

DECEMBER / JANUARY 2023 | POSITIVE CHANGE

BUSINESS BULLETIN

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Path to net zero needs a forty year plan free from political interference.

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Labour leader honours pledge to engage with Chamber members.

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Exclusive:

Steven Bartlett's five tips to create positive change



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The Hub
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AB23 8GX

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

Affiliated Chambers
Moray

Bulletin Team



Editor

Ryan Crighton
T 01224 343926
E bulletin@agcc.co.uk



Advertising

Pauline Western
T 01224 343919
E pauline.western@agcc.co.uk



Design & production

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



Editorial

Cody Mowbray
T 01224 343936
E cody.mowbray@agcc.co.uk



Journalist

Finlay Jack
T 01224 343939
E finlayjack@agcc.co.uk

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What a difference a year makes

As we head into the dark depths of winter, it can be easy to feel blue, low, a sense of hopelessness. But this is an all year round condition for many folk in this part of the world. Glasses half empty.

It's just in the North-east DNA, we can be a dour and miserable bunch. Dinna get ahead of yersel' or you'll get taken down a peg or two. Dinna talk things up, or they'll go pear shaped. The grass is definitely greener everywhere else. Yip, the very vocal Abermoaners hold centre stage - despite being a small minority.

Let's face it, according to these people, our region is doomed, doomed I tell ye (apparently)... yet just a year ago, this point of view sadly had some merit.

The oil boom was over. Government energy policy and rhetoric was consigning an industry which brought prosperity to the nation to an early bath. Driving down confidence, sending investment capital elsewhere, resulting in projects being cancelled and redundancies announced.

RGU's Making the Switch report told us that in a declining oil and gas capital scenario we'll lose 17,000 direct jobs here inside the next decade plus at least as many induced roles in the economy. Akin to what happened to our mining communities forty years ago, and something politicians of all colours claim they will never allow to happen again.

Nothing's happening here. Our city's high street is an embarrassment. We are far away and too often cut off by air, rail and road. It's an expensive place to live and do business. Political dogma and planning and building control red tape stymies progress. There are always reasons NOT to do things and when we do, it usually takes far too long. And our kids all want to get oot.

No progress was being made with government support for the Scottish CCUS cluster and then the North-east lost out in its Green Freeport bid.

The final straw - losing to Liverpool in a bid to host Eurovision - led the P&J to carry it's iconic ABBA (Anywhere But B****y Aberdeen) headline. We were feeling bruised, chips on shoulders. No one likes us.

But wait... then the fightback started.

The Chamber's latest Investment Tracker tells of £6.5billion of major infrastructure and regeneration projects delivered across Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire since 2017. And a future pipeline of £16billion - not including the local supply chain value of energy transition projects.

Union Terrace Gardens has reopened and looks resplendent with the large ABERDEEN letters providing a great foreground to pictures looking up towards the theatre.

Add this to P&J Live, Marischal Square, the refurbishment of the Art Gallery, Provost Skene's House, the Music Hall and the soon to be started international food market project and we are hardly a place in decline.

The team of people working on Our Union Street has raised nearly a million pounds to support its aims, put together the best start up package anywhere in the UK and lots is happening behind the scenes including some very exciting and promising conversations with retailers, hospitality businesses and leisure venues. And teams of volunteers and businesses have signed up to help the spruce up efforts.

Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire were recently voted the best places to live in the UK (in a respondent 6,000 poll carried out by HomeViews.com) and people in this region have, on average, the highest net disposable income in the country.

And the secret is getting out as, fuelled partly by cruise visitors, the value of tourism in the region is on the rise.

Some good conversations are taking place with airlines about adding new routes from and to European destinations and a full feasibility study is underway into reopening rail from Dyce to Peterhead and Fraserburgh for freight and passenger use.

We are one of the UK's most prolific exporting regions.

The award of Investment Zone status to the North-east will be worth £80million in tax incentives, capital and revenue funding over five years to help supercharge key projects in our economic diversification strategy that is already bringing real results in food, drink, agri and fisheries; digital; life sciences, tourism and our ambition to become a globally significant low carbon energy hub.

Notwithstanding environmental concerns, the reality is that oil and gas will continue to play a key role in our energy mix for decades, something fully accepted even by the Climate Change Committee. Significant resources remain in the North Sea basin which can provide energy and economic security for decades.

The message is clear. For as long as it is needed, if the alternative is importing oil and gas from overseas at much higher carbon cost, the UK must favour domestic production. So it's encouraging that the current UK government has recently moved decisively towards this position.

Our region boasts a truly world class energy cluster. Our people, institutions, supply chain companies and infrastructure. And this is complemented by ETZ, NZTC, the National Decommissioning Centre, National Subsea Centre, National Floating Wind Innovation Centre, Advanced Manufacturing Skills Hub et

al based in the North-east, providing an incredible platform to be at the heart of a properly managed energy transition.

And this is being further supported by Scottish Government's £500million Just Transition Fund and £500million investment in offshore wind supply chain.

Speaking of offshore wind, around three quarters of the licenced Scotwind sites are within 100 miles of Aberdeen, giving a platform for us to become established as a worldwide specialist, especially in floating wind technologies. And SSEN is investing over £10billion in electricity transmission network upgrades in the region to support this.

Acorn CCUS at St Fergus now has UK government support and, with it, comes the potential for associated direct air capture, sustainable aviation fuel manufacture and industrial hydrogen production initiatives. Further evidence that the Aberdeen region has a real opportunity to become established as a global leader in hydrogen.

Plans have been lodged for Scotland's largest solar farm in Aberdeenshire and the region is rich in the minerals needed for battery production. All of which offers a multi-billion pound local supply chain opportunity.

The same RGU report referenced earlier also tells us that direct energy jobs in the region can increase from 45,000 to 54,000 - if we get the transition right and this will bring long term opportunity and prosperity to the North-east.

So, just maybe, we are not done for after all. The place we call home has not hit the wall.

As we raise festive glasses - half full this time (at least) - let's make a resolution to drown out the naysayers and talk up the North-east.



MILU

Russell Borthwick
Chief Executive

Our premier partners

The Chamber sits at the heart of the North-east business community, and one of our core aims is to help create the economic conditions and business environment which will allow this region to flourish.

Our premier partners see the value of a strong regional Chamber and choose to engage with us at this level to reinforce their ongoing commitment to the region and its economy.

Without their support we would not be able to undertake much of the work that we do. Their engagement is hugely valued and appreciated.

If you are interested in joining them, we'd love to talk to you!



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Steven Bartlett's five tips to create positive change

Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce's inaugural Ultimate Masterclass Festival drew to a close with a sold-out Music Hall enjoying an enthralling interview with Dragons' Den star and Diary of a CEO host, Steven Bartlett.

A Sunday Times Best Seller, Bartlett's hour-long interview, hosted by Aberdeen's own Fiona Stalker, engrossed the 1,400 people packed into the Union Street venue.

Here's five lessons we learned from the Happy Sexy Millionaire:

1. Be obsessed with culture

First up, Steven spoke about one of Aberdeen's greatest adopted sons, Sir Alex Ferguson.

"I've interviewed a lot of his former players," says Steven, who is still close friends with former Diary of a CEO podcast guests Patrice Evra and Rio Ferdinand.

"His players didn't ever describe him as a great tactician. They didn't think his strategy was amazing.

"The one thing they all said about Sir Alex Ferguson was that he was a savant-level man manager."

The former Dons manager's ability to create a culture within an entire business as big as Manchester United is still something used as a benchmark today.

"He turned his players into disciples", said the business mogul.

"From the waitresses to the executives above Ferguson, he was unnegotiable about culture.

"If you walked past the charity balls and didn't sign them, he would blow up.

"Because the small things say as much as the big things do, and that's what great leaders, great founders have. They are absolutely obsessed with culture."

2. Don't be crushed by the bulldozer of innovation

"I remember that feeling of thinking something is weird. That's the feeling I had got about social media and that's the feeling I've got right now about AI, that I should lean into bizarre behaviour."

Social media was a "contradiction and a threat" to CEOs little more than a decade ago, said Steven.

"They felt they had to dismiss it," he added. "And that's what AI is today".

"I've chosen to build businesses in areas where there's an incumbent that is experiencing cognitive dissonance. [Businesses] that are being disruptive."

"We'll experience 20,000 years of change in the 21st century, so there is going to be more moments in our lives that cause us to lean-out and the threat of that is you get runover by the bulldozer of innovation.

"If I had kids right now, the thing I'd be teaching them isn't anything in textbooks, I'd be telling them to lean-in to change.

"For companies, organisations and CEOs, that is the single most important thing."



If I had kids right now, the thing I'd be teaching them isn't anything in textbooks, I'd be telling them to lean-in to change.

3. Invest in psychology

"Domino's Pizza are the best at this", said Steven. He told the audience about the importance



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of defeating uncertainty, something Uber achieved by giving users the ability to track their driver and not face an uncertain wait on when, and if, their taxi would show.

“Domino’s have managed to survive for multiple decades, in a climate where pizza companies have gone bust, because they understand psychology.

“Once upon a time when you ordered a pizza you would then sit at home and wait 45 minutes for your pizza to come.

“At Domino’s, people would be peppering the phonelines asking where their pizza was. They were slowing down their pizza because they were calling the person making it.

“So, Domino’s introduced a rule where if your pizza didn’t come on time they would give you a refund. People still called.

“They introduced hot bags so your pizza would arrive hot, guaranteed. People would still call.

“It wasn’t until they introduced the pizza tracker, which showed where your pizza was and killed that uncertainty, when people stopped calling.”

Study after study has shown that humans are hardwired to hate uncertainty. People would rather know something bad is going to happen than face waiting in the dark.

Domino’s simply removed the feeling of the unknown.



“A lot of companies would increase the size of the fleet, hire more drivers, pay more people to be in the restaurant,” continued Steven.

“What Domino’s knew is that it’s usually more interesting and more valuable to invest in psychology than reality.”

Prior to the pizza tracker launching in 2008, less than 15% of orders at the chain were made online. In 2022, that number was 90%.

4. Keep failing

Perhaps the most through-provoking lesson from the interview was the multimillionaire encouraging people and businesses to fail more.

Steven explained: “Jeff Bezos in his shareholder letter at Amazon says ‘this is the best place on earth to fail’.

“He talks about how business is like baseball. In baseball, you swing and if you have a great hit then you get a home run, in business if you swing you can get a thousand runs. “The key thing is just to swing and swing quickly.

“He says the one in ten experiments they do at Amazon, like AWS which will make £70billion this year, pays for the entirety of the experimentation graveyard. “He understands that failure is their strategy.

“This is something I’ve seen in the greatest founders and businesspeople going back almost a century.

“Thomas Watson at IBM, once the richest man in the world, said all you have to do is measure your failure rating and increase it. “Increase your failure rate. Out-fail your competition.

“When asked in an interview if he was going to fire one of his colleague who had just lost the company £600,000 because they tried something and it went wrong, he said: ‘fire them? I’ve just spent £600,000 training them’.”

When asked in an interview if he was going to fire one of his colleague who had just lost the company £600,000 because they tried something and it went wrong, he said: ‘fire them? I’ve just spent £600,000 training them’.

5. Manage your expectations

“Which of your guests on your podcast has genuinely been life-changing for you?”, asked host Fiona Stalker, closing off proceedings.

Bartlett spoke about an episode with Mo Gawdat, the former Chief Business Officer at Google, who, following his son’s death during a routine operation, went on a journey to find his true happiness.

“One of the things he said in our conversation really stuck with me because it seemed so simple and so profound that it couldn’t possibly be true, but I’ve not been able to dispute it since.

“He told me that people are happy when their expectations of how their life is supposed to be going are met. From that, you can deduce that people are unhappy when their expectations of how their life is supposed to be going go unmet.”

Following on, Bartlett added: “I didn’t get on a plane until I was 21 years old, other than flying from Africa to the UK,” he said.

“When I got on that plane at 21 years old, and I was sat in economy, I could not believe my eyes. “I’m going through all the pamphlets and the brochures and the security stuff and I’m like ‘This is amazing!’. It blew my mind.

“Four years later, I’m travelling 50 weeks a year in first class. My business has taken off, my job is basically to travel round the world at this point.

“I’m running on the plane as fast I can, throwing my bag up, getting my laptop out before we lose internet connection and just trying to send as many emails as I can.

“And I remember looking over and seeing, let’s call her ‘Julie’. She’s sat there with her husband, ‘Dave’, in first class opposite me.

“She’s putting on the slippers, she’s passing him the catalogue and sipping champagne and she’s in absolute ecstasy.

“I looked over and I thought: ‘that used to be me’.

“I used to experience that same subjective experience of joy and euphoria.

“We’re sat in the exact same seat, and, on the outside, I look a little bit miserable because my expectations in life aren’t being succeeded in any way. Her expectations of life are.

“From that, my main takeaway from this, is if there is a manageable element to your happiness it’s our expectations.

“It’s the realisation that for me and my life now, every single day and everything I do is exceeding my expectations.”

“I have to remind myself that I’m a kid from Africa, that can never have nice things, couldn’t get on planes, and that today my expectations are being exceeded.”





AAB Wealth wins top planning firm award

AAB Wealth, a leading independent chartered financial planning firm, has been awarded the prestigious 'Chartered Financial Planning Firm of the Year' award at the Personal Finance Society Awards 2023/24, following a year of significant growth and geographical expansion.

AAB Wealth's commitment to delivering client service excellence and their highly innovative approaches were commended by the judges. They were also praised for their positive team spirit and dedication to supporting clients and colleagues in achieving their goals.

Andrew Dines, Head of AAB Wealth, expressed his immense pride in receiving the award, stating: "We are truly humbled to be recognised as the best Chartered Financial Planning Firm in the UK by the Personal Finance Society, the leading professional body for the financial planning industry. This achievement is a testament to our team's unwavering dedication and commitment to helping our clients across Scotland, England, and Northern Ireland achieve their goals."

AKE International launches the AKE Community

AKE International has launched the AKE Community to make affordable and expert security, political and economic risk analysis accessible to all.

AKE team member Claire Fleming explains the thinking behind the development: "This year marks the 20th anniversary of AKE's intelligence team and of our country risk platform, Global Intake. This has encouraged a lot of discussion about everything our team has researched, covered and analysed in the last two decades - which is a lot!

"From assessing new markets for energy companies, to briefing journalists deploying to conflict zones or reviewing the risks to an insurer's exposures, we've done it all.

"Our clients come from such diverse backgrounds both in terms of sector and the resources available to them. As a team, and as part of this anniversary year, we wanted to proactively make our analysis as accessible as possible."

Regional recognition for rockstar Site Manager

Scotia Homes' Chapelpark Site Manager Fraser Stephen has won NHBC's Seal of Excellence Award and Scottish Regional Award in the Medium Builder Category at the annual NHBC Pride in the Job awards.

Pride in the Job is considered by many as being the Oscars for the house building industry and it has driven up the quality of new build houses and homeowner satisfaction.

The competition raises standards in house building and inspires site managers and their teams to give just that little bit more, either to win their first award, get to the next level or simply continue a winning streak.

Fraser has continued to work hard since his introduction to the company in 2005 and his recent awards show the commitment and focus he has shown over the last 18 years, starting as an Apprentice Joiner and now leading a site team as Manager.

Fraser Stephen is one of only three winners in the whole of Scotland for the Regional Award, and only winner in the Medium Builder category. Other Regional winners were from Edinburgh and Dunfermline.

Aberdeen seafood restaurant named the best in Scotland once again

For the second time since North-east operator The McGinty's Group took over, The Silver Darling in Aberdeen has won the prestigious title of "Restaurant of the Year (Casual Dining)" at the Scottish Licenced Trade News (SLTN) Awards.

The awards recognise and reward the best in Scottish hospitality and tourism.

Director of The McGinty's Group, Allan Henderson, said: "It's an incredible achievement not just for The Silver Darling but for the city as whole. The SLTN Awards is one of the most prestigious events in Scotland and to be recognised as the best in the country is a fantastic achievement. The fact that The Silver Darling has managed to win the award for the second time in just five years shows how consistently great the restaurant is.

"It's been a tough couple of years for the industry and while it continues to be very challenging, it's great to be recognised for all the hard work that goes into running a hospitality business in the current environment. Hopefully accolades like this showcase how fantastic Aberdeen's hospitality scene is and we are very excited for the months ahead."

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WHAT DOES YOUR BUSINESS DO?

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

The planning process, particularly in Scotland, can be slow and takes many years for projects to be determined. This means that both technology and the market can change quite considerably whilst a project is in planning, plus the benefits of delivering such projects are delayed.

AND THE BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY?

We are in a climate emergency, cost of living crisis and also seeking to enhance the security of our energy supply. Renewables like onshore wind can help to address all of these issues. An onshore wind farm can be built quickly, within 12-24 months. It can provide the lowest-cost form of electricity generation and offset carbon emissions. Onshore wind increases energy security by reducing our reliance on imports and builds resilience to sudden price fluctuations and the uncertainty of global markets.



Nicholas Little,
Head of School,
International School Aberdeen
(ISA)

WHEN WAS YOUR BUSINESS ESTABLISHED?

ISA was established in 1972 as Scotland's first international school. When we first opened our doors over 50 years ago, we had a school population of only 36 students. We now have almost 550 students, with half coming from the UK and the

other 50% comprised of 45 different nationalities.

WHAT DOES YOUR BUSINESS DO?

ISA is the only school in the North-east to provide international education to both local and expatriate families. We educate children from age 3 - 18 with a student-centred approach. Our mission is to deliver educational excellence in a safe and caring learning environment. Our senior students study the pre-university International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme, open to all students regardless of any previous educational background.

WHAT SORT OF COMPANIES DO YOU DO BUSINESS WITH?

We are proud of our heritage in Aberdeen and value our connections with community organisations. We are a huge advocate for local projects, working with sports and arts bodies, as well as hosting networking and charity events. We are also proud to host local and international sports tournaments - events that keep Aberdeen on the map.

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

Preparing young people for a changing world with many technological advances, that we ourselves didn't experience, is a challenge. Predicting future trends means we must keep pace by changing from the ground up to ensure our teaching methods continue to evolve for the 21st century to allow every student to leave school as prepared as possible to succeed.

AND THE BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY?

AI is a very exciting opportunity if we see it as a tool that can reduce our workload and streamline processes. There is a real transformation in the world of work with companies increasingly recruiting for digital skills such as AI and robotics. As educators, we must embrace changing technology and use it as the best opportunity to set our children up for success.

MEMBERS



Ross Barclay,
Managing Director
RMD UK,

WHEN WAS YOUR BUSINESS ESTABLISHED?

R. M. Donaldson Ltd was established as an electrical wholesale business in Glasgow in 1930's. John and Fiona Smykala bought the business in 1993 and turned it into the company it is today. John had a vision back then to sell UPS's to the marketplace and then

partnered up with American Power Conversion (APC), and RMD started to grow into the company it is today.

WHAT DOES YOUR BUSINESS DO?

RMD supply, install and maintains UPS power, cooling, and software monitoring systems throughout the UK to both public and private sectors. Our vision is to be a "holistic" solution for our customers who trust RMD to keep their IT equipment "on-line" 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

WHAT SORT OF COMPANIES DO YOU DO BUSINESS WITH?

RMD works with individuals and businesses which include public services, oil and gas, health boards, and distribution companies. We have clients throughout the UK, from the Islands of Scotland to Folkestone in Kent.

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

Increasing costs! Everyone in the market is looking to reduce costs and

our clients expect us to do the same. Fuel, energy and labour costs have had a big impact on our business in the last year. With the majority of these costs outwith our control, RMD has looked at other ways of reducing our costs by starting to move our fleet of vehicles over to either hybrid or fully electric. RMD along with Schneider Electric carried out energy survey on our building and are now looking to make savings that were highlighted as part of that survey. RMD is currently in discussions to install a large solar option on the roof of our premises.

AND THE BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY?

The biggest opportunity for RMD is making people aware that we exist, and that we are committed to building a trusted relationship with our clients. I feel RMD is one of Scotland's best kept secrets. I plan to change this over the coming years and make RMD more visible through social media platforms and a strategic marketing campaign.



Stuart Henderson,
Branch Manager,
F.H. Bertling Logistics
Aberdeen Ltd.

WHEN WAS YOUR BUSINESS ESTABLISHED?

Bertling was founded in Germany in 1865. F.H. Bertling Logistics Aberdeen Ltd. was opened in November 2010 as part of Bertling's logistics division.

WHAT DOES YOUR BUSINESS DO?

Bertling Logistics specialises in end-to-end project logistics solutions to and

from worldwide locations. We are the partner for extra challenging, heavy and complicated transports via all modes for our global client base. Our services include (but are not limited to) vessel chartering, customs clearance (incl. post Brexit consultancy), warehousing, heavy lift engineering and airfreight transports.

WHAT SORT OF COMPANIES DO YOU DO BUSINESS WITH?

In Aberdeen, our primary clientele comes from the energy sector, including companies involved in the energy and power generation, oil and gas, and hydrogen industries.

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

The logistics industry's biggest challenge is navigating the ever-shifting market dynamics. Unpredictable disruptions, both direct and indirect, continually impact our operations. To succeed, we must remain adaptable and proactive, constantly innovating to ensure our customer's satisfaction despite persistent bottlenecks.

AND THE BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY?

As we work closely with companies in the energy sector, it's crucial that we prioritise providing responsible transportation solutions. We have a golden opportunity to play a central role in the sustainable transformation of the logistics industry. Moreover, our sophisticated IT services and solutions with the focus on customer service, visibility and predictability make us stand out from our competitors. And last but not least excellent customer service will remain one of our priorities now and in the future.

WHAT ARE YOU MOST PASSIONATE AND PROUD OF?

My team, for sure. I am very proud to be surrounded by a group of highly ambitious individuals, including a vibrant contingent of young talent in our Aberdeen office. This dynamic extends to our customer relations, which we highly value, and which drives us to give our best every day.



R&B Switchgear accelerates with landmark Aberdeen expansion

R&B Switchgear has appointed an accomplished Aberdeen head and invested in prime commercial space as it seeks to create a high-performing culture, primed for a new era of growth.

Formerly E&I Superintendent for Altera Infrastructure, Neil Atkinson brings more than 20 years' experience from the international oil and gas industry, along with technical

expertise from his time working in the petrochemical, polymer processing and micro-chip sectors.

Neil will head up operations in the Group's Aberdeen office, pioneering the development of a new business strategy to drive the direction, recruitment and expansion of the newly created business division, R&B Switchgear Services (Aberdeen).

Neil's offshore industry experience runs deep. In his previous role, he was responsible for leading teams and implementing preventative and condition-based maintenance programmes across power generation systems and electrical networks.

This latest appointment comes as the business seeks to invest in its existing regional footprint by relocating the team to a larger, contemporary commercial unit at Unit 7, Airways Industrial Estate in Dyce. The newly constructed office, workshop and conferencing space boasts a fully fitted workshop and testing areas to undertake on-site repairs, equipment testing, retrofits and modifications.

Speaking of the new appointment, Managing Director Mark Beswick said: "We are entering an exciting new era for R&B Switchgear Group and the decisions we make today will shape the company of tomorrow.

"Neil's expansive leadership experience coupled with his impressive technical background will play a critical role as we set the foundations for an ambitious period of growth in Aberdeen and the wider region."

Make a day of it!

Make a day of it in Aberdeen

Head to visitabdn.com/makeadayofit for inspiration

Aberdeen Art Gallery



People, places, planning: changing lives for the better

As a planning lawyer with Brodies, I spend a lot of my time working on projects to change and improve the built environment within Aberdeen and the North-east.

It is well recognised that the places where we live, work and play can have a major impact on our health, wellbeing, sense of identity and prosperity. As the Scottish Government states: planning can nurture our places, our environment and our communities and guide future change so that it benefits everyone.

People lie at the heart of what I do as a lawyer and so I am delighted to have been appointed as Chair of the Aberdeen Football Club Community Trust whose mission is to provide support and opportunity to change lives for the better in Aberdeen and the North-east.

The Trust works to maximise the potential of our communities and to improve their physical and mental health and wellbeing. The Trust's recently published Impact Report 2022/23 showcases the work which has been done over the last year to support over 9500 participants through programmes based on education and positive destinations and football, health and wellbeing. The case studies and testimonies within the Report are both heart-wrenching and heart-warming.

It may surprise many people to learn that around 22% of children in Aberdeen are experiencing child poverty and the Trust is championing change through person-centred interventions within schools and community settings.

Through active ageing activities, reminiscence groups and community projects, such as the Pittodrie Community Hub, the Trust is tackling social isolation and loneliness within the city and its surrounds.

Improving mental wellbeing underpins all the Trust's activities, whether directly through The Changing Room and MINDSET programmes or indirectly through increasing physical activity, engagement, practical

support and bringing people together.

As a charity, the Trust is dependent on external funding and volunteers to deliver its programmes. It is through the generosity of people and organisations across Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, and those further afield whose hearts remain in the north-east, that we can reach people of all ages and backgrounds and help them to improve their physical and mental wellbeing and reach their potential.

I am excited to have the opportunity through the Trust to help our communities maximise their potential. It is indeed all about people and places.

There are lots of ways to get involved with the Trust and make a life changing impact on people of all ages and backgrounds across Aberdeen City and Shire.

Whether as a fundraiser, volunteer, corporate sponsor or personal donor, please get involved and help change lives for the better.

View the Impact Report 2022/23 at www.afccommunitytrust.org/about-us

Elaine Farquharson-Black,
Partner,
Brodies LLP

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HYDRAULICS & MANUFACTURING



Andrew McCallum and Peter Smyth

Royal Mile office creates Edinburgh platform for Aspect's growth

Aspect: The Strategic Communication Experts has chosen Edinburgh's Royal Mile for its first office outside Aberdeen as it continues to grow its team of strategic communication, marketing, digital and external affairs professionals, following a move last year to larger company headquarters in Aberdeen.

The new office, in the heart of the Scottish Capital, also provides a base to extend the firm's government and stakeholder relations proposition in Holyrood and Westminster, under the leadership of recently appointed Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement Director, Peter Smyth.

Close to the Scottish Parliament, the Scotland Office and Edinburgh City Chambers, the office at 166 High Street provides flexible working and meeting space to support existing clients and future growth in issue-rich sectors from technology, life sciences and the natural economy, to energy, infrastructure and net zero.

Peter, who joined the Aspect leadership team in June 2023, is former Public Affairs Director at an award-winning independent communications company, with two decades of experience in public affairs, political intelligence and media relations in multiple sectors from commercial real estate and higher education to conservation and the natural economy.

Reporting to Founder and CEO Andrew McCallum, Peter sits on the Aspect Leadership Team working with Yvonne McCallum, Company Director, Jenny Adams, Marketing Director, Leona Minellas, Communication Director, and Ewan Duthie, Digital Director to develop and grow the firm's integrated consultancy offering.

Aspect is poised to announce five further hires in Edinburgh and Aberdeen in the coming weeks, adding to its 60-strong

team of employees and trusted associates, with recruitment continuing across the team over the next 12-months as the firm's client portfolio diversifies and grows in Scotland, the UK and globally.

Andrew McCallum, Founder and CEO said: "Establishing an office in Edinburgh is a major milestone in Aspect's growth journey and a proud moment for our talented team, who are the driving force behind our continued success which will see a 50% increase in year-on-year top line growth in 2023.

"I'm delighted to welcome Peter Smyth to our fast-growing team, whose rich experience and fierce intellect will not only enhance our public affairs and stakeholder engagement offering but also strengthen our position as trusted advisors to our diverse and much valued clients.

"2024 is set to be another busy and exciting year for Aspect, when we'll continue to focus on delivering great results for our clients, investing in the development of our people, and extending our reach into new sectors and geographical markets."

Peter Smyth, Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement Director said: "As organisations try to understand and get to grips with the rapid economic, political and regulatory change happening around them, there is clear demand for public affairs services that integrate seamlessly with complementary strategic communication disciplines.

"That's what Aspect does exceptionally well, and it has been brilliant to join Andrew, Yvonne, Jenny, Leona and Ewan to develop and extend our client offering in compelling new ways that make the most of the incredibly diverse skillsets across our team.

"Our Edinburgh base provides the opportunity to take that offering further still, serving new and existing clients in Scotland, across the UK and internationally. With high-spec facilities and unmatched connectivity in the heart of the historic Royal Mile, it's a brilliant place to come and work as we embark on the next phase of Aspect's growth."

Chamber calls for new independent body to oversee energy security and transition

A new body independent of government should be set up to oversee UK energy security and the transition to net zero, according to a new report.

Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce says the energy industry is being used as a “political football” and wants to see the establishment of a non-partisan organisation to bring long-term thinking and policy stability to the sector.

Like the Bank of England – which has maintaining monetary and fiscal stability as its central mission – the new body should be charged with developing recommendations which could command cross-party consensus and insulate the sector from political policy shocks in the future.

The call is the central policy recommendation contained with the 38th edition of the Chamber’s Energy Transition Survey, a biannual barometer of confidence in the UK’s energy sector which has been running for almost 20 years.

The business group is also repeating its call for the Energy Profits Levy – which has already resulted in the cancellation of deals, billions of lost investment and cost several hundred jobs in the North-east of Scotland – to be scrapped or reformed with a meaningful price floor.

The report – which is sponsored by KPMG and ETZ Ltd – shows that government policy remains the biggest factor determining future activity in the UK energy sector, and that over half believe that no

party currently has the right policies to support a successful energy transition.

The 38th edition also finds:

- Historically low levels of optimism around the business outlook in the North Sea over the short term remain.
- 30% of the work being carried out by firms in the sector is already outside oil and gas, with the figure expected to rise to 50% within seven years.
- Profitability and return on investment (ROI) remain the biggest barrier to diversification for firms, followed closely by the political and regulatory environment.
- Reducing access to investment capital and funding is negatively impacting activity, specifically internationally.
- Nearly all respondents believe that Aberdeen and the North-east will play a leading role in providing the UK with energy security and lead the energy transition.
- Around two thirds of respondents reported that they expect headcount to grow over the next three years to enable them to deliver on their plans.
- However, a growing skills shortage is being exacerbated by staff leaving the sector and high levels of early retirement with around half of respondents reporting these trends.

Russell Borthwick, Chief Executive at Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce, said: “The evidence of ET38, and that of previous editions of this survey, point to real and pressing need to find a solution to political and regulatory uncertainty. Adverse government policy, political narrative and the perception of a worsening regulatory environment, is resulting in a sustained lack of confidence in the future viability of doing business in the UKCS.

“That degree of uncertainty in the future, which has had a significant knock-on impact on investment decisions and is already costing jobs, is unlikely to dissipate in the months leading up to a UK General Election or in the early months of a new government being formed. And time is of the essence.

“The recent King’s Speech announcement of annual licencing rounds provides a vital confidence boost for the sector and the firms supporting it but with the caveat that if activity in the North Sea remains financially unattractive, it will be an empty gesture. So we urgently need to see the EPL super tax ended - or meaningfully changed - to incentivise the necessary investment.

“However, to be truly effective these matters should be administered by an independent body, developing recommendations which could command cross-party consensus and insulate the sector from the upset and uncertainty of major policy switches according to short-term political cycles. A kind of Bank of England for energy policy.”



Rob Aitken, Director, KPMG Transaction Services, Aberdeen, said: "How we transition from oil and gas to renewables in the coming years will have a huge impact for supply chains, workforces, the environment, and the economy both locally and nationally.

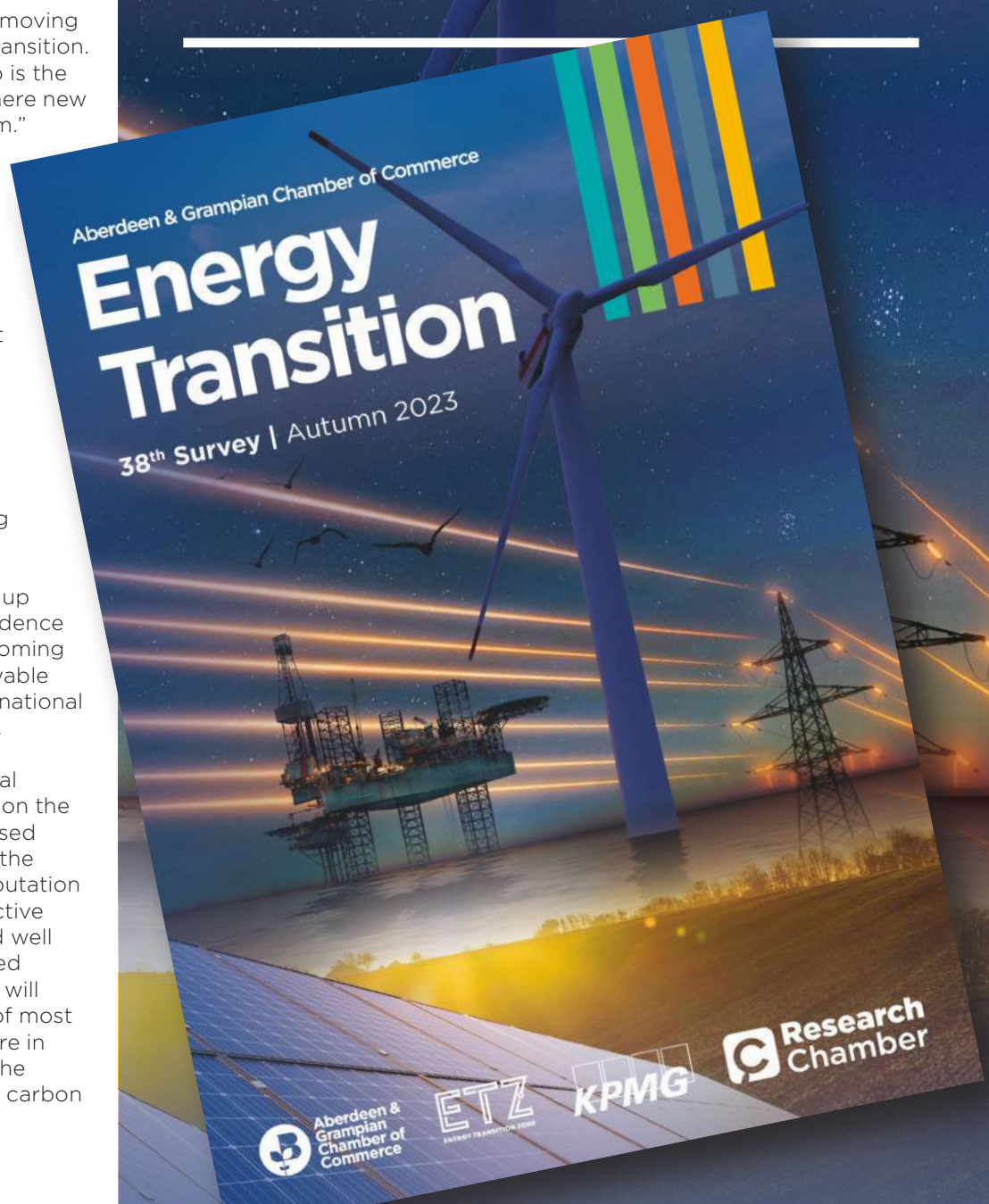
"The North-east has huge potential to be a driving force in the transition to a lower-carbon economy and a net zero future. However, with lots of questions over the political situation in the short term, and recent policy announcements favouring North Sea exploration, it would be worrying to see businesses moving their focus away from the transition. Because ultimately, net zero is the only destination and it is where new opportunities will come from."

Maggie McGinlay, Chief Executive of ETZ Ltd, said: "Progress continues to be made on realising the significant opportunities presented to the North-east of Scotland by the shift towards low carbon energy.

"The most encouraging indicators from the latest findings are that the vast majority of respondents consider our region as being very important in terms of delivering domestic energy security. And this is backed up by increasing levels of confidence in the Aberdeen region becoming a globally recognised renewable energy hub, leading on our national energy transition ambitions.

"This is, of course, the central focus of ETZ Ltd; to reposition the region as a globally recognised energy cluster focussed on the delivery of net zero. Our reputation as an innovative and productive region is both hard won and well deserved, and with continued resilience and optimism, we will secure our position as one of most attractive locations anywhere in the UK, and indeed across the world, for investment in low carbon technologies."

The North-east has huge potential to be a driving force in the transition to a lower-carbon economy and a net zero future.



VISIT THE LINK BELOW TO DOWNLOAD THE REPORT
www.energytransitionsurvey.co.uk

Chamber hosts ‘frank and honest’ energy summit with Sir Keir Starmer

Sir Keir Starmer heard ‘frank’ views from energy leaders in Aberdeen as he honoured his pledge to engage with members of Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce.

The Labour leader, who the polls say will be Britain’s next prime minister, heard first-hand from operators, supply chain companies and investors at a roundtable organised by the Chamber and True North Advisors.

Sir Keir was joined by Ed Miliband, Shadow Secretary of State for Climate Change and Net Zero, Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar MSP, Ian Murray MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Scotland, and Sarah Boyack MSP, Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Just Transition.

They faced pushback from the energy industry, and unions, over their controversial plans to ban all new oil

and gas licences if they win the next election.

During the meeting, business leaders repeatedly made the case for Aberdeen to be named the location of Labour’s planned new publicly-owned energy company.

The discussions were private, but the Labour leader has underlined his pledge that Labour will not be turning off the North Sea taps.

Speaking after the meeting, Russell Borthwick, Chief Executive of Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce, said: “We are grateful to Sir Keir and his colleagues for travelling to Aberdeen to hear the views of our members and the wider energy sector.

“We had a frank and honest exchange about the challenges facing the region, this sector and the 215,000 people whose jobs rely on the right policy decisions being made.

“The companies in the room and across North-east Scotland are ready to make the energy transition happen and want to work constructively with all parties to enable this.

“We hope that Sir Keir and his team will reflect on the views they heard today and use them to create a strategy that aligns fully with our energy security needs of today, and our huge net zero ambition for tomorrow.”

While in the North-east, Sir Keir announced more detail of Labour’s £2.5billion British Jobs Bonus, announced in summer, which is part of Labour’s mission to make the UK a clean energy superpower.

The party confirmed that key North Sea industries will be eligible for the financial incentive. It is estimated the initiative could create 29,000 UK jobs by 2050.



“

We hope that Sir Keir and his team will reflect on the views they heard today and use them to create a strategy that aligns fully with our energy security needs of today, and our huge net zero ambition for tomorrow.



Business lessons I've learned



Natalie Shand,

Assistant Commercial Manager, Goldstar Cleaning Services

What does your company do that others don't?

We tailor our services to our clients. It's the personal, bespoke touch that makes Goldstar stand out in the commercial and domestic sectors. We are a local company that offers a wide range of services, meaning that clients don't need to go elsewhere. It's a Goldstar thing to be close to our clients. That means liaising with them continuously throughout the process; being there for them if they have any questions, from the start of the process to the end, and constantly being visible.

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

Staffing. It's the nature of our industry that staffing levels can change at the drop of a hat. Brexit and CV19 had an impact on our workforce, and both have changed the dynamic of applicants. Responses to job adverts can be disappointing and we are working from a smaller pool of candidates. However, we are well prepared to deal with this challenge and offer robust training to develop a strong, solid workforce.

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

The hardest lesson was when I was Assistant Manager of the Aberdeen branch of a French skincare company. We were called to a Teams meeting during CV19 to be told that the branch was to shut. I was devastated. I knew I had to pick myself up. Not only did I learn I could recover from this, but I found I could change career completely and be successful.

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

I was once told by a friend that there are never problems, only solutions. This advice has always stuck with me, and it is my mantra in this office. It's about not looking at the problem in front of you, but always seeking the solution within it.

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

Goldstar has achieved some important industry awards and I feel very proud to have played my part.

Quick fire round

What was your first job?

A paper round delivering the P&J around Woodend.

When would you like to retire?

When I'm 55!

What did you have for breakfast?

Toast and butter.

Who, or what, inspires you?

My six-year-old twins inspire me greatly. My son has autism and he amazes me with what he achieves.

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

Matthew Perry's Friends, Lovers, and the Big Terrible Thing. I read this shortly before he passed away.

It was such an honour to collect our award for Outstanding Customer Service winner at the Trades Awards in October. I was also so proud when Barratt Homes and David Wilson Homes named Goldstar as their 2022 Sub-Contractor of the Year, given my role in the relationship with this valued client.

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

I would focus on getting more people into work and into our sector, in particular. Some see cleaning as being quite low down the employment chain, but I would urge people to find out more about what a role in cleaning can provide. The sector has many different avenues available and can be a fantastic stepping stone to gain practical experience and learn and develop, both personally and professionally.



Because your time is precious



Domestic

IT'S ABOUT TIME



Commercial



Russell Borthwick and Susie Mountain

Finalists for the 2024 Northern Star Business Awards are unveiled

The finalists in the running for a Northern Star Business Award have been revealed by Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce and Brodies LLP.

A total of 70 organisations have been shortlisted across 14 categories for what will be the biggest business celebration of 2024.

The glittering ceremony - which will take place at P&J Live on April 19th 2024 - celebrates the exceptional accomplishments of organisations across the North-east of Scotland.

Susie Mountain, partner at title sponsors Brodies LLP, said: "The Northern Star Business Awards is an event which brings the North-east business community together and hearing the stories behind all of the finalists this year has been a real privilege.

"The awards highlight the achievements of remarkable individuals and organisations of all sizes, and from all sectors, which continue to inspire those of us fortunate enough to live and work here.

"The Northern Star Business Awards goes to show that there is reason to be extremely positive about the direction the North-east is headed in terms of the brilliant people here, their innovative initiatives and bright ideas.

"All of us at Brodies in Aberdeen are proud that we are the principal partner of the awards once again, and we wish all of the finalists the best of luck at the awards ceremony next April."

Royal Bank of Scotland, Aberdeen International Airport, Gary Walker Wealth Management, Balmoral, CALA, University of Aberdeen, ANM Group, Port of Aberdeen, bp, Shell, RGU,

True North, Luxe Scotland and Robert Gordon's College are also among the key sponsors of the event.

Russell Borthwick, Chief Executive of Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce, said: "For us, Northern Star is the best night of the year - a unique stage to showcase and celebrate the brilliant work being done by businesses of all sizes, from all sectors, across our fantastic region.

"The companies in this area and pioneering, entrepreneurial and resilient, and will continue to be at the forefront of creating a bright economic future for the nation."

The companies shortlisted for the 2024 Northern Star Business Award winners are:



Business of the Year

- Craig International Ltd
- ICR Group
- Mackie's of Scotland
- Sport Aberdeen
- WM Donald



Marketing Magic

- Clan Cancer Support
- Fifth Ring
- Maritime Developments Ltd
- Mearns & Gill
- ThinkPR & Autism & Neurodiversity North Scotland (A-ND)



Customer First

- Bancon Homes
- Goldstar Cleaning Services
- IT Hotdesk
- Load Monitoring Systems (LMS)
- Specsavers Aberdeen



Rising Star

- Murray Collie - Aberdeen Football Club Community Trust
- Grace Arthur - Aberdeen Performing Arts
- Nicole Thompson - Grampian Housing Association
- Chloe Leslie - Infinity Partnership Limited
- Cassie McGunnigle - The Archie Foundation



Driving Sustainability

- Aberdeen Performing Arts
- ATPi Energy Travel
- Cairngorm Bothies
- Duncan Farms
- Port of Aberdeen



Family Business

- Amity Fish Company
- Craig International Ltd
- Katoni Engineering
- PMC Property Management Lettings
- WM Donald



Staff Matter

- Appetite for Business
- Balmoral
- Bancon Group Ltd
- Mackie's of Scotland
- MRS Training & Rescue



Going Global

- ASCO
- Fulkrum Technical Resources Ltd
- ModuSpec, a Vysus Group company
- TWMA
- Viper Innovations



Start-up Business of the Year

- Amuse by Kevin Dalgleish
- Ondo Catering
- PCL Live
- Planner Bee VA Services Ltd
- Usana Mindset



Inspiration from Innovation

- AISUS Offshore Ltd
- Balmoral
- eserv
- Intellicore Ltd
- PCL Live



Student Placement

- Canadian Natural Resources Limited (CNRL)
- eCERTO LIMITED
- Renaissance The Cowdray Club
- RSM UK
- Sealand Projects Limited



Inspiring Futures

- Aberlour Futures Aberdeen
- Build Your Future, Grampian Construction Training Group
- Stork
- TechFest
- WM Donald



The Archibald Simpson Award

- Aberdeen Performing Arts
- Ardent Group
- City Restoration Project
- Dough and Co
- Sugarbird Wines Ltd



Making the Difference

- Aberdeen International Airport
- AberNecessities
- Kayleigh's Wee Stars
- TechFest
- The Archie Foundation



Regional Contribution Award

To be announced on the night



Entier appoints 'rising star' to leadership team

Entier Ltd has announced that award-winning employee Shane Pirie who joined the company at the age of 16, on their apprenticeship scheme, has been appointed to their leadership team in the position of Operations Director for their Remote Sites Global division.

Shane was recognised earlier this year at the Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce Northern Star Business Awards, where he won the accolade of 'Rising Star' and was previously highly commended in the 2021 NFU Mutual's Inspirational Young Persons Award.

Originally joining Entier's 'Fresh Olive' apprenticeship scheme in 2013 as a trainee Chef, he excelled during his apprenticeship. Shane's determination shone from an early stage and whilst he enjoyed being a Chef he was keen to learn more about Entier's business operations. To further develop his career in 2017 Shane joined Entier's Remote Site's Global division, which specialises in providing catering, hospitality and hotel services solution to the energy, renewables and natural resources industry across the world as a trainee Operations Manager. Shane successfully completed this traineeship before becoming Entier Operations Manager for Marine clients globally.

During his time as an Operations Manager Shane mobilised contracts worldwide which has seen him work in Brazil, America, Denmark, France, Norway, Iceland and Namibia.

Speaking on his appointment Shane Pirie said: "I never imagined at 16 I would ever have the opportunity to become a Manager let alone be successful in becoming a Director before the age of 30. Entier's apprenticeship and development programmes have allowed me the

opportunity to develop a broad range of business acumen skills and experiences whilst providing me with exposure to operating internationally. As I join the leadership team, I look forward to working with my colleagues and the industry to further develop our solutions for energy, renewable and natural resources clients worldwide."

Chief Executive Officer, Peter Bruce said: "I'm immensely proud of what Shane has accomplished through his time at Entier. Shane's determination to succeed stood out from the start of his career journey with us. As we looked to further strengthen our leadership team Shane was a natural candidate to become our Operations Director within our Remote Sites Global Division. Shane will help oversee all of our energy and natural resources operations managers and work with the team to support all of our clients worldwide."

This is the second Entier colleague who originally started as a Fresh Olive apprentice to become part of Entier's leadership team. In October the company announced that Euan Rennie had also been appointed to the leadership team in the position of HSEQ Manager.

For further information about Entier or the Fresh Olive apprenticeship programme please visit www.entier-services.com.



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Arnhall Business Park
Westhill, AB32 6UF
Tel: +44 (0) 1224 356040

Find out more:



St Margaret's former pupil awarded prestigious scholarship

St Margaret's School for Girls is proud to share exciting news about former pupil, Lucy Wong. Lucy, from the class of 2011, has been awarded a prestigious scholarship to study at the University of Oxford.

Lucy has worked for a global energy company since completing her undergraduate degree in Mechanical Engineering at the Robert Gordon University. After five years in the workplace Lucy is returning to university to undertake an MBA at the Saïd Business School, University of Oxford, with plans to move into the Cleantech sector.

For current pupils, Lucy reflects and shares her advice: "17-year-old-me would not have believed I would get the chance to study at Oxford. This experience has reminded me that with hard work and determination, the sky's the limit! Take advantage of every opportunity to learn and grow, meet new people and don't be afraid of change - growth happens outside your comfort zone."

Lucy will be undertaking her studies as a Forté Fellowship Scholar. Forté Fellowships are prestigious, competitive awards designed to launch women into successful careers. The scholarship is awarded based on academic merit, professional achievement and a desire to act as a role model and to become an ambassador for the Business School.

Lucy continued: "I am fortunate to attend SBS as a Forté Fellowship Scholar. The Forté Foundation is a community of motivated and inspiring women who are not afraid to challenge the status quo. I am excited to continue my encouragement and empowerment of Women in STEM with them by my side. I am proud to share that for the first time, the Oxford SBS MBA cohort is 51% female. I am excited to face new challenges, meet diverse minds from all over the world and ready myself to make a mark in the clean tech space."

TESS Aberdeen sponsors future football stars

TESS Aberdeen, a leader in offshore integrated fluid transfer, power and control solutions, recently sponsored the Hermes 2012 Blues football team, contributing to their home kits and training tops.

The kits were unveiled by TESS Aberdeen Director Keith Robertson during a recent training session at the Aberdeen Sports Village.

While the sponsorship of the Hermes 2012 Blues enhances their presence in the local sporting community, it also serves a greater purpose.

By sponsoring the kits, TESS Aberdeen hopes to raise awareness for MND Scotland, a cause extremely close to their hearts, with an aim to advocate for greater understanding and support for those affected by this debilitating disease.



Port of Aberdeen wins prestigious sustainability award

Port of Aberdeen won the 2023 Sustainability Award at the British Ports Association (BPA) Conference in London.

The conference - run by BPA, in association with DP World, Gallagher and the Port of London Authority - is one of the most important events for the UK maritime industry. It provides a unique space for stakeholders to hear about the most recent policy changes and industry patterns in the UK's ports and harbours sector.

Over three days, more than 160 companies convened at the Leonardo Royal Hotel in London for a series of industry presentations, networking opportunities, and the prestigious Gala dinner and awards ceremony, which was hosted by the Port of London Authority.

The port faced strong competition from Harwich Haven Authority and Portsmouth International Port. The judges were impressed by Port of Aberdeen's commitment to reduce emissions across all three scopes, guided by our industry-leading net zero strategy.

Bob Sanguinetti, CEO, Port of Aberdeen, said: "This is absolutely fantastic news and richly deserved for the entire port team. This award celebrates our commitment to becoming the UK's first net zero port by 2040."

Hazlehead Academy gets major funding

Aberdeen City Council has secured a significant funding boost from the Scottish Government for a new Hazlehead Academy.

Council staff successfully applied for the funding in the third phase of the Scottish Government and COSLA's Learning Estate Investment Programme (LEIP) which provides upfront investment for the delivery of new or refurbished school buildings.



Take action to protect your home against theft

Tysers, a leading independent Lloyd's broker and a member of the AUB Group, advises that a spike in burglaries around autumn and winter make it an ideal time to review home security.

"Around the winter months there is an increased risk to your home, with longer nights providing more cover for burglars. High-value homes are at particular at risk of targeted burglaries where criminals scope out the house days before the planned break in. Taking steps to secure your home and valuables can deter opportunistic break-ins and make it more difficult for burglars to access your most treasured possessions."



Kate Wallace,
Associate Director

1. Think smarter (lighting)

A completely dark house is an obvious sign of a vacant property, leading to increasing numbers investing in timers for their home lights. However, Tysers advises that while timers for lights are useful in cases of targeted burglaries, homes are often scoped out for a few days prior to forcing entry. If lights in the same rooms switch on at a routine time each night, potential burglars will deduce quickly that the lights are operated by a timer. Smart technology allows homeowners to control lighting at home from anywhere in the world and smart bulbs can be dimmed and switched on and off, lighting up rooms or areas of a house at different times, creating the impression of movement and an occupied property.

Motion detecting floodlights are also a useful deterrent and can be connected to a smart phone to notify the homeowner if unusual activity occurs.

2. Secure your doors and windows

To keep homes secure and be eligible for lower insurance premiums, Tysers explains that all external doors and windows in a property should be fitted with secure locks. There are a number of options, including a five lever mortice deadlock, a rim automatic deadlatch (nightlatch) a multi-point locking system or Euro cylinder lock. It's important to ensure these locks have with British Standard BS3621, SS312 diamond approved or TS007 3 Star certification.

3. Lock it down

Most home and contents insurance policies will stipulate that valuables, such as jewellery and high valuable collectibles, are only covered if secured in a safe of an approved standard.

4. Secure perimeters

Perimeter fencing and security gates can add another layer of protection to a property and form the first line of defence before a would-be burglar can gain access. There are many options for perimeter fencing and gates which provide additional security and fit the aesthetics of a home. Additional outside security, including CCTV systems and night vision cameras, intruder alarms, security lights, electronic barriers and sophisticated access control systems, should also be considered.

5. Protect vehicles

High value cars, such as luxury cars and supercars, are at particular risk of theft. Most insurers will only offer their best premiums to those who take appropriate steps to secure their vehicles through secure storage and anti-theft systems. Many insurers will also stipulate that vehicles such as supercars and classic cars should always be stored overnight in a securely locked garage.



Johnston Carmichael breaks down barriers with student intake

Johnston Carmichael has proudly welcomed 90 students into the firm as part of its commitment to fostering a diverse and vibrant talent pipeline.

The recruits will be spread across Johnston Carmichael's offices across Scotland as well as Newcastle.

The group includes graduates, who will undertake training to become qualified accountants, interns, and school leavers joining via the firm's innovative JC Futures scheme. The four-to-six-year training opportunity offers school leavers a route to full qualification as an accountant.

In recent years, Johnston Carmichael has placed an increased focus on removing barriers to entering the accountancy sector. Among the measures it has introduced are implementing student open evenings across its key offices, allowing attendees to meet other students and senior people at the firm. In October 2023, the firm announced a groundbreaking partnership with the ICAS Foundation to support young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and promote greater social mobility in the profession.

The partnership will see Johnston Carmichael provide bursaries to two accountancy students for a period of up to four years along with internship experience, mentoring support and an introduction to Johnston Carmichael's networks.

Viper Innovations celebrates recent success in Nigeria

Aberdeen-based asset integrity experts Viper Innovations are celebrating the success of their collaboration with Nigerian engineering specialists Cranium Engineering Ltd, following a recent deployment of Viper's award-winning V-LIFE technology on a major oil and gas Operator's deepwater asset in Nigeria.

James Carnegie, Sales and Delivery Director at Viper Innovations, added: "The Viper Innovation team is excited to work with Cranium Engineering to introduce our technology into this region. It is very satisfying to get such great reviews from a new customer, demonstrating the benefits of our technology to enhance production and mitigate insulation resistance and electrical integrity issues."

Robert Gordon University introduces new award programme

RGU is delighted to announce the launch of RGUplus, a new programme which provides students with additionality on their course and takes them on a journey from citizen to global citizen and makes them stand out from the crowd.

Whilst studying at RGU, these opportunities will run alongside their course and empower students to think globally, enhancing their employability skills and equipping them with the skills and knowledge they need to excel beyond university.

Laura Chalmers, Head of the Centre for Employability and Community Engagement, said: "The idea behind RGUplus is to prepare our students to become excellent global citizens to make a positive difference to themselves and the world they will work and live in.

"Guiding our students, the programme provides the environment and learning that is needed for students to develop their understanding of social, economic, environmental, and political views.




"RGUplus places RGU on the world stage as a unique innovator in higher education, constructively developing curricula to advance sustainability, creating the graduate with an entrepreneurial mindset, who through community and industry-informed learning will leave us with a well-rounded 'global mindset'."

This new programme is a collective package of additionality and adds credit-bearing value through the inclusion of cross-cutting themes of sustainability and the entrepreneurial mindset throughout the curriculum.

RGUplus activities will also contribute towards a Denis Law/RGUplus Award Programme that will be awarded to all students and is a testament to the partnership that RGU holds with Denis Law Legacy Trust, a local charity based on campus.

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Orka Solutions attains Tesla Powerwall Installer Certification

Orka Solutions, headquartered in Westhill, proudly announces its accreditation as a Tesla Certified Installer for Powerwall, solidifying its commitment to delivering top-tier energy solutions to homes and businesses.

The company has recently unveiled a FAQ section on its website, with a focus on unravelling some of the common and not-so-common questions surrounding EV charge points, solar PV, and battery storage. What sets this initiative apart is its commitment to providing valuable information, rather than a mere emphasis on product promotion.

Duncan Booth, Managing Director of Orka Solutions, stated: "Our journey to become a Tesla Certified Installer for Powerwall represents a significant milestone in our commitment to providing our clients with the very best in sustainable energy solutions. This accreditation underscores our dedication to making clean energy more accessible, reliable, and cost-effective. We're excited to bring the power of Tesla's Powerwall to our clients, helping them unlock the full potential of their home energy systems."

With severe weather events like the recent Storm Babet in mind, Orka Solutions is confident the Tesla Powerwall Storm Watch Mode which reacts to location-based severe weather warnings and starts charging to maximum capacity, will further provide peace of mind and uninterrupted power supply during future adverse weather conditions.

£10.6million funding award for new AI research partnership

A major new partnership that will train the next generation of scientists specialising in the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to promote sustainable agriculture has received a £10.6million funding boost.

The SUSTAIN Centre for Doctoral Training (CDT) received the award from UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) as part of a £117million package for AI research.

The partnership involving the universities of Aberdeen, Lincoln, Strathclyde and Queens University Belfast aims to transform the UK agri-food sector's approach to sustainability while ensuring that everyone in the UK has access to food that is nutritious, delicious, affordable, and safe.

It will provide a cross-disciplinary doctoral training program across all four universities to support research in the application of AI to sustainable agri-food. This will cover the technical and social science aspects of AI alongside training in plant, animal and/or biosciences, tailored to individual students' needs and interests.



Family-run stove company raises £5,000 for children's charity

Highland stove company Bonk & Co has selected The Archie Foundation as its 2023/24 charity partner, having already raised £5,000 for the local children's hospital charity.

The family-run business recently hosted several internal fundraising events on behalf of The Archie Foundation, including an AGA cooking demonstration and a raffle.

The funds raised through the activities were recently presented to the Archie team at Bonk & Co's Inverness location.

Hydrasun Hydrogen Skills Academy launches energy transition training solutions

In a strategic move, Hydrasun has collaboratively engaged with government, industry stakeholders, academic institutions, and established accreditation and standards bodies to provide comprehensive training and competency assessment solutions for an ever-evolving workforce within the "All Energy" sector.

This initiative seeks to bridge the skills gap between traditional high-carbon industries and the emerging hydrogen sector, aligning the skillset requirements with the rapid pace of innovation whilst ensuring they embed a clear competency framework to the skills transition.

Located in Aberdeen, the purpose-built Hydrogen Skills Academy is dedicated to developing and supporting the energy sector's workforce transition. This involves retaining and enhancing the existing talent, retraining and upskilling individuals to meet the demands of the "All Energy" workforce, attracting young talent possessing relevant skills, and renewing future and non-energy specific skill sets.

Aberdeen Science Centre retains 5-star status

Aberdeen Science Centre has retained its sought-after ranking as a 5-star visitor attraction for the second time in a row.

The prestigious Quality Assurance (QA) status is awarded by VisitScotland, the national tourism organisation, and comes after a detailed inspection of the centre.

The centre's on-site café, which is run by Grub Fresh Food, has also been awarded VisitScotland's Taste Our Best accreditation, which celebrates businesses which serve quality food and drink using fresh and seasonal local produce.

Drawing more than 50,000 visitors a year, Aberdeen Science Centre is one of only two attractions in the city to hold the five-star award.

The QA Scheme is a benchmark for exceptional quality within the tourism industry and operates across accommodation, visitor attractions and food sectors.

'A Night with Ja' in aid of VSA raises over £10,000

Aberdeen local, Amy Strath held an evening of live music, fine dining, and great company at the Ardoe House Hotel in memory of her mum Janice Strath raising an amazing £12,447.01 in aid of VSA.

Amy and her family were left devastated when they suddenly lost their beloved mum and wife Janice. Janice generously supported many local causes, but always consistently supported VSA. Janice was well known in the community and was widely recognised through her work at the Boots store in Garthdee.

In memory of her mum, Amy wanted to host an evening where her friends, family, and people from the community could raise funds for one of her favourite charities.

Commenting on the evening, Amy Strath said: "My mum was truly one in a million with a heart of gold and I am so grateful and thankful to every single person who attended the event, performed, and helped me put on the evening. I am also delighted that we managed to raise so much money that will make a real difference to people living in our communities – something I know my mum would have been proud of."

Also in her mum's memory, Amy donated over 400 Christmas goodie bags last year for the people VSA support. Janice had continually made-up goody bags each year for charity, something Amy wanted to continue.

Amy's Christmas campaign will be called Ja's Goody Bags, and she will continue this each year, meaning her mum's legacy will always bring a much-needed smile to those who need it most.



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Business lessons I've learned



Lyndsay Harley,
Western Hemisphere President, Coretrax

What does your company do that others don't?

Coretrax's portfolio of over 50 technologies address every stage of the well lifecycle to deliver measurable cost and rig time savings. Our expandable technology in particular, is breaking the boundaries of what was previously deemed possible and bringing existing wells back on stream to maximise production. Coretrax has always taken pride of remaining a dynamic business that is able to respond to the changing needs of our industry, delivering engineered solutions quickly and effectively.

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

While oil and gas remains a key element of the energy mix, decarbonisation of existing operations is a key challenge. As

operator's strive to gain greater recovery from existing wells, technology which enhances production with a lower carbon footprint has never been more critical. Coretrax's technology is already supporting this challenge by actively reducing rig time on existing operations.

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

There are a few, but as someone who likes to try to think of every outcome sometimes you have to trust the process and let go!

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

Recruit people who know more than you, having diversity of thought within a team is key.

Quick fire round

What was your first job?

Waitressing in the local pub. I met lots of people and it was great foundation for learning the value of great customer service.

When would you like to retire?

I'm not quite ready to think about that one yet, our industry is an exciting place to be so hopefully it's a long way to go until I'm ready to hang up my boots.

What did you have for breakfast?

Cinnamon raisin bagel and a cup of tea.

Who, or what, inspires you?

The Coretrax team - I am exceptionally proud of the business that I've been part of for 10 years and seeing the evolution and success within our teams has been incredible.

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

I just finished *Lessons In Chemistry* by Bonnie Garmus - loved it!

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

Our first job running offshore in Malaysia. I spent a lot of time travelling to Malaysia and Brunei to help start up operations and build our team in APAC and it was fantastic to be able to see the Coretrax business becoming a success in a new location.



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STC INSISO adds to portfolio of North American clients

Aberdeen-headquartered, STC INSISO has announced a contract win with Pilot Water Solutions (PWS) to deliver its investigation and assurance product, COMET Investigate.

The United States based water midstream operator wished to improve their understanding of undesirable events and near misses, and ultimately reduce incident frequency, which resulted in its team's decision to purchase STC INSISO's root cause analysis tool.

PWS joins STC INSISO's growing portfolio of clients based in North America which includes Cummins, McDermott and Texas based oil and gas operator, Western Midstream.

STC INSISO specialise in helping businesses across a range of industries to control risk and assure operations. Although the majority of the team support their international customer base from the company's Aberdeen headquarters, several staff work remotely from overseas locations.

Mark Rushton, Chief Executive Officer at STC INSISO, said: "It is an exciting time for the company as we grow our presence in North America and welcome another valued international customer. I am extremely proud of the team behind COMET, which has existed for just over a decade and continues to evolve each year in terms of the product's capabilities and the range of clients which we serve."



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Local company with appetite for awards

“I was left with £1,000 of my personal savings, a few staff, two properties, debt, and no customers. Two weeks later, my mum was diagnosed with terminal cancer.”

Sheryl Newman’s road to B-corps status, Scottish Women in Tech Leader of the Year, High Growth Business of the Year and a scattering of other awards has not been straight forward.

At each junction she’s been met with another illness, in some cases life-threatening.

But each time, Sheryl, and her Microsoft 365 and SharePoint Consultancy company, Appetite for Business, have bounced back. She says she gets her determination from her mother, who was given three months to live just a fortnight after Sheryl started her business.

She didn’t live for three months, but three years.

“The first two and a half years were pretty hard.

“You had a lot of self-belief, a lot of determination, and trying to just to grow a business was quite difficult at that time.

“My lawyer said to me: ‘Are you sure you want to be doing this?’

“And my accountant was saying: ‘Stop. Give up. You’re not going to make it, Sheryl. There’s no investment, there’s nothing’.

“But I said I was going to give it a go. I’m very determined. Don’t tell me no because I don’t like it.

“

I was part of another business that was pretty much on its way out and I made the decision to buy it, to save it

“I think the shock of my mum, the shock of what I knew was coming in time, pushed me. I wanted to try and do the best that I can.”

Sheryl launched Appetite for Business in late 2015.

“I was part of another business that was pretty much on its way out and I made the decision to buy it, to save it,” she said.

“I spent all the money that I had in the bank, I was left with £1,000 of my personal savings, and I bought the business from the previous owner.



“I was left with a few staff, two properties, debt and no customers.

“Two weeks later, my mum was diagnosed with terminal cancer and I became one of her full-time carers.

“But I wanted something that was mine, that was my own. I traded the business out of debt over the next year. When it was safe to do so I moved everything into a new business that was mine, and that I owned and was mine to take forward.”

Creating positive change has been at the heart of Sheryl’s business since its inception. She is determined to have a lasting impact on the community.

During the pandemic, Appetite for Business offered the community £25,000 worth of free training.

“We talk about ourselves being an accelerator for businesses, we accelerate their growth. But in doing that we also, through their help, accelerate the growth of people in our community who need new digital skills.

“We want to affect not only the business, but the person too. We’re really interested in what we can do to make a transformational difference. When clients invest in us, we then reinvest back into the community.

“We are quite unique. One of the key taglines is human problems are business problems. If you’re owning a business, you’re stressed, you’re worried, you don’t know how to make technology work for you, you want to spend time with your family, you want to create a business that you can grow. And technology enables you to do that.”

As vital as impacting people out with her own business is, Sheryl’s worked hard to create and maintain a positive



B-Corps status is not a badge, it’s an honour to be considered worthy of that kind of logo

culture within the workplace. Her staff are the heart of the business and central to every decision she makes.

“I wanted to create somewhere that was vibrant, where people wanted to come to work, where they could bring their whole self to work, where they didn’t feel afraid to be themselves.”

Business is a cutthroat environment, though Sheryl says she’s prepared to make tough decision if and when need be.

“If something is not working, you have to deal with it quickly. Because otherwise it can cause this rotten fruit. It will just go right through your business.

“That’s hard as a business owner when you’ve got to make these decisions and it’s harder when you’re on your own.

“For me, you have to get the right people around you all the time because if you have their back, they have yours.

“Together you can grow something good, but if you get the wrong people in, it’s your destination to nowhere”.

And together, the Appetite for Business team has grown from strength to strength.

The business is now one of few in Scotland to boast B-Corps status. They are the third in Aberdeen to be awarded the status and the first for what they do in the country.

“It’s not a badge, it’s an honour to be considered worthy of that kind of logo,” said Sheryl.

Just 16.6% of B-corp business worldwide are led by women.

A larger fraction of UK businesses with B-corp status are led by women (19.7%), but still less than a fifth.

“We started 12 months ago. This is not just ticking the box, these are our values. This is how we live our business.

“We are alongside these massive companies and we’re this a wee tiny company with 15 people.

“We’ve ticked all the boxes that these big companies are doing and that, to me, was a proud moment.”

The awards are stacking up for both Sheryl and her company, after a trophy-laden 2022.

Most recently, Appetite for Business was named in the Sunday Times Best Places to Work 2023 list, alongside household names such as David Lloyd Leisure, FatFace and Pizza Express.

It was also highly commended in the Best Places to Work for Women category.

“Winning awards is amazing, but what does that mean? What does that mean that we can now do for our customers? What does that mean that we can now do for our community?”

Not content with stopping yet, the 51-year-old added: “I’m very ambitious for the team. I don’t think we ever take time to think about what we’ve done because we just want to keep moving forward.

“I think it’s for myself, it’s never enough. It’s a mindset for me. I’m very driven to make a difference.”

Sheryl’s rise is even more remarkable given her constant battle with her own health.

“I’ve almost died three times,” she revealed.

“I’ve got this underlying condition called MCAS (mast cell activation syndrome), which I’m only starting to talk about now because not many people know about it, but it’s becoming very diagnosed.

“Basically, your body has anaphylactic responses to anything; food, perfume, you don’t know what the trigger is going to be, it just goes off.

“I was also diagnosed with lupus when I was 15 and I was basically told at 21, in a hospital bed, that I was going to die, which is pretty harsh when you’re on your own.

“But I found my own way. I found some modifications, I found out what was triggering it and then I sought some alternative things to help me.

“I had a heart operation when I was 31, and I was told I had 70% chance of death, 50% chance of a stroke. But I got through it.

“I’ve always been brought up to try. And if you fail then at least you tried. But if you don’t try the new, then you’ll never know if you can make or not.”

The health complications didn’t stop there.

Just as the country was recovering from the pandemic, Sheryl tested positive for CV19.

Since then, she’s struggled with long covid, which affects around two million people in the UK.

“My colleagues said to me the other day that I’m a machine, but for me, it’s important I show up for them, for my customers and it’s important that I show up for myself.

“It comes down to a positive mindset and attitude. You can sink or you can swim and I’m going to swim.

“And I want to keep swimming until I can’t.”



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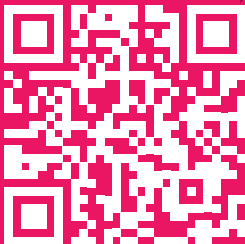


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CHAS renews commitment to families with Loganair partnership

Children's Hospices Across Scotland (CHAS) has renewed its partnership with the UK's largest regional airline Loganair for a third consecutive year, enabling the delivery of specialist nursing care to families who live in remote locations and are unable to travel to the charity's two children's hospices.

As official airline partner for CHAS, Loganair has been working with the organisation since 2021 to provide free flights across its network for the charity's care team, allowing them to provide specialist support to families in areas such as the Highlands and Islands. By providing support with increasing medical and social complexity, the ambition of CHAS is that no one faces the death of their child alone.

In total, Loganair has raised more than £17,000 for the charity through various fundraising activities from Kiltwalk, Santa Dash and a Forth Rail Bridge abseil to raffles and corporate events. Members of staff have also volunteered more than 160 hours, spending several busy days working in the gardens of Robin House in Balloch. Their contribution has ranged from planting and decorating a Christmas tree last December to sprucing up the grounds by weeding and planting fresh bulbs in the Mediterranean Garden in Spring.

Work begins on new Cruyff Court

Work has started on a new Cruyff Court – an outdoor community sports facility – in Aberdeen.

Local contractor, Hunter Construction Limited, was appointed as the main contractor last month for the court, which will be built in Tillydrone and is expected to be completed in Spring 2024.

The court is the city's third and has been named in honour of Aberdeen FC's legendary skipper Willie Miller, who led the team to the Cup Winners' Cup victory over Real Madrid in 1983.

Ashtead Technology signs rental agreement with Reach Robotics

International subsea rental equipment and solutions specialist Ashtead Technology has signed a rental agreement with Reach Robotics, an Australian-based manufacturer of industry-leading all-electric robotic arm solutions for inspection class ROVs.

Under the terms of the agreement, Ashtead Technology will be the exclusive rental partner for all Reach Robotics manipulators which enable inspection, maintenance and repair tasks usually reserved for more expensive work-class ROVs.

Brett Lestrage, Ashtead Technology's Regional Director for Europe, said: "This exclusive agreement with Reach Robotics strengthens Ashtead Technology's existing inventory of manipulator equipment, allowing us to offer a more comprehensive range of solutions to support our customers' ROV tooling applications. It also demonstrates our ongoing commitment to the global offshore energy market by offering the latest and most advanced technologies to support our customers' projects worldwide.

"We look forward to seeing these manipulators performing in the field and delivering excellent results for our customers."

Montrose Port Authority reaches £360,000 donation milestone

Montrose Port Authority has reached an impressive milestone of donating £360,000 to local charities and social enterprises over the past three years after its most recent contribution of £10,000 to Montrose Community Trust.

This notable donation of £10,000 to Montrose Community Trust allows them to supercharge their essential work which enhances the lives of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of the local community.

Tom Hutchison, Chief Executive at Montrose Port Authority, said: "As a trust port, community is at the heart of everything we do. We are really proud of our contribution towards local charities and social enterprises in the past three years as we want to have a positive impact on our community.

"We are delighted to offer our support to Peter and his team at Montrose Community Trust as we've seen for ourselves the real difference that this funding can make to so many lives in Montrose and the wider Angus region.

"This year has been challenging for many people, and the work that the Trust is doing is vital to ensuring that we come together as a community to support one another."

TAQA UK'S COMMUNITY FOCUS

SUPPORTING LOCAL

TAQA UK has been committed to following good neighbour principles ever since it began UK North Sea oil and gas operations 15 years ago.

It has a focus on supporting organisations which contribute to the welfare of the people and environment of the north-east of Scotland and its workforce has collectively raised over £500,000 for TAQA UK's nominated charities of the year – selected annually by its people – since 2014.

During 2023/24 TAQA UK employees are supporting Archway – a parent-led local charity based in Aberdeen providing care and support to children and adults with learning disabilities and their families from across Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.

Archway supports almost 200 children, young people and adults with learning disabilities. Many have complex needs and associated physical disabilities and caring for them is a lifelong responsibility. The youngest service user is seven and the oldest over 70.

Janine Davies, Fundraising Manager at Archway says, "Archway was the dream of a group of parents caring for children with disabilities who knew the type of service that would help them, but it didn't exist. They were told it was impossible,



Above:

More than 50 TAQA UK runners took part in Run Balmoral 2023, raising over £4,000 for local charity Archway

but they'd faced harder challenges, so they decided to set up their own charity and 33 years later here we are."

As well as providing two permanent care homes, residential respite, and supported living services, Archway also provides care at home support and a weekly social club. The charity also operates three charity shops in Aberdeen, Stonehaven and Banchory, which as well as raising vital funds for the charity, provide volunteer opportunities for some of the people the charity support.

Janine adds, "While our core services are covered by statutory sources, we have to fundraise for everything else. And that includes all the things that make life better for the people that need our services.

Things like a wheelchair adapted minibus, outings, activities, special equipment, sensory environments and the Christmas party all need extra support.

"That's why we're so grateful to our supporters, to those that help raise funds and also volunteer, as without them, we wouldn't be able to give the people who use our services such a good experience and better quality of life."

As well as supporting Archway TAQA UK has created a Community Fund to help organisations which are directly addressing the immediate challenges arising from the cost-of-living crisis as well as other community-based priorities.

The funding is intended to help community groups and charities purchase new equipment, implement new initiatives or fund events taking place in the short to medium term (within six months).

Organisations can request an application form to apply for up to £1,000 by emailing CommunityFundUK@taqa.com.

The Community Fund is part of a wider CSR effort that also extends to support for numerous educational and environmental organisations. These range from initiatives which promote STEM subjects among young people to projects which protect, enhance and promote the local environment.



Above:

Ross enjoys some creative time at Archway Dyce

THAT'S WHY WE'RE SO GRATEFUL TO OUR SUPPORTERS, TO THOSE THAT HELP RAISE FUNDS AND ALSO VOLUNTEER, AS WITHOUT THEM, WE WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO GIVE THE PEOPLE WHO USE OUR SERVICES SUCH A GOOD EXPERIENCE AND BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE.

Business lessons I've learned



Gita Klovane,
Marketing Manager, Costco Aberdeen

What does your company do that others don't?

Keep our hot dog prices the same since 1985!

At Costco we place great importance on our employees and strive to foster long relationships with them. Our primary objective is to cultivate long-term connections with our workforce, recognising their invaluable contributions to our success. The unique membership model used at Costco also enables us to concentrate our efforts on devising strategies aimed at consistently delivering cost-effective products to our esteemed members. By embracing this approach, we ensure that our members enjoy unparalleled value and enjoy substantial savings on their purchases.

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

Keeping the prices low during inflation and the current economical climate. Sustainability is also a challenge to work on as Costco

recognises their part in doing for the environment, and how they can constantly improve as a large business that presumably creates a lot of waste, however less waste due to packaging being larger and in bulk. Costco also plans to reduce its Global Warming Potential (GWP) by 30% by 2030.

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

Recognising that you do not have as much time as you think you do. Embracing this sense of urgency has helped me promptly address issues in real-time and allows myself to maintain a steady pace of work and effectively navigate the ever-changing landscape of demands and priorities.

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

It has been crucial to get rid of any fear about asking questions, particularly when transitioning into a new role within the company.

Quick fire round

What was your first job?

Farm work. Picking fruit.

When would you like to retire?

To be honest, I actually enjoy working but I will go tomorrow if I win the lottery (that I never actually buy).

What did you have for breakfast?

An omelette and some avocado. Pretty boring.

Who, or what, inspires you?

My grandma. She taught me the value of good manners, hard work and how to love endlessly not only people but everything that you do. I owe who I am to her.

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

Catcher in the Rye. It is one of my favourite books and I love the way it uses humour and sarcasm, to enlighten the mood of the overall topic. I can read it over and over again.

Seeking clarification or guidance from others is not indicative of weakness but rather demonstrates a proactive approach to learning and growth. It opens a dialogue between people which encourages knowledge-sharing between people and reflects of not only personal growth but also collective growth. This is largely inspired by my superiors who have given unwavering support to me.

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

Securing my marketing role at Costco! It's quite comical to reflect on my humble beginnings as a cafe assistant in Costco considering when I began work at Costco my grasp of the English language was, well, let's just say rather limited. But lo and behold, here I am now, crafting this eloquent message! It really is a testament to the incredible growth I've experienced during my time here but also a reminder that no matter where you start, with hard work and determination, you can achieve anything.



Raeburn Christie Clark & Wallace LLP acquires Mackie & Dewar Solicitors

Leading Aberdeen and North-east Legal Firm, Raeburn Christie Clark & Wallace LLP (RCCW) has announced the purchase of Aberdeen based law practice Mackie & Dewar.

Specialising in Private Client matters and Residential Conveyancing, Mackie & Dewar has hitherto also carried out

a variety of other legal work including Criminal and Family Law.

Partner Alistair Marshall will join RCCW as a Consultant focusing on Residential Conveyancing and Private Client matters. Alistair will oversee the smooth transition of the business to RCCW's head office at 12-16 Albyn Place, Aberdeen.

Mr. Marshall stated: "As a full-service law firm, with expertise in Residential Conveyancing and Private Client matters, RCCW is an ideal match for our business as our strengths are very much aligned. The agreement will ensure that our clients will continue to enjoy the first-class service we have provided with a firm that shares our values and legal heritage. In addition, our clients will benefit from access to the wider range of legal services that RCCW can provide as a full-service LLP, not only in Aberdeen but across their branch network of five offices in the North-East. Clients will also have access to independent financial service advice from the Financial Services team within the firm."

Callum McDonald, Managing Partner at RCCW, stated: "We are delighted to take aboard the business of Mackie & Dewar. The two firms both have long histories, shared expertise and shared values. This acquisition fits well with our long-term growth strategy."

He added: "Alistair Marshall is a highly accomplished and well-regarded Solicitor, as well as being a close and long-standing friend. We are honoured that the firm of Mackie and Dewar has chosen to entrust its business to us and look forward to welcoming both Alistair and the private clients of Mackie and Dewar to our firm."

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NHS Grampian consultant wins prestigious surgeons award

An NHS Grampian consultant has been given a prestigious award for his work in the field of urology.

Professor James N'Dow was given the St Peter's medal, by the British Association of Urological Surgeons, to recognise his work in moving the speciality forward.

James said: "I'm very grateful to have received this. It came as a bit of a surprise, I never worked thinking I'd win this award, it's not something that was on my radar. I never understood what having imposter syndrome meant - but at 57-years-old I realise how incredible this is.

"It's a great recognition of all the work that goes in from all urology staff at NHS Grampian and those involved with UCAN. I do everything with others, I don't work on my own. I very much hope they all take as much pride as I do in this award."

activpayroll relocates to new HQ, enhancing its workspace for the future

activpayroll is delighted to announce the official opening of its new headquarters in the heart of Aberdeen's historic West End.

The move to the offices at Blenheim Gate marks a new chapter in the company's history and comes hot on the heels of their acquisition of acclaimed global mobility company, LIMES International.

The move to Blenheim Gate in Aberdeen comes after a successful 20 years based in the Cults Business Park. activpayroll has offices across the globe, allowing the company to deliver an exceptional customer experience to their customers wherever they are located.

Cala's highly anticipated Burnland Meadows development launches at Westhill

Cala's latest development, Burnland Meadows, which sees the housebuilder return to sought-after town of Westhill, has launched.

The new development, which brings the high-quality new build homes that Cala is known for in the North-east with innovative sustainability and biodiversity features, has launched off plan sales from the homebuilder's Craibstone Estate sales suite in Aberdeen.

Burnland Meadows will offer an exclusive collection of 38 four- and five-bedroom detached homes, set in semi-rural surroundings whilst only being a short commute to Aberdeen city centre. All home styles will be part of the award-winning homebuilder's Light and Space Collection, ensuring flexible living for a variety of buyers, in particular growing families.

RGU Professor crowned Academic of the Year in national awards

A Robert Gordon University (RGU) Professor who specialises in Artificial Intelligence and machine learning has been named Academic of the Year at an esteemed UK-wide awards ceremony.

Professor Eyad Elyan of RGU's School of Computing won the national accolade at the Innovate UK Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) Awards 2023 for his role in leading a transformational KTP project with Aberdeen-based inspection specialists AISUS Offshore.

VSA annual Best of Care Ball raises over £120,000

The 'A Whole New World' themed winter ball, supported by principal sponsor Ithaca Energy, was hosted by Scottish actor Jordan Young who stars in River City and Scots Squad. 350 guests danced the night away and helped raised over £120,000.

Sue Freeth, CEO of VSA, expressed her appreciation, stating: "Our annual ball is one of our major fundraising events and enables us to continue to provide the best of care to the city of Aberdeen and the North-east, changing the lives of many vulnerable children and adults. We are thrilled with the funds raised as a result of the event, kindly supported by Ithaca Energy, and would like to extend our thanks to everyone involved - from our board and team to our corporate supporters, guests and volunteers. It really is a huge, combined effort which we work on across the year."

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Retirement parks are the perfect solution to the shortage of affordable homes for the elderly

Vicki Roddie,
Park Manager,
Miller Parks



Growing up in Aberdeen, throughout my whole life I have seen a massive change in the housing situation. Along with prices being higher than ever, you just can't seem to get a bungalow these days for an affordable price. Too many people are generally frightened to take on high price mortgages due to uncertainty in interest rates and all the other price increases involved.

Producing affordable homes in Aberdeen for over 50's or people with specific needs could be the catalyst to increasing footfall to the city, along with addressing the financial challenges that may come with retirement in such an uncertain era.

Miller Parks are a family run business that started their first high spec retirement park nearly 20 years ago in Elgin. Due to high demand and the great success of the first park, have recently expanded to Newmachar and Kinloss.

They look to prepare people approaching retirement age by getting them settled into a forever home, taking away most of the headache by assisting with the end-to-end process of the purchase and specification allowing them to soon after enjoy the perks of retirement.

Having worked for Miller Parks over the last three years, I've picked up on many benefits that moving to a retirement park will provide.

The parks are run in a way that reduces the costs of overheads like heating, electricity and council tax, providing more certainty on monthly outgoings. Monthly meter readings are taken by the park and billed to each resident, making sure you only pay for what you use.

The grounds are well maintained with grass being cut regularly, gardens being groomed and other various touch-ups throughout the year, allowing residents to relax with very little upkeep.

Approaching retirement for some can free up a lot more time, sometimes leaving many feeling lonely and with not much to do.

Living within a retirement park introduces you to a likeminded community which can be great for finding new friends, starting new activities and great for improving mental health.

All people moving to within the park have to be approved by the park owners, which provides a safer environment to live in along with knowing who your neighbours are.

I'd live more worry free if I knew someone close to me was living in one of these parks.

It's time we start to embrace and welcome more retirement parks to the area, making it easier for families to downsize, freeing up more funds and enjoying a little more financial security.

"Great option all round" we at Miller Parks say.

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Pupils celebrate first day at new multi-million-pound school

St Margaret's School for Girls is proud to share exciting news about former pupil, Lucy Wong. Lucy, from the class of 2011, has been awarded a prestigious scholarship to study at the University of Oxford.

Lucy has worked for a global energy company since completing her undergraduate degree in Mechanical Engineering at the Robert Gordon University. After five years in the workplace Lucy is returning to university to undertake an MBA at the Saïd Business School, University of Oxford, with plans to move into the Cleantech sector.

For current pupils, Lucy reflects and shares her advice: "17-year-old-me would not have believed I would get the chance to study at Oxford. This experience has reminded me that with hard work and determination, the sky's the limit! Take advantage of every opportunity to learn and grow, meet new people and don't be afraid of change - growth happens outside your comfort zone."

Lucy will be undertaking her studies as a Forté Fellowship Scholar. Forté Fellowships are prestigious, competitive awards designed to launch women into successful careers. The scholarship is awarded based on academic merit, professional achievement and a desire to act as a role model and to become an ambassador for the Business School.

Lucy continued: "I am fortunate to attend SBS as a Forté Fellowship Scholar. The Forté Foundation is a community of motivated and inspiring women who are not afraid to challenge the status quo. I am excited to continue my encouragement and empowerment of Women in STEM with them by my side. I am proud to share that for the first time, the Oxford SBS MBA cohort is 51% female. I am excited to face new challenges, meet diverse minds from all over the world and ready myself to make a mark in the clean tech space."



New £1million playpark for Hazlehead

A new £1million playpark which will be designed to cater for all ages of youngsters is to be built in Hazlehead Park.

The massive new structure will be located at the site of the current playpark and will include works to the surrounding areas including drainage.

Councillor Miranda Radley, convener of the Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee, said: "We are delighted that one of our biggest parks in the city is to have a new playpark.

"I'm sure local children in Hazlehead as well as those from around the city who come to visit one of our most-loved parks will enjoy the new playpark."

Project support comes from a Scottish Government and Convention of Scottish Local Authorities £50million fund for the refurbishment of children's play parks.

ISN Solutions on the move in Aberdeen

ISN Solutions, a managed IT service provider, has relocated its Aberdeen headquarters to Neo House on Riverside Drive.

Commenting on the move, Neil Burr, Commercial Manager said: "The new office at Neo House is perfectly suited to our business needs, in terms of facilities and location. The central base is ideal for supporting our local clients in the city and shire, whilst the building itself is a modern, welcoming environment for our team and visitors alike.

"In addition to our dedicated office, the shared Neospace facilities are excellent, providing a mixture of both flexible, collaborative, and private areas for our whole team to make use of. We are looking forward to welcoming clients to the office and meeting other members of the Neospace community, to raise awareness of the specialised and tailored IT services that we offer, and the benefits that we can bring to them."

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Positive news on potential benefits as Aberdeenshire wind farm proposal enters planning

A Section 36 application has been submitted by RES to Scottish Ministers for a 16-turbine wind farm proposal at Hill of Fare, near Banchory.

The project, which is located approximately 6km north of Banchory, went public in August 2022 as a 17-turbine design with 250m tall turbines. Following detailed site assessment work and extensive public consultation on the proposal, during which RES reported record levels of feedback, the project was later revised to a 16-turbine layout with a mix of 180m and 200m tip heights.

The design utilises powerful modern turbines to deliver an installed capacity of 105.6MW meaning that the wind farm will be capable of generating enough clean, low-cost electricity for around 101,000 homes each year and reducing carbon emissions by approximately 69,000 tonnes each year within the grid-mix of fossil fuel, nuclear and renewable generation.

Hill of Fare Wind Farm is also predicted to deliver £4.4 million of inward investment to the local area in the form of jobs, employment and use of local services during the construction and first year of operation as well as around £50 million in business rates to Aberdeenshire Council during its operational life cycle.

Gavin Shirley, Development Project Manager at RES, added: "Once operational, a tailored community benefit package for the local area will become available, which – based on the 105.6MW proposal – will be worth £528,000 each year or £26.4 million over the project's lifetime. This package may include RES' unique Local Electricity Discount Scheme (LEDS), which offers an annual discount to the electricity

bills of those properties closest to the wind farm, something that has received strong interest from the community."

"The design of this proposal has been partly shaped by our public consultation, which exceeded the minimum pre-application consultation requirements, and we are grateful to everyone who took the time to engage with us and share their views. Overall, we believe we have a well-designed project that could deliver significant benefit to the area, contribute to net zero targets, enhance security of energy supply and help towards tackling the cost of living crisis and the climate emergency."

The planning submission also includes a proposed cultural heritage walking trail involving designated pathways and interpretation boards to link key heritage assets in the local area.

Furthermore, RES has been working with the landowner to explore other potential opportunities to support access and recreation across the site, including potentially renovating the old shooting lodge as a place of shelter and visitor information and creating car-parking facilities for the Hill of Fare.

The Scottish Government has a target of increasing operational onshore wind capacity across Scotland from 9GW to 20GW by 2030 to meet net zero targets.

This is a substantial increase and will require a significant deployment of onshore wind to meet demand for green, low-cost, low-carbon electricity.

MEET THE



Dr Astrid Bendomir, MD, MRCOG, MSc, MFOM, AMED, Occupational Physician,
Director,
Assured Occupational Health

WHEN WAS YOUR BUSINESS ESTABLISHED?

Assured Occupational Health was established in 2015 at the New Machar Business Park before moving to our current location 2 Thistle Road, Dyce right next to Aberdeen Airport.

WHAT DOES YOUR BUSINESS DO?

Assured Occupational Health specialises in providing professional medical services to the onshore and offshore industry. Our services include, HSE Diving Medicals, OGUUK Medicals, ENG1 (MCA) Medicals, Wind Turbine Medicals, HGV & Driving Medicals, Health Surveillance (according to your needs), and Travel Health Clinic. I am happy to work with companies to design individual packages for company-specific needs.

WHAT SORT OF COMPANIES DO YOU DO BUSINESS WITH?

As an occupational health provider, we work with all industries that have a duty of care towards their employees. We are specialists in providing HSE Diving Medicals, ENG1 (MCA) Medicals, and OGUUK Medicals in particular.

AND THE BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY?

Opportunities are unlimited, and alongside the regular services that we already provide, is an increasing

demand from employers and employees working in the renewable energy sector. It is a growing industry and as an occupational health provider, it's a very interesting industry to engage with.

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

I am a passionate and dedicated occupational health physician. My special interests are in Diving Medicine (AMED), Maritime Medicine (MCA), and oil and gas industry-related medicine. Having years of experience in a wide range of occupational health services including occupational health consultations, specialised medicals such as airside driving, HGV driving, ionizing radiation, lead, asbestos, and hand-arm vibration. I also work as a medical advisor to oil and gas offshore industries. In my line of work daily, I meet unique and inspiring people from all walks of life and understand how they manage their working lives including their physical and mental well-being.



Tom Murdoch,
Managing Director,
Brimmond

WHEN WAS YOUR BUSINESS ESTABLISHED?

Brimmond was founded in 1996 by my Dad - Alistair Murdoch. The business started life in a small 185m2 lock-up in Dyce with a team of nine. Fast forward to today, and we have a team of 46, the majority of whom are based at our 2.5 acre site in Kintore, where we now have a 600m2 office and a 1970m2 workshop.

WHAT DOES YOUR BUSINESS DO?

Brimmond specialises in the design, manufacture, rental and service of lifting, mechanical and hydraulic equipment for a range of industries from our purpose-built base in Kintore. We have built an incredibly strong reputation for delivering the highest quality equipment and service.

WHAT SORT OF COMPANIES DO YOU DO BUSINESS WITH?

Our core client base is within oil and gas, but in more recent years we have increasingly delivered projects within marine, defence and aquaculture. Whether its fish farms interested in our recently launched NetJetTM high pressure pump unit or equipment spreads for windfarm installation vessels, we are certainly never bored!

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

At this exact point in time, growing our team in a sustainable yet rapid time frame is our biggest challenge. We

have recently launched a recruitment campaign to take on seven new full-time staff positions - mainly workshop based technical roles.

AND THE BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY?

Capitalising on the renewed realisation that oil and gas is key to a sustainable energy transition, whilst Aberdeen also leads the way in being an offshore renewable energy hub.

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

I am most proud of the reputation our team has built over the past 27 years. When you hear people speaking about Brimmond, they always comment on the quality and reliability of our equipment, and the professionalism of our staff. Throughout the entire business, from our office to workshop teams, the culture we have is one of trust, pride and hard graft.

MEMBERS



Carla Frei,
Sales Manger,
Hampton by Hilton Aberdeen

WHEN WAS YOUR BUSINESS ESTABLISHED?

February 2017

WHAT DOES YOUR BUSINESS DO?

We offer accommodation in the airport area. We have 155 modern bedrooms with an onsite fitness centre and restaurant.

WHAT SORT OF COMPANIES DO YOU DO BUSINESS WITH?

We have a variety of guests that stay for example, families going on holiday, oil and gas clients and our very loyal Hilton Honors members.

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

The squeeze of the cost of living is a very big challenge, with rising wage and utility costs to name a few. Also, the uncertainty of the North Sea and lack of varied markets in the airport area.

AND THE BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY?

Lies within political decisions made for the North-east.

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

Providing amazing customer service and the strong relationships I have with our clients.

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

Meeting other members at events and growing my network throughout Aberdeen.



Sean Stewart,
Electrical Director,
North East Services

WHAT DOES YOUR BUSINESS DO?

We are multi-award winning providers of electrical and plumbing services for domestic, commercial and industrial customers, across a variety of industries. We are NICEIC and Gas Safe Registered. As part of our commitment to sustainable energy solutions, we are excited to announce the upcoming addition of solar panel installation services. Harnessing the power of the sun, we aim to provide eco-friendly and cost-effective energy solutions to further benefit our valued customers and the environment.

WHAT SORT OF COMPANIES DO YOU DO BUSINESS WITH?

Our skilled team have a combined experience of over 70 years. Our know-how extends across a diverse range of projects from small, simple installations to larger complex works with multiple sites and types of buildings including graded, listed and old buildings. We deal with a variety of companies including letting agents, landlords, retail and retail parks, restaurants and hotels, fish houses, doctors, dentists, schools and colleges, supermarkets, offices,

manufacturing, warehousing and storage, oil and gas service companies on and offshore.

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

Recruiting skilled electricians.

AND THE BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY?

Since merging we are now able to handle larger projects - electrical, plumbing and solar. This in turn helps our clients by having one reliable contractor to complete their project, saving them time and money.

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

The support from the AGCC team has been invaluable, especially Suzanne Todd. The ongoing help offered helps businesses to flourish and grow. I would definitely recommend joining the Chamber to other businesses.

WHEN WAS YOUR BUSINESS ESTABLISHED?

The business was established 2016. In August 2022, due to an increase in demand for additional services, North East Electrical and Premier Plumbing merged.



Laura Ross,
Estate Agency Manager,
Ledingham Chalmers Estate Agency

Residential property round-up — is now a good time to sell?

Optimism interest rates may have peaked. Average sale prices around valuation. Uncertainty in terms of inflation and the commodity price.

Combined, these statements illustrate the multi-faceted nature of the North-east housing market: perfectly demonstrating why people are finding the decision to buy, sell, or stay put more complex than it was, even a couple of years ago.

Laura Ross, who recently moved into the estate agency manager role at Ledingham Chalmers Estate Agency (LCEA) says there is promising activity in the residential market — with good deals to be done — but that uncertainty has, unsurprisingly, given both buyers and sellers food for thought.

The Registers of Scotland Property Market Report 2023 says while the average price in 2022/23 in the city was £171,330 — below the 2014/15 peak of £214,519 — the residential property sales market value remains the third highest in Scotland after Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Mrs Ross said: “The reality is the local market is holding up relatively well.

“Homes are still selling, the easing of inflation means there’s a degree of optimism in the mortgage market and the sale prices we’ve seen at LCEA this year are consistently higher than the area’s average.”

For example, she says in September 2023, the average sale price of a city home was £157,429 and £203,043 for

a suburban property, whereas the LCEA averages were £195,107 and £243,318 respectively.

What kind of homes are selling?

Mrs Ross adds that, as ever, homes needing very little work remain popular with buyers.

She said: “Given the cost of living, people have less income to spend on, for example, refurbishing properties, so we’re seeing purchasers predominantly look for homes that need very little work.

“In terms of property type and location, homes with the lowest average time on the market are mid-size properties with two or three bedrooms. Popular areas to buy include the city centre, Bridge of Don, Westhill, Portlethen and Banchory.

“Aberdeenshire towns like Banchory have consistently done well over the years; however, with many businesses now offering hybrid working, clients are telling us they’re willing to move further out of the city centre than they might have before because they have that option of working from home for part of the week.

“This means lower commuting costs too, which is particularly helpful at the moment when budgets are stretched.”

Mrs Ross adds recent examples of homes going under offer quickly include a two-bed home in Bridge of Don (a week. ASPC figures show the average time on market for a two-bed detached home in Bridge of Don is 151 days) and a four-bed, seven public room home in Ballater (three working days. ASPC’s statistics show the average time on market for a four-bed detached home in Ballater is 111 days).

The mortgage picture

For people buying, Martin Williams, independent financial advisor with Ledingham Chalmers Financial, said mortgage lenders were quick to reduce fixed price products following the Bank of England’s hold on interest rates in September. He adds the average five-year fixed rate is now around 5%.

Mr Williams said: “This shows lenders feel interest rates are close to — or have reached — their peak and are trying to attract customers back to the housing market. That’s positive, but we have to bear in mind the cost of borrowing is still more expensive than it was at the end of 2021 when the average two-year, fixed-rate deal was around 2.3%.”

He adds existing homeowners looking to move or remortgage with a large deposit of around 40% of the property’s value, or a lot of equity in their home, will be the ones most likely to be able to access the most favourable deals.

In conclusion

Mrs Ross concludes: “We can take a degree of reassurance from the statistics as well as the signs of optimism we see in the market.

“Of course, we can only wait and see what happens with inflation, interest rates and mortgage deals, but for now keenly priced, well-presented North-east properties are selling well.”



Rubberatkins celebrates 35 years of business

Aberdeen based manufacturing company Rubberatkins, is celebrating 35 years of business and marked the occasion with the official opening of their new manufacturing facility in Conroe, Texas.

Rubberatkins has supplied the oil and gas industry with reliable, high performance sealing solutions growing to become the leader in the design and development of rubber and plastic components for the oil and gas and space industries.

Aberdeen has served as the company's sole manufacturing hub since 1988, with the first global sales starting in the 90's to North America which was followed up by establishing a sales team in Houston. Further global expansion followed with sales offices in Calgary, Dubai, Singapore and Shenzhen.

Nick Atkins, Founder and Managing Director, commented: "The expansion has been driven by the demand of our US customers to have the, 'Made in Texas,' stamp on our products. Our customers are extremely supportive and are excited to see us manufacturing on their doorstep in the US. Further investment is planned early 2024 to meet the anticipated demand."



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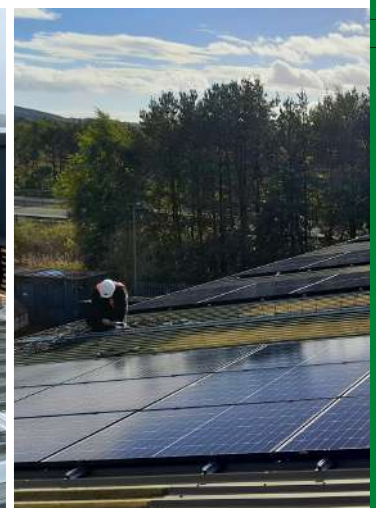
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Blackburn Business Park
Aberdeen
AB21 0PS

+44 (0) 1224 798600

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New Aberdeen Market approved by councillors

Construction is poised to begin on the new £50million Aberdeen Market set to be at the heart of the Granite City's regeneration.

The project, which has been carefully planned for a number of years, was unanimously given the go-ahead by councillors on Aberdeen City Council's (ACC) Planning Development Management Committee.

Operated by Aberdeen's McGinty group, it's expected that the city centre hotspot be open in 2025.

A modern-day Borough Market

The latest development follows a number of improvements made to the city, including a new art gallery and refurbished Union Terrace Gardens.

Speaking following the approval of the plans, Russell Borthwick, Chief Executive of Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce, said: "The City Centre Masterplan vision is something we all need to buy into, even if we personally don't like every detail of every project. We need to move into the 21st century and create a place people want to visit.

"So far, we already have Marischal Square - a civic square to be proud of, Provost Skene's House, the refurbished Music Hall, our incredible new Art Gallery and Union Terrace Gardens.

"Next, we'll get a really cool space that will be a modern-day version of Borough Market in London. Somewhere where our local artisan food and drink producers can find an audience. A place for independent bars, café's and restaurants to cut their teeth, all coordinated by an operator

that knows and cares about Aberdeen."

Continuing, Mr Borthwick said: "It will also connect Union St more easily with the rail and bus stations, provide an outdoor events space and support regeneration of the Green and Merchant Quarter.

"It's big, iconic, placemaking projects like this that create confidence, drive more footfall and encourage the private sector to invest in the city centre.

"This is a significant investment by Aberdeen City Council - supported by UK Government levelling-up funding - at a time when public funds are stretched. It's building on the great progress being made by Our Union Street, Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce, Aberdeen Inspired and other partners.

"If you care about your home city, stop talking it doon and get yersels into toon!"

Breathing new life into Union Street

The £50million project will stand where the old marker and BHS once stood on the Granite Mile, while an open bridge will provide a walking route from Union Street to the Green.

The plans are for a food hall on the lower floor with up to 10 vendors to choose from, and bar run in collaboration with local brewery Fierce Beer.

A number of small retail spaces are also available, and the bar and a coffee shop will include an outdoor balcony will overlook The Green.

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Powering up a positive future for Peterhead

“If you can’t get this right in the North-east of Scotland, then where can you do it?”

That’s the mantra of SSE Thermal’s Project Director for the Peterhead Carbon Capture Power Station, Andrew Underwood.

The project is a key part of the Scottish Cluster, which was awarded long-overdue status in Track 2 of CCUS Cluster Sequencing this summer, having been in reserve status since 2021.

The proposed 910MW plant on the Aberdeenshire coast, which is also being developed by Equinor, would effectively replace the existing Peterhead Power Station.

It would capture up to 1.5 million tonnes of CO₂ each year, while providing vital flexible backup to Scotland’s growing renewables might.

But its potential deployment has been slowed, with the UK Government choosing to initially focus on projects in Teesside and the North-west of England.

“We know that all industrial regions need to be decarbonised and being a reserve cluster gave us real confidence that the Scottish Cluster would be at the front of the queue as the next cluster to be developed.

“We were always confident that we would get there. We have very much been looking at what projects should get away in what areas and we are thinking that this is a ‘when does it happen’ rather than a ‘if it happens’, because we’ve previously been nominated as a reserve.

“There is a lot of emotional investment and willing within the company to deliver a decarbonised power solution at the site,” said Andrew, who has been trying to do just that, on and off, for more than a decade.

“I’ve been involved with this specific iteration of the project for about two and a half years,” he added.

“I was also involved in the previous attempts to bring carbon capture to Peterhead, although this is a significantly different project, this is a brand-new build, whereas the previous one was a retrofit of the existing asset that’s already there.

“We are convinced as a company, and I am convinced personally, that this is the right thing to do to deliver net zero. Net zero has been a game changer, and the reality is we know we’ll need flexible power assets like Peterhead Carbon Capture if we’re to meet our targets as a country. And as a company, we have clear targets too.

Carbon capture technology will capture more than 90% of the carbon



When it’s cold, calm and clear, when the wind is not blowing, then you’re going to need, low- carbon, flexible assets to support the grid

emissions produced during the power generation process, preventing them from entering the atmosphere, before being transported and stored underground in depleted oil and gas fields.

“We’ve got a great supply chain that is really supportive of our ambitions and what we want to deliver, but at the same time we have to make sure that our development spend on the project is commensurate with our level of certainty.

“When it’s cold, calm and clear, when the wind is not blowing, then you’re going to need, low- carbon, flexible assets to support the grid, especially as we see moves away from things like the gas to increased electrification and electric cars.

“A plant like Peterhead Carbon Capture Power Station is going to contribute significantly towards net zero delivery.

“I feel quite strongly that you can’t decarbonise Scotland without delivering this project.”

The project in the North-east is the backbone of the Scottish Cluster, with developer Storegga expecting around 21,000 jobs to be created at peak.

That means more opportunities for the reskilling and upskilling of the thousands of oil and gas workers throughout the region.

“If you’ve got a mechanical engineer working in oil and gas then 95% of their skills are directly applicable to low-carbon jobs,” said Andrew.

“And it’s not a massive reskilling for those who are already skilled.

“If you’re an accomplished welder in oil and gas, for example, then what you need to do to be a welder in offshore wind or at a carbon capture

plant is very little. You might need to use slightly different materials, or you might have slightly different inspection routines, but the principles of being an accomplished welder are, again, 95% the same.”

Ensuring oil and gas workers are correctly reskilled, upskilled and moved into long-term renewable jobs is one of the great challenges of ensuring a successful energy transition, which Peterhead will be the heart of.

But Andrew reckons bigger employment challenges lay ahead.

“We have to attract younger people to want to work in these areas, that’s potentially where I see more of a challenge. Until low-carbon projects are actually being built and operated in the region, people are likely to look elsewhere for long-term career opportunities.”

However, progress is being made on that front.

“What we have found is that because of the net zero story and how we have tried to upskill people, we have got a diverse group of highly skilled graduates and apprentices coming through our doors. Hopefully we can create even more opportunities as the

project continues to develop.”

“We have a really big chance here,” he added.

“There’s CCS, CO2 transport and storage, offshore wind delivery, billions of pounds of capital investment that’s required to decarbonise and there’s going to be lots of highly, highly skilled people in the area. So as we help to deliver the energy transition from the North-east, we can also support the just transition with the region having a huge opportunity to become a low-carbon powerhouse.

SSE is currently awaiting the outcome of the planning submission for the proposed plant at Peterhead.

But progress has not stopped on the project. Andy said: “We’ve achieved a lot already.

“We’ve worked to get the technology into an even better place through our partnerships with Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Worley and Técnicas Reunidas, and we’ve worked with the Scottish Cluster and our supply chain to really drive things forward.

“We’re now getting ourselves absolutely ready to go, because we want to be ready to answer the bell. We’re constantly trying to put ourselves in that position.

“And I hope 2024 will be a massive year,” said Andrew.

“To meet the target of a decarbonised power system by 2035, the Government needs to be bringing forward more carbon capture projects at pace. Our expectation is that the Track 2 process will really kick off in earnest next year, so this time next year we could be in a very exciting place.

“The available storage capacities for CO2 and the expertise available mean that Peterhead should be up there in terms of a deliverable project.

“Not only with the decarbonisation, but it’s also delivering an asset that everyone is proud of and that delivers real benefits for the local economy.

“We want to be a great neighbour, we want to facilitate things in the Peterhead region and we want to contribute to delivering Scotland’s low-carbon objectives.

“We are very committed to trying to deliver that.”





Council placed in top ten for UK climate action progress

Aberdeen City Council placed in the top ten of single tier UK councils, and joint second in Scotland, in taking action on climate change, following an assessment by Climate Emergency UK.

Councils were assessed using Climate Action Scorecards, with Aberdeen scoring 55%, compared with the UK average of 35%. The top score went to Westminster City Council which scored 62%.

Aberdeen City Council Co-Leader Councillor Ian Yuill said: "The Council's high placing on the Climate Action Scorecards highlights the scale of action it has already taken. Much more though remains to be done.

"Every individual, business and organisation can play their part in tackling the climate and nature emergencies. We can all help make a real difference.

"One way individuals and organisations active in Aberdeen can show their commitment meeting the challenge of the climate and nature emergencies is to sign the Aberdeen Climate and Nature Pledge, committing to take action to help the city reach its climate and nature ambitions."

Net Zero, Environment and Transport Vice Convenor Councillor Miranda Radley added: "Tackling climate change not only affects the environment but also delivers social and economic benefits to the local economy, equity, and jobs. "Partnership working is the only way to achieve our ambitious climate goals. I am pleased that progress and collaboration has resulted in the Council to placing so highly on the Climate Action Scorecard."

Climate Emergency UK aims to measure the success of councils following their declarations to take action. The Climate Action Scorecards were launched in 2022, and in this second year scored councils using 91 questions across seven sections which are: Buildings and Heat; Transport; Planning; Governance and Finance; Biodiversity; Collaboration and Engagement; and Waste Reduction and Food.

ACE Winches boss calls on industry to invest more in young talent

Scottish engineering business ACE Winches has called on industry to invest more in training young people as it expands its own apprenticeship scheme.

The Aberdeenshire-based company has welcomed its very first foundation graduate, bringing the number of young people recruited as apprentices to around 300 over the last 30 years.

And Founder and CEO Alfie Cheyne, a marine engineering apprentice himself when he left school at 16, has called on all industry bosses to recognise the potential and invest in the next generation.

"It's a changing world and our youth are better equipped than ever to embrace modern technology and apply it to industry," he said.

"For over 30 years, ACE Winches has been recruiting school leavers and training them through our own award-winning apprenticeship scheme. As the energy industry evolves, new opportunities are emerging for both businesses and individuals' careers in conventional energy and renewables.

"Apprentices are our future, but few of the major companies are investing in them in the numbers needed. We have excellent schools and teachers in the north-east of Scotland and beyond, as well as our great colleges and universities, all of whom are preparing our youth for a future in industry.

"My first boss, Andy Kennedy, gave me a chance at Dauntless Engineering in Banff when I left school and I feel I have a responsibility to do the same."

ACE Winches' new foundation graduate scheme recruits an individual straight from school to split their time evenly between Robert Gordon University and ACE, completing a Graduate Apprenticeship in BEng (Hons) Engineering: Instrumentation, Measurement & Control in the process.

The latest foundation apprentice joins the company alongside eight new craft modern apprentices, three business modern apprentices and two engineering graduates.

"The addition of a further 14 young people starting off on their journey is an indication of our intention to continue to support the next generation," said Mr Cheyne.

"Many of our earlier ACE-trained apprentices and engineering graduates are now team leaders and business unit managers across the business. We have to make sure the company has a pipeline of future talent to support our ambitious growth plans.

"Our offshore service business has grown through our offering of experienced highly skilled multi-disciplined engineers and technicians, bolstered by our business support functions. We have a team of over 200 highly experienced individuals, who take on client challenges and transform them into creative, innovative, world-leading solutions."



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AAB appoints new Chief Executive marking the start of 'next chapter'

AAB Group has announced the appointment of Emma Lancaster as its new Chief Executive.

Emma will succeed Graeme Allan who has been at AAB for more than 16 years. Graeme will remain on the AAB Group Board of Directors and transition into the role of Group Executive Director, focusing on strategic partnerships and ongoing M&A activity.

Emma, a qualified accountant, has an exceptional track record in driving business growth through a people centric culture which will be invaluable to AAB Group which is set to continue its impressive growth journey targeting £100million annual revenue in 2024. She has more than 15 years Board level experience in CEO and CFO roles in private equity backed, international, people-based businesses in the business services and education sectors, most recently with Study Group, a leading provider of international education.

Whilst Emma will be based in AAB's London office, she will have an active presence across all AAB Group locations.

Commenting on Emma's appointment Graeme Allan said: "I'm delighted Emma has agreed to join the group and lead the next part of our journey. Her experience and people-centric focus makes her the perfect choice for AAB. Her diverse background and experience in driving growth will strengthen the senior leadership team. Emma is completely aligned with our number one value that "Nothing is more important than our people". I'm looking forward to working with Emma in the next phase of our exciting growth journey.

"Leading AAB Group has been an absolute privilege and helping to build the Group with such talented people is something I'm very proud of and look forward to continuing in my new role."

Emma Lancaster said: "I am proud to be joining AAB Group to lead the team through the next exciting chapter of growth. The Group has been founded and grown on strong values and as we continue to expand there will be endless opportunities for the businesses and individuals we work with as well as for our fantastic team delivering those services across the globe. I am delighted that I will be working with Graeme and the Board of Directors."

Craig International reaches 10th global location

Craig International has opened its tenth global base and its first in Australia. The procurement specialists to the global energy industry have invested in a new office in Perth, Western Australia to capitalise on the opportunities within the region's mining, energy and infrastructure sectors.

Opening the office on the back of a multi-million service agreement with an oil and gas major, Craig International expects to double its revenues in Australia in less than a year.

This office is the second new international base this year for Craig International, which is pursuing an ambitious global growth strategy. The company recently opened an office in Singapore to increase its reach into the fast-growing South East Asian energy market and immediately secured a five figure sum contract win with a major operator.



BrewDog teams up with Warner Bros. to launch 'Elf' beer

Aberdeenshire-based brewery BrewDog has launched its new festive beer, celebrating the 20th anniversary of one of the most popular Christmas movies of all time.

In collaboration with Warner Bros., BrewDog has launched 'Elf'.

It's described as a 'crisp and fresh 4.5% German-style pilsner', helping to spread some Christmas beer.

The limited-edition product is available on the company's website, in Tesco, or on British Airways flights.

James Watt, captain of BrewDog said: "We couldn't be more excited about our collaboration with Warner Bros., bringing the best of beer and Christmas films together.

"Don't be a cotton-headed ninny-muggins and enjoy our ultimate festive beer this Christmas. Cheers!"



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Shell LiveWIRE entrepreneurship programme launches

North-east businesses are being given the opportunity to support their growth through Shell LiveWIRE, a global entrepreneurship programme that is returning to Scotland 30 years after it was first founded.

Shell LiveWIRE is seeking small and medium enterprises who have a clear ambition for expansion but are experiencing hurdles on their journey.

The programme uses coaching and mentoring to help give participants the tools and confidence needed to progress; overcoming barriers, driving sales growth, customer volumes and ultimately expanding their workforce.

The first stage of LiveWIRE 2023-24 will target businesses in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, before expanding into the west of Scotland.

Now operating in 20 countries, this free initiative helps business founders and directors with key decision-making powers to access the skills, networks and resources required to drive innovation within their companies and beyond.

Shell has appointed business support organisation Elevator to deliver the Scottish relaunch of LiveWIRE. Elevator has more than 20 years' experience delivering business and economic support services through links with regional councils, Scottish and UK governments and a network of partners.

Fulkrum honoured with King's Award for Enterprise

Fulkrum, a leading provider of inspection, expediting, auditing and technical staffing services has been awarded the prestigious King's Award for Enterprise for International Trade. Presented by Prince Richard, Duke of Gloucester and Lord-Lieutenant of Northamptonshire, James Saunders Watson, the award recognises the substantial impact of Fulkrum's services worldwide.

The King's Award for Enterprise celebrates the outstanding success and significant contribution of businesses across the country, with Fulkrum receiving the coveted accolade in recognition for its achievements and contributions to international trade.

£2million contracts boosts Imrandd's UK operations

Aberdeen-based industrial data and engineering consultancy Imrandd, has reported its most significant six-month growth period. The firm has secured a record £2million in topsides asset integrity awards with new and existing clients, amplifying its agile data-driven intelligence services further across the UK.

The firm has won 11 contracts indicating a 27% increase in revenue in Q3 of 2023 compared to the same period last year. As a result, 13 data scientists and multi-discipline engineers have been recruited, ramping up its headcount to 63.

Established in 2015, the company specialises in industrial data solutions helping clients in energy and other sectors to make fast and efficient business decisions in line with commercial and ESG strategies.

Imrandd founder and CEO Innes Auchterlonie, said: "This record period of growth demonstrates the competitive edge our data solutions and expert engineering guidance is delivering. Particularly where there are facilities operating beyond their original life span, companies are seeking fast, optimal answers to harness their assets' performance safely and sustainably.

"R&D remains core to our strategy, and we continually reinvest 20% of our efforts into evolving the next generation of our propriety AI and digital software services to help our clients stay ahead of the curve. This has ensured we are well positioned to leverage our expertise to safeguard the effectiveness of our clients offshore and onshore assets as they navigate the energy transition."

Aberdeen wins gold in Britain in Bloom

Aberdeen has won gold in the prestigious Britain in Bloom competition.

The Aberdeen Communities Together bid won the award in the 'city' category, beating several other well-regarded entries. Tower Hamlets Council in London won the silver award in the same category, and the overall Britain in Bloom winner was Newcastle-under-Lyme.

The bid, which included Aberdeen City Council's environmental services and community groups across the city, were ecstatic with the win.

Aberdeen City Council In Bloom Champion Councillor Neil MacGregor said: "A huge congratulations to our environmental services staff and all the community groups involved in getting a gold for the city in the most prestigious community gardening competition in the UK.

"They have done a wonderful job of ensuring our parks and green spaces are at their best and contributing towards our beautiful city for everyone to enjoy.

"They are delighted with the win as it shows what all their hard work and effort has amounted to and the city congratulates them for the gold."



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Business lessons I've learned



Vikram Kavi,
Director, Thistle Dental Group

What does your company do that others don't?

We can offer the best treatment available in the North-east thanks to having the most advanced digital technology in dentistry. We pride ourselves on innovation and are diligent in striving to be at the forefront of dentistry without looking back.

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

Expanding our workforce has been very difficult since CV19. A lot of people have changed career path for multiple reasons and it is really difficult to find dental care professionals to fill a number of roles. We have also obviously had a significant financial hit since CV19.

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

One of the hardest things to learn has been that what you dish out, is not always what you receive back. Kindness, loyalty and standing

by someone else, isn't necessarily reciprocated and doesn't necessarily come back with a thank you.

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

To live by one's own standards, it doesn't matter what the conditions, or other people's opinions are. You need to be able to rest easy with yourself and who you are. My advice would be, notwithstanding lessons learnt, I would advise people to judge themselves by their own standards.

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

Being able to be one of the first people in the world to be able to offer what we call an "immediate definitive implant" treatment. Meaning in some cases, where conditions are all ideal, we can carry out full implant surgery in one appointment, including the replacement of the tooth/crown. Which eliminates the need for temporary dentures/bridges.

Quick fire round

What was your first job?
A labourer.

When would you like to retire?
Age 60.

What did you have for breakfast?
Eggs and a protein shake.

Who, or what, inspires you?
People who are hardworking, have a lot of gumption and stand up for what they believe in.

What's the last book you read/ film you saw?
Yuval Noah Harari "21 Lessons for the 21st Century".

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

That we could play to our strengths, which include inclusivity, research, and a strong emphasis on hard work.



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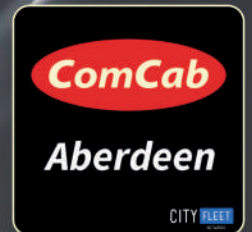
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BCC brings politicians together in push for export growth

The BCC has brought together an extraordinary group of politicians, diplomats, civil servants, businesses and Chambers to push for export growth.

They met at the House of Lords recently to discuss the BCC's Trade Manifesto, which is supported by logistics company WTA. It sets out a comprehensive list of steps to get more UK businesses, currently just 10%, involved in international trade.

Among those to contribute to the debate were the Minister of State for International Trade, Nigel Huddleston MP, and Shadow Minister for Exports, Afzal Khan MP.

They heard about recent survey data from the BCC that found:

1. The UK's picture on exports has been broadly static since the pandemic.
2. In Q3 of 2023, half of all SME exporters (49%) saw no change in overseas sales, and a quarter (25%) reported a decrease.
3. A larger proportion of SMEs are now regularly reporting decreased sales – with an average 10 percentage point rise since 2018.
4. It is almost five years (Q4 2018) since the proportion of firms reporting increased sales was higher than 30% – it was 26% in Q3 2023.

Shevaun Haviland, Director General of the BCC, said: "If our economy is to grow then we must export more, it's as simple as that. But the pandemic, supply chain disruption, Brexit, non-tariff trade barriers and global headwinds have all made this more difficult over the past few years.

"Yet firms that trade overseas, grow faster, pay better, and are more resilient. If the UK wants to remain one of the world's largest economies, then

we need more firms selling goods and services internationally.

"Our Manifesto sets out a long-term strategy on the key areas where the Government must focus if it wants to hit its target of £1tn of exports.

"Trade is constantly developing and there are real opportunities for a global Britain to exploit new markets as technology advances, net zero takes hold and the geopolitical landscape shifts.

"We are already a world-leader when it comes to digital trade, and we must lean more heavily into the opportunities that will provide.

"We also need to build a strategy to protect the UK's supply chains – the US, the EU and China are all investing £100bns in sustainable and low-carbon technology.

"We don't have that kind of money, but we do have great strengths – services, renewable energy, green finance, engineering, professional services, cutting edge manufacturing, food and drink exports, and R&D.

"We need to work with politicians, diplomats and businesses to put in place a framework that makes use of all the advantages the UK has, to keep us at the top table. The BCC is forecasting economic growth of just 0.4% in 2023, more international trade is the key to boosting that."

International Trade Minister Nigel Huddleston said: "When businesses export, they're more likely to succeed.

"UK exports are already on the rise – they were worth over £880billion in the year to August 2023, up 15% in current prices on the previous year. We are the second largest exporter of services in the world and the fifth largest exporter of goods and services overall, up from sixth in 2021.

"It's fantastic to see British businesses

being recognised for their world-class goods and services – we want them to be as ambitious as possible in their exporting strategies and will give them the tools they need to do it.

"I'm proud of the work we're doing to secure free trade agreements and remove trade barriers facing businesses, working closely with the BCC, and look forward to doing all we can to help British businesses export around the globe."

Shadow Minister for Exports, Afzal Khan, MP, said: "After a difficult few years, with the pandemic, soaring inflation and high interest rates, businesses are desperate to turn things around, boost exports and improve the UK's reputation as a great trading nation.

"Labour is committed to taking a leading role in driving exports, negotiating free trade agreements and making sure British businesses in every corner of the UK are seeing the economic benefits of better trading relationships."

Rochelle Sommer, CO-CEO of WTA, said: "It is an exciting time for UK companies to enhance their international trade. Exporting is a great strategic tool for growth and can provide robustness to profit and loss, as it can minimise seasonal peaks and troughs and protect your growth strategy from pockets of economic downturn.

"As well as encouraging and supporting the £1tn export target, this manifesto is committed to the digitisation of supply chains, something we feel passionately about at WTA.

"This digitisation was one of the key drivers for our partnership with the BCC, as we feel digitisation is what turns supply chains from transactional parts of a business to strategic, and it's where WTA can add the most value for our customers".



Tim MacLaren

Sword UK welcomes Tim MacLaren to lead the managed IT services business in Aberdeen. Tim brings a wealth of experience to help fine-tune and provide the strategic direction for the IT services Sword provides, leading its professionals to deliver scalable services that ensure service continuity for its customers.



Aimee Maitland, Alan Mitchell and Hannah Mutch

Developing the Young Workforce North East has announced three key appointments to support its goal of encouraging as many employers in the region to connect with and recruit young people. Aimee Maitland and Alan Mitchell have been promoted to Regional Lead roles, while Hannah Mutch returns from maternity leave to the newly created position of Programme Lead.



Cameron McCready

Home-Start Aberdeen is under new stewardship as Cameron McCready takes over as Chief Executive. A former Residential Service Manager for Aberdeen Cyrenians, Cameron brings a wealth of experience in the non-profit and community welfare sectors.



Karen Gatherum

Full-service legal firm Gilson Gray has appointed Karen Gatherum as a new Licensing Solicitor, bolstering its fast-growing corporate practice. Karen joins Gilson Gray from Ledingham Chalmers, where she specialised in licensing and planning.



Kelly Golightly

Global E&C has appointed Kelly Golightly as the company's HR Director. With an extensive background in senior HR leadership roles spanning over two decades in the energy sector, Kelly is set to shape the company's future in the realm of human resources.



Neil Burr

ISN Solutions has announced the appointment of Neil Burr as its new Commercial Manager. Based in Aberdeen, Neil will lead the sales function and help drive the strategic growth ambitions of the company. He joins ISN Solutions following a successful career spanning almost 40 years in B2B sales.



Steve Mitchell

STC INSISO, a leading provider of risk control and assurance software and services, has announced the appointment of Mr Steve Mitchell as its new Chief Financial Officer in the wake of significant growth.



Roy Buchan

Aberdeen Minerals announces the appointment of Roy Buchan as an independent Non-executive Director to its board. Mr Buchan is a prominent business leader in North-east Scotland with a career spanning over four decades in the energy, technology and infrastructure sectors.



Claire Jessiman

Aberdeenshire-based marketing and PR firm, Instinct, is pleased to announce the appointment of Claire Jessiman as Marketing and Communications Executive. Claire is skilled in client relations, communications, and social media, with a strong background as a self-employed Scottish food and travel blogger known as 'Foodie Quine'.



Reiss May and Finley Symon

SPACE FM, a division of Space Solutions, is delighted to welcome two new members to their growing team. Reiss May joins the facilities management consultancy team as an FM Consultant. Reiss is joined by Finley Symon, who starts in the newly created role of FM Business Development Support, playing a key position in supporting the continued growth and development of business across the North-east of Scotland.



Paul Simpson and Alexa Duncan

Well-Safe Solutions has strengthened its commercial team with the hiring of Paul Simpson as Business Development Manager. Paul, who is based at Well-Safe Solutions' global headquarters in Aberdeen, brings over 25 years of experience in global well intervention management, business development and operations to the role. Well-Safe Solutions are also adding carbon capture, usage and storage and geothermal project capabilities to their offering with the appointment of Alexa Duncan as the company's first Energy Transition Manager.



Filipa Lopes

C-SAM is excited to announce the newest addition to its team, Filipa Lopes, who will be taking on the role of 1st Level Support Specialist. With a passion for problem-solving, technology, and a unique combination of interests in fitness and gaming, Filipa brings a fresh perspective and enthusiasm to her new role.



Mat Norris

Duncan and Todd Group has appointed Mat Norris as its new Chief Executive Officer. This strategic move is part of the company's commitment to driving growth and excellence in eye and hearing care services.





Dr Dan Allen

The Head of Bath School of Art, Film and Media has been appointed as the new Dean of Gray's School of Art at Robert Gordon University. Dr Dan Allen brings a wealth of experience in higher education, most recently as Head of the Bath School of Art Film and Media, where his teaching specialisms centre around Fine Art, Sculpture and Ceramics.



Wendy Russell

Caledonian Sleeper has welcomed Wendy Russell as Business Development Manager. Wendy will focus on developing and delivering for the corporate market, nationwide. Having previously worked with the Glasgow Convention Bureau for nearly 13 years, Wendy is delighted to extend her approach nationally as she promotes a unique way to travel between Scotland and London.



Anita Erridge

Anita Erridge joins ITC Hydraulics & Manufacturing as the Rental & Supply Sales Executive. Anita brings over 27 years of entrepreneurial experience and skills having run both her own very successful business in the health and beauty sector, and previously worked as a Sales Manager, with over 25 reports in the retail sector.



Doug Fleming

OEG Energy Group Limited, a leading offshore solutions business, announces the appointment of Doug Fleming as its new Chief Financial Officer (CFO). Most recently Doug was CFO of private equity backed Siccar Point Energy from its start up in 2014 to a business that was sold to Ithaca Energy in 2022, for a consideration of up to \$1.46billion.



Lisa Buchanan

Annie Kenyon Architects and Annie Kenyon Developments have appointed Lisa Buchanan as their new Business Administrator. Lisa brings to the team experience from her roles in tourism, event management, retail and interiors and will be supporting the busy architects' practice and expanding development company.



Paul D'Arcy and Archie Bradshaw

Ashtead Technology welcomes Paul D'Arcy to the team, who joins as Business Development Manager for UK & Europe. Paul brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to his role in Ashtead Technology with over 15 years' experience working in senior global business development positions in the offshore energy sector, as well as other industries. The company have also recently welcomed Archie Bradshaw who joins the team as Graduate Commercial Coordinator based at its facility in Westhill, Aberdeenshire. In his new role, Archie will serve as a focal point to support the sales and commercial team, helping to coordinate the various aspects of the sales process whilst ensuring Ashtead Technology continues to provide the highest standards of service to its customers.



Alan Taylor

Alan Taylor recently joined the team at Quensh Specialists Ltd in Ellon as Operations Director. Alan brings with him a huge amount of expertise to the role, including extensive client-side experience in different global regions.



Emily Findlay

Befriend a Child has welcomed Emily Findlay to the team as their new Marketing and Communications Manager. Emily has extensive knowledge of third-sector marketing and comms, having previously worked for The Archie Foundation and other North-east charities. Emily is also a main volunteer for the fantastic volunteer-run organisation Celebrate Aberdeen.



Andy Cliffe

The Scottish Tourism Alliance (STA) has announced the appointment of Andy Cliffe, Chief Executive Officer of AGS Airports to its Board of Directors. This strategic move further strengthens the STA's position as the leading representative body for Scotland's thriving tourism industry, adding invaluable aviation expertise to the Board.



Shabnum Hanif

Integrity HSE has taken another bold step in its impressive growth journey by adding Shabnum Hanif to its senior leadership team as Director of Clinical Psychology. This was a strategic move that fits perfectly with its purpose of making the working world a safer, healthier and more sustainable place for all.



Julie Thomson

Aberdeen Cyrenians has extended the strength in depth of professional expertise on its board with the appointment of finance specialist Julie Thomson. Julie, Chief Financial Officer of city legal firm Aberdeen Considine, lends three decades of knowledge to the voluntary post.



Elaine Farquharson-Black and Barry Duncan

Aberdeen FC Community Trust is pleased to announce trustee Elaine Farquharson-Black as its new Chair, with Barry Duncan stepping into the role of Vice Chair. Prominent businesswoman Elaine Farquharson-Black, who is a Partner at Brodies LLP, was appointed to the Board of Trustees of AFCCT in August this year. Barry Duncan, Managing Director and VP Finance CNR International (UK) Limited, has a long-term association with the Trust having served on the Board for five years, playing a pivotal role in its continued development. The Board of Trustees is assured that Elaine and Barry are outstanding leaders to take AFCCT forward as it prepares to celebrate its ten-year anniversary in 2024.



Gillian Donald

Gillian Donald has been appointed as a Partner at Blackadders in Aberdeen. Gillian is joining the employment team from Brodies LLP and has extensive experience working with clients in the North-east of Scotland.



Martin Simmonite

Wood has appointed Martin Simmonite as Senior Vice President (SVP) of UK Operations. Martin's appointment to this new role will strengthen Wood's Operations business in the UK, creating a more streamlined approach for customers and providing performance excellence across their portfolio.





Jeanette Forbes shortlisted as Female Entrepreneur of the Year

North-east businesswoman and entrepreneur Jeanette Forbes OBE has been shortlisted as a finalist in the Female Entrepreneur of the Year category in the national Forward Ladies Awards 2023.

“It is a huge honour to be shortlisted as a finalist in a pool of incredibly talented and inspirational women from across the UK,” said Jeanette. “The role which women play in starting up and leading companies which make such a huge positive impact on our economy should never be underestimated.

“We still have some way to go in breaking through the glass ceiling completely, but events such as this which continue to raise the profile of women as successful business leaders are helping push through that boundary.”

Jeanette was also named as one to watch in Business Women Scotland’s list of top 100 female entrepreneurs.

Aberdeen set to smash record-breaking cruise season in 2024

Port of Aberdeen celebrated the end of a record-breaking cruise season and is already on course to surpass this in 2024.

Between May and October this year, Port of Aberdeen welcomed 43 cruise calls with thousands of guests from across the UK and Europe visiting the region. The season was delivered with zero HSE incidents and generated an increase in revenue for the port. To date, 55 cruise calls are scheduled for 2024, with that number expected to increase. The port is also accepting bookings as far as 2026.

Bob Sanguinetti, Chief Executive, Port of Aberdeen, said: “South Harbour has moved Aberdeen into the premier league of UK cruise ports and is transformational for tourism in the North-east of Scotland. More than 250 cruise ships sail past Aberdeen every year, and we want to attract as much of that business to the port as we can.”

Stork UK secures three-year contract with Sellafield

Fluor Corporation has announced that Stork UK, a Fluor company, has secured a three-year contract with Sellafield Ltd for its nuclear site in the United Kingdom. Fluor will recognise the contract value in the third quarter of 2023.

The three-year contract, which has two one-year follow-on options, will continue to see Stork UK provide independent third-party inspection and quality assurance solutions for Sellafield Ltd. These crucial services ensure compliance with regulatory and legal obligations regarding the quality standards of products and services, on-site and off-site, including local and international supply chains.

“This contract is a great example of a collaborative partnership between Stork UK and Sellafield” said Steve Hunt, Stork’s Regional Director in the UK. “Our team’s dedication has ensured the contract’s success since 2020. We look forward to building on our relationship over the term of the new agreement.”

Gidi Grill completes £1.5million Union Street investment

The owners of the Gidi Grill on Union Street have completed the final phase of their £1.5million investment on the Granite Mile.

The West African and Caribbean inspired restaurant opened a year ago in the former Jones the Bootmaker and Milne & Munro building.

Since then, work has been ongoing on remodelling and refurbishing two apartments above the popular restaurant. Accessed via Langstane Place, a two-bedroom and a three-bedroom apartment both feature two en-suite bedrooms.

Commenting on the investment, Co-owner of Gidi Grill Mobolaji Adeniyi said: “Our investment in Union Street demonstrates just what can be done to grow the culinary landscape of the city centre in new and exciting ways.

“We hope that others will be inspired to help breathe new life into this part of the city.”

Continuing, Co-owner Eniola Odejayi added: “By taking a successful Dundee business and expanding it into Aberdeen, we are delighted to add something new and fresh to the city’s hospitality offering.

“The combination of our restaurant and recently completed rental apartments ensures a diversified income stream and we now look to the future with confidence and optimism.”

Bob Keiller, the leader of the Our Union Street campaign, added: “The apartments that Mo and Eniola have created are great - well finished, great locations and a great use of the space they have.

“For the longer-term vibrancy of Union Street we need more people living, working and visiting the city centre to enjoy all we have to offer including fantastic West-African and Caribbean fusion cuisine.



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