

APRIL 2023 | PROPERTY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

# BUSINESS BULLETIN

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New report outlines how housing will play a key role in regenerating town and city centres.

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**Exclusive:  
Edith Bowman  
to bring celebrity  
sparkle to awards**



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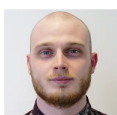
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# Transporting our region to an international plane... or are we an island?

**Next month sees the launch of the sixth edition in the Chamber's Investment Tracker series. It has become the go-to source for a complete, at a glance view of the exciting infrastructure and economic development projects being delivered across the Aberdeen City Region. It's a key part of our regional narrative and you can read more elsewhere in this issue of the Business Bulletin.**

The previous five editions have included a range of transport related schemes, many of which have already been delivered and are contributing to building our economy, enhanced productivity and greater quality of life.

The Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route opened in 2019 and was the largest new roads project in the UK during its construction. We are already seeing clear signs of its impact in terms of making parts of Aberdeenshire more connected, improving intra-region travel times is expected to generate over £6billion for the local economy and 14,000 plus jobs over the next 30 years.

The transformational impact of the AWPR in turn calls into question the investment of around £50million in the Haudagain roundabout scheme. Was this really necessary and could the precious funds have been allocated elsewhere?

Over £20million was invested in the reinvention of passenger facilities, including new reclaim area, passport control, executive lounges, shops and more departure lounge space at Aberdeen International Airport as well as a resurfacing of the areas around the taxiways.

£330million was spent dualling the rail track between Aberdeen and Inverurie with the plan of enabling

a half-hourly cross-Aberdeen service from Inverurie to Montrose. Linked to this, we have seen Kintore added to the rail network with a new £15million station and various improvements to Aberdeen Railway station.

And on the south of the city we have seen around £400million invested by the Port of Aberdeen Trust in the biggest new build harbour in the country for decades providing state-of-the-art marine support facilities and making Aberdeen the largest port in Scotland in terms of berthage.

It's ironic (and somewhat telling) that while this privately led project is now open for business, the public sector's bit of the jigsaw - a mere £25million Harbour link road Improvement - is not even off the drawing board yet.

The region's other ports are investing in their facilities too, positioning us strongly to deliver on our low carbon energy ambitions.

All of which sounds really promising and it's great that we have this infrastructure now in place but what should be next to ensure we are optimising the investments already made and what else do we need to underpin our economic and placemaking strategies?

Aberdeen more than any other region of the UK is dependent on air connectivity to enable our internationally-focused economy and ensure we do not become just a distant Northern outpost. Securing the future of our airport and connections to key hubs and cities will be central to our future success.

This has become increasingly challenging in the post pandemic world and a recent study into the recovery of sustainable aviation,

travel and tourism in Scotland from the aviation cross-party group warns that Scotland is at risk of being cut off.

It states: "Without bold forward thinking, we risk damaging Scotland's reputation, position and influence on a global scale as well as our employment rates and economic wealth".

The Chamber stands square behind the position that "Scotland is currently being left behind as competitor countries across Europe change their manner of doing things and the time is now to apply creative thinking to route development to building connectivity from Scottish Airports which will benefit Scotland's competitive position in an increasingly competitive global economy."

Our country, and this region specifically, needs the right incentives for airlines to deliver additional routes to and from our airports, something which is already happening in Ireland, France and Italy despite Scottish Government stating it is anti-competitive and not in line with EU regulations.

Two things to point out to them here. One, it cannot be illegal if other European nations are providing such funding and two, I didn't think we were any longer in the EU. And on the topic of anti-competitive behaviours, it seems our government is happy to maintain





the position where flights out of Inverness are exempt from Air Passenger Duty placing Aberdeen at a significant commercial disadvantage. A level playing field is urgently needed.

On rail, the North of the country has been regularly cut off over the last few years due to a range of issues. This is simply not acceptable.

Maybe the answer, of course, is that state control is the answer to all the ills. However, I challenge anyone to point to any early wins from the nationalisation of Scotland's Railway which is being extended from this month to include the Caledonian Sleeper.

Alongside the City Region Deal in 2016, Scottish Government announced a further £200million of funding to improve journey times between Aberdeen and the central belt.

Ironical that this has moved a slower than snails pace over the last six years and the current promise is for up to 20 minute journey reductions to/from Edinburgh and just 10 minute improvements on the Glasgow route. Really, is that it?

Two examples. It takes longer to travel the 150 miles between Aberdeen and Queen Street than it does to cover the 250 miles between Newcastle and London. And the four hour journey from Aberdeen to Newcastle takes over two and a half hours to reach the

half-way point at Edinburgh with the second half taking just 90 minutes!

The decarbonisation of Scotland's Railway with the promise of electrification of the lines north of Haymarket and Dunblane from 2030 is welcome from an environmental perspective, it is a hugely complex engineering project built on top of fundamentally Victorian infrastructure and is likely to slow down journey timers for years with closures, replacement buses and the likes as the works are completed.

Closer to home, the Chamber is backing the Campaign for North East Rail - the initiative to reopen the line from Dyce to Peterhead and Fraserburgh for freight and passengers. We helped secure a quarter of a million pounds from the Just Transition Fund for a full feasibility study and all the indications are that it should be more feasible than the borders railway which has already happened. Although that IS in the Central Belt I suppose...

If you haven't watched the 10 minute film outlining the route and options for station locations - get on YouTube and search Campaign for North East Rail.

And this is without even touching on the thorny topic of road improvements. Or not? If we can't even make progress in the best part of a decade with a junction on the A90 at Laurencekirk, what prospect for any of the more ambitious plans?

I leave you with the sobering thought that the proposed cost of the Clyde Metro scheme is a whopping £16billion to serve a population of 1.5million. Do the math. That's £10,600+ per head.

It's not like-for-like but let's estimate a total investment in our region of £1.5billion covering the AWPR (part funded by local authorities - unlike other schemes in Scotland), Inverurie rail enhancements, supposed improvements to central belt journey times and the proposed Aberdeen Rapid Transport system. A more modest £3,000 per head is the answer here. Feeling fairly treated North-east population?

In conclusion, our message to the incoming First Minister is: "Is the Scottish Government happy to ignore the North-east and see it effectively cut off from the rest of the country and its key overseas hubs?"

We need to see this refuted and real pace and meaningful investment put behind proving it.



**Russell Borthwick**  
Chief Executive





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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.

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Stephen McCallion

## It's no joke – R&D tax credits are changing from April 1

North-east firms could be left feeling foolish if they don't take heed of changes to R&D tax credits which come into force from April 1.

New government legislation could penalise companies of all sizes that claim tax relief for research and development (R&D) activity. From this date, claims made to HMRC will be subject to higher levels of scrutiny, require added layers of information, and need to be submitted digitally.

Stephen McCallion, Founder and CEO of ZLX Business Solutions, has warned against non-compliance with an estimated five-fold increase in the number of specialist inspections carried out by HMRC, while fines for companies that make inaccurate or misleading claims can reach up to 100% of the initial tax relief granted.

ZLX, which recently moved into office premises at neospace on Riverside Drive in the heart of the Granite City, is led by an experienced management team, including experts in legal, accountancy and technical disciplines. They help identify projects eligible for tax relief and navigate clients through the claims process.

Commenting ahead of the April 1 deadline, Stephen said: "With the tightening of regulations surrounding R&D tax credits, these reforms carry the potential to penalise businesses that are either not aware of the new requirements or that have made errors in good faith as part of their claim for tax relief.

"For companies that are active in R&D, it's imperative they seek the right professional advice at the earliest opportunity to not only deliver maximum ROI but

prevent them from falling foul of these impending legislative changes.

"Over recent years, we have built a reputation as a robust defender of our clients against HMRC compliance reviews – in no small part thanks to the investment we've made in recruiting our own, in-house specialist legal department, which continues to prove an important differentiator in the market.

"As the go-to experts for tax compliance, our team at ZLX Business Solutions has broad expertise across the full spectrum of legal, financial and technical requirements, meaning we are ideally placed to protect clients' interests and add value to their bottom line."

R&D tax credits are an HMRC scheme designed to incentivise UK businesses, across all industry sectors, to invest in innovative projects through research and development.

The average pay-out from HMRC for an SME claiming R&D tax credits is around £55,000 per annum, and more than 10 times higher for large corporates. With ZLX's assistance, customers have reclaimed funds from £10,000 to £1.5million through their innovation investments.

ZLX Business Solutions provides trusted counsel to company founders and directors around complex issues such as tax compliance, land remediation tax relief, raising finance, restructuring, and market repositioning. For further information, please contact 01224 013374 or email [hello@zlx.co.uk](mailto:hello@zlx.co.uk).



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# Placing homes at the heart of our town and city centres

## If Scotland doesn't prioritise its town centres, there is a danger of cutting off their lifeblood.

This warning comes from Mhairi Donaghy, Associate Director of the Scottish Futures Trust.

Her comment came after publication of a new report produced after the Scottish Government had asked the trust to look at the benefits and barriers to town-centre living (TCL).

The study says: "TCL is a key policy aspiration for the Scottish Government, local authorities and a wide range of other public, private and third-sector bodies.

"It builds upon strong foundations of strategic place planning and supports key principles around inclusion, wellbeing and sustainability.

"The development of housing that brings more people to live within our town centres can have a major role in creating strong and sustainable places - as well as supporting key policy aims around active travel, affordable and independent living, walkable neighbourhoods, the wellbeing economy, net zero, and the re-use of existing built assets.

"TCL can underpin the resilience of many of Scotland's places, but it needs to be done in a way that delivers the right homes, in the right places, for the right reasons.

"There has, however, been limited TCL activity across Scotland and some towns where there has been little, or even no, new town-centre housing development for a very long time."

## Key findings in the report include:

### Misbalanced cost-benefit analysis

The range of positive impacts and benefits of TCL are not acknowledged or incorporated into project appraisal - particularly not into the quantitative cost-benefit analysis that project funders typically require. TCL projects are typically more expensive, riskier and take longer to deliver than other housebuilding options. TCL projects also tend to be smaller in scale due to the nature of project conversions and infill site developments - it is therefore harder to achieve viability on a financial basis, limiting private-sector interest.

### Affordable housing v affordable living

There is also a failure to acknowledge the difference between affordable housing and





affordable living – the latter taking account of the quick, easy and free access to a wide range of facilities, services and activities that are typically located in a town centre. However, the focus of Scottish Government policy has been on delivering affordable housing, with rent and purchase price being the sole determinant. The location of the house has no bearing on its affordability, even when it is located in a place that has limited and relatively expensive public transport connections, and a limited activity and service offering.

The trust highlights the amount of vacant office floorspace in our town centres is likely to increase substantially in the very near future as a result of changes in working patterns brought on through the pandemic “work from home” arrangements. Public-sector bodies are actively looking to consolidate and co-locate, and private sector businesses are exploring opportunities for best value use of their spaces. This could substantially increase the supply of vacant premises and creates an opportunity to repurpose for TCL at scale.

Mhairi Donaghy, of the trust, pointed out that Scottish society was built around towns and villages.

She said: “From the traditional clan system to today’s modern settlements, we’re a sociable nation that thrives on community spirit.

“And, yet, most new-build houses and developments are located so



**More people living in town centres means more support for local businesses. It means keeping bus routes active. It means a safer environment, thanks to passive policing. These all make a town more attractive to visitors – which, in turn, means more benefits to the local economy.**

far out of town centres that people must rely on private vehicles to access the facilities and services they regularly need.

“More people living in town centres means more support for local businesses. It means keeping bus routes active. It means a safer environment, thanks to passive policing. These all make a town

more attractive to visitors – which, in turn, means more benefits to the local economy.

“From an environmental perspective, people living in towns often walk or use buses to access local services, reducing their reliance on cars. And repurposing vacant buildings into housing, rather than building new, will help reduce our carbon emissions. Both of these are vital if Scotland hopes to meet its ambitious net zero target.

“Increased walking also leads to better physical and mental health, which, in turn, may reduce strain on our National Health Service.”

But the Associate Director pointed out that – thanks to the barriers preventing widespread investment in town-centre regeneration, of Scotland’s 479 settlements with a resident population of over 1,000 people – just 50 places have delivered new town-centre housing in the past five years.

She added: “Many of us greatly enjoy being part of vibrant, thriving communities. But if we don’t prioritise our town centres, we are in danger of cutting off their lifeblood.

“To keep them alive and reap their benefits, we must use them – and we hope that the recommendations we set out in our report can help everyone involved in this process to do more, and do better.”







**Adrian Watson,**  
Chief Executive,  
Aberdeen Inspired

Aberdeen City Council and partners have had a long-standing commitment to city-centre living through the principles of the Aberdeen city-centre masterplan.

There have been some great exemplars of residential development playing out on our main thoroughfare of Union Street and environs, but in keeping with most other large towns and cities these are sporadic and more needs to be offered in support.

As the city centre business-improvement district, we have long held that city-centre living ought to be a key strand in revitalising the heart of Aberdeen.

It is well documented that the large acreage of former retail space is unlikely to be returned to this purpose to anywhere near the same level.

Between public and private-sector partners, we must look at how we can overcome the age-old barriers that have limited the viability of city centre living to date.

For instance, funding gaps, obtaining the right consents and lack of data can all put off private-sector investors and developers.



**As the city centre business-improvement district, we have long held that city-centre living ought to be a key strand in revitalising the heart of Aberdeen.**

It is imperative that local policy prioritises the city centre for residential development, as having this “captive audience” brings life and with that trade to the city centre. Much needed by our businesses. It keeps bus routes active and helps create a safer and more welcoming environment, which, in turn, attracts more visitors.

Moreover, there are environmental benefits, with less car usage and the lowering of an individual's carbon footprint, and the move towards the 20-minute neighbourhood which has the potential to re-purpose existing vacant properties into public/social services, such as health or education, to cater for the growing residential population.

The town-centre living report is useful in highlighting the barriers, and we need the collective wisdom from across the sectors to mitigate the challenge to developers around our city centre potentially proving more expensive, a riskier proposition and often taking longer than other housebuilding options.

City-centre living remains an integral part of our masterplan and, although the challenges are often complex, we need to create the environment in Aberdeen that will make it a more viable proposition and get much-needed life back into the heart of our city and soon.







### Dean Gowans,

Director of Aberdeen property company,  
City Restoration Project

The town-centre living (TCL) report highlights the opportunity available to our city to reinvigorate our central district through conversion of our historic sites and building assets.

It also underlines the many hurdles that must be overcome to achieve the major transformative effects of TCL development activity.

City Restoration Project has a passion for city-centre regeneration and our appreciation of historic architecture drives our sympathetic refurbishment of listed commercial property into beautiful homes.

Our objective is to undertake a role in the revival of the city centre by helping create vibrant communities and a stronger local economy.

We design our projects in such a way that the vast majority of the structure is retained, thereby ensuring the retention of the existing embodied carbon and reducing the project's environmental impact.

We must also appreciate the numerous additional benefits such as convenient and low-cost living, improved connectivity, inclusion and well-being, utilisation of existing infrastructure, enhancing safety and resilience of the city.

TCL development activity is indeed complex, but not impossible. We hope the points raised in the report will foster discussion amongst stakeholders and act as a catalyst to raise further awareness of the importance and huge benefits of repopulating our city centre, in order to shift remaining local indifferent, or even negatively-held perceptions of city living.

Conversion of historic assets can be complex, time-consuming and financially risky.

Anything that can be done, for the collective benefit of the city, to reduce the complexity and associated costs, in order to smooth the development process must be looked at.

Prioritising planning applications and streamlining of the multiple processes to gain faster obligatory permissions from local authorities would be a good start.

This would allow for quicker commencement and completion of projects that will, in turn, facilitate more development.

Considering the inherent robustness yet restrictions of historic buildings, and the architecturally-significant features often contained throughout, we must be careful not to adopt overly onerous building standards, which could render heritage building projects non-viable.

We must be flexible, embrace new technologies, collaborate effectively and be solutions-orientated to deliver projects.

Mortgage providers and funding partners should also reassess their risk appetite for lending to purchasers of city-centre property by increasing loan to value on finance products in line with the rest of the market.

There is demand for city-centre living in Aberdeen and this type of regeneration can only cultivate prosperity.





# HOT TOPIC

**What impact do you think a reduction in empty property relief will have on the Aberdeen commercial property market?**



Aberdeen City Council's move will be a significant blow to property owners and investors. The city's property market continues to move through an incredibly difficult period of adjustment and the changes to vacant relief will do nothing to encourage new investment into Aberdeen – exactly at the time we need it the most. We need our city leaders to now look at how they can potentially assist property owners to bring vacant listed buildings back into use. Such steps might include: simplifying the rules to allow developers to claim vacant relief whilst planning applications are being considered as well as the period covering strip-out and subsequent redevelopment works; streamlining the cumbersome and lengthy statutory consent process to secure the necessary planning consents for listed buildings; the redirection of funds previously available from the Scottish Government to fund vacant relief to assist developers meet the significant additional cost of redeveloping listed buildings to bring them up to current building and energy-regulation standards.

**Stuart Johnston**, *Partner, DM Hall*



If you own a listed building – say a 10,000sqft office - which you haven't been able to lease, you will now not only have no income but also have to pay £90,000 per annum to the council for business rates. I believe that this will result in the abandonment of buildings over the next three to five years. I also suspect this change will result in a handful of property owners being put in serious financial difficulties. This decision by the council shows a shocking disregard for property owners (who are not all millionaires) without any form of consultation. Unfortunately, all the changes will cause financial hardship to those involved and with no consultation. It's a bit like the council deciding we all have to pay an additional £1,500 of tax per year without saying why and what it is for. The Scottish Government devolving empty property relief is smart (cunning) in our opinion, as they can essentially pass the blame to local authorities should business complain about reductions in relief. Landlords really need to seriously consider their re-marketing of properties 12 months' ahead of lease expiry to ensure that void periods are kept to a minimum.

**Eric Shearer**, *Partner, Knight Frank*



This decision by the council will provide an overdue and urgent stimulus to take action. This change can be a win-win for the city over the longer term in realising revenue for the council whilst motivating many apathetic building owners into action, and thereby improving the city centre and the listed buildings in it. This is not going to be an easy time for the development industry, but we have to work together to allow the city centre to reach its potential. Things need to change, and this is just one measure in a basket of solutions that the council has some control over, and it should be congratulated for being brave enough to implement. We choose how we respond - do we throw our arms up in the air and resist or do we play with the cards we have been dealt and show how resilient we can be? For the commercial property market, this is a real opportunity to get people to live in our city centre in the listed buildings that are currently lying empty - and it's a huge opportunity for those in the commercial-property sector to educate, advise and support their clients in understanding this is where the future of their buildings and Aberdeen lies.

**Richard Tinto**, *Managing Director, TINTO Architecture*

# Taking the stress out of letting

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## Aberdeen letters to spell out city's pull for tourists

Plans for landmark giant letters which spell out "Aberdeen" have been revealed.

The proposal was drawn up by city business leaders wanting to encourage visitors to the city centre, as well as positively promoting the city, far and wide, on social media platforms.

Many other cities around the globe have a similar focal point, including the iconic Amsterdam letters and Toronto's famous coloured sign in Nathan Phillips Square.

The Aberdeen Letters project has been developed from an idea that emerged through Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce's Vanguard initiative, to encourage creative suggestions for the future of the region.

The project is being funded and led by Aberdeen Inspired, which will manage the letters, VisitAberdeenshire and Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce.

Local design and fabrication firm Luxous Group has been appointed to design and manufacture the letters.

The letters will be located at the historic Castlegate with the iconic Union Street Granite Mile as its backdrop, but have been designed to be a detachable and movable attraction for the city.

Adrian Watson, Chief Executive of Aberdeen Inspired, said: "The Aberdeen Letters project aims to create a tourist attraction that will drive both visitors and local people into the city centre, encouraging them to visit the letters to take photos as a souvenir or a selfie for their social media channels then spend time in the shops, bars, restaurants and take in a show or exhibition.

"Many cities around the world already have similar schemes and they have become a 'must-do' for visitors,

but we hope that different animations being displayed from the letters, as well as being moveable, takes the concept a step further and will ensure the letters remain a unique focal point for that perfect Instagram picture.

"They will also broaden Aberdeen's offering and enhance the city centre as a destination for cruise passengers and national and international tourists, including those visiting for the European Pipe Band Championships and the Tall Ships, as well as more local visitors who are proud to show off their city.

"As part of our ongoing efforts to support the regeneration of Union Street, we are keen to do all we can to encourage footfall and create reasons to visit the city centre and we are excited to see the letters at their first home, the Castlegate."

David Edgar, a member of the Chamber Vanguard group, said: "The whole of the Vanguard team, who have helped to shape the plans for the letters, are delighted to see that the Aberdeen Letters will soon become reality on the streets of our city.

"We want these signs to be a bright symbol of the new Aberdeen, helping shape our international identity. We've seen from other cities, such as Toronto, Gdansk, Amsterdam and Brisbane, that these signs often become a top tourist attraction, because people want to share a 'selfie' in front of them. This will help Aberdeen reach places it otherwise wouldn't on the feeds of the thousands of tourists visiting our city region every year."

# VANGUARD

# Net Zero Property

## Challenges v Opportunities

In 2019, the UK became the first major economy to set a legally binding target to achieve net zero carbon by 2050 with an interim target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 68% in 2030. The recent BPF paper explains that the UK property sector accounts for 25% of GHG emissions so has a pivotal role to play in helping the UK achieve 2050 net zero targets. Whilst growing momentum towards net zero carbon has led to significant commitments at global and national levels, the challenge of decarbonising the sector cannot be underestimated.

A lack of UK Government incentives and regulation has resulted in calls from the British Property Federation for an **actionable set of policies** to speed up transition. Despite the introduction of the EPC in 2008, insufficient energy consumption data remains another challenge. Such **data is crucial** for calculating a carbon baseline to inform realistic net zero targets/pathways and assess returns on investment for carbon reduction measures. Given that transition financing will largely come from the private sector, **smart technology providing robust evidence** on operational savings is vital to justify additional capital expenditure. Creating an environment where property owners have **confidence to invest** in net zero is a key step in speeding up the transition.

As with other sectors, **skills and supply chain shortages** impact investment, especially in the context of retrofitting. New builds are being prioritised suggesting there is a need to set **different targets for retrofits** to help address difficulties associated with older building stock. Retrofitting works can be significantly more complex and expensive.

**Capacity challenges within local planning departments** compound the problem with a need for more investment to ensure the planning system can better support the net zero carbon agenda by enhancing capacity and capability to improve the decision making process.

On a more positive note, whilst the current economic climate presents challenges for investment in net zero, with every challenge comes an opportunity. Despite inflation running at levels not seen since the 1970s and the ongoing disruption of global energy supply chains brought about by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, many companies are actively exploring domestic renewable energy sources.

Rapid **advances in "prop tech"** encourage buy-in from asset managers and contractors. Connecting multiple **smart buildings** enable portfolio level decisions to be made. Ongoing innovation can enhance carbon reductions through the introduction of new materials such as **green steel** and modern methods of construction resulting in lower carbon emissions. At a global level, UK cross sector **collaboration is producing a range of best practice guidance**. The Netherlands, Canada, Italy, Australia, France, Switzerland have introduced various tax incentives and other mandatory schemes which can **help incentivise** the implementation of renewable technology. All of which can help shape policies which target each level of the **net zero carbon hierarchy** and support organisations through each stage of the transition.

Recent **government pledges** towards home insulation, energy efficiency savings and the Energy Efficiency Taskforce are to be welcomed but more targeted policy is required to

ensure the UK property sector can complete its transition to net zero within the planned timeline.

Emissions from property have **decreased by approx. 30%** over the last 20 years, predominantly through improvements in energy efficiency and grid decarbonisation. Notwithstanding, the pace of change may not be fast enough.

Stronger Government action is called for. Well targeted policies, proportionate regulation, incentives, interventions and guidance can help drive the sector to **accomplish its 2050 ambition**.



Liz Stewart, Partner in Stronachs' Commercial Property team.

### Scottish Property Federation

*Liz has over 20 years' experience in a wide range of commercial property transactions including leasing, security work, development projects and support for company acquisitions/disposals.*

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Russell Borthwick

## Chamber calls for Aberdeen base for new UK Government department

After the UK Government announced a new Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, calls have been made for it to be headquartered in Europe's energy capital.

The department has been tasked with securing the UK's long-term energy security and seizing the opportunities of net zero.

Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce said that bringing hundreds of energy-focused civil servant jobs to the North-east would be a "no-brainer in terms of creating a winning relationship between industry and government".

It would mean DESNZ would sit alongside other key institutions such as the North Sea Transition Authority, the Net Zero Technology Centre, the two universities at the forefront of driving research and technology to achieve net zero, and the 45,000-strong offshore energy sector workforce.

The proximity to industry would deliver greater accountability and scrutiny to ensure a just transition and more collaboration and innovation between public and private sector to unlock jobs.

Furthermore, AGCC has said it would be a vote of confidence in the future prosperity of the region.

Russell Borthwick, Chief Executive of AGCC, said: "Energy security has become the defining issue of the past year - as the fragility of global supply has come into sharp focus, and consumers and businesses have been hit by sharply rising costs.

"It's encouraging to see a designated department within the UK Government, laser focused on addressing this challenge and seizing the opportunities of net zero.

"Governments at Westminster and Holyrood receive justified criticism for being over-centralised. Meanwhile it is the North-east alone which can deliver at scale the renewables revolution underway in our energy sector.

"Bringing the headquarters of the new Department for Energy Security and Net Zero to Aberdeen would bring hundreds of jobs to our city, deliver a huge vote of confidence in our region and is no-brainer in terms of creating a winning relationship between industry and government."

## DC Thomson confirms 300 employees to go

Three hundred employees at DC Thomson will be made redundant, the Scottish publisher has confirmed. The Dundee-based group said it had to "reshape its portfolio" to plug a £10million gap.

As well as shedding almost 19% of its workforce, it will close a number of publications including teen magazine Shout. About half of the job losses will come from the closure of titles acquired from Colchester-based Aceville in 2018.

A spokesperson for DC Thomson, which employs about 1,600 people across the UK, said it was a "difficult decision".

"A huge amount of work goes into the creation of our titles and, despite being loved, some titles and brands are finding it harder to be profitable," they added.

## BrewDog strikes 'transformational' deal in China

Ellon-headquartered craft beer giant BrewDog is expanding in China after partnering with brewing giant Budweiser.

The joint venture with Budweiser China will see the Scottish firm's Punk IPA and other beers brewed in China.

BrewDog also plans to open more bars in the world's second-largest economy.

BrewDog Founder James Watt described the Budweiser partnership as "transformational" and said it would bring the craft brewery to "every corner of the world's biggest beer market".

BrewDog employs more than 2,300 people and also has breweries in the US state of Ohio, Berlin in Germany and Brisbane in Australia.

## More growth at STATS

Pipeline engineering specialist, STATS Group will celebrate 25 years in business with an expected 20% rise in revenue and an increase in its headcount to 400 staff.

Established in 1998 beside Aberdeen Airport, STATS is now a global supplier of pipeline intervention solutions to the energy industry.

In 2021, STATS posted annual revenues of just under £50million and expects to improve on that performance when reporting its 2022 figures, laying the foundation for further growth in its 25th anniversary year and beyond.

# The Espresso Office

Preserving the built environment through retrofit



**Steve Judge,**  
Founder & Chair,  
Space Solutions

**Aberdeen is Europe's current energy capital and will hopefully become its renewables centre of excellence. Supporting the future economic prosperity is dependent on providing more high quality (Grade A) office space. A phrase I read the other day described the future office being 'the espresso office' – small, but powerful. Is this where Aberdeen has the opportunity to retain the character of the city centre but provide the quality the market demands, and do so through sustainable development?**

Should a focus on renewables in Aberdeen go hand in hand with a focus on retrofit and refurbishment? I believe that it does, and believe that today's designers and architects will need to educate clients along the way as to what is achievable.

Landlords and investors will also need to be educated. The last thing they want is to have stranded assets that ESG-conscious organisations overlook in favour of spaces that are sustainable and place a high premium on access to staff amenities.

Coffee is often described as being vital to the smooth running

of organisations. Perhaps these espresso offices are vital to the resurgence of the city centre – there are numerous buildings in Aberdeen that are suitable for transforming into espresso offices. When West Dunbartonshire Council re-located their HQ back to the town centre, there was an immediate knock-on effect with businesses opening adjacent to the new building. Let's see what impact the Silver Fin building has on neighbouring businesses now that Shell has taken occupation.

The transformation of old buildings has to be informed, there is no point in upgrading the internal fit-out of a space while failing to address the underlying poor energy performance. We know that on the face of it, some retrofitting seems to add up, but not when you consider the whole lifetime carbon costs – a perfect example being the decision to install triple glazing; the embodied carbon exceeds the pay back in energy efficiency.

In creating these "small, but powerful" spaces the circular economy has to be at the forefront of the client's mind (as much as they are at the forefront of designer's minds). Re-use where possible makes commercial sense and minimises the

amount of waste material that goes to landfill.

Given that 80% of the offices we will occupy in 2050 are already built, it is crucial that we prioritise retrofitting and refurbishing existing office spaces to reduce our carbon footprint and preserve our built environment. As professionals in the industry, we have a responsibility to prioritise sustainability and make informed decisions that will benefit both the environment and our cities.

Let's talk about the future of the Aberdeen office sector. The coffee is on me – what are you having? An espresso?

Steve founded Space Solutions in 1997. Over the last 26 years, he's created a thriving business built on the foundations of strong industry knowledge, and a genuine passion for creating workspaces that support the people and business who inhabit them to succeed. If you'd like to speak with Steve about workplace change, email him at [steve.judge@spacesolutions.co.uk](mailto:steve.judge@spacesolutions.co.uk).



SPACE



# MEET THE



**Ross Murray,**  
Managing Director,  
Acumen Accountants  
& Advisors

## WHEN WAS YOUR BUSINESS ESTABLISHED?

Acumen Accountants & Advisors Limited was incorporated in 1994.

## WHAT DOES YOUR BUSINESS DO?

We provide finance and accounting services for small and medium sized businesses across Scotland.

## WHAT SORT OF COMPANIES DO YOU DO BUSINESS WITH?

Owner managed businesses in the SME market.

## WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FACING YOUR BUSINESS AT THE MOMENT?

The current economic outlook and recent rise in interest rates will hurt some clients, so making sure we can support them through a tough period will be our biggest challenge in 2023. We've got a great team so I am confident we'll rise to the challenge.

## AND THE BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY?

We see the advisory services as a great opportunity for growth, both for Acumen and for helping our clients navigate these testing times to grow.

## WHAT ARE YOU MOST PASSIONATE AND PROUD OF WHEN IT COMES TO YOUR BUSINESS?

I'm extremely proud of the entire team for their proactive, can-do attitude to the work, and I'm passionate about giving them every opportunity to succeed and advance in their roles. We all know what we're trying to achieve as a business and how we want to be perceived by our customers. It's been fantastic to see staff progress into more senior roles within the business.

## WHAT HAS BEEN MOST VALUABLE TO YOU AS MEMBERS OF ABERDEEN + GRAMPIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE?

It's a great tool for raising our profile across the business community and keeping a finger on the business pulse of Aberdeen.



**Sean Reid,**  
Sales and Marketing,  
E&M Hydraulics

## WHEN WAS YOUR BUSINESS ESTABLISHED?

E&M Hydraulics was established in 2006 and we operate locally from our base in the Bridge of Don.

## WHAT DOES YOUR BUSINESS DO?

We provide specialised hydraulic equipment and support services

to the international oil and gas and manufacturing industries. We offer full-service hydraulic support ranging from advice on filtration/oil cleanliness to system design, maintenance and manufacture. We own and operate the largest fleet of oil purification units in Scotland.

## WHAT SORT OF COMPANIES DO YOU DO BUSINESS WITH?

We have a varied client base ranging from large international oil and gas companies to local service companies.

## WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE AT THE MOMENT?

The biggest challenge we currently face is recruitment, with a shortage of personnel with the appropriate skillset to maximise our current opportunities. This closely followed by cost increases and the long lead times of certain materials within the supply chain.

## AND THE BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY?

We have recently signed service contracts with two major oil and gas

companies. We see this as a great potential to grow the services we offer to other business units within these companies. This has also boosted our profile locally and will hopefully lead to more business.

## WHAT ARE YOU MOST PASSIONATE AND PROUD OF WHEN IT COMES TO YOUR BUSINESS?

We take great pride in our work and believe we offer excellent customer support to our clients. I am proud to be part of a team of dedicated individuals who go the extra mile to ensure our clients needs are fully catered for.

## WHAT HAS BEEN MOST VALUABLE TO YOU AS MEMBERS OF ABERDEEN + GRAMPIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE?

Having just joined, getting the opportunity to advertise and promote our company to fellow members and the wider business community. We look forward to benefitting from the support and training courses available to us as a member.

# MEMBERS



**Jim Grimmer,**  
Founder & Business Partner,  
P3 Business Care

## WHEN WAS YOUR BUSINESS ESTABLISHED?

We started to support our first client in Aberdeen in January 2019.

## WHAT DOES YOUR BUSINESS DO?

P3 provides personal and proactive support to employees in partnership with the employer. Our P3 Business Partners visit the business twice a

week to meet employees face-to-face and develop trust and relationships. We then proactively identify and address a myriad of issues before reaching crisis point, absence, staff turnover or worse.

## WHAT SORT OF COMPANIES DO YOU DO BUSINESS WITH?

We work with companies operating in the corporate private sector, historically supporting business in oil and gas and manufacturing. More recently we are expanding into finance, banking and other professional service industries.

## WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE AT THE MOMENT?

Too many companies are stuck in the tick box mentality of the traditional employee assistance programme (EAP) which even after the CV19 pandemic still only has an average take up of 11.4%. The reactive approach isn't working. We need to move to a personal, proactive, partnership approach.

## AND THE BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY?

To educate business owners, managers and employees on the impact of taking a P3 approach to employee care. Employees feel that the company is demonstrating that they genuinely care. Immediate families are also supported, and the business has increased productivity, reduced absence and staff turnover. Who wouldn't want that?

## WHAT ARE YOU MOST PASSIONATE AND PROUD OF?

Not everyone loves what they do! I'm incredibly blessed that I found my life's purpose in caring for others. Through the fantastic work of our P3 Business Partners we see the tangible impact we have. When someone says you have literally been a 'life saver' it makes your day.



**Scott Rennie,**  
Partner,  
Raeburn Christie Clark &  
Wallace LLP

## WHEN WAS YOUR BUSINESS ESTABLISHED?

RCCW is a result of the merger of two respected and well-established law firms, Raeburn Christie and Clark & Wallace, in 2004. The firm has expanded since 2004 with a number of acquisitions and subsequently grown to become one of the largest full service legal firms headquartered in Aberdeen, with a staff of over 120

and a branch network with offices in Banchory, Ellon, Inverurie and Stonehaven.

## WHAT DOES YOUR BUSINESS DO?

As a full service Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) we provide legal services for individuals and businesses across the North-east. As a solicitor estate agent we help people buy and sell their homes and can provide independent financial advice to help secure mortgages, insurance and pension and investment products. I work in our Stonehaven branch and focus on residential property conveyancing. Our Stonehaven property transactions are handled start to finish in branch meaning our clients get specialist advice on their doorstep throughout their transaction.

## WHAT SORT OF COMPANIES DO YOU DO BUSINESS WITH?

We have great relationships with many of the local surveyors firms, accountants, banks and of course a network of tradesmen with whom we can link our clients. Firm-wide our

commercial departments work for local and national house builders and local and national organisations both large and small.

## WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE AT THE MOMENT?

As with most people and businesses, the current economic situation has had an impact on almost all areas of life and business. Regarding residential property, the rise in interest rates has made it more important than ever that people get impartial financial advice early in the process to ensure they secure the best deal possible when buying a home.

## AND THE BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY?

I joined RCCW in 2019 following the merger of the firm with Connors of Stonehaven, where I worked previously. The merger created a huge local client base. Both firms value personal service and building long term relationships by understanding clients' needs. This enables us to continue to deliver tailored practical advice for both life and business.



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## 40th anniversary of European success

Aberdeen FC will commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Club winning the European Cup Winners' Cup with a weekend of celebrations in May.

The celebrations will kick-off with a gala dinner on May 11, exactly 40 years to the day since the Dons beat Real Madrid in Gothenburg.

The highlight of the weekend will be a special event at Pittodrie on May 12, at which the club and the Gothenburg Greats will be presented with the Freedom of the City by Aberdeen City Council.

The event will see the club, in its 120th year, and the players that led it to its greatest achievement receive the top civic honour from the Lord Provost of Aberdeen.

The festivities will culminate with a homecoming game at which the Gothenburg Greats will be welcomed back to Pittodrie as guests of honour.

Dave Cormack, the Aberdeen FC Chairman, said: "Being awarded the Freedom of the City is a tremendous honour for the club and befitting of our greatest-ever team. The Gothenburg Greats have long been assured of their position as legends at the club and in the city, but this special tribute further underlines their place in our history.

"To beat Real Madrid in a European final is an achievement that has only become increasingly impressive over the course of time. Winning the Cup Winners' Cup and European Super Cup in 1983 was inspirational for the club and city; something that we should remember and cherish.

"This weekend of celebrations will allow our supporters to share in recognising these players and in celebrating with them."

## Siberia makes international move

Siberia Bar & Hotel's marketing team have taken Aberdeen worldwide as part of its latest campaign.

A video, which shows Chef Mickey Robertson and Business Development Manager Scott Anderson coming up with interesting ways to tell the world about the Granite City and how important it is to them, culminated in the team being broadcast live on one of New York City's biggest and most prominent billboards in the centre of Times Square.

Scott commented: "I love having the freedom within my job to create interesting and engaging content, no matter how big and silly. This video is the culmination of a week's worth of hard work trying to shoot and edit all the content while also travelling to New York for the big reveal, but I feel like we pulled it off and hopefully our humour and passion for our hometown comes across for the public."

## Understanding fatigue

Innovative research using artificial intelligence (AI) led by the University of Aberdeen aims to find better ways of managing and treating fatigue.

Many people struggle with fatigue, which can be the result of medical conditions or simply because of modern lifestyle. This makes it difficult for doctors to understand whether patients are tired as part of every-day life or whether fatigue may be a symptom of a more serious medical condition.

Researchers are now working with men and women who have fatigue related to long CV19, myeloma, heart failure, and people who do not suffer from one of those conditions and do not experience problematic fatigue in the study which will look in-depth at fatigue patterns in different people.

Those taking part will wear a sensor on their wrist, which will measure their activity levels, posture and sleep. They will also be given movement sensors to keep in their home and an ECG patch to be worn during the first seven days of the study.

Senior Clinical Lecturer in Academic Primary Care and Lead Researcher Dr Rosalind Adam explains: "What is exciting about this study is that it combines experts from six different universities with backgrounds in Engineering, Artificial Intelligence, human-computing interaction, psychology, and clinical (general practice). The sensors are novel too and will allow us to study fatigue patterns in different people in detail.

"Treatment options for fatigue are limited. We hope this study will help us understand fatigue better and will identify patterns of fatigue in different people. We hope that this will help us find better ways of managing and treating fatigue in the future."



# The great Union Street gamble:

## Will scrapping rates reliefs help or hinder?

### What do Pride & Prejudice author Jane Austen and Aberdeen's commercial landlords have in common?

Not a great deal, you'd think. And you're right... except for one thing; a dislike of surprises.

"Surprises are foolish things," Austen once said. "The pleasure is not enhanced, and the inconvenience is often considerable."

I doubt many building owners in the Granite City will have been so eloquent in describing the surprise they were dealt when Empty Property Reliefs were all but scrapped in Aberdeen City Council's 2023/24 budget.

From this month (April), and with no consultation, they face some of the highest tax bills in Scotland after SNP-Lib Dem councillors approved a £9million levy on vacant buildings, including listed properties.

Union Street alone has 111 vacant listed units which will be affected, which has thrust the city centre into the heart of the debate.

Council co-leader Alex Nicoll believes the removal of the relief will help solve the scourge of absentee landlords, including large funds and investors, and nudge them to find tenants or buyers.

However, property agents have been vociferous in their criticism, with one describing the move as "an utter disgrace". Many believe that the changes will lead to buildings being abandoned.

### What's changing?

Up until now, vacant commercial premises which are listed in Scotland have received 100% relief on non-domestic rates, due to the limitations and burden of owning and maintaining such properties.

Various other reliefs also apply to empty industrial buildings, shops, offices, warehouses and damaged properties, as well as vacant ground for development.

From April 1, the Scottish Government will devolve these reliefs to local authorities, but with funding to cover the cost of the support. Budget papers show that the council's grant settlement from the Scottish Government includes £15.1million to maintain these reliefs in the year ahead, which is more than the £14.7million required to deliver them.

But despite other local authorities seeking to hold the relief for at least 12 months – including neighbouring Aberdeenshire – the city council will reduce all empty property reliefs to 50% for the first three months, before reducing the support to just 10% thereafter.

The changes will bank £9million for the council in the first year alone, according to the budget papers. It will be reviewed annually.

### What is Aberdeen City Council saying?

Mr Nicoll said: "Over the last five years we have seen a steady increase in the number of vacant buildings along Union Street.

"We have also seen that many of the building owners have taken full advantage of the rate relief discounts that have been available to them because many of them are listed buildings.

"This hasn't always led to them being willing to engage with council officers to maintain the buildings but also to take necessary measures to find tenants to take over the leases.

"This is an opportunity to actually revitalise the city. We have a finite pot of money and have devoted considerable investment and resources, offering discounts where people are looking to provide accommodation and help for people looking to take over units on Union Street.

"But the owners of many of these buildings have a hugely important part to play and they cannot just sit on an asset waiting for all of us to do the hard work."



## What is the property sector saying?

Eric Shearer, Head of Office for international property giant Knight Frank in Aberdeen, fears the council's move will lead to properties being abandoned and falling into disrepair.

He said: "If you own a 10,000sq ft listed office building which you haven't been able to lease, you will now not only have no income but also have to pay £90,000 per annum to the council for business rates.

"They are being given a modest 50% reduction for the first three months, so basically that owner is going to be £75,000 worse off from April 1 and the first he/she will have heard of this was four weeks beforehand. This is shocking and an utter disgrace.

"Setting aside the impact on each property owner, I believe that this will result in the abandonment of buildings over the next three to five years. I also suspect this change will result in a handful of property owners being put in serious financial difficulties.

"In my view, this decision shows a shocking disregard to property owners - who are not all millionaires - without any form of consultation."

However, architect Richard Tinto is among those who think the bold move from the council could pay off.

"I think the council need to be congratulated on this occasion for indeed placing the responsibility on landlords to get their act together," he said.

## High-stakes gamble

So, who is right and who is wrong? I can't sit here and tell you it will be a disaster. I also can't tell you it will be a success. And that is the point; nobody knows, which is why a period of consultation should have been considered.

For me, it is important to remember why relief is there in the first place - developers taking on listed buildings, for example, are unable to demolish, and have limited renovation options, yet are still burdened with statutory obligations to maintain the building.

And the clear shared view of the experts we have consulted with is that any sudden reduction in the rates relief offered for listed buildings will make ownership and redevelopment of some of our most historic buildings unattractive and unviable, leading to abandonment and further disrepair.

We share these concerns and would have liked to have seen the council develop a deeper understanding of the potential impact this could have through a period of consultation.

However, the local authority has taken the gamble regardless. For the sake of our city centre, I really hope the gamble does not backfire.

“

**I can't sit here and tell you it will be a disaster. I also can't tell you it will be a success. And that is the point; nobody knows, which is why a period of consultation should have been considered.**



**Ryan Crighton,**  
Director of Policy  
and Marketing,  
Aberdeen & Grampian  
Chamber of Commerce





# UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF ABERDEEN'S APPRENTICES

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) is proud to support this year's Scottish Apprenticeship Week and highlight the positive impact work-based learning has on people, businesses and the local economy. Apprenticeships unlock learners' potential and provide them with valuable skills and experience sought by employers. Apprenticeships also support sustained employment and upskilling, as well as opening up opportunities for young people from diverse backgrounds and abilities to gain skills that will support them throughout their life and in work.

Modern Apprenticeships are an essential part of Scotland's education and training landscape, and SQA qualifications, specifically Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs), are an integral part of most Modern Apprenticeships. These well-respected vocational qualifications meet the required National Occupational Standards outlined by a host of industries. This ensures that the skills young people develop during their apprenticeship meet employers' needs, and that the young people themselves are work-ready and able to accurately demonstrate the skills, knowledge, and experience that they have developed during their training. The flexibility of SQA qualifications allows for innovative delivery approaches that schools, colleges, and training providers can tailor to meet their own specific requirements.

Declan Hoskins from Aberdeen recently completed a Modern Apprenticeship in Social Services (Children and Young People) at the Treehouse Early Care and Education Centre, situated onsite at Robert Gordon University. He now leads the pre-school room at the nursery, supervising staff and ensuring his team delivers exceptional care, as well as developing relationships with parents and carers.



Throughout his apprenticeship, Declan completed one SQA qualification; an SVQ 3 in Social Services (Children and Young People) at SCQF level 7. He said: "The Modern Apprenticeship appealed to me because of the opportunity to get hands-on experience at work. Reflecting on my learning every day of my apprenticeship meant that I was constantly building on my skills.

"I would never have gained the same insights into child development

without doing the qualification while I was working. Being part of a team and having people who believe in me improved my confidence - I love to share my enthusiasm for the job with others and support them too."

SQA qualifications also underpin Foundation Apprenticeships, which provide work-based learning opportunities for secondary school learners in S5 and S6. The programme enables learners to complete elements of a Modern Apprenticeship while still at school, alongside their other subjects. They spend part of the school week at college or with a local employer, working towards industry-recognised qualifications while developing skills and experience in the workplace.

Alistair McKay, SQA Regional Manager for Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, says that by investing in apprentices, businesses are setting a fantastic example to other employers, not just in the social care and childcare sector, but across the board. "The qualifications and courses that SQA offer, and the support given by training providers, enable employers in Aberdeen to take on the responsibility of training their own people. This means they can tailor their development and get the person they want to fit their specific needs."

For more information on SQA, the qualifications it offers, and how it supports Modern, Foundation, and Graduate Apprenticeships, visit <https://www.sqa.org.uk/apprenticeships>.



As the Regional Manager for Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, Alistair McKay has extensive knowledge of SQA qualifications, from those delivered in schools and colleges, to workplace-based qualifications. He supports and engages with organisations delivering SQA qualifications in his area and aids the development of new qualifications to meet the changing needs of learners and employers. If you'd like advice on delivering SQA qualifications, please contact Alistair at [alistair.mckay@sqa.org.uk](mailto:alistair.mckay@sqa.org.uk).





# Qualifying Scotland's Apprentices

Our SVQs are at the heart of most  
Modern Apprenticeships.

[www.sqa.org.uk/MA](http://www.sqa.org.uk/MA)





# Business lessons I've learned



**Neil Thomson,**  
*Director, Nomadic*

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

Nomadic is an innovative immigration and compliance solution that is part of Fragomen, the world's leading immigration services firm. From identifying travel requirements to lodging the right visa, Nomadic is an end-to-end workforce mobility solution.

Nomadic was founded by experienced figures in the global immigration industry to bring an automated technological approach to the immigration compliance side of short-term travel.

The company is uniquely positioned in this specialist market as the only provider of an end-to-end solution for international compliance, as companies contend with the fallout of CV19 and Brexit as well as continual changes to travel and visa rules. The platform is used by small, medium, large and global organisations, including those in the energy sector.

Nomadic ensures users are 'travel-ready', meeting stringent immigration, documentation and health criteria. Using the portal online or via their smartphone, the

user simply selects their proposed destination to bring up all relevant documentation, with a previously created traveller profile automatically populating sections. The completed documents are sent by the traveller to the relevant embassy, global Nomadic hub or Nomadic in-country partner for lodging. We work with more than 80 partners worldwide to cover 170 countries.

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

Much like with the CV19 pandemic, geopolitical and economic situations can have a profound impact on how travellers and workers move around the world. Similarly, embassies and consulates are continually reviewing and updating visa rules. All of this means that we are constantly monitoring changing regulations to ensure our clients are able to continue moving freely from country to country and while challenging, our ability in this regard is unmatched.

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

Rome wasn't built in a day. It's important to move forward with

# Quick fire round

## What was your first job?

Paper boy. I also remember cutting cheese as part of my duties at Kelly of Cults.

## When would you like to retire?

I think the mind will tell me when it's time.

## What did you have for breakfast?

Coffee, lots...

## Who, or what, inspires you?

My father, David Thomson, was and remains a massive inspiration. He was a successful businessman and the founder of Central Insurance Services.

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

I recently enjoyed watching Braveheart with my son, Alfie.

purpose but don't expect instant success. The hard work will pay off eventually but there's a need for patience.

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

Cash is king. That phrase is perhaps an oversimplification. There is a need for robust financial management.

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

I'm very proud to have launched The Visa Team, which was acquired by Nomadic in early 2020. We achieved so much in a relatively short space of time.

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

I'd like to see companies move here to grow their business by using the wealth of experience the region has gained over the years in the offshore industry. There's been some amazing projects delivered by amazing teams.

## Promotional opportunities

VisitAberdeenshire has launched a suite of new promotional opportunities for local tourism businesses that are looking to reach new customers who have already indicated an interest in visiting the region.

Chief Executive Chris Foy said: "Since our inception in 2016, we have worked hard to build an engaged audience across our social media channels, website and through our email database. These digital platforms allow us to encourage visits from elsewhere in the UK, as well as inspiring locals audiences to rediscover the region. We place a high value on our channels, and we know they have an impact.

Dedicated newsletters, promoted social media ads and website advertorial are available for local businesses to purchase.

## Thumbs up for new marquee at Aberdeen hotel saves 20 jobs

Twenty jobs at a popular bar and hotel in Aberdeen have been saved, with permission granted by councillors to keep a replacement marquee up for at least three more years.

The Dutch Mill in Queens Road erected the original structure in 2021, as CV19 restrictions hit hospitality. But Aberdeen City Council ordered it to be removed by the end of January, saying the large white canopy looked out of place in the traditional area.

In a bid to find a compromise, Dutch Mill bosses wanted to put up a smaller grey marquee designed to fit in more. They also pledged to set it a few feet back from the street and shield it with trees.

The business issued warnings of "considerable" redundancies if the proposal was rejected to which Councillors all agreed that it was more important to support the firm, after hearing from manager Finlay Cran about the 20 jobs at risk.

Councillors were united in their support, pointing out that other Queens Road buildings have modern extensions.

## Packed Up acquisition

Aberdeen-based packaging company Packed Up has acquired the business of Protect Net UK, a leading supplier of protective packaging solutions.

The deal will bring a range of new products and services to Packed Up's portfolio.

Packed Up's Managing Director, Sean McConochie, said: "We are excited to welcome Protect Net UK to the Packed Up family.

"This acquisition will allow us to better serve our customers by offering a wider range of products and services, and it will also help us to continue our commitment to sustainability and innovation in the packaging industry."



## Relaxed Mondays

Aberdeen Art Gallery is offering a more relaxed visiting experience on Mondays for visitors who may prefer it.

Relaxed Mondays are primarily for – but not limited to – families with neurodivergent children, neurodivergent young people and adults, adults living with dementia, adults and children with mental health problems, and any visitors with sensory needs, or who may prefer a more-relaxed experience, along with their families, friends and carers.

Local charity We Too! has worked with the Gallery team to deliver 'sensory first aid' training to staff and develop resources including an access guide, visual story, sensory den and sensory kits for visitors.

Councillor Martin Greig, Aberdeen City Council's culture spokesperson, said: "Aberdeen Art Gallery is a place for everyone to visit. The support from the We Too! team will help to make the Gallery more accessible to individuals with issues of neurodivergency."

## New project to focus on urban migration

A shift to hybrid working practices following the pandemic has led to many people swapping city living for country life.

Now an international project will explore the scale, and pros and cons, of urban migration into rural, island and coastal communities across the globe.

The project, by Scotland's Rural College and the James Hutton Institute in Aberdeen, will look at how increased migration to rural and island areas offers opportunities for the future sustainability of these communities. It will also look at the challenges they face in adapting to a period of rapid change.

The project, which has been awarded nearly £20,000 by the Royal Society of Edinburgh, will bring together researchers from across the world, including Japan and Turkey, to share evidence and identify emerging policy and practice.



## Wood at the heart of Moon pipeline project

Aberdeen business Wood is at the heart of a project which may pave the way for a permanently-manned base on the Moon.

The company has teamed up with US firm Lunar Resources to design a crucial pipeline.

It would carry oxygen from an extraction site on the Moon's south pole to a proposed lunar base.

According to Wood Business Development Director Stuart Turl, the project is one everyone at the firm wants to be involved in.

He said: "Not satisfied with pipeline design on Earth, we've gone slightly further afield. There's real cutting-edge work that's happening at the moment.

"I think it would be an interesting site visit, put it that way."

Wood has managed projects to date involving a total of more than 372,800 miles of pipelines.

Mark Netzel, Senior Vice-President for Upstream and Midstream at the company, said: "To bring our pipeline expertise to the lunar surface is incredibly exciting for us, from both the potential impact it could have on lunar development and the technical challenges we must solve to implement a project this advanced."

Lunar Resources is a corporate spin-out from various Nasa-sponsored technology development programmes.

Elliot Carol, the Houston firm's Chief Executive, said it was imperative for America to develop industrial infrastructure on the Moon in advance of a permanent presence.

He added: "We are thrilled to team with Wood on the development of the LSPoP (lunar south pole oxygen pipeline)".

Lunar Resources Chief Scientist Peter Curreri said: "The extraction of oxygen on the Moon is essential for lunar operations. However, the transportation of oxygen gas is a big challenge.

"We estimate the use of robotic rovers to transport gaseous oxygen in gas tanks would use more energy to transport the oxygen than extracting it."

Matthew Laborde, a Senior Pipeline Engineering Consultant with Lunar Resources, said the environment of the Moon is "night and day, compared to Earth".

He added: "The reduced gravity and vacuum environment will force the team to rewrite the rules on designing pipelines."

Wood and Lunar Resources have been awarded funding under Nasa's Innovative Advanced Concepts programme for an initial nine-month feasibility study.



Jack Codona

## Aberdeen's new retro arcade bar opens

Arcadia Bar & Games is powered up and ready to play, bringing a retro video-gaming twist to Aberdeen's bar scene.

The venue, located on Union Street, offers two levels of retro arcade machines, giant screens, skee ball, pool and more.

Working closely with local vendors, the venue has created a decked-out bar serving bespoke cocktails curated by 10 Dollar Shake, Fierce Beer IPAs on draught and slices of Big Mannys' Pizza to accompany the video gaming experience.

Arcadia Bar & Games hopes to offer visitors something fresh and exciting through the lens of retro nostalgia, with a venue quite unlike any other within Aberdeen city.

## Council takes ownership of new Countesswells School

Aberdeen City Council has taken ownership of the new £17million Countesswells School following the completion of building work a month ahead of schedule.

The keys to the new school were handed over by contractor Morrison Construction Building North East which delivered the project for the council along with Hub North Scotland architects Halliday Fraser Munro.

It will serve the new Countesswells community on the western outskirts of Aberdeen where more than 600-homes have already been built.

Councillor Martin Greig, Aberdeen City Council's Education and Children's Services Convener, said: "I am delighted that we have now taken ownership of the new Countesswells School and can now begin the process of fitting out the state of the art building which will be able to accommodate 434 pupils and a further 60 Early Learning and Childcare places.

"The school will also promote health and wellbeing via outdoor learning facilities and a 3G all-weather pitch.

"The new school will not only benefit children and families but the wider community allowing for after school access to designated facilities."

# What employers need to know about the proposed fire and rehire statutory Code of Practice

**Lesley Rennie,**  
*Principal Employment Law Solicitor,*  
*WorkNest*



**In January, the UK government published a new draft Code of Practice on Dismissal and Re-engagement, which caused a heated debate among businesses and workers. The Code outlines a prescriptive procedure employers must follow when seeking to change employees' terms and conditions, such as significant adjustments to working hours or pay.**

While the Code has yet to be finalised, it is expected to be implemented after the ongoing consultation period ends on April 18, 2023. The Code will likely considerably impact how employers manage contractual variations and could herald a move away from the controversial fire and rehire practice.

That practice gained attention during the pandemic as more and more employers used this strategy to reduce costs in a difficult economic climate and was brought to the forefront by P&O Ferries. In response to this and the strong public sentiment against fire and rehire, the Government commissioned a report by ACAS, ultimately leading to this draft statutory Code of Practice.

The draft Code sets out a clear process for employers to follow when proposing changes to employees' terms and conditions. It intends that employers will, in good faith,

engage in meaningful consultation providing detailed information, so employees understand the proposed change and the rationale behind it. Businesses must consider all alternatives that could achieve their objective, consider any options presented by employees, and continually review and reflect upon their business reasons for the change. The Code emphasises that employers should not use threats of dismissal as a negotiating tool and that unilateral changes to contracts are to be avoided, where possible, as these are likely to harm industrial relations and give rise to legal liability.

Under the proposed Code, dismissal and re-engagement should be a last resort once all other options have been exhausted. Where this is the case, employers must provide as much notice as possible, the contractual notice period as a minimum, and consider individual employees' specific needs.

The Code further recommends that if multiple changes to terms and conditions are sought, they should be implemented (where possible) over time to lessen the immediate impact on employees. It also advises that if the reason for changing terms ceases to be relevant, original terms should be reintroduced.

While the Code will not impose legal obligations on employers and a failure to comply will therefore not

give rise to any standalone claim, any such failure may result in an uplift to compensation of up to 25% in certain Employment Tribunal claims, including unfair dismissal.

Once implemented, the Code will make it more difficult for unscrupulous employers to enforce new terms through fire and rehire ultimatums. However, the Government stopped short of banning the fire and rehire practice entirely as it recognised that, in some circumstances, employers need the flexibility to make crucial changes to save jobs. The Code attempts to balance that valid business need and the detrimental impact upon employees. Fire and rehire undoubtedly has negative consequences that can harm a Company's long-term success, including decreased employee morale, talent retention issues and legal implications. The Code should assist employers in navigating these consequences and mitigating risk.

Introducing the Code of Practice on Dismissal and Re-engagement will be a significant development that will considerably impact how UK employers handle changes to terms and conditions. Employers must be aware of the Code's recommendations and, where possible, adhere to these to minimise the risk of legal action and maintain positive employee relations.



# BBC star Edith Bowman adds celebrity stardust to business awards

**BBC television and radio star Edith Bowman has been announced as the host for the North-east's top business awards next month.**

The award-winning broadcaster will be heading to the Granite City to present the Northern Star Business Awards, organised by Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce and title sponsors Brodies LLP.

A total of 65 organisations have been shortlisted across 13 categories for what will be the biggest business celebration of 2023.

The glittering ceremony – which will take place at P&J Live on April 28 – celebrates the exceptional accomplishments of organisations across the North-east of Scotland.

Born and raised in Anstruther, Fife, Edith's broadcasting career has flourished over more than two decades and she is now one of the most well-respected and sought after personalities in the film, television and audio industry.

Spring 2023 will see Edith co-present The Great Food Festival for BBC Two, a brand new show celebrating all things food, farming and countryside, with fellow hosts Colin Murray and Sean Fletcher.

Her radio work has spanned all the major stations, presenting shows on BBC Radio 1, 2, 6 and 5Live as well as Virgin Radio. As a TV host and producer, she has fronted a versatile mix of shows for BBC, Channel 4, Sky Arts, MTV and the list goes on.

From hosting her own internationally-acclaimed podcast,

Soundtracking With Edith Bowman, to music festival coverage, the 2021 BAFTA Film Awards for BBC1 and the BAFTA Scotland Awards and Hogmanay celebrations for BBC Scotland, to presenting dozens of movie premieres, Edith has incorporated her genuine passion for, and in-depth knowledge of, music and film into her work.

Russell Borthwick, Chief Executive of Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce, said: "We are delighted to be welcoming Edith to Aberdeen to lead what will be the biggest business party of the year.

"It has been a gruelling year for many businesses, but once again companies here have risen to the challenge, turning adversity into triumph.

"Northern Star provides a unique stage to celebrate the brilliant work being done by businesses of all sizes, from all sectors and across the length and breadth of our fantastic area."

A handful of tables are still available for the Northern Star Business Awards, which is also being supported by ANM Group, Aberdeen International Airport, Balmoral, Bancon Group, University of Aberdeen, Port of Aberdeen, bp, Gray & Adams, Aberdeenshire

Council, Shell, RGU, True North, Colin Lawson Transport and Ledingham Chalmers LLP.

The awards will also raise money for four local charities, Mental Health Aberdeen, Aberdeen Science Centre, The Archie Foundation and Kayleigh's Wee Stars.



Edith Bowman





**NORTHERN  
STAR2023  
BUSINESS  
AWARDS**

Principal sponsor  
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# The companies shortlisted for the Northern Star Business Awards 2023 are:



## Business of the Year

- Maryculter House
- Nomadic
- North Star Shipping Ltd
- Port of Aberdeen
- Sport Aberdeen



## Making the Difference

- Aberdeen Sports Village
- CFINE
- Charlie House
- Denis Law Legacy Trust
- Mental Health Aberdeen (MHA)



## Customer First

- Aberdeen Performing Arts
- Gray & Adams
- Healthoutfit Ltd
- No 45, Ballater
- Petrasco



## Marketing Magic

- Korero
- Lawrence of Kemnay Competitions
- Mission10 and Kirkwood Homes
- Tricker Communications
- VisitAberdeenshire



## Driving Sustainability

- ASCO
- Burnobennie Distillery
- Carbon-Zero
- KR Group
- Tidy Green Clean



## Rising Star

- AVC Immedia - Angus Turner
- Entier Ltd - Shane Pirie
- ESS Energy - Izabela Ginter
- J+S Subsea Limited - Tom Hutchinson
- Wood - Jamie McCallum



## Family Business

- City Restoration Project
- ITC Hydraulic Services Ltd
- J G Ross (Bakers) Ltd
- Schoolhill Hydraulic Engineering Co Ltd
- TPS Fruit & Veg Ltd



## Staff Matter

- Acumen Financial Planning
- Hilton and Aloft Aberdeen
- ITI Operations Limited
- Rubberatkins
- WM Donald Ltd



## Going Global

- Collabro
- Craig International
- JBS Group
- Load Monitoring Systems Limited (LMS)
- Schoolhill Hydraulic Engineering Co Ltd



## Start-up Business of the Year

- ABERDAM
- Devenick Drinks Co. Ltd
- Raw Culture Ltd
- SpringGen Advice Ltd
- The Key Health Café Ltd



## Inspiration from Innovation

- Deep Casing Tools
- Delmar Systems Ltd
- DeltaTek Global
- Fennex
- North East Scotland College



## Student Placement

- CFINE
- Diversity Energy Solutions
- Prospect 13
- RSM
- Sport Aberdeen



## Inspiring Futures

- Aberdeen FC Community Trust
- Aberdeen Science Centre
- KR Group
- University of Aberdeen
- WM Donald Ltd



## Regional Contribution Award

To be announced on the night



## New editor for P&J

The Press and Journal has a new editor with Craig Walker replacing Frank O'Donnell as part of a major restructure.

Mr O'Donnell, who was editor of The Scotsman before being recruited in 2020 to lead the successful digital transformation of Aberdeen Journals, announced his departure to staff yesterday afternoon.

He said he was sad to be leaving but incredibly proud of everything the staff had achieved during his tenure, including recently winning the coveted title of Scottish Newspaper of the Year.

Mr Walker, Mr O'Donnell's Deputy and Editor of Aberdeen's Evening Express, will oversee the next stage of the transformation.

Mr Walker has worked for the Evening Express for almost 20 years and Ms Miskin said he "has been a key part in the evolution of our newsrooms in Aberdeen, Inverness and Elgin."



Korero team

## Put a spring in your step at lunchtime

Workers in Aberdeen city centre are being invited to put their best foot forward as a walking group returns.

Wander Wednesdays, organised by local PR agency Korero, encourage professionals to take a quick break from their desks and get some fresh air with a 30-minute walk with people who work close by. The monthly meet-up is open to professionals from all industries.

Alison Cran, Director at Korero said: "I set up the group as an opportunity to meet like-minded individuals and grow connections in an informal setting, all while enjoying some fresh air. Now that Spring is on its way it's the perfect time to get out for a lunchtime wander and meet other professionals who work within a stone's throw of each other."

"We all know how important exercise and the outdoors are for our mental health and wellbeing, and as the Aberdeen weather begins to improve, we really look forward to welcoming new faces," she added.



Ian Kirk

## Vulcan eyes expansion

An international leader in the provision of creative solutions for the oil and gas completions market has set its sights on achieving turnover of £5million and increasing staff numbers by 50% this year.

Aberdeenshire-headquartered Vulcan Completion Products has already doubled the size of its team to 20 since October and that number is on track to grow further as the company increases focus on research and development at its global headquarters in Westhill.

Ian Kirk of Vulcan Completion Products said: "What started as a three-year plan became a five-year plan due to the pandemic therefore this investment allows accelerated growth which will enable us to capitalise on more opportunities."

"We are confident that by putting down roots in key emerging markets such as the US, employing the right people in the right places, and focusing on research and development, we will be able to achieve our goals."

## Westhill development approved for Cala Homes

Cala Homes (North) has received planning approval from Aberdeenshire Council for a development of 50 new homes on the western edge of Westhill at Burnland.

The development will feature a mix of four and five-bedroom detached family homes, as well as one, two and three-bedroom affordable properties.

Ross MacIennan, Land Director at Cala Homes (North), said: "This development will bring a variety of new homes, built to Cala's exacting standards, to a superb Aberdeenshire location, popular for its excellent transport links, abundance of local amenities and green spaces."

"We look forward to bringing the new community to life and commencing work in due course."



# Sustainable growth at Ledingham Chalmers

## Supporting clients buying and selling residential property has been central to our sustainable growth over the past few years.

Not only have we seen year-on-year increases in financial performance in the private client discipline, which includes this area of expertise, recent deals we've concluded to enhance our service offering involve residential property to some extent.

In November 2019, we announced Simpson & Marwick's Aberdeen estate agency practice was transferring to Ledingham Chalmers in a deal that created one of the city's largest in terms of number and value of properties sold.

Most recently, at the end of last year, we acquired Inverness-based legal practice Anderson Shaw & Gilbert (ASG): creating a business with an annual turnover of around £14million with all personnel transferring across to our firm.

For now, the ASG estate agency practice will retain its name, while all other teams trade under the Ledingham Chalmers brand.

### Our plans

We're making progress towards our goal to double revenue to £25million by 2025. Shortly before the ASG deal was

announced, we released our financial results for 2021/22 which included our highest turnover — £12.8million — since becoming a limited liability partnership (LLP) in 2006.

Turnover for the group, including subsidiary Ledingham Chalmers Financial, was £13.6million, compared with £12.3million in 2020/21. Group profit rose to £4.1million from £4million the previous year.

The results reflected a strong performance across the board including in staple corporate and commercial practice areas. Results from the rural and private client teams (including residential property) continued to rise against the previous years too.

Looking ahead, a large part of our growth strategy will be strategic acquisitions and mergers.

This isn't about growth for growth's sake. It's about broadening our offering or complementing the work we already do with public sector organisations and individuals, as well as multinational organisations, national companies and high potential SMEs.

These businesses operate across industries that drive the national economy, including energy, oil and gas, renewables, commercial property,

construction, agriculture, leisure and tourism, as well as insurance.

Another key part of reaching that target is having the right people in the right roles in all our offices. As such, we're actively recruiting for solicitors across all positions for our teams in Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Inverness and Stirling. And we're keen to hear from anyone considering a move.

### Joining the firm

It's an exciting time to join our firm. There are great opportunities for people to take control of their careers; to exercise autonomy to progress and grow in an independent law firm where your contribution's welcome and actively encouraged. Often there's first-hand experience of working on high profile, high calibre and complex matters: looking after and protecting our clients' interests.

You'll find more details on our website at [www.leadinghamchalmers.com/careers/ambitious-growth](http://www.leadinghamchalmers.com/careers/ambitious-growth).

In conclusion, the exceptionally competitive marketplace for recruiting, winning and retaining business — and indeed growing our firm — is a challenge, but one I think we're more than up for.



**Jennifer Young**  
Managing partner



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The course provides an overview of all methods of payment when trading internationally.



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Understand how to protect your business and customers by implementing an ISO 27001 Information Management System.



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Understand responsibilities and techniques in relation to HR requirements.



**April 17** \*£330 +VAT  
**Leading Remote Teams**

This course addresses the complexities of 'leading from afar' and encourages participants to consider how to build an effective team in an evolving marketplace.



**April 21** \*£330 +VAT  
**Train the Trainer Advanced**

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# LUXE SCOT TO ENHANCE GUEST EXPERIENCE WITH LAUNCH OF NEW EVENTS BUSINESS

**Luxe Scot, the renowned luxury travel and hospitality company, has recently announced its foray into the events business, and it's a move that has industry experts and enthusiasts buzzing with excitement. With their impeccable attention to detail and dedication to creating unforgettable experiences, it's no surprise that Luxe Scot has decided to expand their portfolio and venture into this new territory.**

Luxe Scot has long been known for its exceptional services in the luxury travel industry, from bespoke tours of Scotland's breathtaking landscapes to personalised stays in the most exclusive hotels and resorts. However, with their expansion into the events business, Luxe Scot is now poised to elevate the standards of event planning and management to a whole new level.

Alan Findlater says: "Every customer is guaranteed an unparalleled level of luxury and customer service. We're thrilled to be building on this with our new, elite event planning business. Unforgettable corporate and private events can be organised, and creating a unique experience for attendees is our main focus. We look forward to delivering a truly special occasion for each guest."

One of the key strengths of Luxe Scot is their ability to curate bespoke experiences tailored to their clients' needs and preferences. Whether it's a corporate event or a private celebration, Luxe Scot's

team of experts will work closely with their clients to create a truly unique and memorable experience. From venue selection to decor and catering, every aspect of the event will be carefully crafted and executed to perfection.

David McDonald, adds: "We know first-hand how important it is that events run smoothly – our team has years of experience in event planning. That's why we take great pride in ensuring every detail is taken care of with our unrivalled attention to detail and special, personalised approach. As our client, you'll have nothing to worry about."

What sets Luxe Scot apart from other event planners is their focus on creating experiences that are deeply rooted in the local culture and heritage. With their intimate knowledge of Scotland's rich history and traditions, Luxe Scot is well-equipped to infuse events with a sense of place and authenticity that is sure to leave a lasting impression on attendees.

"We want guests' time with Luxe Scot Events to be truly memorable. We're so excited to share our amazing plans with all of you! Get ready for something special.," says Tracey Nudd.

Moreover, Luxe Scot's commitment to sustainability and ethical practices will be a major draw for clients who are increasingly conscious of their environmental impact. With a focus on locally sourced, seasonal ingredients and an emphasis on reducing

waste and carbon footprint, Luxe Scot is leading the charge in creating events that are not only luxurious but also environmentally responsible.

In addition to their exceptional attention to detail and commitment to sustainability, Luxe Scot is also deeply committed to putting their clients at the centre of everything they do. They understand that each client has unique needs and desires, and they strive to exceed their expectations at every turn. Luxe Scot's team of experts will work closely with clients from the initial consultation to the final execution, ensuring that every detail is tailored to their specific preferences.

By putting the customer at the forefront of their business, Luxe Scot is setting a new standard for excellence in the events industry. Clients can rest assured that with Luxe Scot, their event will be not only luxurious and sustainable but also uniquely personalised to their needs and desires.

In conclusion, Luxe Scot's move into the events business is a natural progression for a company that has built its reputation on delivering exceptional experiences. With their unique blend of creativity, attention to detail, and commitment to sustainability, Luxe Scot is poised to become a major player in the events industry.

LUXE.SCOT







★★★★ LUXE SCOT ★★★★★



LUXE SCOT  
*Events*

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Sarah Gray and Cassie McGunnigle

## Sport Aberdeen announces new partnership with The Archie Foundation

A dynamic new partnership has been established between two local charities Sport Aberdeen and The Archie Foundation – the official charity of Royal Aberdeen Children's Hospital (RACH).

As part of the new partnership, Sport Aberdeen will provide five free Fitness memberships for 12 months to users of the Archie Foundation, to support the physical and mental health and wellbeing of families being supported by the charity.

Sport Aberdeen will also provide free activity passes for The Archie Foundation to give to users of the Archie Family Centre and their family members. These will include gym passes as well as ice skating and swimming passes.

Sarah Gray, Head of Marketing and Commercial Development at Sport Aberdeen, said: "The Archie Foundation does an exceptional job of supporting children and families going through difficult times. We are delighted that this new partnership allows us to give something back by breaking down barriers to sport and physical activity."

Cassie McGunnigle, Fundraising Manager at The Archie Foundation, said: "We are so grateful that our children and families will benefit from Sport Aberdeen's facilities. There are a variety of factors as to why families may not access health and fitness facilities which could be cost related, not being familiar with the area if they have travelled for treatment, or simply because they are so occupied whilst in hospital that they just haven't had the chance to consider it.

"Sport Aberdeen will bridge the gap for many of the children and families we support that are either looking to exercise, or simply have fun."

## Scottish fraud skyrockets during 2022

The number of alleged fraud cases over £100,000 being heard in Scottish courts rose significantly last year, according to KPMG UK's latest bi-annual Fraud Barometer.

A total of 24 cases totalling £17.4million reached Scottish courts in 2022, skyrocketing from 2021 when 16 cases worth £5.9million came to light, a value increase of 194%.

Commercial businesses were the victim of five cases of fraud in Scotland with a combined value of £1.3m. Four of these cases were instances of embezzlement fraud worth a combined total of £604k. By both volume and value, the general public were the victim of the most cases with 11 cases in 2022 compared to 3 in 2021. The total value of fraud against the general public also increased to £10.3million, up from £1million in 2021.

13 out of the 24 cases had a value of between £100k - £250k, however one case involved a 24-year-old Ayrshire man scamming £7million from a top US Bitcoin broker.

Annette Barker, Head of KPMG Forensic in the UK, said: "The dramatic increase of fraud cases coming to light in Scotland is worrying, particularly with many cases involving rogue employees abusing their positions of trust to steal money from their employers, clients and other partners."

## NorDan UK announces record growth

NorDan UK Ltd has announced a record 34% increase in turnover for a single year for 2022. The company's sales have now increased year-on-year every year since 2016 and has grown more than 85% in the last five years.

Sustained growth across private and public customers is further evidence of changing priorities in the construction industry, with an increasing focus on the whole life carbon reduction of buildings and the longevity of product performance.

Alex Brown, NorDan UK Managing Director said: "Last year's record growth is obviously very pleasing, but 100% consistent with the wider direction of travel in construction and the built environment. People have long known that NorDan's timber products are carbon negative and offer a 60-year lifespan but have maybe in the past needed a reason to specify what were perceived premium windows or doors.

"What we now see is low carbon, durability, and high-thermal performance becoming the new mainstream, and this is taking NorDan's and other quality timber products with it.

"Architects and developers are now seeking incremental gains across buildings to meet raising industry standards, as well as the expectations of the public, and NorDan can give them the low-carbon, high-performance guarantees sought."





**Andy Imrie,**  
*Managing Director,*  
CS Group

### Area of expertise?

We are evolving rapidly but our core mission is to help businesses look after their people and premises. Hygiene and wellness are so vitally important, from cleaning your environment to using the latest technology to enhance your work setting. We also have a general business supplies arm with another two new complimentary divisions launching this year.

### What should people know?

Cleaning isn't just about turning up with a duster and mop. Using the latest monitoring technology, electrostatic cleaning and complimentary offerings such as destratification mean that a much more focused and efficient outcome can be achieved. It is often the hidden and overlooked threats that can cause unnecessary absence and reduced productivity. We can also use destratification technology to reduce both your energy costs and carbon emissions by 30-50%. Our 300+ people, however, are our most valuable asset.

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

We are living through some of the most challenging conditions in recent history. Understandably, companies are reluctant to commit to CapEx requirements, CapEx is cash here and now after-all. That reluctance to invest earlier means that significant OpEx savings that far outweigh an initial outlay over a relatively short time scale are never realised. This can have a mid-long term effect on the financial health of a business that could have been avoided.

### What's your top tip?

Be brave. Have faith in the ROI profile. If a technology or service is going to contribute positively to the longer term health of your business, be decisive. Find a way. Don't look back and ask "What if?".



**Jackie Owen,**  
*Business Manager,*  
Sandaig Engineering

### Area of expertise?

Quality management services in the energy sector.

### What should people know?

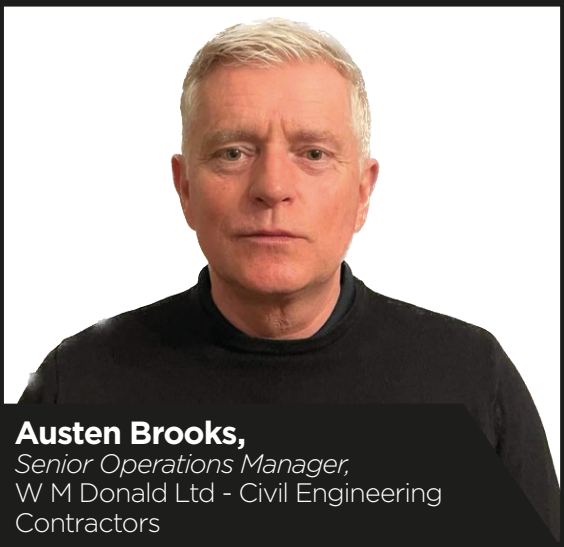
Sandaig Engineering offers tailored QA/QC consultancy solutions to the energy industry. We deliver strategic and operational quality consultancy within supply chain, engineering, and project management. Our consultants listen carefully to our customers, making sure we understand in detail what they need. Then we can offer a tailored solution that is suitable for their business.

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

Companies that fail to understand what their market is and who their customers are will waste resources. Having a clear strategy to understand your market and customer base will allow companies to effectively use their resources to optimise customer engagement and add value within the organisation. There are many business development organisations promoting industry conferences and the like. However, it is crucial to be selective about where to spend resources, time and ensure follow up.

### What's your top tip?

Quality management can appear complex at times however the PDCA - Plan-Do-Check-Act - approach can be scaled for both simple and complex businesses. It is a four-stage approach for continually improving and problem-solving processes products or services. It involves systematically testing possible solutions, assessing the results, and implementing the ones that have been shown to work.



**Austen Brooks,**  
*Senior Operations Manager,  
W M Donald Ltd - Civil Engineering  
Contractors*

### Area of expertise?

W M Donald Ltd is a multidisciplinary civil engineering construction company based in Aberdeen with operational centres in Perth and Inverness. As Senior Operations Manager I have an extensive knowledge of the construction process and my role is to oversee all aspects of the companies site based operational activity through my teams of Contracts Managers and Site Supervisors in each area.

### What should people know?

The civil engineering industry is dynamic and ever-changing, it is essential for professionals to stay up to date with the latest technologies and advancements. For those aspiring to pursue a career in civil engineering construction I suggest the best grounding is to gain practical experience by working on real-life projects to develop strong communication skills and the ability to work effectively as part of a team.

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

One of the biggest mistakes a company can make is to not have a clear understanding of the project's scope and timeline which leads to missed deadlines, cost overruns, and a decline in quality. Those businesses that constantly cut corners on quality to save money will suffer long-term consequences and damage their company's reputation.

### What's your top tip?

My top tips for business success are:

1. Hire the right people: It is essential to have a team of highly skilled and experienced professionals who are passionate about their work.
2. Plan ahead: Proper planning and preparation are key to ensuring the success of a project.
3. Be flexible: Be open to change and be willing to adapt to new technologies and methods.
4. Stay organised: Effective organisation is critical to ensuring that projects are completed on time and within budget.
5. Maintain a positive reputation: Building a positive reputation is crucial in the civil engineering industry. Make sure to deliver high-quality work that exceeds customer expectations.



**Yolanda Smith,**  
*Quality Manager,  
Apex Tubulars*

### Area of expertise?

Quality Management. As an IRCA certified auditor and having recently passed the ISO 9001:2015 Lead Auditor exam and the 45001:2018 Lead Implementer Exam, it is my aim to ensure that Apex Tubulars has the best Quality Management System in place to enhance the business as a whole and its ability to exceed customer expectations every time. At Apex, we strive to offer an excellent service for the supply of downhole casing, tubing and accessories to the local and global energy markets, whilst ensuring that we exceed customer expectations as well as ensuring that health and safety and the national environment continues to be of paramount importance.

### What should people know?

Quality management is the act of overseeing different activities and tasks within an organisation to ensure that products and services offered, as well as the means used to provide them, are consistent. It helps to achieve and maintain a desired level of quality within the organisation. These factors help differentiate a business from its competitors and this is something that Apex has always focused on. Better products and services equal happier customers and the chance of repeat business.

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

Quality is crucial for the satisfaction of customers. It would be a mistake for any company to underestimate the importance of an effective Quality Management System and its ability to provide a sound basis for sustainable development. Customer focus should always be the top priority, together with ensuring that there is effective leadership and engagement of people within the organisation.

### What's your top tip?

Be ambitious and never stop learning. There are vast amounts of courses and training programmes available which will help keep your skills and knowledge up to date and strengthen your professional credibility.





Calum Crighton, Lesley McKnight and Richard Shepherd

## Gilson Gray boosts Aberdeen offering

Gilson Gray, the full-service legal firm, has acquired The Law Practice in a move which will see the business expand its offering in Aberdeen.

Owner of The Law Practice, Lesley McKnight, and her team will join Gilson Gray at its Blenheim Place offices, bringing further private client, property and estate agency expertise. The acquisition will see a new estate agency department added to the firm's offering in the city and surrounding areas, complementing its market-leading property services arm.

The Law Practice was established in 2005 and Lesley McKnight took over as principal solicitor in 2018. Lesley specialises in private client services and previously held roles with Ledingham Chalmers and Brodies.

Glen Gilson, Chair and Managing Partner of Gilson Gray, said: "The Law Practice is well known in Aberdeen and is a fitting addition to our operation. While many firms have chosen to reduce their footprint in the city, we are committed to servicing the business community and wider client base, with plans for further expansion to come.

"Since launching in 2014 Gilson Gray has built up a reputation for disruption in the legal market and has grown at record rates. We are one of the few independent Scottish firms of scale left in the market, bucking trends with continuous growth and acquisitions.

"We are looking for the very best in local talent to join us in Aberdeen to further supplement the excellent team we have built and would encourage any interested lawyer or indeed potential client to get in touch."

Lesley McKnight added: "It is great to be joining a forward-thinking modern team like Gilson Gray with a culture that supports both the next generation of clients and legal professionals. With access to a wider range of services and experts, we are growing our own professional family to continue looking after our clients and their families. I'm looking forward to this new chapter."

## Jesus Christ Superstar announced for His Majesty's Theatre

A brand new stage production of iconic global phenomenon Jesus Christ Superstar is coming to Aberdeen, stopping off at His Majesty's Theatre from October 10 to October 14.

Jesus Christ Superstar is set against the backdrop of an extraordinary series of events during the final weeks in the life of Jesus Christ, as seen through the eyes of Judas. Reflecting the rock roots that defined a generation, the legendary score includes 'I Don't Know How to Love Him', 'Gethsemane' and 'Superstar'.

## Well-Safe Solutions to support decommissioning of bp Kate wells

International well decommissioning specialists Well-Safe Solutions is supporting the decommissioning of two suspended wells in bp's Kate field in the North Sea, 220km from Aberdeen.

The programme of work, expected to be executed from the Noble Innovator jack up vessel during Q2 2023, will see Well-Safe Solutions carry out well engineering support services using its bespoke Well Decommissioning Delivery Process (WDDP).

Ruth Thomas, Subsurface Team Lead at Well-Safe Solutions, said: "We are very much looking forward to supporting bp with this work scope, which involves detailed subsurface and well engineering basis of design studies ideally suited to our specialist capabilities.

"Well-Safe Solutions will be instrumental in establishing and evaluating key subsurface isolation criteria including identifying and quantifying zones of flow potential and risks associated with redevelopment.

"In addition, we will also examine existing barriers and optimise the barrier strategy, taking into account the attributes of the region to safely and efficiently deliver this project."

Well-Safe Solutions personnel will work alongside bp staff throughout, realising the decommissioning company's promise to provide safe, smart, and efficient well decommissioning through collaboration.

James Richards, Well Abandonment Director at Well-Safe Solutions, added: "The Well Decommissioning Delivery Process (WDDP) guides operators through the well plug and abandonment process efficiently and effectively, without the extended commitments and high costs historically associated with engineering resources over long periods.

"The WDDP is built to realise the benefits of capturing, retaining and sharing of knowledge between our personnel, clients and stakeholders."

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**MORNING**  
BULLETIN

## Budget axe falls on Aberdeen commercial landlords



**Aberdeen commercial property and land owners face some of the highest tax bills in Scotland after councillors approved a £9million levy on vacant buildings.**

Plans to impose a 10% council tax rise were scaled back to 5% as the ruling SNP-Liberal Democrat administration on Aberdeen City Council prioritised cost-of living support in its 2023/24 budget.

There will be over £200million of investment in new schools – but pools and gyms have been left facing closure by a substantial cut to funding for Sport Aberdeen.

And there are fears that listed buildings could be left to decay or even be abandoned after the

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# Getting the Northwood Guarantee

If you are looking for a new home or property investment opportunity in 2023, then look no further than Northwood.

As specialists in residential property leasing and sales in Aberdeen City and Shire, our family-run business believes in taking a personal and proactive approach.

This ethos has stood us in good stead, particularly during what has been a challenging time for the industry, and we are now proud to be one of the North-east's leading estate and lettings agencies.

With the recent welcome news that the region's commercial and residential property markets are beginning to rally - Aberdeen is once again bucking the trend as property prices across the UK forecast look set to tumble - our team at Northwood Aberdeen is looking forward to a busy year with demand for rental properties outstripping supply and sales enquiries hitting record highs.

What makes Northwood stand out from the rest is our 'Guaranteed Tenant' with 'Guaranteed Rent' initiative, an established property management plan which reduces the risk and pressure on both landlords and tenants. With a trusted tenant such as Northwood, you will have a fixed rental income every month that is completely unaffected by market conditions, a fixed rental income even when the property is vacant, a fixed rental income with no rent arrears to worry about, and a fixed rental income start date. There are also no set up fees and no monthly commission charges.

Our six Northwood offices in Scotland have been providing this service for more than 25 years with thousands of landlords across Scotland.

As well as providing risk-free rental management, we can help you find opportunities and grow your investment portfolio through our dedicated investors' service, which provides information about investment properties available to purchase with or without tenants in-situ.

Since my husband Steven and I founded the first North-east branch of Northwood in 2009, we have grown from having one shop in Rosemount Place Aberdeen, to having a 12-strong award-winning team and a second shop on West High Street Inverurie.

The past few years have been difficult at times, but we have overcome any problems by being innovative, adapting to

new technologies and responding to market conditions quickly and proactively.

This year, we will continue to grow our sales offering via our estate agency department by capitalising on increased market share in both Aberdeen city and the Shire through our strong office and online presence, commitment to going over-and-above for our clients, and our personal approach to selling properties for our clients.

To find out more about Northwood Aberdeen and the services we offer, visit our website at [www.northwooduk.com/aberdeen-estate-agents](http://www.northwooduk.com/aberdeen-estate-agents). For a free no obligation valuation, contact us today on **(01224) 218450**.



**Laura Mearns,**  
Owner, Northwood Aberdeen

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Professor Paul Mealor

## Coronation honour for university composer

University of Aberdeen composer, Professor Paul Mealor, has been selected to write music for the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III.

Mealor has been commissioned to write an entirely new piece of music for the ceremony on May 6 at Westminster Abbey.

He described it as 'the honour of a lifetime' and said he was delighted that His Majesty has supported the creation of new music for the Coronation.

Mealor is one of only a handful of living composers who has been given the honour of creating pieces for the historic event at Westminster Abbey.

He said: "It is the most amazing honour to be asked to produce a piece of music for such an important historic occasion.

"We have a King who has shown great support for a wide variety of music over many years and is a passionate advocate for music.

"It is a privilege to be a part of an occasion of this scale. Many of us will not experience another Coronation in our lifetimes."

Writing an entirely new work for such a significant world stage is not without its challenges and Professor Mealor said he had to block out thoughts of the momentous occasion while composing.

"Once the adrenaline of being selected for this honour wears off, it is rather daunting to begin putting pencil to manuscript and trusting that what you write will be worthy of such a stage," he added.

"I am grateful to have been given this wonderful opportunity following on from a number of previous occasions where I have written for both His Majesty and Her Majesty The Queen Consort.

"A decade ago, I was busy preparing music for Her Majesty The Queen Consort's installation as the University's Chancellor. During her tenure, Her Majesty has been an active supporter of our University music and opportunities to showcase it do not get any bigger than the Coronation."

## Azets rapid growth leads to job opportunities

Top 10 accountancy firm Azets is to recruit up to 80 apprentices, graduates and school leavers in Scotland during 2023. Across the UK the firm is looking to recruit up to 551, taking the overall number employed at the firm to 1600.

In 2017, Azets employed just 30 apprentices, the increase reflecting the firm's rapid growth and significant investment in talent development during the past six years.

Azets also recently announced plans to add 900 additional staff across its UK business this year. The roles cover all levels, from Associate through to Partner, and service lines including audit and assurance, accounting and advisory business services, corporate finance, tax, and restructuring.

Peter Gallanagh, Regional CEO for Scotland and the North said: "Our commitment to early careers and creating accessible apprenticeship opportunities is stronger than ever. We have continued to increase apprenticeship opportunities year-on-year, as we continue to invest in people and talent development.

"I am pleased to report that we are seeing significant interest, with a record number of applications for September 2023. The applications are not only being driven by young people but from a diverse range of ages and people looking for a career change. Azets is growing rapidly in Scotland and investing in people and talent development is a key strategy for the business, as we continue with our ambitious growth plans and deliver a service of outstanding professional quality, that is both personal and local."

## ZynQ 360 partner with global energy giant

ZynQ 360, headquartered in Aberdeen, announced that they have signed a new five-year MSA (Master Services Agreement) with one of the largest publicly traded energy providers in the world.

The new MSA builds upon the previous five years of successful partnership and will continue the further implementation of the world leading ZynQ visualisation and digital twin software and services.

Brian Dillon, CEO, commented: "This is a major achievement for ZynQ, who have also recently moved into brand new offices in Houston. We look forward to announcing more contract successes in the coming weeks with a combined value of over \$2million".

"This is an exciting growth phase for the company that will lead to further job creation and recruitment across the business globally."



## Caledonian Sleeper into public ownership

The Caledonian Sleeper rail service will follow ScotRail into public ownership later this year, the Scottish Government has announced.

The move comes after ministers decided last year to terminate Serco's contract to run the service seven years early.

It will stop operating the cross-border rail operation in June, at which point it will be nationalised.

The service, which has been operating in various forms since 1873, runs overnight trains between Scotland and London.

There is a Lowlander route between London and Glasgow and Edinburgh, and a Highlander route to Aberdeen, Inverness and Fort William.

In a statement to MSPs, Transport Minister Jenny Gilruth said an arm's length company of the government would take over the franchise on June 25. She said the step would "provide stability and certainty" for passengers and staff.

The decision to end Serco's contract came after the company tried to renegotiate the deal through a "rebase clause", to put the loss-making service on "a more sustainable financial footing".

## Walker's looking to create a vegan version of its shortbread

Walker's Shortbread is exploring how to create a vegan version of its best-selling product in an effort to further broaden its appeal.

Managing Director Nicky Walker, who is a fourth-generation member of the business' founding family, said vegan shortbread would help the Speyside-headquartered company "move with the times".

Developing a vegan alternative would involve finding a non-dairy alternative to butter for the 125 year-old Scottish biscuit maker and royal warrant holder.

"Vegan is very much something we're looking at right now," said Nicky Walker.

"We'd like our product to be globally accepted, whether that means kosher, organic, gluten-free... we want to have our product enjoyed by as many different factions as possible."

Founded in 1898 by Joseph Walker, Walker's shortbread is one of Scotland's best-known brands. The business makes a range of biscuits, cakes and oatcakes but is most associated with its all-butter shortbread.

# Is your marketing built on strong foundations?

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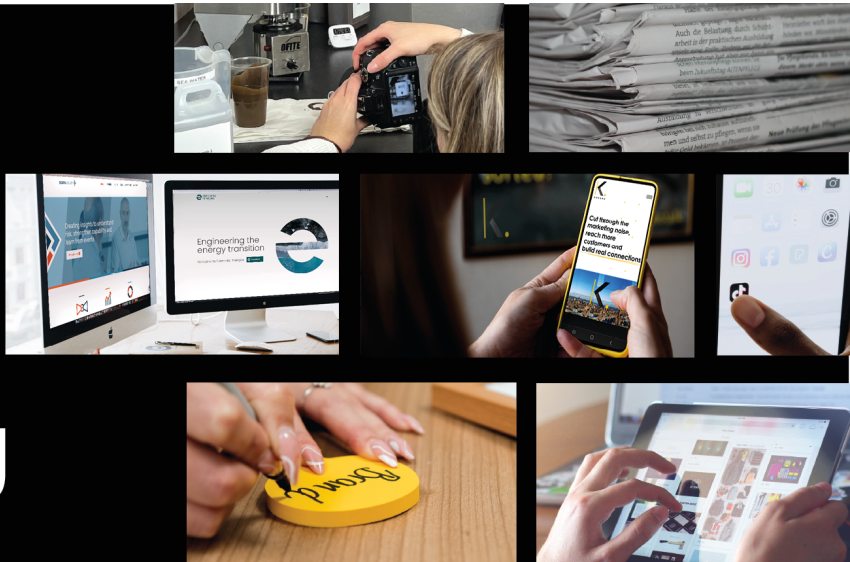
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# Infrastructure first, but who pays for it?

**Elaine Farquharson-Black,**  
*Partner,*  
Brodies LLP



**“...linking infrastructure with planned development is the most significant challenge for the Scottish planning system at this time...” concluded the independent panel appointed by the Scottish Government in 2016 to review the planning process. Returning to an “infrastructure first” approach was one of the panel’s recommendations and that is now enshrined in Policy 18 of the National Planning Framework 4 which came into force on 13 February 2023 and will guide the determination of planning applications.**

By putting infrastructure at the heart of place-making, the intention is that the services and facilities that are necessary to create liveable and sustainable places will be identified early in the development planning process, along with a delivery programme outlining where, how, when and by whom the infrastructure will be delivered.

But what is “infrastructure”?

The Scottish Government’s definition of infrastructure is more widely drawn than anywhere else in the UK. Infrastructure is: “The physical and technical facilities, natural and other fundamental systems necessary for the economy to function and to enable, sustain or enhance societal

living conditions. These include the networks, connections and storage relating to the enabling infrastructure of transport, energy, water, telecoms, digital and internet, to permit the ready movement of people, goods and services. They include the built environment of housing; public infrastructure such as education, health, justice and cultural facilities; safety enhancement such as waste management or flood prevention; natural assets and networks that supply ecosystem services and public services such as emergency services and resilience.” Quite the list.

It is for local councils to determine the capacity, condition, needs and deliverability of the infrastructure in their area and make sure that existing infrastructure assets are used sustainably, prioritising low-carbon solutions.

This of course comes at a time when councils face increasing costs and demands. In its recent budget, Aberdeen City Council chose to prioritise education, the environment, roads and transport over spending on libraries, swimming pools and gyms. A major public consultation on spending priorities is promised ahead of next year’s annual budget setting. Although housing is included within the definition of infrastructure, and it is acknowledged that there is a housing crisis, allocating enough land for the construction of new housing continues to be a controversial

topic, yet it lies at the heart of infrastructure delivery.

With council spending cuts, communities need to recognise that it is new housing and other developments which will continue to fund the provision of new schools, community facilities, health centres, public transport, parks and open spaces and many other items of infrastructure in their area.

As part of her manifesto for election as First Minister, Kate Forbes MSP, has stated that “housing must be viewed as a necessary infrastructure in building a better Scotland”.

With the ink not yet dry on their most recent local development plans, Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils must embark on a review of their housing requirement for the next 10 years, with Scottish Government requiring them to be “ambitious” and to exceed the minimum all tenure housing land requirement set out in NPF4.

It is perhaps time for existing residents to think of that infrastructure first and support proposals for new housing in their locality.



# How billions of pounds have transformed the North-east

**A bright future lies ahead for the North-east economy as fresh opportunities in a variety of new and growing industries present themselves.**

Though oil and gas is still a key jobs-and-wealth driver for the Aberdeen area – and will be for many years to come – other sectors are going to play an increasingly bigger role.

Renewable energy, life sciences and tourism are among the industries which will be important economic drivers in the North-east in future decades – creating thousands of new roles.

Huge investments are already being made locally in these expanding sectors, and much more will follow.

Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce keeps a close watch on the spending plans of businesses and the public sector – and you will be able to find out all the latest news in the 2023 edition of our Aberdeen City Region Investment Tracker which is out next month.

Chamber Chief Executive Russell Borthwick said: “Billions of pounds of investment will deliver the infrastructure, regeneration and cultural activity to create a truly 21st Century environment in our city region; right here, right now.

“Outsiders might know of this region being Europe’s oil capital – and with that knowledge make assumptions of this place being industrial and in decline.

“Nothing could be further from the truth, but perception is reality, so the 2023 report is part of our shared narrative to demonstrate that – as well as already being great place to live, work, study, visit, invest and do business – ours is a region with big ambitions for the future.”

In advance of publication of the new Investment Tracker, let’s take a look at three of the most significant current projects locally – the Energy Transition Zone (ETZ), the BioHub and Aberdeen’s South Harbour. The ETZ is expected to create 2,500 direct jobs and a further 10,000 energy-transition-related jobs across the region.

The venture – which has £60million of funding approved – will be a centre of excellence for floating offshore wind and other renewables, including hydrogen. It will be a focal point and catalyst for high-value manufacturing, research, development, testing and deployment.

The Energy Transition Zone, adjacent to Aberdeen’s South Harbour, is to be completed in the next few years.

ETZ Ltd, a private-sector led company, was set up in April 2021. Funded by the UK and Scottish governments and Opportunity North East, it is chaired by Sir Ian Wood and led by Chief Executive Maggie McGinlay.

Just over a year ago, the then First Minister Nicola Sturgeon formally launched ETZ Ltd.

At that event, ETZ Ltd and the Offshore Renewable Energy Catapult also announced that they would co-invest and collaborate in a world-leading national floating wind innovation centre in Aberdeen.





It will be dedicated to accelerating the commercialisation of floating offshore wind throughout the UK and supporting the incubation of new products, services and businesses in the sector.

The £9million centre will be located in the ETZ's offshore floating wind park in Altens.

The North-east has the opportunity to gain first mover advantage and be a global leader in offshore floating wind given the significant synergies with subsea technologies and expertise – 75% of the world's subsea engineering capability being based in the region.

Ms Sturgeon said: "The Energy Transition Zone, backed by £26million of Scottish Government funding, will contribute to the North-east being ideally placed to make the most of the anticipated increase in demand for offshore wind as we transition to net zero.

"The new national floating wind innovation centre is a world first, and it marks a major step in our collective efforts to capitalise on the huge opportunity that floating offshore wind presents."

Sir Ian added: "The North-east is one of the most attractive locations for investment in low carbon and net zero technologies.

"The Energy Transition Zone will be at the very heart of our efforts to reposition this region as the net zero energy capital of Europe.



## Billions of pounds of investment will deliver the infrastructure, regeneration and cultural activity to create a truly 21st Century environment in our city region; right here, right now.

"The significant backing for ETZ by both the Scottish and UK governments is hugely welcome and will help ensure the North-east's energy transition ambition becomes a reality."

He pointed out that many of the successful bids in the recent ScotWind leasing round were within 100 nautical miles of Aberdeen.

Sir Ian went on: "This region is ideally placed to become a

globally-recognised hub supporting the high-value manufacturing, operations and maintenance and innovation required to deliver these developments at pace."

Aberdeen is also home to a project to make the region a centre for life-sciences research, commercialisation and growth.

BioHub is a £40million investment at the city's Foresterhill Health Campus.

The building opening this spring will provide a combination of specialist space and support for the sector. It will house up to 400 scientific entrepreneurs and 40 tenant businesses at total capacity.

BioHub aims to double the size of the North-east's high-value life-sciences sector.

The life-sciences sector is a thriving part of Scotland's economy, with a turnover of £6.6billion, employing 40,000 people across over 750 organisations and on target to achieve £8billion turnover by 2025.

Opportunity North East (ONE) is the lead partner and a co-funder of BioHub.

Chair of ONE Life Sciences Dr Deborah O'Neil, said: "Aberdeen has world-class research and innovation strengths in life sciences – across our companies, universities and NHS – and a track record of producing exciting new businesses.

"The ongoing investment in BioHub will help accelerate



South Harbour



commercialisation and business growth to bring new therapies, treatments, and technology to market.”

Meanwhile, work on the £400million-plus expansion of Aberdeen’s South Harbour is due to be completed this quarter.

The port will be having a busy time in the months ahead. More than 25 cruise calls are currently scheduled from April and September, with up to 12,000 tourists on board.

This could boost the regional economy by more than £1.5million.

The first cruise call to the South Harbour on May 2 is the AIDAaura, which can carry more than 1,200 guests.

Port Chief Executive Bob Sanguinetti said: “We’re delighted to welcome a host of new cruise vessels to Port of Aberdeen in the maiden year of South Harbour.

“We expect to see year-on-year increases in the number of cruise calls as we ramp up our capacity and capability. It’s encouraging to see that major international cruise lines are already booking their larger cruise ships for calls to Aberdeen in 2024 and beyond.”

The new deepwater harbour significantly increases the port’s capacity for cruise calls and will be able to accommodate the majority of the world’s cruise-ship fleet.

Mr Sanguinetti added: “Port of Aberdeen is a gateway to the

“

**We expect to see year-on-year increases in the number of cruise calls as we ramp up our capacity and capability. It’s encouraging to see that major international cruise lines are already booking their larger cruise ships for calls to Aberdeen in 2024 and beyond.**

amazing attractions of the North-east.

“Our investment in South Harbour will enable tens of thousands more guests to experience this incredible region every year.”

Chris Foy, CEO of VisitAberdeenshire, added: “The opening of the South Harbour to cruise vessels in 2023 will be a timely boost to the tourism and hospitality sector in the North-east.

“Disembarking passengers - who will be met by our Welcome to Aberdeenshire volunteers - will have a wealth of experiences to enjoy during their time on our shores, planting the seed for future travel back to Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire for a longer stay.” Adrian Watson, CEO of Aberdeen Inspired, commented that the cruise market offers some real potential to city and regional businesses.

Looking further ahead, the Port of Aberdeen is looking forward to a visit from the Tall Ships Race. The vessels will dock in the Granite City from July 19-22, 2025.

As well as cruise ships, Aberdeen is now an attractive location for larger vessels from a wide range of industries including oil and gas, renewables, decommissioning, cargo and cruise.

A jack-up rig sporting legs more than 600ft in height became the largest ever vessel to visit the port in February. The Noble Innovator had arrived at the South Harbour for 60-90 days of maintenance.

Roddy James, Chief Commercial Officer at the port, said: “It’s exciting to welcome new types and sizes of vessels to the port, be that from oil and gas, renewables, cargo, or cruise.

“South Harbour’s tidally-unrestricted deepwater berths, extensive laydown space and heavy-lift capacity make Aberdeen an attractive option for larger vessels.”

BioHub





## Graham + Sibbald appointed agents for new business park

Angus based property developer, DJ Laing has appointed Graham + Sibbald as agent on their new commercial property development, Victoria Green.

The 14 acre site looks to generate an estimated £20million worth of investment in the local economy and provide an opportunity for new and existing businesses to locate in the popular coastal town.

Graham + Sibbald will be the sole agent for the development and will be actively looking to attract local and national tenants to the modern industrial units suitable for Class 4 Business, Class 5 General Industrial and Class 6 Storage and Distribution use.

The business park is adjacent to the A92 road network in an ideal location to Dundee.

## Aberdeen Considine helps North-east firm expand

Pharmacy business Porter Pharmacy has announced two purchases as part of its ongoing growth plans.

The business, owned and run by husband-and-wife team Andy and Lynne Porter, have added two pharmacies to their existing group, with the company now operating seven pharmacies in Aberdeen City and Shire.

Ritchie Whyte, Partner and Head of Corporate at Aberdeen Considine, and Associate Danny Anderson provided legal support for the financing and acquisition.

Partner Gemma Perfect and Partner Nicola Gray provided legal support on real estate and employment law matters respectively.

Since buying the two pharmacies in Westhill, Porter Pharmacy has recruited five new staff, taking the total number of employees at Porter Pharmacy to 73.

## Equinor acquires Suncor Energy UK

Norwegian energy giant Equinor has signed a deal potentially worth over £700million to acquire the UK North Sea business of Canadian firm Suncor.

The deal gives Equinor another 40% stake in its key Rosebank project in the West of Shetland – one of the largest untapped fields in the UK – taking its total ownership up to 80%.

It also gives Equinor a 30% stake in the Buzzard oilfield, one of the largest producing fields in the UK at the moment.

Equinor is paying £710million (\$850million) to Suncor, but £209m (\$250million) is contingent on a final investment decision on Rosebank, expected this year.

Philippe Mathieu, Executive Vice President for Exploration and Production International at Equinor, said: “This transaction is in line with our strategy of optimising our oil and gas portfolio and deepening in our core countries.

“We are building on our longstanding position as a broad energy partner to the UK, strengthening our position as a reliable energy provider in Europe, while continuing to deliver on our ambition of becoming a net zero company.

The transaction will add approximately 15,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day in equity share in 2023 and “create synergies” with Equinor’s existing operations.

The transaction is subject to relevant regulatory approvals.

According to a socioeconomic study by Wood Mackenzie and Voar Energy, Rosebank is estimated to create £8.1billion of direct investment, of which £6.3billion is likely to be invested in UK-based businesses.

The report also estimates that a further £16billion could be generated through indirect and induced economic impacts over the field life resulting in a total gross value add (GVA) of £24.1billion.

Rosebank, which is factored into the UK Government’s carbon budget, will have a significant impact on the UK production outlook. In 2021, the UK only produced 57% of the volumes required to meet oil demand and 41% of national gas demand.

From first production in 2026 through to 2030 Rosebank could account for 8% of the UK’s oil production.

Rosebank will also have a major impact on local supply chains, industry and jobs according to the report.

At its peak and during the development phase, Rosebank is expected to create 1600 jobs, of which 1200 are expected to be UK-based. Across the lifetime of the field, Rosebank will continue to support significant employment with an average of 450 full time employees.

Equinor is also looking to further support the UK economy by investing billions in crucial energy infrastructure, including offshore wind, carbon capture and storage (CCS), hydrogen, power, and oil and gas.



“

**Social exclusion deprives people of choices and opportunities to escape from poverty and denies them a voice to claim their rights.**

”

[www.weareac.org](http://www.weareac.org)

- Reducing Poverty by Tackling Social Exclusion DFID Policy Paper

## WHY IT MATTERS IN THE NORTH-EAST

Aberdeen, a tale of two cities – great wealth through a lucrative energy sector, rich with adventure and history, and sumptuous food and drink offerings. However, there is the other, more invisible city – where an ever-increasing number of vulnerable people face living in deprivation and despair.

## Why people are seeking our support

### 1. In-Work Poverty

People in full time employment are no longer able to cover essential costs. 1 in 5 people in Scotland have no savings at all. The average household can survive only 18 days on their savings\*.

### 2. Mental and Emotional Wellbeing

Declining mental health resilience caused by the stress of hardship and lockdown is having a profound effect, increasing the complexity and challenge of the issues faced.

### 3. Financial and Digital Support

People who are unable to meet essential costs can face debt, deprivation, or both. Support is now mainly accessed online or by phone, widening the digital divide.

# FIGHTING SOCIAL EXCLUSION



## HOMELESSNESS

Advice, tenancy support, and advocacy to challenge unfair practices



## VIOLENCE & ABUSE

Emergency housing access to escape and recovery from current and historical abuse



## CRISIS AND POVERTY

Food and essentials, clothing, heating credits, kitchenware, hygiene items



## ADDICTION & MENTAL ILLNESS

Respite care and support for recovery and independence



## ISOLATION AND DISPLACEMENT

Supporting independence and meeting social need



## DISCRIMINATION

Advice and support on discrimination, abuse, exclusion and homelessness



## JUSTICE SYSTEM

Supporting people to rebuild a place in their community



## DIGITAL EXCLUSION

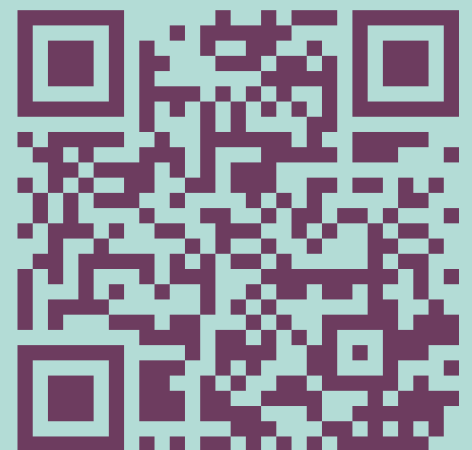
Support with skills, equipment and data to access vital services

## PUTTING THE 'S' IN ESG

An opportunity to collaborate with us in making a commitment to sustainable social change.

## INTERESTED IN MAKING IMPACT?

Contact us - [hello@weareac.org](mailto:hello@weareac.org)





# What is in Rishi Sunak's new Brexit deal on Northern Ireland?

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

**Rishi Sunak has secured a new deal on the Northern Ireland Protocol, dubbed the Windsor Framework, which he hopes can bring to an end the row over post-Brexit arrangements in the region.**

The deal is lengthy, complicated and is currently being poured over by the Democratic Unionist Party, Tory backbenchers and businesses across the UK.

Here we answer your questions and look at what is in the deal and why it is so significant.

## **Why don't businesses like the current protocol arrangements?**

Businesses in Northern Ireland (NI) and Great Britain (GB) had a range of issues on the movement of goods between GB and NI under the Protocol arrangements.

These included customs, checks and documentation for food and plant products, supply chains, VAT, state aid, and flexibility in implementing the agreement.

Easements – some bilateral and some unilateral (by the UK) – had been in place since the Protocol started, but business wanted a permanent agreement which

provided stability and certainty. Businesses in GB and NI also wanted to see a reduction in paperwork and checks for goods only being sold or consumed in NI, and the same products being able to be marketed in GB and NI. For NI businesses, the Protocol provides friction-free access to the EU Single Market for traded goods, avoiding the need for border control arrangements between NI and the Republic of Ireland (ROI). The NI business community wanted to see that protected in any deal over the operation of the Protocol.

## **How does the new Windsor Framework make the situation better?**

For business that join the Trusted Traders' Scheme, simplified records, for customs purposes, will be permitted on goods moving from GB to NI – where that is the destination of the goods (the green lane). GB as well as NI based companies will be able to join the scheme. Similarly, members trading in plant products or products of animal origin will be able to use a single simplified certificate for mixed consignment movements between GB and NI under another trusted trader scheme. Physical checks of such goods will not ordinarily be required at NI ports where NI is the destination for

consumption or usage of those products. Identity checks will be reduced to very low frequency as labelling conditions for “not for EU” retail goods are introduced in NI. There will also be simplified customs procedures through an authorised operators' scheme. This can be used by businesses sending non plant or animal origin products by postal packages or packets from GB to NI, via for example online platforms, Royal Mail, or fast parcel operator delivered goods, for customers or businesses in NI. Goods moving from GB to NI which will move onwards into the EU or are deemed to be at risk of entering the EU will follow full customs procedures (the red lane) at the port of entry in NI and border control posts will be created at NI ports for these purposes.

## **Does this affect trade between NI and Ireland or just with the mainland?**

No – the effects of the Protocol with NI goods having tariff-free, friction-free access to the EU Single Market – will continue under these arrangements. No customs declarations, SPS Windsor Framework paperwork or import VAT accounting occur in relation to NI goods being sold within the EU Single Market. EU rules in relation to those products – agri-food,



electrical, mechanical, and industrial goods – continue to apply.

### What are the drawbacks of the new proposals?

The Trusted Trader Schemes on customs and plant/agri-food products will provide benefits through lower red tape for companies in NI and GB, but they will need to join them. There is also an element of political uncertainty in that the NI Assembly (if back in full operation) will vote in 2024 on whether to retain the Protocol for the next four or five years (depending upon the cross-community nature of the vote or otherwise).

### How easy will it be to register with the Trusted Trader Schemes?

Full details of how to register have not yet been released. But the agreement indicates that to qualify as a trusted trader, firms must register with the relevant UK authority, fulfilling all relevant conditions, while also providing a detailed list of the products they usually transport. In addition, applicants will have to prove that they are of good financial standing, that they have a clear understanding of their obligations under the scheme and that they are able to correctly identify the goods they move to Northern Ireland, in particular, as regards goods that need to be declared with a higher level of detail.

### Does this create any issues for future divergence between UK and NI, or NI and EU regulations and how does that affect businesses?

The Protocol and other legislation are being amended under a process which expires in 2024 so no further substantial changes via this route

are likely. The Stormont Brake creates some uncertainty that regulations may differ between NI and the EU and NI access to the Single Market being altered could be one of the consequences of such action. It will not alter the flow of trade between NI and GB. The Brake is to be used as a last resort option when discussion through the dispute resolution processes in the Protocol has not resolved a complaint over proposals for new or amended EU legislation, and where the regulation could cause long-lasting social or economic issues in NI.

### Do you think further changes will be required to the protocol in the future?

Further operational level changes could be made, particularly in areas like VAT and excise where enhanced co-operation will apply, but in terms of amending the Treaty text itself, the power being used to make these amendments through the Windsor Framework falls away at the end of 2024.

Why are the DUP and European Research Group of Conservatives unlikely to welcome this deal in full? The Windsor Framework continues to apply EU law to the movement of goods from NI to the EU, but also in relation to NI to GB movements of those goods regulated under the EU Single Market, such as food or chemicals products. A subset of EU law (quoted as 3% by the UK Government) will continue to apply under the Windsor Framework to NI. The Framework amendments overlay new rules on the existing

ones (including on GB to NI goods movements), altering how they operate but without repealing them. The role of the European Court of Justice as the ultimate arbiter on issues of EU rules is also not removed. The ERG and DUP may not like these facets of the deal despite other areas, in terms of reduction of EU law on GB to NI goods movements, meeting what they had called for.

### Does this new deal put NI businesses in a better trading position than GB firms?

NI businesses will be able to sell goods produced in NI into the EU with almost no red tape or compliance issues compared with businesses based in GB. This may lead to an increase in inward investment in NI as companies involved in trade in goods establish themselves and their staff there. During the last 12 months there is evidence that economic activity in NI has held up better than other parts of the UK, in part due to this special access to the EU Single Market in goods which it has.







Simon Hudson

## New holiday let management company 'Heritage Hosting' launches

A new Aberdeenshire-based holiday let management company has launched to address a gap in the short-term lettings market.

It was while attending property events and trade shows that Managing Director, Simon Hudson, noticed a recurring theme in the conversations he was having with property owners and with that, the idea of 'Heritage Hosting' was born.

Simon commented: "People with Airbnb properties approached us for help as they were finding that the upkeep of their property was taking up too much time. Some with second properties had thought about short-term letting but didn't know where to start. Given the expertise of our team, I knew that we could help."

Beyond overseeing the legal requirements, Heritage Hosting manage the full lettings journey, from interior design and staging, advertising and listing, through to checking in guests.

Simon added: "There are national companies who offer similar Services, but we pride ourselves on offering the full package, including linen cleaning, which sets us apart from other holiday let management companies. We are a local business with extensive knowledge of Aberdeenshire, and we are committed to working with trusted contractors who are based in the North-east of Scotland."

"At present, we look after holiday lets in coastal locations such as Arbroath and Stonehaven and countryside homes which tend to be used for family getaways, golfing holidays and wedding guests who want that exclusive mini break."

Heritage Hosting is a new arm of Oldmeldrum-headquartered PMC Property Management & Lettings. The launch of this service follows the recent news that PMC was bought over by two of the firm's directors, Annette Hudson and Neale Bisset. Simon Hudson recently became Managing Director after almost two years in the role of Commercial Director and has ambitious plans for Heritage Hosting including the development of a bookings portal which will enable customers to reserve holiday lets directly without the need to use a third-party listings site.

## Jobs boost for Aberdeen from Mooreast

International mooring and anchoring specialist Mooreast Holdings could bring at least 100 jobs to Aberdeen after signing a collaboration agreement which it is hoped will help the company realise its ambition to open a subsea foundation production facility in the Granite City.

The company is working with ETZ, the private sector-led and not-for-profit body spearheading the North-east's energy-transition ambition. The collaboration agreement signed with ETZ aims to identify a potential location for the establishment of a manufacturing facility in the Granite City.



## TINTO recognised at ASA Design Awards 2023

TINTO Architecture, an award-winning architecture and interior design practice in the North-east, was recognised at The Aberdeen Society of Architects' (ASA) annual Design Awards last month.

The awards celebrate the achievements of architectural professionals from across the region. The company was nominated for two awards, and on the night picked up the Best Small Project award for its work with City Restoration Project on the Crown & Cottage development in Aberdeen.

Richard Tinto: "The Small Project category is a big deal for us. TINTO built their business on this type of work and as we have grown and diversified we have retained a commitment each year to transform the world of a small number of clients."

"Our team love the creative freedom of something like Crown Cottage — where true co-creation with clients delivers spectacular results."

TINTO was also nominated for its Union Kirk project - which happened to play host to the awards evening.

Located in Newburgh, Aberdeenshire and serving both UK and international clients, we offer independent testing and verification to the offshore industry. Our testing equipment is housed in a large, heated hanger space with full HGV access serviced by a 2.5 t overhead crane.

## Testing equipment and services

### High pressure hyperbaric testing vessel

Our high volume (1.8m x 0.75m internal), high pressure hyperbaric pressure testing vessel is equipped with an insulated cooling jacket to simulate deep ocean temperatures down to the equivalent of 7000m depth.

### Vibration Table

Designed for simulating the vibration and shock conditions which automotive, aerospace and subsea equipment may encounter in use, our table is capable of qualification to a number of industry standards, including ISO 13628 and MIL-STD-810.

### Environmental Chamber

Our large capacity chambers allow temperature testing from -40°C to +180°C, along with controlled humidity.

### Indoor Immersion Tanks

NDC has a substantial indoor fresh water tank capable of accommodating offshore assemblies for testing. The tank has dimensions of 5 x 5 x 5 metres and is an essential proving facility for subsea inspection equipment, ROV's and other subsea test simulations.

### Boatyard facilities

Our close proximity to the Ythan Estuary with a boatyard and slipway means we can offer the facilities to assist with research and development of any tidal stream-based systems for subsea power generation (following the necessary regularity consents).



Courtesy of Decom Engineering



1495



**UNIVERSITY OF  
ABERDEEN**





**Britta Krueger**

McCue Wealth Management welcome new adviser Britta Krueger to the Practice. She has over 20 years' experience in helping businesses achieve their goals starting up their businesses, running and growing them successfully. Britta is passionate about helping others create their dream and securing a financially stable future.



**Kevin Sharp**

Kevin Sharp will lead Drillmar's drilling division in his new role as Operations Manager. With more than 30 years' international experience in the energy industry, he began his career offshore in the North Sea as a roustabout before successive promotions through the drill crew led him to shore-based HR, crewing and training management roles.



**Andy Brown**

The Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB) has announced that Andy Brown will take over as its Interim Chief Executive. Andy has been in engineering since 1982 when he joined the Royal Air Force as an Aircraft Technician. Andy joined the ECITB in 2006 and became Director of Operations in 2013.



**Baptiste Gougeon**

Aiken, a Global E&C business, has appointed Baptiste Gougeon as Business Director for its modular outfitting and refurbishment operation. His appointment comes as the business looks to position itself for growth in the energy-transition space, while continuing to support its customers in the traditional markets.



**Debbie McMurray, Chris Pless and Miriam Lenahan**

Life-of-asset integrity service provider CAN Group has further strengthened its management team through a number of strategic promotions and role changes across its business. Debbie McMurray has become Engineering Manager at ENGTEQ - CAN's engineering business stream - following her previous position of Integrity Team Lead. Chris Pless steps into the new role of Digital and Technology Solutions Manager to continue to lead the company's digitalisation journey. He was previously IT Manager. Miriam Lenahan becomes Corporate Development Manager.



**Stuart Thompson**

North East Scotland College has appointed Stuart Thompson as Vice Principal for Finance and Resources. He takes up the role in May. Mr Thompson will join NESCol from City of Glasgow College, where he currently serves as Vice Principal Corporate Services.



**Craig Revie**

ASCO has promoted Craig Revie to the new post of General Manager for Specialist Services. He will provide a streamlined service by combining several business lines into one unit. Craig joined ASCO in 2018 as Head of Marine Services and since then has held various management positions across the business.



**Paul McWilliams**

Annie Kenyon Architects has named Paul McWilliams as Senior Architect. He is said to have extensive experience in restoration, conservation, conversion and new-build projects. Paul, who previously worked at the practice, has returned from the west coast after renovating and extending a croft cottage.



**Alan Turner**

AAB Wealth is expanding its operations further across Central Scotland with the appointment of Senior Financial Planner Alan Turner based in Glasgow. Alan has more than 12 years' experience in financial planning and previously held positions at Bank of Scotland, Grant Thornton Wealth Advisory and abrdn Financial Planning.



**Gemma Neal**

Gemma Neal has been appointed Head of Marketing and Communications at ICR Integrity. With over 18 years of strategic marketing and communications experience, Gemma will be responsible for leading the marketing and communications team and implementing a comprehensive global strategy to help drive the growth of the business.



**Ron Liddell**

Commercial real estate consultant Ryden has announced the appointment of Ron Liddell as an Associate in its project-management team in Aberdeen. He brings 35 years of extensive experience to Ryden, working previously as a Construction Civils Director at CHAP Group Aberdeen.



**Craig Walker and Chris Blake**

Unique Group, a subsea technology and engineering firm, has announced the appointments of Chris Blake and Craig Walker to drive forward the organisation's ambitious growth plans. Chris joins as Vice President – Survey, with 30 years of experience in the offshore industry throughout Europe, Middle East, Africa and the Americas with organisations such as Fugro and N-Sea. With 17 years of project management, leadership, and global resource management experience, Craig's appointment as Global Asset Manager will further enhance client project experience through data-driven asset tracking along with optimised asset visibility as the Group continues to invest in digitalisation.



**Jeff Hailey**

Software-as-a-service solution firm Eserv has promoted Jeff Hailey to Head of Business Development to lead its growth strategy across new sectors. Jeff's new role will focus on developing and implementing strategic plans for Eserv's digital twin technology. A project engineer by trade with more than eight years' experience in the sector, Jeff joined Eserv in October 2021.



**Lisa Wilson**

Lisa Wilson recently joined Vialto Partners as Senior Manager where she'll be supporting the business in delivering a distinctive client experience to organisations across Scotland with a particular focus on those in the Energy Sector. Lisa has joined from Wood plc, where she was part of the global mobility tax team for 16 years.







**Susan Mackie**

Leading energy efficiency charity Scarf has appointed Susan Mackie as its new Chair. Susan brings a wealth of experience in data privacy and business systems management having held roles across the UK and Europe for local authorities, health and social care partnerships, and oil and gas companies over the past three decades.



**Trevor Crichton**

Aberdeen-based Zenith Energy has named Trevor Crichton as a Senior Recruitment Consultant. He will support the well engineering consultancy and project management company, located in the city's Bon Accord Square, as it currently recruits for several of its key global projects in Aberdeen, Australia and the UAE. Mr Crichton has 15 years of recruitment experience.



**Charlotte Hope**

Online Electronics has appointed Charlotte Hope as Director of Sales. The business is part of the IK Group, a technology-enabled provider of pig tracking, pig detection and pipeline communication systems. Charlotte has a career spanning over 14 years in the oil and gas service sector.



**Hallvard Norum**

Hallvard Norum is now Head of Media and Channels at Aker Solutions. He was previously a climate and economics journalist at the Norwegian Broadcasting Company. In his new role, Hallvard will work with communications through Aker Solutions' official channels, press work and internal communication.



**Mark Bowron, Linda Smith and Craig Irvine**

Vulcan Completion Products welcome Mark Bowron, Linda Smith and Craig Irvine to the team. Mark joins as Sales and Business Development Lead. He brings a wealth of industry experience and offers exceptional commercial and business development expertise to the company, which will be critical for the continued development and growth at Vulcan. Linda joins as Accounts Officer and brings with her, more than 30 years of experience in accountancy and admin, in both practice and industry. Craig has been appointed as Operations Coordinator. Craig who has worked in the industry for 12 years, most recently in a supply chain/manufacturing role, specialises in the manufacture and supply of primary cementing equipment.



**Peter Marioni**

Augean, a specialist provider in waste management, has announced that Senior Operations Manager Peter Marioni has been promoted to Chief Operating Officer for the North-east Scotland division. He started his career with Augean as an Offshore Drilling Waste Management Operator and progressed to Senior Operations Manager.



**Amy Fordyce**

Stronachs has named Amy Fordyce as a Senior Solicitor to its commercial property team. Amy is skilled in dealing with commercial leases on behalf of both landlord and tenant, acquisitions and disposals. She enhances the depth of skill and experience offered by the Stronachs' commercial/corporate teams on both a national and international level.



### Have you changed role recently?

Send your good news to [bulletin@agcc.co.uk](mailto:bulletin@agcc.co.uk) to feature in our new weekly mailer.

# Live for today, *plan* for tomorrow

You probably know where you want your inheritance to go when you die. But making sure your legacy gets to the right people at the right time can be hard work. There's a lot to think about, from clearly documenting your intentions to making the most of gifting allowances and pinpointing legitimate ways to mitigate Inheritance Tax.

We offer a friendly, local service, backed by the strength and security of FTSE 100 company St. James's Place Wealth Management. Let us guide you through the estate planning maze and make sure your inheritance plans come good.

**Let's start a conversation.**

**Mark McCue** 01224 745200  
MA (Hons) 07596 196084  
Chartered FCSI mark.mccue@sjpp.co.uk  
**Director** www.mccuewealthmanagement.co.uk



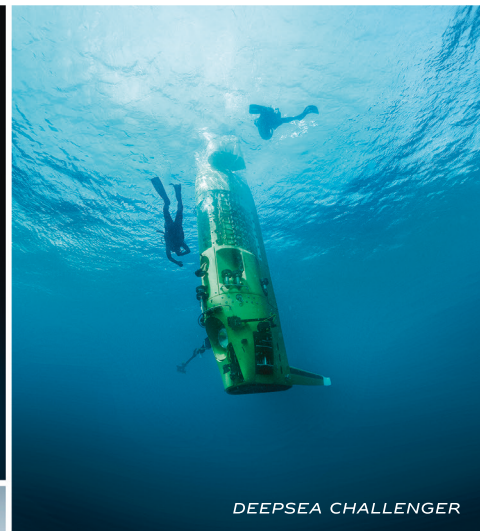
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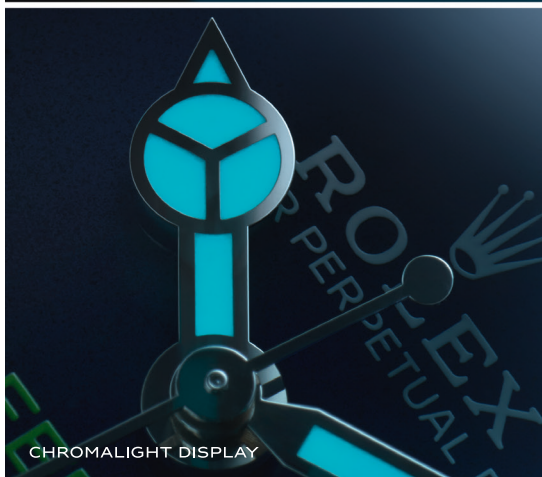
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