and learning solutions, and over the past year we have poured our heart and soul into updating and improving our branding and website.

"With the support and advice of our partners at Hampton, we have incorporated a bold colour scheme and a refreshed logo. Our redesigned website offers readers an insight into the variety of our service offerings, case studies, upcoming events, and the opportunity to register for our free members area.

"The thinking behind the new design was to create an image that accurately represents Electra's services, what we do and who we are."

OPITO change leads to new training

ABERDEEN based training and competency consultancy Ann McRobb Associates is set to deliver a series of in-house training programmes which will revolutionise the way oil and gas sector professionals gain industry certifications.

The move is in response to the recent announcement by global skills body OPITO that it is changing its CMS approval criteria to allow organisations flexibility in how competence assessors and internal verifiers are trained to gain qualifications.

Under the revised criteria organisations are no longer required to only train assessors and internal verifiers to a nationally or industry recognised standard but can launch their own in-house training packages providing they operate within OPITO guidelines.

Ann McRobb Associates is believed to be among the first in Scotland to roll out its own series of in-house training and competence programmes fully in line with the revised industry body criteria.

Subsea Expo set for 2022

THE world's largest underwater engineering event, Subsea Expo, will not take place this year.

Organisers Subsea UK who have already postponed the event from February to May this year due to the CV19 imposed restrictions have decided to wait until 2022 before staging the event. The three-day exhibition and conference is now scheduled to run from February 22-24, 2022.

A word of advice



Fiona Lindsay,
Lindsay & Lang,
director

What's your area of expertise?

Lindsay & Lang is a people and culture consultancy which provides solutions that promote positive corporate wellbeing to enhance performance. Corporate wellbeing embodies all aspects of employees' lives, their development, wellbeing and communication. It also considers physical, psychological and social factors. We provide a unique combination of HR and internal communications expertise, professional credentials and a desire to change, to provide employee engagement solutions.

What should people know?

The pandemic has provided some key opportunities for communicators – we now have a seat and a voice at the table. We must ensure that at a time when we are socially disconnected, we use this as an opportunity to keep the workforce connected through a shared sense of identity, safety and purpose during these turbulent times. Organisations must continue to provide stability through uncertainty by reinforcing core values, policies, and practices to provide clarity of direction as a form of safety so the workforce thrives and know that they are supported.

What's the biggest mistake companies make?

Not sharing information. People can handle unpleasant news when they are engaged with current and accurate information, this builds trust. Sensitivities come when words and actions are misaligned. Share what you know, what you do not know, and what the future may or may not look like, even if nobody really knows - be honest.

What's your top tip?

Traditional communication methods should now be complemented by a more empathetic, authentic and vulnerable rhetoric from our leaders. Communication has a huge impact on an organisation. It sits at the heart of all workplace experiences. What we do, and how we say it, will influence productivity. Keep reviewing your communications strategy, keep being proactive, keep asking your employees about what they would like to see and hear and how they wish to receive it. Keep checking in with staff to drive positive change.

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Emerie-May Townsley

First aid instructor – aged three-and-a-half

EMERIE-MAY Townsley, aged three-and-a-half, has become the youngest first aid instructor in the UK, having taken it upon herself to get involved in demonstrating first aid skills to older children as part of Aberdeen's Mini Medics course.

These courses are normally run onsite by provider Omniscient Safety Innovations Ltd, however during the CV19 pandemic they moved to online remote learning and have also provided free sessions. The courses are a very basic introduction to first aid and defibrillation for children.

Brett Townsley of Belhelvie, who owns the company, said: "I did not realise she had been paying such close attention however, during an onsite session when she was two, she simply started doing CPR in front of the other children. Since then she has become a regular fixture in our online courses.

"Our Mini Medics offering is just our way of giving back to the community. Educating children in first aid is so important especially in today's world and we normally run these courses for cost or free.

"During the three-hour programme which includes educational, theoretical and practical teaching sessions, Emerie-May demonstrates raising the alarm, CPR, the recovery position and what to do for a teddy bear when it's choking."

Scotland's economy and the impact on the third sector

Steve Rae,
finance director on the board of trustees,
Befriend a Child



NO ONE can deny that the Scottish economy has been hit hard over the last 12 months. In September 2020, the Scottish Government announced that Scotland's economy had recovered half of the GDP which had fallen as a result of the national lockdown implementation in March 2020, but highlighted that certain areas of the economy may still not return to pre-pandemic levels until the end of 2023.

Scotland's charities, community groups and their beneficiaries, many of whom are the most vulnerable in society, will be some of those hardest hit by the challenging economic landscape caused by CV19.

According to OSCR, the Scottish charity regulator, 70% of charities believe CV19 has had a negative impact on their beneficiaries. This has led to an unprecedented increase in demand for services from the third sector. Befriend a Child has seen a dramatic increase in its referrals compared to this time last year, as have many local services such as food banks and mental health advice.

Our local voluntary organisations have never been more in demand but due to the nature of the health crisis and the potential impact on

the finances of both corporate and individual donors, they have never had such a challenging environment in which to work.

Many charities have had a sustained loss of income over the last year as revenue from sources as diverse as public fundraising, events, charity shops and visitor attractions has reduced or ceased. Investment income plummeted, which led to a reduced funding pot for trusts and foundations to distribute to local causes.

Thankfully investment values are recovering but no funding streams are safe and many organisations have had to delve into their reserves to survive. Although the picture is bleak many organisations have successfully navigated the last 12 months when at the beginning of the pandemic their future looked uncertain.

So what have charities done to survive and what will put them in a good position for the future?

Third sector organisations, both large and small, have had to adapt and innovate as they respond to the increase in demand for services alongside continued financial uncertainty. Changes, such as the shift to digital technology for both service delivery and digital fundraising, that

would normally have taken years have happened in a matter of weeks or months. Organisations that are agile have been able to ensure they are connecting with stakeholders and responding to beneficiaries' needs.

Good governance and clarity of vision and mission has never been more important, as many trustee boards and senior staff have had to make difficult and swift decisions. There has also been more collaboration and support across the sector. This will be key for many charities moving forward as they will be able to achieve a greater impact for the communities they serve.

To help with cashflow, charities have been able to take advantage of the furlough scheme and CV19 response grants, which have provided welcome short-term relief. This, allied to the fact many businesses and individuals have stepped up to support their local communities, has been the difference between some organisations sinking or swimming.

For many charities to survive and be able to play their vital role in supporting and helping communities through this pandemic it will take a continued, collective, effort from staff, volunteers, government, foundations, companies and individuals.

The top half of the page features a stylized illustration. On the left, three blue gears of varying sizes are shown, with dashed white lines indicating their rotation paths. A blue paper airplane is positioned below the gears, pointing towards the right. On the right side, a pink sign with a black border and a black post stands on a purple plant. The sign has the words "FOR SALE" written in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.

Buy the way

THIS year is shaping up to be a busy one for mergers and acquisitions for several reasons – but how do you go about selling your business and are there likely to be buyers for it?

Many companies have held onto their cash because of Brexit uncertainty over the last three years. With interest rates at historic lows and seller expectations perhaps lowered because of the pandemic, some might now feel the time is right to put that cash into businesses.

Mike Beveridge, UK co-head of corporate finance specialist Simmons Energy, a division of Piper Sandler, believes that both Middle East buyers, investors and banks, will be important drivers of activity.

The cash-rich Middle East buyers with deep pockets and aggressive growth strategies are likely to be looking globally for technology and expertise to exploit in their large and recovering regional markets.

Banks now essentially have control of several heavily leveraged oilfield services businesses but are not generally keen to own and run industrial companies for long, so will look for more permanent homes for these companies to recover that outstanding debt.

“I think there will be quite a number of people who will be thinking ‘I just don’t want to go through another recession or pandemic so I’m going to sell,’” said George Yule, founder and executive director of BGE Consultancy Ltd – the initials stand for build, grow and exit.

George has more than three decades of oilfield experience, including start-ups, MBOs, acquisitions and internalisation projects.

More recently, as former executive vice chairman of Aberdeen Football Club, the former president of Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce played a pivotal role in the turnaround in the club’s fortunes and its re-connection with supporters at all levels, culminating in the club gaining planning consent for its new training ground and stadium.

He is now using his experience and global contacts to assist start-up and early-stage businesses, those looking to grow their bottom line and business owners preparing for acquisition or exit.

“The moment owners start considering selling their company they must begin planning an exit strategy,” he said. “Preparing a successful exit usually takes longer than many business owners realise.

“Unless they have had previous expressions of interest from suitors, it can take up to three years from start to completion depending on the business climate, market conditions, availability of funding, the performance of the business and its ‘scale-ability.’

“They need to be focussed, patient and fully committed to preparing a strategic plan based on factual information and able to look at the strengths and weaknesses of the business through the eyes of any potential acquirers – and not just how they see it.”

He said carrying out a health check to ensure it is ‘sale-ready’ is beneficial from an ongoing efficiency viewpoint but provides confidence that there are no nasty surprises along the route.

“It will stimulate a positive relationship from the outset and avoid any subsequent awkward questions from potential buyers,” added George. He said it was vital to be honest and open to potential buyers which could include compiling a comprehensive inventory of the business’s key points – a documentation pack containing all the necessary details a buyer will look for.

“That might be financial information, a list of clients, contacts and trading



history, details of staff, any relevant HSEQ details, accreditations held, key suppliers, knowledge of the market sectors the business operates in, its main competitors, any IP and relationships with banks, accountants and legal advisors.

“That will also help avoid deal fatigue – a potential buyer withdrawing because discussions become too protracted or onerous.

“It’s important to resist any temptation to ‘conceal’ information but equally important to protect your own business interests by getting a potential buyer to sign a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) before allowing them to access sensitive business data. This is particularly important where there is interest from buyers within the same industry sector because some competitors may indulge in ‘fishing’ for information without having any intention of acquiring the business.”

He said it was important, when considering preparing a company for possible sale, that the owners continued to manage and grow the business without the diversion of preparing an exit strategy.

“That should be left to the experts who will lead the process, with the help and support of the owners,

not the other way round,” George added. “The sale or exit process will be time-consuming and involve many meetings with third parties. There will be numerous requests for information which have to be answered and while the owners will obviously have to assist, they don’t require to be directly involved.

“Their focus should be on running the business because trading and income needs to be sustained and increased because this will be the basis of its future valuation.”

Keir Willox, a partner in Shepherd and Wedderburn’s corporate team in Aberdeen paraphrases Benjamin Franklin in his guidance to making a business ready for sale:

““

“If you fail to prepare, prepare to fail – you might still sell it, but you will almost certainly sell it for less.”

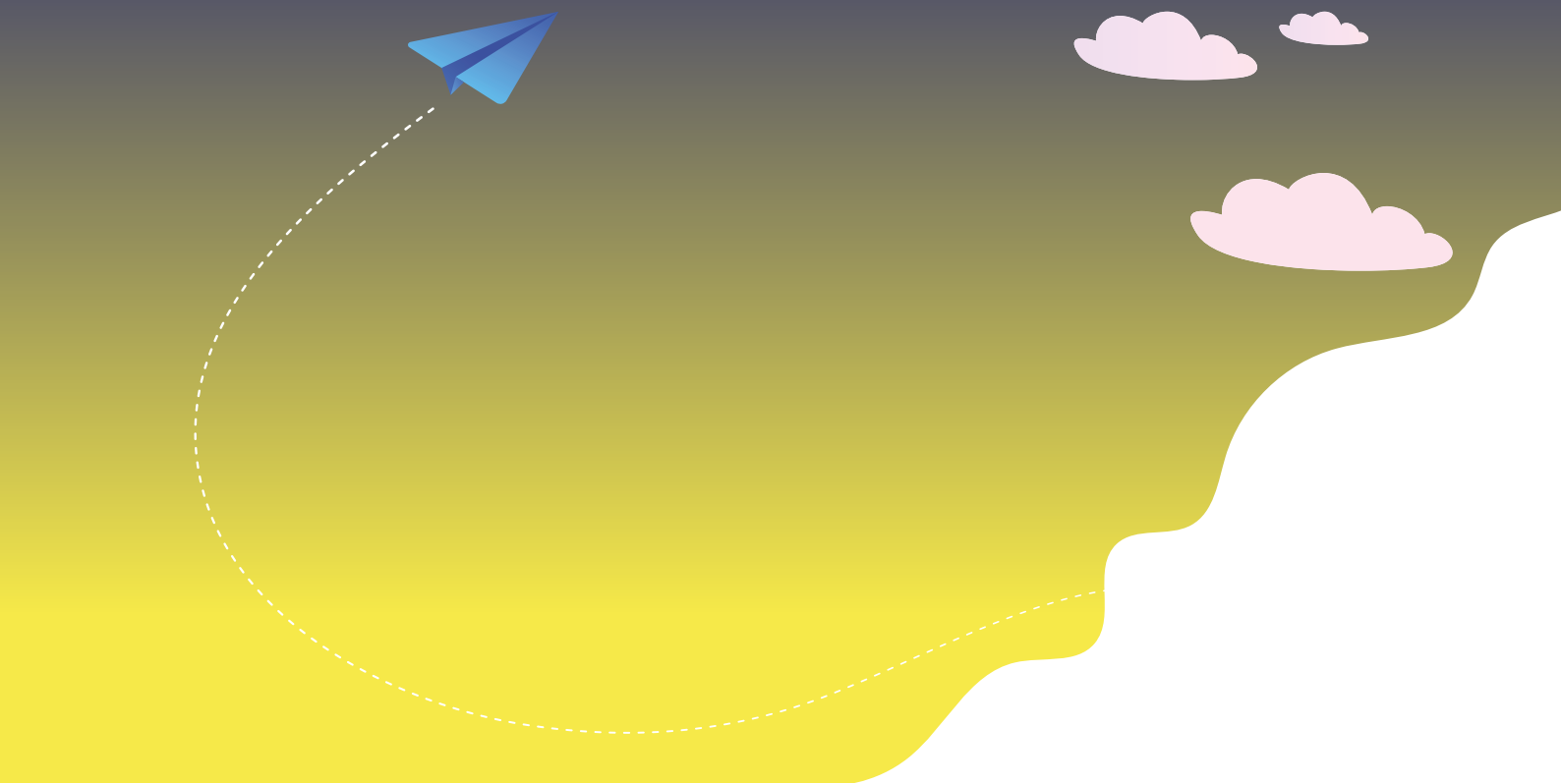
Keir Willox,
partner,
Shepherd and Wedderburn

“If you fail to prepare, prepare to fail – you might still sell it, but you will almost certainly sell it for less.

“You need to bring quality advisors in early to help with that process, and potentially to help find potential buyers. This is important to establish the value and price and because a buyer will generally ask you to verify what you are telling them, which means you could be liable if it turns out later that the information you provided was inaccurate.”

He said the key points you should consider are:

1. Historical financial information – this will form the basis of pricing and the better quality it is, the better chance you will have of achieving your asking price. If you are, or have, a good accountant, then you have a head start. If not, bring one in to prepare this information for you. It will repay the cost and time many times over.
2. You need a business plan to demonstrate the potential of your business to a buyer – what and where the growth opportunities are and the financial projections that go with that. A quality business plan in a recognisable format backed by verifiable information is a vital tool in negotiating a decent price.



3. Customers – you will need to provide details of key sales and the underlying contracts that back them up – but be careful not to give too much away to competitors at the early stages of the process. Your supply chain can also be critical, and you will need to evidence its resilience. Often contracts can be incomplete or difficult to find so get them in order before it becomes a problem.

4. Legal housekeeping is more important than many think, as a buyer needs to know they are actually getting what they pay for. The buyer is likely to ask you to stand behind what you tell them, so make sure that you have the evidence to do so.

The main areas here are: property leases or title deeds; employee contracts – particularly for key employees, and details of any share options you have granted; details of pension rights (buyers are wary of final salary pension schemes and will check this area thoroughly); intellectual property rights can be very important for value – ensure you have proper protection or registration for trademarks and patents, where applicable, and that you are not contravening anyone else’s rights; statutory books and key registers, if you are selling a company (the shares

are what they are buying and they will need to see these are complete and accurate); and details of any litigation or disputes – and the advice you received around them.

Kirk Anderson and Millar Kennedy weren’t actively seeking a partner for Load Monitoring Systems Ltd but their innovation and success in establishing a highly regarded brand attracted suitors.

“We have actually had a number of approaches over the past 18-months and recently secured a new strategic partnership and investment with Austrian-based pewag group,” said Kirk, the company managing director. LMS attends a number of major international conferences and tradeshows every year around the world.

“These kinds of large-scale industry networking events are vital for building connections and familiarising potential customers with the LMS name and what we stand for,” said Kirk.

It was at ADIPEC in the Middle East in 2019 that they first met with the pewag group, one of the most established global chain manufacturers with a range of innovative lifting related products.

The two companies then connected virtually, negotiated during most of 2020 and in December successfully brokered a deal.

“It is testament to the new virtual nature of business due to the pandemic that the process was conducted entirely online with no face-to-face meetings with anyone from either business, including our legal and accounting teams,” said Kirk. “Everything was carried out via video conferencing.

“By joining forces, complementary new high-quality products and services will be introduced to each portfolio which will strengthen the support we can provide to both new and existing markets. The combined knowledge and experience will produce forward thinking world-class lifting systems for diverse industries in global markets.”

LMS was established in 2016 by Kirk and Millar Kennedy, the sales director. Since then, its innovation and good reputation within the lifting industry has driven significant global growth with 45% of its business being overseas and products shipped to 40 countries.

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WEALTH MANAGEMENT



Andrew Blain signs the Edinburgh Climate Compact

Shepherd and Wedderburn commits to net zero

SHEPHERD and Wedderburn has committed to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and signed the Edinburgh Climate Compact.

The firm, which has been at the forefront of innovation in the clean energy sector for almost three decades, has adopted an enhanced sustainability strategy, underpinned by a 'route map' focused on reducing its Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions under the Greenhouse Gas Protocol Corporate Reporting Standard.

Shepherd and Wedderburn has also joined a number of leading private and public sector organisations in signing up to a series of decarbonisation commitments as part of the Edinburgh Climate Compact to support the city's ambition to reach net zero by 2030.

Andrew Blain, the firm's managing partner, said: "We are committed to being the most sustainable business we can be because it is the right thing to do. We have all benefited from the natural environment and have an ethical obligation to make a tangible, positive contribution to tackling the climate emergency, for the sake of current and future generations."

STAHL and Norco join forces

IN A STRATEGIC move R. STAHL Ltd. and Norco Group Limited have officially joined forces to fulfil Central Battery System (CBS) supply, commissioning and service scopes.

The new alliance will involve R. STAHL Ltd. working closely with the emergency power specialists. Norco Group Limited will be recognised and promoted as the official service partner for Central Battery Systems of R. STAHL Ltd. in the UK.

MISS continues to grow

DESPITE 2021 not getting off to the start everyone was hoping for, MISS (Miscarriage Information Support Service) is continuing to grow and provide new services.

The charity has been resilient and quick to adapt to the pandemic, bringing additional support and care to women and men affected by miscarriage in Grampian and beyond. Increased digital presence has also made the charity better known in the North-east.

At the end of 2020, MISS started providing customised memory boxes for early pregnancy loss at Aberdeen Maternity Hospital in partnership with NHS Grampian and is to provide them to other maternity hubs in the North of Scotland.

It also launched its first structured four-week group on coping with loss and bereavement. The group has a course format with weekly set activities and professional speakers. Participant feedback will be used to develop the group which is planned to run quarterly in 2021.

MISS is also hoping to start work on an early pregnancy loss garden in the North-east in 2021 and is looking for funding for this initiative.

Snapshot shows improved outlook for subsea sector

A SNAPSHOT survey of the UK's supply chain has revealed an improved outlook for the industry with less anticipated redundancies, greater optimism and new geographical markets.

Industry body Subsea UK surveyed its 300 members in early July and then again in late November 2020 to provide evidence-based insight into how the supply chain was faring in the midst of the public health and economic turmoil of last year.

In July, 73% of respondents did not anticipate making redundancies in the near future. This figure has increased to 80% with only 12% planning to make people redundant and 8% undecided.

Optimism has also increased by 7%, with 63% of companies now feeling fairly optimistic about the next six to 12 months, compared to 56% in July last year. Slightly fewer subsea companies now believe the recession will last for the next 12 - 18 months (66% compared to 68% in July) with 13% believing recovery will be quicker and 21% anticipating recovery taking longer than 18 months.

Employee health and well being remains the top priority for subsea companies with cash-flow becoming an increasing concern. In November, 25% of respondents said cash was their main priority, compared with 19% in July. Lack of visibility on projects and project deferrals were the third area of concern with client behaviours becoming more of an issue.



Some of the appeal donations

Charity thankful for response to All Wrapped Up Appeal

LEADING family support charity Home-Start Aberdeen has thanked members of the public, the business and local community for their support and donations towards its All Wrapped Up Appeal.

The charity, which supports vulnerable families with young children across the city, appealed for donations of coats to provide children and families with cosy winter jackets as the cold, winter months approached.

The charity received an overwhelming response to the appeal with hundreds of coats donated. A range of organisations, companies and individuals donated coats, some new, others gently used which were cleaned for the charity by Timpson's, free of charge.

"Thanks to the generosity of so many we were able to provide 45 families, including 86 children, with winter coats, books, toys and selection boxes ahead of Christmas," said Eleanor McEwan, general manager.

"The All Wrapped Up appeal was all about being able to provide something cosy to wear, something warm they need, something fun for a treat and something joyful to read. We'd like to say a huge thanks for each and every donation we received. It's made a big difference for local families at Christmas and over these cold days."

OGTC and AIRTO collaboration

OGTC and AIRTO, the Association of Innovation, Research and Technology Organisations, have announced a new five-year collaboration aimed at strengthening cross-disciplinary collaboration across the innovation, research and technology sector in support of delivering the UK's industrial strategy and accelerating the transition towards net zero.

AIRTO is the principal membership organisation for the UK's Innovation, Research and Technology (IRT) sector. The sector employs over 57,000 scientific and technical staff and contributes £34bn to UK GDP. Through collaboration with OGTC, which has been a member of AIRTO since 2016, it is hoped to build closer links with allied organisations in the IRT sector to facilitate development and deployment of technology that will accelerate the transition to a net zero North Sea.

OGTC succeeds The National Physical Laboratory as the host for AIRTO staff and activities. AIRTO staff will continue in their roles alongside the team at OGTC.

Six new units at ABZ Business Park

CONSTRUCTION of the second phase of the new development at ABZ Business Park in Dyce, six new units of 2,500sq ft, is underway.

The premises will be available individually or as a whole, offering from 2,500 to 15,000sq ft of industrial space, with completion expected in Q2 2021.

Despite CV19 and lockdown restrictions, ABZ Business Park has recently secured two recent lettings, one to MM Aviation and the other to Aviation Logistics.

These deals, along with the other strong interest in the buildings, has given the developer the confidence in the market to go ahead with the second phase of the development.

The new units will provide accommodation ideal for a number of uses, including oil and gas operators, storage and distribution and trade counter operators.

Neptune Energy awarded six licenses in Norway

NEPTUNE Energy has been awarded six new licences in the Awards in Predefined Areas (APA) 2020, announced by the Norwegian Ministry of Petroleum and Energy.

Four licenses have been granted in the Norwegian North Sea and two in the Norwegian Sea. All the licenses are close to existing infrastructure in areas where Neptune already has a presence and according to its exploration strategy to focus on key opportunities within existing core areas. In three of the licenses Neptune has been awarded operatorship.

Providing tools to ease home working stresses

FIRST Psychology Scotland is sharing some of the resources it has developed to help businesses and organisations support themselves and their employees during the CV19 pandemic.

It has developed a Keeping Mentally Healthy Toolkit full of information, tools and techniques to help everyone keep mentally healthy, including coping strategies and advice on what to avoid to stay calm. The toolkit can be downloaded from the company website free of charge.

In addition, First Psychology has a series of pre-recorded webinars to help individuals maintain their wellbeing. These include: Looking after your mental health during lockdown, how to de-stress and relax, resolving household conflict during lockdown, helping children and young people cope during lockdown, maintaining wellbeing while working from home and more. The webinars can also be seen via the website.

KR Group strive to educate throughout pandemic

KR GROUP Scotland, a local steel, cladding and project management solutions business, has continued to support education through working with schools, colleges, and universities to educate and inspire young people throughout lockdown.

Whilst providing a broad range of construction services on a national level, the Aberdeenshire based group not only provides support and development within schools but has given young people the opportunity to safely visit construction sites. These opportunities have been beneficial to give students a real-world insight into construction projects.

Nicola Fraser, business director at KR Group, is a STEM ambassador for construction who is passionate about engaging young people and advocating for education in the industry,

“It has been challenging to sustain our ability to provide education and opportunities to young people where we can throughout 2020 and now into 2021 but we have found many creative means and I am proud of my team who have got on board to enable us to provide meaningful experiences in a more creative way,” she said. “We are always hopeful that our young people will move on with more skills and confidence than they arrived with and that we have managed to ignite a spark.”

Over the years, and most notably during the pandemic, KR Group has strived to do this by providing valuable career mentoring in universities and schools, attending career days, taking on work experience students, supporting work-related learning in schools such as the Collaborative Strategic Partnership with Ellon Academy and Developing Young Workforce, supporting Barnardo’s Works program and being involved sponsors and mentors of young people at events like Build Your Future.

The company has not stopped there, providing part-time opportunities for young people, and ensuring the creation of trainee positions to skill up and educate new workers. Providing opportunity to young people as well as educating them is a strong part of its family-run, community ethos.

University of Aberdeen probes ‘long covid’

A £375,000 study led by the University of Stirling in collaboration with the University of Aberdeen, is seeking to understand the lived experiences and support needs of people suffering from the long-term effects of CV19.

The research ultimately aims to improve the support and care available to those affected by ‘long covid’ through the sharing of its findings with patients, their families and carers, and healthcare professionals.

The two-year study has received £299,883 in funding from the Scottish Government’s Chief Scientist Office.



John Lawrie Metals repurposes over 2200 tonnes of material destined for recycling

SCOTTISH metal recycler John Lawrie Metals Ltd has recently repurposed and exported over 2,200 tonnes of used mooring systems acquired through the decommissioning of North Sea oil and gas assets.

In 2020 John Lawrie repurposed approximately 3,700 tonnes of mooring material destined for recycling, which has helped save up to 3,589 tonnes CO₂e.

As was the industry norm, redundant wire rope was only ever cut up and recycled. But with an aim of zero to landfill, John Lawrie is focused on looking for new and innovative ways to repurpose the waste metal it handles. With a circular economy at the heart of everything the business does, repurpose and reuse is higher up the waste hierarchy and so recycling is only ever used as a last option.

Over 50% of the 2,200 tonnes came from the recent decommissioning of a North Sea FPSO and FSO mooring systems, carried out by John Lawrie’s expert decom team.

The material is now destined for Northern Europe’s aquaculture industry where it will be used as weights and ballasts for the construction of fish farm pens, offering the perfect environmental and economic solution. Given the size and importance of the aquaculture industry, there is a requirement to maintain the quality and durability of these pens, ensuring they are weighted correctly for optimal production.

Working with the fish farming industry, John Lawrie has been a key driver in the early development of this novel but effective solution and is steadily increasing its geographical reach and reputation for being a trusted supplier to the aquaculture industry.

Legal risks in requiring employees to have CV19 vaccination

Dr Anne Sammon,
partner and employment law specialist,
Pinsent Masons LLP



CAN UK employers require staff to be vaccinated is a question that has been doing the rounds since the Pfizer vaccine became available.

My experience is that clients start the discussion thinking that they might want to mandate, or very actively encourage employees to be vaccinated, but having had legal advice tend to back-track and decide that actually they will probably remain more agnostic.

That's because there is a whole myriad of legal risks associated with requiring employees to have vaccination. One of the issues is that we don't yet know what impact vaccination has on transmission rates. If evidence emerges that suggests vaccination can lower the transmission rate, then that will give some employers in certain sectors more scope to be able to justify why they might want their employees to be vaccinated.

For example, in the social care sector, if vaccination has a positive impact on transmission in that it lowers that transmission rate, then employers may decide that it's really important for their staff to be vaccinated because that will lower the risk of transmission from the staff to patients and vice versa.

The other thing that we're starting to see is employers thinking about whether or not the 'anti-vax' movement could actually be a protected belief, and therefore something that they need to be mindful of when they're looking at discrimination angles.

As we know from some of the cases around veganism and environmental beliefs, establishing that something is a protected belief is very fact-specific, so the employee involved will have to show that this belief is core to their way of life and that what they do throughout their life is informed by that particular belief. That means that it is very difficult to say, absolutely, whether an anti-vax belief will or won't be a protected belief - it very much depends on the circumstances and the way in which the individual manifests those views.

There is also a risk of indirect discrimination. We're seeing a vaccine programme which is based on how old someone is. So if an employer is forcing people to have vaccination when the NHS makes it available, that's going to have a bigger impact on the older part than the younger part of their population, even though it's an apparently neutral provision. In my view, that means there is a real risk of an age discrimination claim, through indirect age discrimination,

if employers require employees to take up the offer of vaccination. That risk may change over time as larger numbers of the population are vaccinated and we see whether or not there is disparate treatment between the different groups of employees based on age.

Employers who choose to dismiss employees who refuse a reasonable vaccination request would still have to follow a fair procedure. Again, this going to be very fact-specific as the question will be whether the employer has given a 'reasonable instruction' and whether the refusal is 'reasonable'. That's going to depend on the employee, their individual risk profile, whether they've got any underlying disabilities, and whether there are any other reasons that they might not want to take the vaccine.

So employers will have to look at every case on their specific facts and details and carry out an assessment, and part of that assessment involves talking to the employee and understanding their rationale for refusing the vaccination and taking that on board and properly considering it.

IR35 off-payroll reform: A recap

Megan McDonald,
*employment taxes assistant manager
and IR35 specialist,*
Anderson Anderson & Brown LLP



AS WE find ourselves in another national lockdown, businesses may be questioning whether we will see another delay to the implementation of the IR35 off-payroll working changes due to come in from April 2021. This is, however, wishful thinking as we hear the government has pledged its commitment to introducing the rules as planned with parliament having already passed the legislation.

Having had almost 12 months of battling CV19 restrictions and lockdowns, IR35 has been put on the back burner by most but with the job market picking up and businesses potentially looking to engage contractors over staff given the lessened commitment to them, here's a recap of what the changes are and some key movements over the past few months:

These rules will impact medium and large sized businesses in the private sector, coming into play from April 6 2021. This will see responsibilities around IR35 compliance move up the chain away from the individual worker's own personal service company (PSC) to the end-user and fee-payer, including the assessment of individual contractor status and operation of tax and national insurance

deductions for those 'caught' by the legislation.

It is important to remember that these rules will only impact individuals who contract via their own PSC and should not be confused with self-employed individuals.

In order to establish where responsibilities will sit within the supply chain, a review should be completed considering both contractors directly engaged with the business and those who may be sub-contracted through another service company or agency. It is vital that businesses recognise that the obligations do not stop with directly engaged contractors and responsibilities over those indirectly engaged may exist.

While the above may seem straightforward, the key to success with these changes is to dedicate time and effort into the streamlining of the company's practices around the engagement of contractors.

One of the burning questions we have seen crop up is what happens if we are contracting with an overseas-based client? While many assume this rids them of any requirements under the legislation, this may not always be the case.

In the original guidance and legislation published by HMRC it was apparent that the IR35 rules would continue to apply and would fall to the highest UK based company in the supply chain if the end-user was based overseas.

However more recently this has been updated to confirm that where the end-user is based wholly overseas with no connection back the UK, the new legislation will not apply and instead it will remain the responsibility of the PSC to determine the worker's status under IR35, ultimately following the rules as they are currently.

Similarly, if an individual is non-UK resident carrying out work overseas through their own PSC, assuming no liability to UK tax or national insurance arises, no action would be required under the new legislation.

March



Need to know your FPSO from your jack-up? Get to grips with the basics of oil and gas in this course.

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

23 Tue
1 day

Essential Supervisory Skills

Bridge the gap between doing and supervising

24 Wed
2 day

Essential Management Skills

Become equipped with the knowledge and skills required of a manager

30 Tue
1 day

Essential Supervisory Skills - via Zoom

Bridge the gap between doing and supervising

April



Time is money so they say, make sure you are getting the most out of your day.

6 Tue
1 day

Beginner's Practical Guide to Exporting

Gain a high-level overview of the exporting process

13 Tue
1 day

Cash Flow Management

Maximise cash flow with effective cash collection techniques

14 Wed
1 day

Time Management

Identify time wasting activities and manage your day more effectively

15 Thu
1 day

Train the Trainer

Feel confident whilst developing and presenting different types of training

20 Tue
1 day

Assertiveness at Work

Learn to communicate your point of view without causing conflict

21 Wed
1 day

Report Writing

Learn to produce clear, concise, and effective reports

21 Wed
1 day

Customs Declaration Training

Learn how to complete customs requirements accurately and efficiently

22 Thu
1 day

Personal Effectiveness

Improve your self-management by changing the way you work

23 Fri
1 day

Train the Trainer Advanced

Improve training delivery techniques

27 Tue
1 day

Sales and Account Management

Develop a structured approach to selling

29 Thu
1 day

Project Management - The Fundamentals

Understand the principles of project management and the complexities of scale

29 Thu
1 day

Customs Procedures and Documentation

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

Investing in basic skills in times of transition

Faced with transformational change like the CV19 pandemic, the UK's exit from the EU, or company-specific change like a merger or acquisition, businesses should think carefully about the benefits of investing in the resilience and adaptability of their workforce.

Maintaining or improving basic skills can go a long way towards ensuring that while the world may have turned upside down, you and your people can continue to respond effectively without a drop in service quality.

The Chamber offers a range of practical 'skills for business' courses designed to maximise the impact of day to day activities and interactions, helping delegates nail the fundamentals and free up time so your business can focus on the big-ticket items.

Courses include:

- Making the Most of Any Meeting
- Time Management
- Report Writing
- Presentation Skills
- Customer Service Excellence
- Winning More Bids
- Negotiating and Influencing Skills
- Personal Effectiveness
- Sales and Account Management
- Project Management: The Fundamentals
- Communication and Interpersonal Skills

Many of these skills are what turns a good business into a great one. Can your organisation afford not to be doing these things well? We can tailor a programme of bespoke in-house courses designed to meet the specific needs of your company.

Get in touch and let's see what we can do for you.

Susan
training team leader



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Eviction of tenants during the CV19 pandemic

Nicola Brown,
associate solicitor dispute resolution,
Blackadders LLP



SINCE the start of the pandemic the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 and Coronavirus (Scotland) (No. 2) Act 2020 have been passed by the Scottish Government. The new Acts were introduced to provide security to various sectors during the pandemic.

The new legislation makes temporary changes to the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988 and the Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Act 2016. These new rules will be in place until at least March 31 2021 and may be extended beyond this date.

The new rules affect all residential tenancies in Scotland including Short Assured Tenancies, Assured Tenancies and Scottish Private Residential Tenancies. The changes are designed to improve the security of tenure for tenants by extending the notice periods as well as introducing pre-action requirements for rent arrears cases.

The legal criteria which apply to notices and applications for repossession have also changed, most notably all grounds are now discretionary grounds for removal which means that the tribunal will use discretion and take all factors relating to the impact of CV19 into account before deciding whether to issue an eviction order or not.

As well as temporarily changing the rules surrounding tenancies the Scottish Government has imposed a ban on winter enforcement of eviction orders, until March 31 2021. It is however still possible for landlords to serve notices and apply to the tribunal to recover possession during this period.

In summary, the new rules temporarily extend the length of notice landlords must give when ending a tenancy to six months in most cases. The six months' notice period also applies when ending a short assured tenancy at its end date.

In addition to extending the notice periods, The Pre-Action Requirements (Coronavirus) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 which are in force until at least March 31 2021 set out pre-action requirements for landlords where rent arrears that have arisen (whether wholly or partially) during the pandemic.

Landlords must comply with the pre-action requirements before eviction action is being taken in respect of any assured, short assured or private residential tenancy and will be required to demonstrate to the first-tier tribunal how they have complied. Landlords are encouraged to engage with this pre-action process as soon as possible when arrears of rent occur, and failure to do so will result in an

order for possession being refused by the tribunal.

The pre-action requirements require the landlord to provide the tenant with clear information relating to the terms of the tenancy agreement, the amount of rent arrears, their rights -including the pre-action requirements and the need for an order to be granted by a tribunal; as well as how the tenant may access information and advice on financial support and debt management.

Additionally, the landlord must make reasonable efforts to agree on a reasonable plan with the tenant for payment of arrears and future rent. In applying the pre-action requirements the landlord must also give reasonable consideration to steps being taken by the tenant which may affect their ability to make payment of the rent for which the tenant is in arrears within a reasonable time; the extent to which the tenant has complied with an agreed plan; and any changes in circumstances which affect the tenants' ability to comply with an agreed plan.

DYW | NORTH EAST

The vital link connecting schools and businesses

Supporting young people

IN A collective effort to help young people, employers across the North-east are being encouraged to get behind a national commitment towards ensuring everyone aged from 16 to 24 has the opportunity of work, education or training.

The Young Person's Guarantee (YPG), backed by an additional £60m Scottish Government investment, aims to give all young people in Scotland the chance to succeed despite the economic impacts of the CV19.

There are '5 Asks' of employers to support the YPG while helping them to grow their workforce with motivated young workers. These are:

- Help prepare young people for the world of work through work experience, volunteering and work-based learning opportunities
- Engage with and provide opportunities to young people who face barriers to work
- Create work-based learning, training and upskilling opportunities for young people
- Create jobs and opportunities for young people through apprenticeships, paid internships and work experience
- Create an inclusive workplace to support learning and enable young people to meet their potential

There is monetary support available to help create new jobs and take on

apprentices through the Kickstart initiative and Skills Development Scotland respectively.

Developing Young Workforce (DYW) North East is here to provide on the ground support and guidance on the best way for your organisation to get involved. With the nature of engagement changing dramatically since the pandemic, online delivery is offering a new dimension to the raft of activities employers can get involved in, from inspirational workshops, talks, workplace visits, or placements.

All of which means there's lot of ways to get involved, add real-world input to the curriculum, help build young people's job readiness, increase their career options and grow their knowledge of the world of work. If you would like to discuss the best way to get involved please contact the DYW team at info@dyw.org.uk

Understanding apprenticeships

Whether it's hiring someone new or developing an existing employee, apprenticeships can help provide the skills you need to adapt, sustain and strengthen your business. As well as being a cost-effective way of building your skills base, taking on an apprentice can help develop employees' soft skills, increase motivation and retention, bring in fresh ideas and help meet your corporate social responsibilities.

There are three different types of apprenticeship available, with DYW able to provide guidance on funding support:

Foundation Apprenticeships: for secondary school pupils to give them workplace experience whilst still completing their qualifications, including the new SCQF Levels 4 and 5 opening up the reach to support youngsters from S3 to S6.

Modern Apprenticeships: for people aged 16 and over giving individuals the opportunity to earn a wage whilst studying towards an industry-relevant qualification.

Graduate Apprenticeships: an apprenticeship that gives apprentices the opportunity to take their studies up to Masters level.

Employers can also sign up to **'Adopt an Apprentice'** with financial support available to help cover the wage and recruitment costs of taking on an apprentice who has been made redundant from another employer.

Scottish Apprenticeship Week runs from March 1-5. To get involved go to www.apprenticeships.scot/scottish-apprenticeship-week

Whatever your resources, there's a way for you to get involved.

Visit dyw.org.uk and take the first step.



Yzanne Turbett

Mackie's marches on with 'Scotland's most advanced freezer system'

A £4.5m low carbon refrigeration system that will enable an ice cream brand to cut energy use by up to 80% has taken a significant step forward towards completion.

Mackie's of Scotland has installed a six-metre-tall, double drum spiral freezer. The new freezer can chill more ice cream more quickly, which will further improve the quality and texture of the product.

The two spiral drums – which stretch five metres in diameter – are part of a £4.5m low carbon refrigeration system which will increase ice cream productivity on the Aberdeenshire farm.

It comes after the completion of the plant room which saw successful test runs of its four new ammonia compressors last month as the family-run business aims to become the greenest company in Britain.

Project manager, Yzanne Turbett, said: "The installation of the spiral freezer marks a major milestone in this project. In our early planning phase we had no inclination of the problems which the country would face last year and the building work was indeed delayed at the start of the first lockdown.

"Despite these ongoing challenges we have managed to finish our plant room which contains the core of the new refrigeration system that will be fully operational later this year.

"This is a much more complex project than Mackie's has ever taken on before, with so many different aspects to the build and new technology to be implemented."

SMEs move to online operations

THE UK's SMEs – including those in non-consumer-facing sectors – are, through necessity brought on by the pandemic, increasingly moving operations online, according to Close Brothers Asset Finance's latest research.

The survey of 900 SMEs reveals businesses are becoming more online based, with 28.3% moving day-to-day operations online, while 26% have seen an increase in online trading, and 9.1% a blend of the two. The remaining 36.6% have made no changes.

With the move to online has come an increase in capital investment in firms' digital infrastructure, with 60% of businesses making the commitment to spend more on this key activity.

"We already live in a highly digitised world but it appears the pandemic has super-charged firms' digital investment plans," said Neil Davies, chief executive officer of Close Brothers Asset Finance and Leasing.

Escone wins £250,000 of contracts

ABERDEEN based business application experts Escone Solutions has secured a number of exclusive contracts worth £250,000 including a new contract win with Intuitive Business Intelligence to provide support for its dashboard software.

The new business also includes contract renewals with Abellio Group and Independent News and Media for continued business application support and maintenance.

Escone Solutions is the home of Escone Assist, a helpdesk solution which gives clients the reassurance that their business-critical applications are being managed by a team of super users who can work quickly and effectively to provide ongoing support and maintenance.

Creative awards by Aberdeen Art Gallery

SIX local creative practitioners have been awarded commissions to create new works for Aberdeen Art Gallery's collection.

The commissions celebrate Aberdeen Art Gallery's success as a joint winner of Art Fund Museum of the Year 2020 for which it received a share of the £200,000 prize split equally between the five UK winners.

The Art Gallery's share is being used to support a series of small-scale 'micro-commissions', open to creative practitioners living in AB postcode areas. There were more than 40 submissions for this first of two rounds of awards. Two projects each receive £3,000 and four projects receive £850. Funding will be available for a further six commissions in Round 2, which is due to open in April.



Chamber launches new recruitment platform

AS PART of its commitment to supporting the regional economy, Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce has launched a new job vacancy advertising service on its website.

Open to members and non-members, the service will provide a platform for promoting vacancies in and around the North-east while driving traffic back to individual company websites or recruitment agency sites.

Laura Grant, head of communications and marketing at the Chamber said: "This is a time of change for a lot of companies and making sure they have the ability to attract the best people and achieve their ambitions is really important. We wanted to support local businesses by providing a forum for sharing information about jobs and do our bit to help attract or retain skilled people in the city region."

Current vacancies can be viewed under 'North-east jobs' in the 'Helping your business' section of the Chamber website.

Funding improves safety and broadens opportunities

WOOD RecyclAbility has been awarded £10,000 in National Lottery funding to develop its site which will help its work with adults with additional support needs.

The social enterprise, which was founded more than 20 years ago, provides practical work experience and training for its service users through working with waste wood.

The new funding is from The National Lottery Community Fund and will enable Wood RecyclAbility to have groundwork carried out to establish a clearly marked one way system around the site, improving safety for service users, staff and visitors.

General manager Brian Reid said: "Now, thanks to National Lottery players, we will be able to press on with our long-term plans to broaden the range of opportunities available to our service users. Making the site safer and more accessible is the first step in this process."

Backing of £1.6m for Deep Casting Tools technology

ABERDEEN headquartered oil and gas technology development company, Deep Casting Tools (DCT), has secured new investment of £1.6m from Scottish Enterprise and its long-term backer, EV Private Equity, which will help the firm build on its global success of the last two years.

DCT's growth is attributed particularly to its robust technology pipeline, and this funding will support DCT's strategic R&D plans to develop and commercialise further innovations which will allow operators to develop assets safer and more efficiently. The investment will allow the firm to increase CAPEX investment and bring new technologies to the global market.

David Stephenson chief executive officer at DCT, said: "It is highly encouraging to secure the backing of Scottish Enterprise, and continued support from EV Private Equity, who share our vision for DCT's future global growth and continued innovation.

"As the global energy industry focuses on achieving ambitious net zero targets, innovative downhole technologies which can unlock greater efficiencies and value, and ultimately help to reduce emissions, have never been more important. This backing allows Deep Casting Tools to continue to support the energy transition through smart, innovative technology based on simple mechanical principles."

Grampian Housing Association's staff wellbeing days

IN RESPONSE to Grampian Housing Association's concern about colleague wellbeing and resilience in the face of the enduring global pandemic, new wellbeing days are being offered to staff through its 'Feeling GREAT' initiative.

Wellbeing days are part of a range of measures the association has put in place to support colleague mental health. They will acknowledge the continuing hard work and commitment of staff in challenging circumstances as well as being a way of saying thank you and showing appreciation.

Chris Mathieson, compliance, engagement and support lead at Grampian Housing Association said: "Diagnosis of stress, anxiety and depression are increasing daily throughout the UK and require specialist support. Our colleague wellbeing days are not a sticking plaster for these issues.

"Instead, we feel that we are playing our part in highlighting the importance of positive mental health through contributing something tangible and beneficial for colleagues which may provide a bit of respite and may help prevent an issue from becoming more significant further on. Our wellbeing days will help colleagues to clear their mind, process their thinking and come back stronger."



Nicola Alexander

Customs consultancy advise 'back to basics' approach to tackle Brexit

A LEADING North-east customs consultancy has highlighted the need for businesses to understand basic customs documentation as they adjust to the new trading relationship with the EU.

Founder and director of Oldmeldrum-based Bethan Customs Consultancy, Nicola Alexander, said that a high proportion of businesses who deal solely with the EU have never previously needed to complete customs declarations to move their goods. As a result, there appears to be a collective gap in awareness on how to complete the documentation required needed to import and export goods in our post-Brexit economy.

She explained: "New rules covering imports, exports, tariffs and data came into force on January 1 this year, and in some cases businesses may now need a licence or certificate to continue trading with EU countries. The exact requirements for each business will vary depending on what is being exported, its value, where the product originates from and to which country it is being sent.

In a bid to help businesses understand how the new arrangements are operating in practice, the Bethan team plan to release a series of short Q&A videos.

Drilling takes off on Seagull

NEPTUNE Energy and its joint venture partners bp and JAPEX have started drilling on the Seagull project in the UK Central North Sea.

The Gorilla VI (JU-248) jack-up rig, operated by Valaris, will drill four wells for the development over 18 months.

Neptune Energy's UK managing director Alexandra Thomas said: "In late 2020, we successfully completed the first subsea construction phase for the Seagull project, that underpins Neptune's further growth on the UKCS. Thanks to a collaborative approach between Neptune, our partners bp and JAPEX and key contractors, we are progressing with the project at pace and have reached another important milestone."

Big growth for BIG Partnership

FULL-SERVICE marketing agency BIG Partnership has made a strong start to 2021, with almost 20 new wins since the beginning of the year.

The new work, which is spread across all four of BIG's UK offices, covers a broad range of industries including retail, food and drink, energy and professional services. In Aberdeen new business has been secured with EnerMech and AREG.

BIG chief executive Allan Barr said: "Marketing spend can often be an economic bellwether and the signs we're seeing are certainly far more positive than in recent months. With the vaccine rollout now picking up pace, there is real reason to believe that this trend will continue.

"The figures we're seeing are particularly encouraging, because they're coming from new clients as well as existing clients briefing us on fresh projects. Our many conversations with clients demonstrate that optimism is slowly building and we're hopeful this momentum will continue to grow as the economy starts to emerge from the effects of the pandemic."

Tourist businesses to meet global operators

SCOTTISH tourism businesses have another opportunity to link up with global tour operators and travel agents virtually.

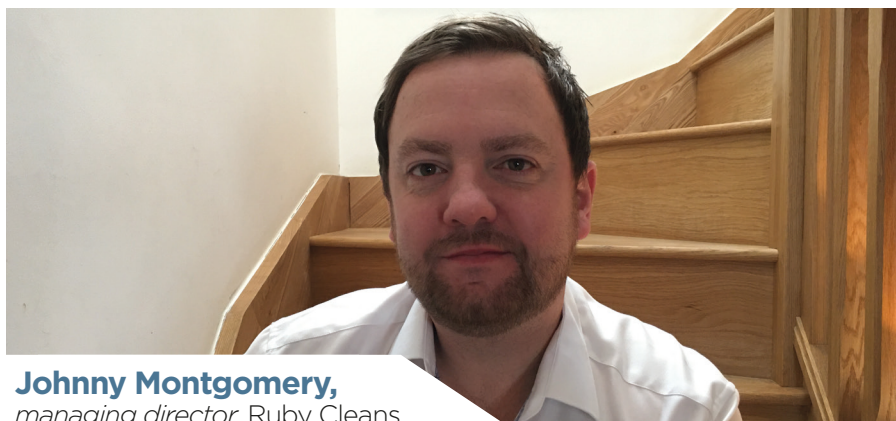
Recognising the need for Scotland's tourism businesses to maintain contact throughout CV19 with travel intermediaries around the globe, VisitScotland has organised the Scotland Reconnect 2021 event, which will take place April 27-29.

Given ongoing constraints on travel, VisitScotland will deliver the Scotland Reconnect 2021 event in place of the VisitScotland Expo live workshop event which would normally have been an annual feature of the business development calendar for tourism in Scotland. Last year's Scotland Reconnect was the first time the national tourism organisation had delivered a virtual trade event on this scale.

Malcolm Roughead, chief executive of VisitScotland, said: "Until we can run face-to-face business events, platforms like Scotland Reconnect are the next best thing. We hope it gives the industry confidence that engaging online can deliver for their businesses."

ASET's new training status

ASET International Oil & Gas Training Academy has achieved the status of becoming an approved Credit Rating Body (CRB) through the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Partnership. This allows the organisation to make decisions about the SCQF level and SCQF credit points allocated to qualifications developed to train staff in the oil and gas sector.



Johnny Montgomery,
managing director, Ruby Cleans

What does your company do that others don't?

We offer eco-friendly cleaning with the same team member/s every visit, same time and day, whether it be residential with Ruby Cleans or commercial cleaning with Emerald Eco. We only ever place one or two staff members per residential client. We were the first company in Aberdeen to be approved by Method to use their marketing material and we have continued to use them since then. More recently, we have introduced Astonish - both are quality cleaning brands however other products are available on request but we like to stay eco-friendly as much as possible.

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

Quite simply, CV19 restrictions have been devastating for the industry. We could have remained open like some have done but we have put the safety of our staff and clients first, closing down three times since March 2020 and furloughing our staff at great cost to us. With businesses being advised to work from home, many of our commercial clients do not require our services at the moment, which is another massive blow. When restrictions are eased, the government should be encouraging the return to the office just as quickly as they told us to work from home. Humans are social animals, we need and thrive on interaction with people.

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

Probably not to take things personally. Time waits for no man. After 12 years in oil and gas I was made redundant in the last downturn which was a horrible time for myself and my family. At the end of the day, you only have yourself to rely on and keep you going. I realised that I was just a number in the oil industry, even after years of hard work. This was a key driver which prompted me to start my own business. I had to go for something

that people would still need in uncertain times, so opted for cleaning. If you told me five years ago I would own a cleaning business now, I would never have believed it.

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

So many: Don't make any rash decisions, always take your time if possible to make the best choice you can. If you are having a bad day, take a walk, disappear for an hour and clear your head. Come back, realign, be positive and focus on your goals. Also, understand the business, whoever you work for. Be respectful. A big one - understand cashflow! Understand your client needs, everyone is different. Hire the right people. Business owners, you know what I mean.

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

Spending evenings and weekends studying for an Open University degree in business studies whilst working full time seemed tough enough at the time but I have to say that keeping this business alive and furloughing staff during the pandemic tops the bill. Saving jobs with no financial support has been extremely difficult. This has come at great cost to the business but I am managing things for now. Hopefully we can all get back to some sort of normality soon.

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

Restore Union Street to its former glory? Pedestrianise the whole street, add some greenery. Get some high street action back. Our main street in Aberdeen has so many fantastic buildings and it is a shame to see it in its current state. As a business we would like to see other people and more businesses go eco-friendly, recycle more, do more for the environment.



Quick fire round

What was your first job?

Working in the College Bar and the Cotton Club glass collecting when I was 15.

When would you like to retire?

Tomorrow! (kidding). At present my target is 60, that may change though.

What did you have for breakfast?

It's a Sunday, my wee girl loves my homemade gluten free pancakes, a winner for Dad!

Who, or what, inspires you?

My daughter. During these difficult times she has been so positive, so full of life even when she cannot see her friends.

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

Diamonds are Forever.



Video presenter Jessica Brook

Aberdeen Science Centre delivers Stay Home Science online

ABERDEEN Science Centre has brought a scientific twist to lockdown with its new STEM series, Stay Home Science, which provides new videos on the centre's Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube profiles.

Aiming to aid home schooling, the online programme offers members of the public the chance to digitally experience some of the new centres' content from the Energy, Space, Make It, Test It, Life Sciences and Under 6 zones.

The informative videos also feature 'how to' elements so the audience can create their own science experiment at home, giving parents the chance to show how STEM features in everyday life.

Head of operations at ASC Elaine Holland said: "Our online videos proved popular last year before our new centre opened, so we were keen to create fresh content, using the new zones at the centre as inspiration.

"Not only are the videos short and clear for younger viewers, but it provides the families with activities to do while the children are at home all day, which we hope keeps the family entertained while learning about STEM at the same time."

Aberdeen Science Centre will continue to upload various content to its platforms, as it promotes and encourages STEM education.

STC Global and Insiso merge

TWO Aberdeen-based firms, STC Global and Insiso have merged to realise a shared vision of providing business performance improvement through the smart integration of process design, health and safety solutions, training and innovative software.

Under the new name STC INSISO the firms will draw on their respective expertise in process design, software technology, health and safety, and training to offer an enhanced problem-solving business. It will be focussed on delivering products and services which sustain performance improvement for clients across a range of industries, including technology, oil and gas, rail, engineering and construction, maritime, environmental waste services and medical.

SME Spotlight



John Rhodes,
OD4G,
Owner and lead consultant

When was your business established?

OD4G was established in 2020

What does your business do?

We provide learning and development (L&D) consulting and services that help organisations deliver their short, medium, and long-term business objectives. Specific L&D services include interim management, course design, technology selection and implementation, change management and the optimisation of people development processes.

What sort of companies do you do business with?

We work with a variety of clients from many sectors both locally and globally. Typically, our clients are ambitious, forward thinking companies, with leadership that really appreciates the value of developing their people. Recently, we have also been working with third party training providers, supporting them with transitioning their courses from in-person to online.

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

With the pressures of CV19 many companies went into survival mode, often with a reduction in focus on - and funding of - the development of their people. This is quickly coming back on the agenda however as more and more businesses lift their heads up and shift their focus to the future.

And the biggest opportunity?

Companies looking to make changes to what they do and how they do it. Change can't happen without people and we can add real value by taking a modern, digitally enabled approach to people development and change management. One big positive from 2020 was that companies realised that there are new and more effective ways of doing things. This open-mindedness helps us to bring in novel solutions that can drive greater impact.

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

Receiving client feedback that highlights the real-world, lasting impact we have helped them to make with their people. This is what makes us smile and keeps us moving forward.

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

Although OD4G is relatively new business the Chamber has provided support and expertise and an opportunity to meet some great like-minded people. It is already proving very valuable for industry insights and thought leadership on a variety of business topics.

Why are Rules of Origin putting a spanner in the works?

Paul Wrighting,
trade training manager,
British Chambers of Commerce



RULES of Origin (RoO) are putting a spanner in the works for UK exporters wishing to take advantage of the UK's newly negotiated trade deals with the EU and all trade deals we had with the EU that have been rolled over.

The new trade agreements only allow goods of UK origin to move tariff and quota free. Many UK exporters from a variety of sectors are finding that goods they thought they could export tariff and quota free do not meet the new origin rules putting their goods at a disadvantage compared to their EU competitors.

The rules define which goods can be counted as originating in the UK and therefore benefit from the negotiated agreements.

So, why do we have RoO? They are written into all trade agreements to ensure that reduced tariffs and other non-trade barriers covered by the agreement are only available to goods originating in the countries that have signed the agreement.

If we did not have RoO then companies could just import goods into a country that has a trade deal with the country they want to trade with then just export the goods from that country, even though

the country that originally sent the goods does not have a deal with that country.

For example, a US company wants to export to the EU, but the US and the EU do not have a trade deal. Without RoO the US company could export the goods to the UK and then on to the EU taking advantage of the UK EU trade deal.

The rules vary for each commodity code though in general if 50% of the ex works price is considered as originating in the UK then the goods would be considered to be of UK origin. For goods wholly originating on the UK this is not an issue but with modern supply chains parts come from all over the world.

When we were a member of the EU then parts from EU countries counted towards the origin of the goods and in some agreements they still can as long as they processed in some way in the UK. This is called cumulation and is included in some format in most trade agreements.

The issue UK businesses are having at the moment is that cumulation can only apply if the goods are processed and there is a list of minimal processes which do not change the origin of the goods.

For example, if Norwegian salmon is imported into the UK and then repackaged for the consumer market, then repackaging is considered a minimal process which does not confer origin, so the goods remain of Norwegian origin. If the same Norwegian salmon is imported into the UK and is smoked and then repackaged for the consumer market, then the salmon can be considered of UK origin.

These rules will have the effect of curtailing the UK from being a distribution centre for EU goods. It may make UK manufacturers look for UK suppliers to replace their existing EU suppliers, but EU manufacturers face the same issue so may well replace their UK suppliers.

In short RoO are an added barrier to trade that many UK exporters have not needed to consider before. Not all goods can move tariff and quota free between our trading partners.



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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.

16 Mar

8:00 - 10:00
Webinar
Free

Abu Dhabi trade mission

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is one of the UK's most important trading partners and one of the fastest growing markets for UK businesses. As a place to do business and a hub for the region and beyond, it continues to be increasingly important, relevant and attractive to businesses in Scotland.

The first of two events, this virtual trade mission will provide market insights from a range of high profile speakers for energy businesses looking to understand the opportunities Abu Dhabi offers. Delegates will hear from Nick Cochrane-Dyett MBE, BP UAE / chairman of the BBG Abu Dhabi; as well as speakers from ADNOC Shell UAE, BP UAE, the Al Yaseagh Group and The EIC.

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.



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.



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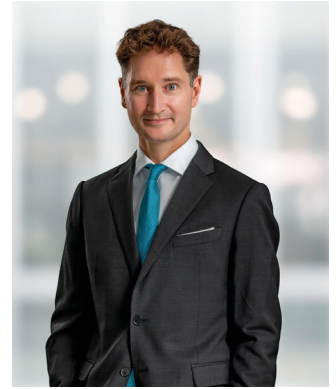
Natalie Coupar and Jenny Stanning

OGUK has appointed two directors to lead its newly created external relations and communications directorates. Natalie Coupar has taken up the role of communications director and Jenny Stanning is OGUK’s external relations director. Natalie will lead the teams delivering the organisation’s media relations, editorial, design and digital strategy. Jenny will be responsible for leading OGUK’s external affairs, events and membership teams. Her responsibilities include working with governments, parliaments, industry leaders, business and industry organisations and regulatory bodies to ensure that members’ interests are well represented.



John McHugh

DM Hall chartered surveyors has appointed Ayrshire-based John McHugh as the firm’s new managing partner. He replaces Eric Curran who has held the role for six years. To ensure a smooth transition, Eric will enter his 43rd year with DM Hall working alongside John in a supporting role throughout 2021.



Nick Scott

Managing partner of law firm Brodies LLP Nick Scott has been re-elected to serve a second term in the role. Having trained in London, Nick joined Brodies in 1999. He became a partner in 2001 and led the firm’s real estate practice from 2010 to 2018.



Paula Cormack

The ARCHIE Foundation has appointed Paula Cormack as chief executive. Paula joined the charity in January 2020 as fundraising director. She held leading roles in the Scottish food and drink sector before moving into the charity sector in 2016 as fundraising manager for Maggie’s Aberdeen.



Mark Hardy

ITI Operations Limited has appointed Mark Hardy as chairman of the board of directors. Mark spent the last few years as an independent advisor to private equity investors, industrial technology companies and start-up businesses and brings significant experience to the company, from both a commercial and industry perspective.



Steve Petrie

Pentagon Freight Services has boosted its commercial team with the appointment of Steve Petrie as business development manager. Steve returns to Pentagon having gained experience in business management both in the UK and overseas.



Graeme Bain

Johnston Carmichael has strengthened its restructuring team with the progression of Graeme Bain to an appointment-taking director. A licensed insolvency practitioner who joined Johnston Carmichael as a director in 2017, his progression comes after a 20-year career in restructuring, 16 of which were spent at a Big Four firm.



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Gail Soutar

Gail Soutar has joined James Milne Chartered Accountants as head of business services at the Inverurie office. Gail has extensive experience of business financial services, having worked as finance manager for James Dun's House in Aberdeen and Glasgow and for BAA at Aberdeen Airport.



Cara Lake

Northern Star Business Awards Rising Star finalist Cara Lake has been promoted to group finance manager at Nucore Group. Cara joined Nucore Group in 2019 as a management accountant for Oteac. In her new role she takes on lead responsibility for the Nucore Group finance function.



Jacqui Dougray and Liane Munro

Stronachs LLP has announced that two new roles within the firm's estate agency and leasing teams, estate agency manager and leasing manager, will be filled by two long-standing members of staff, Jacqui Dougray and Liane Munro respectively. Both have worked in Stronachs for a number of years and have a great deal of experience in the estate agency and leasing markets.

Other recent appointments

Dentons' Scottish private client team is joining Shepherd and Wedderburn, creating one of Scotland's largest private client practices. It will also expand the specialist asset protection, personal tax planning, trusts, executories and succession planning support available to clients. The arrival of the 20-strong team, led by partners **Eleanor Kerr** and **Alexis Graham** will increase the size of Shepherd and Wedderburn's private client practice to 46.

VisitAberdeenshire has appointed three new members to its board of directors from the hospitality and culture sectors. **Leah Hodder** is currently director of marketing and communications at Aberdeen Performing Arts, where she oversees marketing and communications for three city centre venues, His Majesty's Theatre, the Music Hall and the Lemon Tree. **Allan Henderson** is director of the McGinty's Group, with hospitality establishments across the region; and **Jordan Charles** is general manager of Meldrum House Country Hotel and Golf Course.

Aberdeen lifeboat coxswain **Davie Orr** has stepped down to deputy coxswain. He has also been appointed as an assessor/trainer with the RNLi and will be supporting trainee crew members and shaping future our crews around the UK. Lifeboat mechanic **Cal Reed** becomes coxswain mechanic in a joint role and **Mark Gray** become 2nd mechanic for Aberdeen all weather lifeboat. The station has also recently added three deputy launch authorities, including locals **John Strathearn**, **Martin Dunn** and **Gary Cruickshank** - to its roster of volunteers. In addition, the RNLi's lifeboat station's management group in Aberdeen has welcomed **Scott Livingstone** as water safety officer, **Stuart Braithwaite** as deputy lifeboat medical advisor and **Jamee Kirkpatrick** as lifeboat press officer.

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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Students become good neighbours to reduce food waste and support their local community

AN ABERDEEN student group has prevented thousands of kilograms of food going to waste and supported the local community through the CV19 pandemic.

The Foodsharing Service, which forms part of the University of Aberdeen's Shared Planet Society, has distributed surplus food from supermarkets to those in need and those unable to leave their homes as a result of the virus.

The group, made up of student volunteers, collects food from supermarkets which cannot be sold because of mislabelling or over supply as part of the FareShare scheme at selected local stores.

Prior to the pandemic the Foodsharing Service operated in the Student Union Building and students could visit to collect what they needed – with the main focus on reducing food sent to landfill. But when restrictions were implemented in March, they quickly recognized that they could fulfil a wider need within the local community.

Anna Kebke, coordinator of the group and a fourth year marine biology student, said: "A number of our volunteers recognized that their neighbours would benefit from the service we offer because they were vulnerable to CV19 or shielding and we expanded what we offer to the wider community."

The student volunteers continued to collect food from supermarkets and then divided it into packages and provided delivery.

Between March and December they gave away hundreds of food packages and prevented around 15,000kg of food going to landfill, with the food donated by Tesco alone equating to more than 20,000 meals.

Wood RecyclAbility sets up fundraising charity

LOCAL social enterprise, Wood RecyclAbility, has launched Friends of Wood RecyclAbility (FoWR), a registered charity, to actively fundraise in support of its growth plans.

Wood RecyclAbility provides a diverse range of tailored training opportunities for adults with additional support needs, working with the circular economy primarily processing waste wood and plastics.

The charity will be overseen by a board of four trustees: consultant Gill Reavley; Lewis Sim, managing director of Legasea Ltd; Sarah Whitman, director of MES Ltd; and Fiona Smith, director of Delfinity. Fiona also sits on the board of directors at Wood RecyclAbility.

Award for Aberdeen City Council

ABERDEEN City Council received an Outstanding Service award at the 10th annual Scottish Empty Homes Conference.

Over the past 10 years, the awards have showcased the inspiring work of individuals and organisations which have made exemplary contributions to the field of private sector empty homes work in Scotland.

The council's Empty Homes Service Working Group received the award for the exceptional partnership working that uses a joined-up approach to target empty homes in the city. The group's success is being able to consistently respond to changes in demand for housing and identify any other associated risks which impact on its delivery.

Nigerian contract for MyIO

MYIO, an African market focused specialist which helps education and training providers to sell, promote and market their services and products, has been awarded a contract by the Petroleum Technology Development Fund (PTDF), an agency of the Federal Government of Nigeria.

PTDF which is responsible for building human and infrastructural capacity in the Nigerian Oil and Gas industry, has built two state of the art facilities in Kaduna and Port Harcourt.

The Aberdeen based education company will provide consultancy services to source international partners to help collaborate and run courses at the newly established College of Petroleum and Energy Studies which is funded by PTDF. The facility will focus on running postgraduate programmes, research and CPD across five main disciplines which are engineering, earth and applied sciences, ICT, business and health and environmental.

Nescol and Foyer fight child poverty

NORTH East Scotland College has teamed up with Aberdeen Foyer to deliver Foyer Families, a partnership programme tackling child poverty through online family learning.

The Foyer Families Programme seeks to build on a successful pilot programme at the college's Fraserburgh campus and hopes to replicate this success at the Aberdeen city site.

The programme has been funded by the Scottish Funding Council's (SFC's) Tackling Child Poverty Fund. Last year the Scottish Government made up to £400,000 available to the college sector from the Tackling Child Poverty Fund. Given the impact of CV19 colleges were encouraged to work with partners to increase support to young people and families who need it most.

The Family Learning & Employability programme seeks to support parents with young children by developing their personal confidence and helping them to gain accredited qualifications as well as helping them learn how to further support a child's learning and play. Aberdeen Foyer is currently seeking families to take part in the programme.

Elevator acquires innovation and technology consultancy

BUSINESS support organisation Elevator has secured a six-figure deal to acquire Targeting Innovation, a leading UK innovation and technology consultancy.

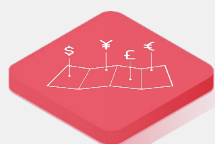
The deal will bring Elevator's staff to more than 100 and bolster its existing capabilities in the digital, technology and innovation sphere whilst increasing its national footprint.

Glasgow-based Targeting Innovation was founded in 1993 by Scottish Enterprise and four Scottish universities to support the commercialisation of new technology products and services.

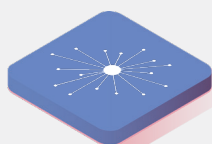
Working across the UK and delivering projects and programmes internationally, the consultancy has built a solid reputation for helping SMEs and large corporations leverage digital technologies and drive value from innovation from improving process efficiency and developing new products, to creating international growth strategies and robust commercialisation plans.

The acquisition allows Elevator to further implement its strategic plan to stimulate the development of an entrepreneurial led economy across Scotland through its delivery of business support services.

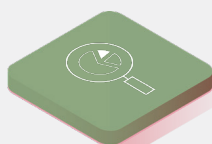
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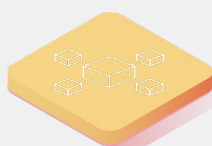
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Welcome to the Chamber

100 Degrees Ltd

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W www.aquateqpools.com
E accounts@100deg.com
C Ann Marie Lafferty, accounts manager

Harley & Co (Peterhead) Ltd

Knitwear manufacturer.
T 01779 472109
W www.harleyofscotland.com
E mary@harleyofscotland.com
C Mary Dick, director

Holiday Inn Express - Aberdeen City Centre

T 01224 623500
W www.hieaberdeen.co.uk
E reservations@hieaberdeen.co.uk
C Susan Casey, reservations manager

J&S Subsea Limited

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T 01224 773435
W www.jands.co.uk
E sales@jands.co.uk
C Simon Smith, business development director

Recycle Scotland

Change management specialist catering for business and personal change requirements.

T 01506 400704
W www.recycle-scotland.co.uk
E hello@recycle-scotland.co.uk
C Lewis Myler

Sunrise Partnership

Offering a free confidential therapeutic one to one bereavement and loss support service for children and young people throughout Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. There is no waiting list, support continues for as long as required and we travel to meet the child/young person in a setting they feel comfortable. We aim to help children and young people cope with loss, change and bereavement in a healthy and positive way to allow them to move towards a brighter future.

W www.sunrisepartnership.org
E fay.mcleod@sunrisepartnership.org
C Fay McLeod, office manager

V-TES

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E info@v-tes.com
C David Gray, managing director



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