



Special report

What does a post Covid-19 future hold?

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Tapping into our tourism appeal

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Viewpoint

IT FEELS like a long time, a very long time since I sat down to write my piece for April's Bulletin. In fact those of you that receive your copy by post will know I had to include a separate letter as the world had changed so much in such a short period of time. I trust you and your families are all well and that your organisation is plotting a course through these uncharted waters. We hope that the Chamber is doing the right things to support you and I wanted to take this opportunity to update you on some of this.

Response

Our UK network of Chambers is at the front line of providing support to businesses struggling to survive, adapt and make the best decisions for themselves and their people, under extraordinary circumstances. Our direct line into government at all levels has led directly to some of the headline policy announcements and subsequent revisions to reflect what our business communities are telling us.

The COVID-19 hub on our website is being refreshed daily, providing members with an update on our activities and priorities, emerging government policies and measures together with advice and data we have drawn up in partnership with others.

Never has there been higher demand for our advice and policy services yet

often there is an assumption from many that the Chamber is 'just there to do that kind of stuff'. As you know, the reality is that our core operations are entirely privately funded. We are a small business facing the same pressures as our members. Thank you for your support, without it we could not do the work we do.

It is good to report that there continues to be demand from our networks for some semblance of 'business as usual' and we have been striving to provide this. Firstly we are continuing to publish the Business Bulletin based on member feedback. Of course our online readership has peaked but we were delighted with the positive comments we received in response to the post re-direct scheme we put in place to ensure that copies still reached you wherever you are currently working. If you are currently reading a digital version and would like print copy sent to you, please email info@agcc.co.uk

And through all of this there are still good business news stories out there. Some of these are featured in this issue, others on the members news area of the website and it's why we introduced the Chamber HelpHub portal on LinkedIn. This group provides a forum for you to let others know where you need help, or to shout about the assistance your business can provide - and get connected.

We continue to support exporters from the region including the new ChamberCustoms service and our

documentation team remains fully open for business while operating remotely.

Our events and training schedules have also been adjusted to reflect the current situation. Some courses and events have been rescheduled for later in the year. Others are going ahead as webinars or e-training. Full details are at agcc.co.uk

Recovery

Of course it's absolutely right that governments have been prioritising public health but some weeks ago - before it was fashionable to do so - this Chamber started calling for much greater emphasis being given to the resuscitation of our economy. I hope by time you are reading this, we all have much greater clarity and are seeing meaningful progress towards a return to normal life and business.

With this in mind work has been going on behind the scenes on various initiatives to ensure we can re-boot our regional economy as the lockdown ends. Bringing to life our aim of supporting our members today while creating the economic conditions for future success.

Our regional economic strategy and sector diversification plans had some real momentum before all of this so we need to resume the programme, focus on delivering quick wins to indicate some semblance of 'normality' alongside developing big ticket placemaking items, beacons of hope,

to help to bring confidence flowing back through the veins of our region's communities.

We need to play on and amplify our sense of community. We are all in this together and are all part of the solution. One way we can do this is to make sure we buy local, support regional companies and brands to put money back into the tills of our economy as quickly as possible. And with summer holiday plans 'up in the air' to coin a contradictory phrase, why not become a staycationer this year and visit Aberdeenshire. We have some of the world's finest coastline, countryside, castles, golf courses and many other attractions. Some pretty cool hotels too. Go on, you know you want to.

A strong domestic energy sector is vital both for exchequer and keeping the lights on. Against the backdrop of the collapse in crude price, we need to ensure that UK Government delivers on its election promise of an energy sector deal that will first stabilise things and then accelerate the energy transition agenda putting Europe's oil and gas capital front and centre in the delivery of this. The Chamber has been leading a group of partners in developing a strong narrative to enable our readiness to do this to be communicated to key stakeholders and decision makers.

Against the current uncertain backdrop it's very encouraging to see that major inward investors still have confidence in our future by moving forward with ambitious projects in support of the Aberdeen city centre masterplan. Patrizia's market development will be the jewel in the crown of the Merchant Quarter and add to the new lease of life being enjoyed by that area including the incredible collection of Nuart street art on show.

We welcomed the Scottish Government's decision to broaden rates relief to airports and certain businesses which support them but the impact of this crisis on the aviation sector cannot be overstated. Aberdeen more than any other region of the UK is dependent on air connectivity to enable our internationally-focused economy and ensure we do not become just a distant Northern outpost. Securing the future of our airport and connections to key hubs and cities will be central to our recovery and we will continue to make the case for a defined package

of further aviation support to ensure this.

On business rates we all know that our region is at a competitive disadvantage against other areas given the much higher than national average rates in place here. The Chamber has been asking government to put in place temporary support measures around empty property relief and expanding grant support for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses with rateable values of over to £51,000. And for the repeal of the 'material change of circumstance' clause in the recent Non-Domestic Rates Act. If this situation isn't material then nothing ever will be.

Most importantly, surely this is the time for a meaningful change to this not-fit-for purpose up front tax on business to act as a stimulus for our high streets and other key sectors that will drive the recovery.

Most of this was, I think, correct at time of writing. If not, please cut me some slack. Office bingo has been full of 'unprecedented', 'challenging' and 'dynamic' but never were truer words spoken.

Let's work through the other side of this together, supporting our people, jobs, businesses, economy and the way of life we love in this fantastic part of the world.



Russell Borthwick
chief executive



Clearing the path to a positive future

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



AT THE end of January this year, the Chamber held a series of discussions in London with local MPs and the Secretary of State for Scotland. Amongst other things, we discussed the regional narrative work underway to change perceptions of the North-east, the forthcoming COP26 climate conference as a key opportunity to highlight our energy transition credentials; and the ongoing Brexit process. At one of these meetings it was mentioned just how different some of the topics we were discussing were compared to only a few years ago. It was an interesting reflection on the region's evolving priorities, and on the pace of change.

Now, only a few months later, the pace of change seems to have accelerated beyond all recognition. A huge amount of our time is now spent talking to members and government about schemes and policies which didn't exist only a few months ago.

Furthermore, some of the statistics on key sectors of our regional economy make for grim reading. At the time of writing, OGUK has just released its latest Business Outlook report, estimating up to 30,000 redundancies in the months ahead, with the industry having to make difficult decisions to respond to the impact of COVID-19 on

oil markets. Additionally, some sectors like tourism - core to plans to diversify the regional economy - face a hugely uncertain future with the potential for sustained restrictions on activity.

Our initial focus at the Chamber was to ensure we were signposting members to the right support for them. To their credit, our respective governments have broadly responded at speed. I've heard schemes like the Coronavirus Jobs Retention Scheme described as a 'lifesaver' and some of the business rates relief measures will provide much needed reassurance to those sectors asked to close by government to protect public health. We've pulled together a regularly updated information hub on the Chamber website where you can find more information on the schemes that exist and new announcements as they happen.

We're also engaging with government ministers, civil servants and our local MPs and MSPs regularly to feed in concerns from businesses across the North-east. In the weeks preceding the writing of this article, the Chamber team have raised persistent issues directly to the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Cabinet Secretary for Economy. On a daily basis, we'll escalate shared concerns to our national teams at the Scottish and British Chambers of Commerce.

At the end of April, we sent a

comprehensive open letter to our elected representatives in the region and the Scottish and UK Governments to outline the concerns that continued to create uncertainty in North-east businesses and member views on the guidance needed to support a future recovery.

Broadly, we split our letter into four main sections: improvements for existing support schemes, changes to business rates and grants, the need for sectoral support for the hardest hit industries, and the importance of comprehensive guidance for the recovery and safe operation of businesses.

We started seeing change only a week after the letter's publication. The Scottish Government moved to publish a framework for recovery outlining the broad principles that government will be considering when they look to progress plans to restart the economy. The UK Government also recognised concerns raised with the interruption loan scheme, which wasn't delivering the finance to firms at scale that was promised, by creating a new 'Bounce Back' loans scheme designed to deliver small loans which are 100% backed by government with a streamlined application process.

Of course, we'll need to see more in the weeks ahead. It's always hard to predict what the world will look like by the time our articles hit your desks (or

jury-rigged home offices!) but there are a couple of key changes that we believe government should focus on next.

Firstly, clarity on the future of the critical jobs retention scheme. Government needs to commit to a phased withdrawal of the scheme as lockdown measures are eased and be ready to hold it in place for specific sectors – such as tourism, aviation or oil and gas – who face a more prolonged path to recovery.

Some clear packages of sectoral support have to be next on the list. Both our ambition to be one of the global centres of the energy transition and our regional connectivity are at risk as key industries try to weather this unparalleled economic event. Decisive action now from government is the best way to ensure we meet the climate challenge from a position of strength.

The Scottish Government also needs to take steps to expand business rates relief and reduce these upfront costs in the weeks ahead. Expanding grants above the current £51k threshold and ensuring that firms following social distancing advice and working from home get appropriate rates relief should be part of this. Our data shows that many firms have less than three months cash in reserve so reducing upfront costs and delivering cash injections has to be government's priority.

Finally, a firm, detailed plan for the easing of lockdown measures needs to be drawn up collaboratively by the UK Government and the devolved administrations. Differentiated guidance on workplaces has caused some real confusion during this period, and we have concerns about how support schemes would be deployed if different approaches were taken by individual nations. Any plan should be transparent, honest and give businesses as much clarity as possible on how they should be supporting staff and customers. Firms have a real responsibility to take this seriously and work constructively with government to avoid the further economic damage that an additional period of lockdown could incur.

We're laser focused on ensuring the North-east economy gets the support it needs to make it through this pandemic and we'll be continuing to press the priorities I've outlined here with our respective governments in the weeks ahead. We're directly guided by your feedback so please email policy@agcc.co.uk with your concerns so we can continue to develop solutions constructively with government as we navigate the uncharted waters ahead.



Life sciences outlook post COVID-19

by Professor Stephen Logan,
chair,
Opportunity North East life sciences
sector board



THE life sciences sector is at the forefront of the UK's response to coronavirus. It is supporting testing, developing equipment, repurposing drugs to treat patients with the virus and leading efforts to develop a vaccine at an accelerated pace. The industry, like others, is grappling with the impact of the pandemic on the day to day business of developing new therapies and technology, trialling these in clinical settings and raising funds to enable this work.

We must make every effort to support the sector, which will make a significant contribution to the health and the wellbeing of our communities and the growth of our health economy in the years ahead.

SMEs drive a significant proportion of innovation, research and development in life sciences nationally. Government has already announced a package of support for the UK's most innovative companies that face financial uncertainty due to COVID-19 and is supporting research to address the pandemic.

There are challenges for life sciences businesses not working on COVID-19. These include significant delays to their research projects and clinical

trials in hospitals, supply chain issues and access to research facilities and a general decline in investor confidence. The pandemic fallout has severe implications for the development of new treatments for patients and the medium-term growth of the sector.

If we look ahead there are opportunities. Firstly, new ways of working have been introduced rapidly, including digital healthcare with patients and clinicians engaging remotely on a scale unimaginable earlier this year. North-east Scotland has well-developed digital health expertise, including health data science, and building on this is part of our strategy to grow the sector. Secondly, the frequency of secondary bacterial lung infections in COVID-19 patients underscores the need for new antimicrobial resistance treatments. Aberdeen-based NovaBiotics is fast-tracking repurposing of its experimental drug Nylexa for use in these circumstances. Thirdly, drug development takes a long time and is expensive. The current accelerated approach to vaccine development may result in acceptance of new methods that could be adopted in the future to reduce the time and cost involved in clinical testing of novel therapies and bring treatments to market quicker.

We need the life sciences sector

nationally to bounce back quickly once the COVID emergency has passed. Its continued growth is a priority for both the UK Government and the Scottish Government. Achieving this will require funding from government and the private sector. Regulators will have to be open to try new ways of working while maintaining safety. We will need more collaboration and risk-sharing between big pharma and early-stage companies.

For North-east Scotland, life sciences is a priority sector with high-growth potential. Our regional strengths – including biologics and digital health – are growth areas that can transform future healthcare. The ONE-led action and investment already underway to support the sector is relevant to both the post-pandemic recovery phase and the medium to long term growth of the company cluster in and around Aberdeen.

Technology, wellbeing and the environment will all have a place at the table

by Adam Hardie,
partner and head of food and drink,
Johnston Carmichael



THESE are brutal times for business, many producers working hard just to survive, however, learning from each other, sharing best practice and making useful connections has helped us to come to terms with the current situation, collaborate and plan for a virus free future.

For those producers supplying only the multiple and independent retailers March and April saw phenomenal demand as consumers filled their shopping baskets and deep freezers, before demand levelled off to a norm. Those producers with exposure to food service pubs, restaurants and hospitality saw their revenues temporarily terminated. Home delivery was previously a small element in the typical sales mix.

However, during the coronavirus crisis, direct-to-consumer (D2C) has been a star performer, with sustained demand off the scale and producers struggling to keep up. Many producers felt the impact of social distancing in their workplace as employees were uncomfortable or chose not to work which reduced productivity.

Through adversity comes strength and there were several examples of producers pivoting with new products and innovative ways to make sales. Craft brewers extracted beer from

kegs to put into cans or bottles to meet demand, whilst distillers made hand sanitisers. Producers reversed food service sales into retail to invent new ways to reach customers. Export of food and drink was lost for many as air haulage and logistics came to a grinding halt. However, the flip side of limited exports was limited imports, which created new opportunities for local producers to fill the gap. Finally, many furloughed workers took up roles as fruit pickers solving a Brexit problem of limitation of EU nationals.

Many assumed the food and drink industry would survive the virus without a scratch, we all have to eat. However, the real picture was mixed with the majority experiencing a negative impact. So, what now for the road ahead?

Technology has been a great enabler through the virus, as video meetings allowed business to continue. Those who had invested in such platforms as Microsoft Teams in advance of the emergency were in a strong position to support home working for their people. Furthermore, the seamless ability to connect people by video across different locations has been a great success. I am sure this will continue post virus and undoubtedly assist with increased productivity.

One of the worries with the negative

impact on the stock market, is that there will be less money to invest in growing food and drink companies. Less business angels with funds which will undoubtedly hamper the early stage growth companies.

Post coronavirus I believe we will see an increased demand for local and healthy produce, sustainable and healthier lifestyles, and a more caring society with a positive impact on waste.

The independent convenience retailers were the trusted local supplier during the virus and this, combined with continued surge in food to go, will continue to drive local shopping.

A great example of all these elements in action was launched by local fish producer, Sutherlands of Portsoy. Sutherlands launched an innovative home delivery service with a healthy and sustainable alternative to processed food from the multiples. They teamed up with various other local food producers and The Rowett Institute, (who created a range of healthy and nutritious recipes), to deliver 1,000 grocery boxes a week to North-east households.

And finally, I believe that caring for our planet and the sustainability agenda will come back into a sharp focus post coronavirus. A positive end to a horrific experience for families and business.

The priorities for the oil and gas sector

by Matt Abraham,
supply chain director,
OGUK



LIKE most businesses in the UK our industry is facing pressures on many fronts. It's a complex and diverse situation and the reason we turned our annual Business Outlook into a series of reports each highlighting the impact in areas including Markets and Investment; Security of Supply and most recently, the Activity and Supply Chain report.

Reflecting the massive impact of COVID-19 and record-breaking lows in the oil and gas price markets, the stark findings of these reports attracted extensive coverage in the press so what are our priorities at a time like this?

The current focus of companies as always is the health and safety of their employees. Right now, companies are doing this alongside fighting for the very survival of their businesses. We remain deeply concerned about the severe pressures across the supply chain and their impact on companies, jobs and the communities they belong to.

In their feedback to the survey we conducted for the Activity and Supply Chain report, our members revealed they're anticipating a dramatic reduction in revenue, sparking

concerns about some companies' ability to survive a downturn far more challenging than the previous one in 2015.

That's why we're calling for urgent action to protect the supply of domestic energy and protect jobs as we will need these in place to build the critical infrastructure the UK will need to transition to a net zero future. It's a case of tackling immediate challenges while simultaneously retaining a focus on the medium and long term future, identifying where we have the ability to stimulate and support activity during a recovery.

This ability to stimulate new demand for our industry's expertise and capabilities depends on how internationally competitive we are as a basin and as a centre of excellence for innovation, as these are the only ways we can attract fresh investment to the UKCS.

OGUK has asked governments and regulators to support a three-stage framework to support the sector in dealing with the immediate crisis while positioning it to play a key role in the UK's transition to a net zero future.

The three-stage framework proposed by OGUK covers: immediate needs, industry recovery and accelerating

to a net zero future. It includes recommendations to improve current COVID-19 financial packages, retaining the sector with a leading and progressive regulatory, fiscal and policy framework, as well as the development of a sector deal which will support the supply chain and accelerate the UK towards a net zero future.

Our industry's future success is now inextricably linked to the UK's legally binding target to deliver net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. We have the skills, knowledge and experience not only to reduce our sector's emissions and improve the footprint of production, but also to deliver low-carbon technologies at scale, for example through industrial-scale carbon capture and net-zero hydrogen production. These new sectors also provide part of the answer to providing new business opportunities for companies in the UK.

Digital connectivity will be crucial to help us bounce back

by Robert Thorburn,
partnership director,
Openreach Scotland



COVID-19 has brought sharply into focus how digital connectivity matters in everything we do. And we will need it more than ever as we emerge from this crisis.

In many ways the lockdown shows us how far we've come as a digital nation. Our homes are doubling up as offices and school classrooms. We're still able to socialise but online rather than in person.

Even a few years ago, the idea of running a weekly quiz on Skype or Zoom with friends would have been unimaginable. The media, despite its shift to digital platforms, would not have contemplated swapping busy newsrooms for remote news desking.

Yet necessity is the mother of invention and innovation is happening across the whole country much faster than it might typically do – in the digital sector and elsewhere. Today, nearly 97% of Aberdeen households and businesses can connect to a superfast broadband service, and around 33% can access ultrafast services. And since lockdown, internet traffic across Scotland is up by about 20%.

Despite the inevitable hike in daytime use, the nation has more than enough

capacity to keep things ticking over. But we need to look beyond lockdown. People will become used to a new normal. As we emerge on the other side, workers and employers may want to retain digital practices adopted during this crisis.

Working from home gives employees greater flexibility, while employers can potentially save costs and boost productivity. There are side benefits for the environment and in stemming brain drain and population flow from rural areas. Reliable connectivity enables digital businesses to set up and be sustainable in our rural communities.

It's vital that investors – whether from the public or private sector – continue to build

fast broadband and business connectivity, where work can be carried out safely. It is crucial to helping Scotland bounce back economically.

There's been good progress in rural Scotland and that must continue. Public spending will need to support recovery from the crisis and redirect investment to areas that will provide a high return: digital education, cybersecurity, health and environment.

Digitalisation of SMEs and key industries – such as health, environment, transport, agriculture and tourism – needs to be a priority. Hard-hit SMEs may need help to adopt online tools to increase their competitiveness. Businesses earning revenue from online sales are better placed to weather the storm.

The Scottish Infrastructure Commission has recommended that Scotland should aim for a full fibre network by 2027. The UK government has outlined a £5bn plan to deliver gigabit-capable broadband across the UK by 2025.

Achieving this will need a massive effort, significant investment from the private sector, and a faster build rate than virtually any other country has achieved. Analysts have warned that any delay will cost the economy dear.

Network builders need the right conditions to invest and the right policies to encourage a fast, efficient build. As we adapt to the new normal and beyond, we must be in the best position to tackle the fiscal shock that is to come.

Reimagining our visitor economy

by Chris Foy,
chief executive officer,
VisitAberdeenshire



TOURISM and hospitality is facing an unimaginable crisis. An industry dependent upon the movement of people over short and long distances has had its very lifeblood cut off. For Aberdeen, where business travel accounted for 29% of visits at last count, the impact of the oil price fall further compounds the challenge.

Tourism and hospitality is also resilient and has proven its fortitude in the past. Not without pain then, nor without more pain to come, but our sector will emerge from this darkness and our human need to meet and desire to broaden our horizons will remain.

My work is largely about inspiring others to explore a world beyond their own backyard - to enrich their lives and importantly, the livelihoods of those who serve them. That will continue to drive our mission to develop a thriving visitor economy. While a long term strategic view is essential, there is no time to overlook short term tactics. Our priorities for the coming months must be to:

- help drive cash into tourism and hospitality businesses as quickly as possible

- maintain our focus on securing business for the North-east in 2021 and beyond
- provide relevant product development and marketing support to businesses that recognises that a new operating environment will exist.

Local tourism is not our usual business but this will be critical to help reignite the tourism and hospitality sector. There is little to no leadtime required to experience what is on the doorstep.

Our home is not just the four walls we've become over-accustomed with in recent weeks, it's the experiences that we will be able to enjoy across our region as they gradually open up. To sustain such exploration we need to upsell those escapes and reunions to go beyond what is already known: enjoying a gallery or museum before hitting the shops in Aberdeen; adding a great meal out to a family trip visit to a castle; extending that reunion gathering with friends into an overnight in the city or Aberdeenshire.

Of course, we must be mindful about people's propensity to get out and about in the company of others and that the experiences we can enjoy

may have changed. But domestic tourism is likely to bounce back faster than international visits, and at 80% of the UK's £113bn tourism sector, we have a headstart over fly-to destinations. If conditions allow, restarting our promotional focus on the rest of Scotland and northern England can follow suit, driven by insight into visitor priorities. Monitoring sentiment and search online can help us understand where those priorities lie and when the best time will be to promote.

VisitAberdeenshire was already planning for 2021 and beyond before the virus hit. Tour operators, conference organisers and other distributors have long lead times and, while this distribution chain will also feel pain, we will ensure that the North-east is on the radar of those who have business to place.

I recently heard a Canadian destination talk of 'reimagination' rather than a return to business-as-usual, and that rings true. It will be important to be nimble in our response and reimagine how we develop our visitor economy to meet customer demand in a post-COVID world.

Innovation in a time of crisis

by Professor Gary McEwan,
chief executive officer,
Elevator



THE timing of COVID-19 has inevitably given some businesses whiplash but could this global pandemic finally force individuals, companies and even entire industries to rethink and transform their business thinking and supply chain models?

During more stable times, we create consumption chains - from raw materials to finished products, passing through many businesses before making their way to the end consumer. While COVID-19's full impact on Scotland's consumption chains is still unknown, there is one thing that is certain - its ramifications will force multiple breaks in just about every consumption chain, leaving markets wide open for those savvy enough to spot and exploit opportunities.

As of March 2019, the Scottish Government reported an estimate of 354,125 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operating in Scotland, accounting for 99.3% of all private businesses, 55.4% of private sector employment and 41.5% of private sector turnover.

These numbers indicate an appetite for entrepreneurial thinking. And, although many SMEs are currently absorbing the pandemic blow, there are many keeping one eye on the emerging breaks.

The Aberdeen city region has the ingredients needed to support the development of economic growth. When the oil price crashed in 2015, Elevator's Centre for Entrepreneurship formed part of the city's regional recovery scheme, supporting an increase in start-up business activity by as much as 30%.

Through the mist of COVID-19 it is clear that we still possess a number of these key ingredients. Now, our recovery mission needs to focus on working with businesses to recalibrate mindsets. A mindset which allows you to take a different approach to your business. A mindset where you allow for critical questioning of the norm. Ultimately, an entrepreneurial mindset.

Entrepreneurs are different, they see the world differently. They undertake challenges that most would not dare. They think, plan, and have a determination to succeed in life however they may measure that success.

An entrepreneurial mindset is about embracing a pain point as an opportunity to create new and innovative solutions. Flexibility is key in this time of uncertainty, which goes hand-in-hand with bravery. Those entrepreneurs who hold these traits will tackle whatever is thrown at them

With our market currently in a flat spot, it is time to plan, to stop and think, to revisit our business models and adapt. It is time to ask yourself: are you brave enough to pry open consumption chain breaks and tackle head on the opportunities these present?



Our partners

As well as helping our member businesses to be better through a range of activities, the Chamber is committed to investing a significant amount of energy in moving forward the economic growth agenda and lobbying for change on key issues to create the conditions for success. Our regional renaissance.

Without the support of our Premier Partners, we would not be able to undertake much of the good work that we do. Their engagement is hugely valued and appreciated.

If you'd like to find out more contact our membership and events director, Seona Shand

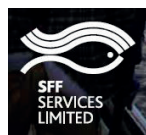
T 01224 343929 E seona.shand@agcc.co.uk

Thank you

The Chamber is entirely focused both on providing the practical support and access to funding information that will help businesses get through the very challenging environment we find ourselves in but also on providing stability for our members in terms of the channels they need to raise their profile, share news and continue doing business both now and when we all come out the other end of this.

We too are a small business and are very grateful to our advertisers whose support allows us to keep operating these vital channels - without you we simply wouldn't be able to.

On behalf of the North-east business community, our thanks go to:



Into the blue?

by Derek McDonald,
*industry support executive
(rural and maritime),
economic development,
Aberdeenshire Council*



AT THE time of writing, COVID-19 - a tiny scrap of lipids, protein and RNA small enough for 500 million of the blighters to fit onto the head of a pin - is wreaking unimaginable havoc worldwide, sweeping cosy and indulgent consumption, lifestyle and indeed life expectancy assumptions aside.

What should have been an article to celebrate Scotland's Year of Coasts & Waters now seems utterly irrelevant. At present, only those located near the coast may visit. And although a new normality will ultimately emerge from the chaos, what will change and what might the world look like?

Snapped from Apollo 8's lunar orbit by William Anders in December 1968, 'Earthrise' reveals our lonely blue planet peeking beyond the barren moonscape. Remarkable image. Go find it. Nothing resembling earth has been found anywhere else in the vastness of the cosmos. With 71% surface cover (and rising), we live in a unique waterworld where oceans provide 90% of total habitable space and biodiversity, including the phytoplankton pumping out most of the world's oxygen; and the richest of resources.

Who knew? North-east folk know. Through fisheries then oil, gas and subsea, countless thousands of local livelihoods have owed their existence to the North Sea and its hard-won harvests. As we prepare once more to repurpose our offshore talents towards renewable energy challenges, sustainable shipping, a reborn, renewable wild-caught seafood industry (already our largest food sector) and low-impact (and now affordable) tourism amongst others, are we really doing enough to make the necessary investments to capture the full potential of the blue economy - particularly in human capital?

For a litmus test, look no further than the DYW North East report card. There are numerous exemplary schools partnerships, particularly with businesses from subsea, energy and hospitality sectors; seafood less so. So we could do better to turn the minds of all young people to sustainable maritime-facing careers, starting perhaps with more resources for the National 5 in Maritime Skills delivered by the excellent Scottish Maritime Academy.

COVID-19 has hit the world's pause button. There will be pain and loss but also an unexpected opportunity to look critically at ourselves and,

crucially, to reset our previously exploitative and wasteful relationship with the planet and its resources: for once to value what has been taken for granted for far too long.

We simply cannot afford to hit the restart button.

At some point in the months ahead, travel restrictions will be lifted and stir-crazy locals and tourists alike will flock to the coasts and waters of North-east Scotland in a manner unseen for 60 years. They will indeed have something to celebrate and hopefully time to reflect upon the beauty of their surroundings and that how we interact with our environment really matters.

Is it too much to hope when they head for home happy and revitalised from our stunning beaches, cliffs, inland lagoons and estuaries, that for once they will have left our coasts and waters in a better condition than they found them?



The new Mini Collection

Mackie's goes mini for latest product launch

MACKIE'S of Scotland has now launched 'The Mini Collection' - a multi-pack of four miniature ice cream tubs, with listings including Sainsbury's and Tesco stores throughout Scotland.

It means that the Aberdeenshire family-owned brand will have launched more than 200 products in its 34 years, with the newest seeing it react to the latest consumer trends.

It has expanded its product range to introduce The Mini Collection, which is being sold in retail outlets for around £4 per pack and contains four 120ml tubs, two each of the brand's most popular flavours - Traditional and Honeycomb.

According to Kantar insights data, the UK market for snack size ice cream tubs is worth around £18.2m and has grown by more than 20% in the last year. The research found that 57% of consumers would like to see more single-serving sized tubs of ice cream sold in their local supermarkets.

Stuart Common, sales director at Mackie's of Scotland, said: "It is astonishing to think that we've made more than 200 new products. We have had a lot of fun over the years with various innovations in format and flavour - from a marmalade flavour to Mackawack macaroon, an extra posh look for the cows in tiaras, bite sized chocolate truffles and even "good mood food" - ice cream with a drop of happy orchid essence."



Scott Kerr

Mintra Group offers free e-learning courses

MINTRA Group, a leading provider of workforce management systems for safety critical industries worldwide, is offering five of its e-learning courses free of charge to help companies and their employees stay safe amid the COVID-19 outbreak.

Working together with its learning partners, Mintra Group identified courses that it believes will help both businesses and individuals adapt to the recent unprecedented global changes.

The chosen courses cover five topics such as how to stop the spread of the virus and how to prepare households for quarantine. Mintra Group is also offering its own Display Screen Equipment and Ergonomics course that was provided to its internal staff, as guidance for other employees to help them safely set up working from home stations.

Scott Kerr, Mintra Group chief executive, said: "By monitoring the market and working closely with our training partners, we are delighted to be able to offer these informative resources free of charge, not just to our own customers but to anyone who needs help during this difficult time."

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Centre of attraction

NORTH-EAST Scotland's coast and rivers are possibly unrivalled for their spectacular beauty but they also have huge economic benefit for the area and the rest of the country. We have beautiful beaches, the dramatic clifftop ruins of Dunnottar and Slains Castles, rivers including the Dee, one of the world's finest salmon fishing rivers; and the natural resources for every conceivable sport from mountain climbing and hillwalking, from skiing to windsurfing and from fishing to links golfing.

We also have big ambitions when it comes to our tourism sector, with the aim of having a £1bn a year regional industry within the next few years. Others also see what we've got in our little corner of the world, with the New York Times last year listing the North-east as one of the top places to visit.

Coronavirus means that Scotland's tourism and events industries are now facing their greatest ever challenge but in spite of the situation we can continue to celebrate our favourite coasts and waters in the North-east and help shine a

spotlight on their importance and beauty.

Scotland's Themed Year for 2020 is centred around our coast and waters with the aim of focussing on Scotland's natural environment and wildlife, its historic environment and cultural heritage, activities and adventure; and food and drink.

A series of events had been planned to run throughout the year ranging from a seaweed festival on Isle Martin near Ullapool to the Baxters

“

“Many people have happy memories of visiting the seaside on day trips or on holidays and we are hoping to draw on that nostalgia about the coast.”

Jo Robinson,
regional director,
VisitScotland

Loch Ness Marathon and Running Festival and the Stonehaven Folk Festival in July.

Sadly, all are now subject to cancellation or postponement in line with government advice. However, Jo Robinson, regional director at VisitScotland, suggests we can all continue to celebrate our favourite coast and waters locations, memories and experiences to help share our love of Scotland with others, to bring some positivity during this challenging time.

“I would encourage people to join the conversation at #YCW2020 to share Scotland's wonderful coast and waters assets, from its natural environment to food and drink,” said Jo.

“When it comes to celebrating food and drink during the Year of Coasts and Waters, it's all about the purity of the rivers which flow down from the mountains and form the backbone of our whiskies and the purity of the land around them from which we get the grain for the whisky and it is all linked in to so much food and drink production.

“Sustainability is also at the heart of the year and it is important for



us to show people that we want to safeguard these assets for future generations and we want visitors to recognise the value of our natural environment.

“Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire are not really the honeypots which attract the masses. Our coastline and our villages and attractions along the coast aren’t the best known in the country so this year is an opportunity for us to shout a bit louder and hopefully inspire future visits away from these well-known spots.

“Many people have happy memories of visiting the seaside on day trips or on holidays and we are hoping to draw on that nostalgia about the coast – Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire have some wonderful traditional fishing villages and wide-open sands.”

For the Ballogie estate the River Dee, which links the upper reaches of the Cairngorms to the harbour at Aberdeen, plays an integral part in daily life. The river sweeps through the northern boundary of the estate which has been managed, conserved and nurtured by the Nicol family and employees since 1850.

“With tributaries meandering across the farm, forest and moorlands the river, its myths and legends form part of the life blood and history of the whole estate,” said Malcolm Nicol, its managing partner.

Potarch, the gateway to the estate is a popular destination for locals, tourists and day trippers from Aberdeen. Potarch Bridge, designed by the Scottish architect Thomas Telford and completed in 1814, offers an access point to the river and is a popular picnic destination for families and swimmers during the summer season.

The estate also boasts a restaurant and a variety of holiday accommodation. Conservation as well as tourism plays an important part in estate life and Ballogie takes pride in working to look after the immense diversity of habitat and species found on or near the river. By actively investing time in riparian management and supporting the work of The River Dee Trust the estate continues to preserve and nurture the river, recognising the river's importance in the context of managing a successful business, while being dutiful caretakers for future generations.

“The Dee epitomises Ballogie, on the one hand ever constant and on the other ever changing,” added Malcolm.

Aberdeen is also changing and one of its most iconic landmarks could soon be one of its most compelling attractions.

When the Torry Battery was built more than 160 years ago, and armed with 200lb guns, it provided the main defence for Aberdeen Bay and Harbour.

Now, it is becoming beacon of hope for Aberdeen’s future and those who will soon peer out from an outstanding vantage will not be looking for invaders but for the exceptional wildlife which is welcomed, not least as a formidable tourist draw, to a city in transition.

Greyhope Bay is a charitable organisation with plans to build a marine experience centre which will connect communities with our dynamic marine environment.

Work is expected to start within the next few months on the first phase of the project, ‘Dolphins at the Battery’, which will enhance access to Torry Battery.



"This is a site with a unique heritage, spectacular panoramic views of Aberdeen's city and coast and the best view of our charismatic bottlenose dolphins - the largest bottlenose dolphins found anywhere in the world," said Fiona McIntyre, founder and managing director of Greyhope Bay.

"It will deliver a zero-footprint glass-fronted viewing platform, café and outdoor exhibit which invites visitors to experience our natural and historic environment while they explore an extraordinary local monument.

"It provides a vantage point which really gives us the opportunity to tell the story of the city and our connection to our coast.

"We are creating opportunities for our community to experience our marine world but also to imagine more for the city, what we can collectively achieve and also be a part of leading the change.

"Sustainability is at the core of the experience we are creating and central to our business model. Working with innovators at RGU and the University of Aberdeen, the facility will be a showcase for

sustainable design, technology and behavioural changes focussing on plastic neutrality and the circular economy.

"It is intrinsically important even from the viewpoint of just watching the boats navigating their way in and out of Aberdeen harbour which is a symbol of the connection to the oil and gas industry. People can also see the wind turbines in the bay and how we are actually moving from one type of energy production to a more renewable source.

"We are also tapping into a wider mental health offering because so many people have told us it is an engaging environment which brings so many benefits.

"We have had a wealth of stories from people about what it means to them and while many have a strong attachment to the area there are also quite a lot unaware of it. There is a slight disconnect between Torry and what its headland offers and the people of Aberdeen accessing that."

She said the centre would tell the fascinating story of the Torry Battery which never actually saw armed conflict but was once a military training area. It was also

used as accommodation for homeless soldiers returning from the first world war and once again for homeless after the second world war.

"In these difficult times I think it gives us hope for the future and represents a changing city which is focussing on renewable energy, tourism and above all sustainability." more people to enjoy the coast in the most sustainable way and maybe give something back when they are there as well."

She said there were several ways the public could help. One of the areas of focus for the MCS is marine conservation - protecting the ocean and its wildlife through well-managed marine protected areas.

#StillStandingFree

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ABERDEEN FOOTBALL CLUB & COMMUNITY TRUST LEAD RED ARMY IN COMMUNITY OUTREACH

As the country continues to deal with the global repercussions from Covid-19, Aberdeen Football Club has marshalled its forces to support fans and the north-east community.

— “

ABERDEEN FOOTBALL CLUB HAS BEEN AT THE HEART OF OUR COMMUNITY FOR OVER 100 YEARS. THROUGHOUT OUR HISTORY, WE HAVE BEEN SUPPORTED BY OUR REVERED AND LOYAL RED ARMY... NOW, WE RALLY BEHIND OUR FANS AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY IN THEIR TIME OF NEED.

— AFC Chairman, Dave Cormack

The Club's approach has been two pronged: engaging with people, particularly those in isolation, and offering practical support to those in need.

The Club and its partner charity, Aberdeen FC Community Trust (AFCCT), have been working with Community Food Initiatives North East (CFINE) to make deliveries of food to areas where the Trust already works to reduce food poverty, supporting children during the school closures.

As a result of this outreach, Trust staff and volunteers have made over 500 deliveries, supporting 2,500 people and making sure 1,300 children have at least one meal a day.

Since the #StillStandingFree campaign launched three weeks ago, over 3,500 supporters have also been lifted by a call from a member of staff, volunteer, first team player or AFC legend. In some cases, these check-in calls have been the highlight of the day, particularly for elderly fans during the coronavirus-imposed lockdown.

Liz Bowie, chief executive of AFCCT, explained: **“We’ve already seen the hugely positive impact a call from the Club can have...It’s estimated that one in four people will suffer from mental health issues as a result of being in lock-down; exacerbating problems like depression and anxiety. Knowing the Club cares could really make a difference, and we are committed to reaching as many people as we can.”**

Many of the Trust staff have experience in dealing with individuals, of all ages, who are struggling with poverty, mental health and physical disabilities.

To enable the Trust to continue this valuable community work, the AFC board of directors last month pledged to donate 10% of the total revenues generated by the sale of season tickets, throughout April and May. AFC believes it can sell 5,000 season tickets which would result in a £125,000 donation to the Trust.

Ms. Bowie, added: **“We’re absolutely blown away by the generosity of the AFC Directors, if AFC fans continue to support the Club at the rate they have been, then the Trust will be in a position to provide even more support to the wider community.”**

AFC Chairman, Dave Cormack, said: **“We are living through an unprecedented global crisis, everyone is concerned about well being of their families. Yet, Dons’ fans are supporting the work of the Trust and our campaign. It is truly humbling.”**

A dedicated email address for those wishing to contact the Club about the above initiatives is: info@afc.co.uk

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OPEX joins forces with Wood Mackenzie

ABERDEEN-based provider of data science and predictive analysis services, OPEX Group, has joined forces with global natural resources research and consultancy firm Wood Mackenzie, to launch a new data service for the oil and gas industry.

The Operations DataHub™, which has been developed in partnership between the two companies, enables operators to securely pool and gain insight from operations data from multiple assets across the UKCS, with the aim of learning from each other and sharing best practice to make more informed decisions, reduce costs and optimise operational performance.

Crucially, Operations DataHub™ provides these benefits without any risk of commercially sensitive data being exposed or identified to competitors. Data is handled in a consortium with agreed confidentiality and data security terms, with insights being delivered at two distinct levels: confidential, operator-specific data, and anonymised, comparative metrics and best practices.



The employee benefits team

Acumen offers free wellbeing hub access

ACUMEN Employee Benefits, an experienced team of employee benefits consultants is offering free access to its Employee Wellbeing Hub.

The online hub provides a range of mental, physical and financial wellbeing support and discounts for employees at no cost to businesses for the duration of the coronavirus pandemic.

The team based at Kingshill Park, Westhill, had planned to launch the service later this spring but given the recent predicament many employers and employees currently find themselves in, the hub is available now. The online hub can provide improved communications, added value and bring teams together as many adapt to working from home for the forthcoming weeks.

Director Andy Eason said: "We hope this can be of help to as many companies as possible during these challenging times and as the current situation develops."



David Lumsden

MAX marks third anniversary in business

ABERDEEN-BASED creative agency, MAX, is marking its third successful year in business.

MAX specialises in creating powerful, visual and communicative solutions for businesses, products and ideas - across both digital and print platforms.

Since launching in 2017, MAX continues to grow its client base and expanding the sectors in which it operates. From large multi-nationals to sole-traders and the third sector clients, MAX is providing its clients with branding, design, 3D visualisation and animation that help them differentiate themselves from their competitors.

Director David Lumsden said: "Everyone at MAX is extremely proud of what we've achieved over the last three years. We've worked on a wide variety of projects and challenges with some fantastic clients and partners, and we're looking forward to many more."

"MAX continues to grow our skills by adding 3D printing and CAD modelling to our services. 3D printing is a really interesting growth area and being able to rapidly prototype in CAD compliments it so well."

DeltaTek partners for expansion

ABERDEEN-based well construction specialist, DeltaTek Global, has partnered with GS Oilfield Solutions to support its ongoing expansion in the Norwegian North Sea. GS Oilfield Solutions, based in Stavanger, offers resourcing services of all types of equipment required by the global oil and gas specialising in premium products in the drilling and well intervention sectors.



How can software increase productivity and safeguard important documents?



by Arrash Nekonom,
managing director,
Insiso

TRADITIONALLY software has been developed and introduced into organisations to automate and simplify existing manual processes and procedures. The benefits of which are understood and accepted in general, however the increase in productivity and enhanced security of commercially sensitive business material grow in comparison with advancements in software development technology.

In terms of productivity there are three key areas of relevance with increased implementation of software solutions within any business:

1. Automation of business process flows – mapping of existing business processes and procedures so that an automated representation may be developed accordingly. Often business processes such as these do not exist in a clearly defined workflow so embarking on an automated design project will not only lead to a solution that enhances the efficiency of the process but a cleansing of the process itself.
2. Systems integration – often corporate data sets exist in data silos in disparate systems, leading to duplication of data entry and reporting. By building integration

interfaces using software technology the gaps between data silos may be bridged to allow organisations a complete picture of their data, removing the need for repeated data entry and thus improving overall productivity.

3. Reporting for decision making – by achieving the first two points, collating data sets and effectively representing key metrics, statistics and charts, meaning business stakeholders can make better tactical and strategic business decisions.

In terms of data security with regards to commercially sensitive and important documentation, implementing software solutions offers the following security benefits:

- Authorised access – using secure access portals enforces an authorisation requirement to obtain access to documentation. Combined with strict password policy, two-factor authentication and other measures this authorisation can be further validated to ensure key personnel are only granted access.
- Audit access – effective audit features may be built into document management platforms so that every action of an authorised user will be logged, and any updates made may be historically evidenced

as required.

- Data encryption – with recent advancements in cloud storage solutions, utilising such solutions not only offers an economically scalable solution but offers additional features such as data encryption whereby any breaches of the raw document repository will require a further decryption exercise to reveal content in a human- readable format.
- Data privacy – compliance with data privacy laws such as General Data Protection Regulations are important to any business and achieving compliance without the implementation of software solutions to enforce control is extremely difficult. Through the implementation of software solutions where authorised access is both audited and encrypted, complying with the requirements of data privacy specifically where personal/sensitive data is involved. In summary, implementation of effective software solutions within your organisation is the natural evolution of any business hence why significant investment has been made in recent years in digital transformation projects, across industries, with software development and software solutions at the heart of it all.

Directors during COVID-19: Risk? Yes. But how much risk?

by Robert McDiarmid,
partner, head of dispute resolution,
Stronachs LLP



THERE has been a lot of talk of the serious risk to company directors of personal liability due to the unprecedented and unique challenges COVID-19 has brought to businesses.

I want to take this opportunity to pour a little cold water over the fear of personal liability and to provide some (cautious) comfort to those directors out there about the risks they've probably heard or read about.

Firstly, there is absolutely real risk. There is always risk as an office bearer of a company. And for businesses with the real potential to fall into insolvency that risk is ramped right up.

But I think it is important to also approach that risk in a measured, proportionate and practical way.

The key issues facing well-intentioned directors include:

- Liability for wrongful trading
- Clawback of monies paid out to directors (or others)
- Liability for breach of directors' duties

Wrongful trading arises where, after a company has entered into a liquidation process, the liquidator identifies that there was a point in time prior to

liquidation when the director(s) knew or ought to have concluded that there was no reasonable prospect that the company would avoid going into insolvent liquidation/administration. That is somewhat simplifying the legal position, but it should also be noted that the bar of 'no reasonable prospect' is a high one. In other words, if there was any reasonable prospect that the company would pull through, say due to unprecedented government assistance, then there is no wrongful trading. Furthermore, the UK Government has already expressed an intention to relax the law on wrongful trading even further.

As regards directors duties, there are a number of these enshrined in the Companies Act 2006. The first duty which comes to mind in this situation is the duty to exercise reasonable care, skill and diligence. This is the standard which a director must meet in terms of his general performance in the job. As one will note, the standard is vague and not prescriptive at all. The conduct to be expected is judged against objective standard of reasonableness and that inevitably must be considered against the reality of the moment – namely a national crisis. The courts have always been reluctant to try and second guess what a director should

or should not have done, particularly with the benefit of hindsight. I expect the courts will be even less interested in doing so now.

If that isn't comfort enough, the 2006 Act specifically provides to the court power to grant relief where a director of a company has been found liable to pay a sum of money for a failure of the sort described where he has acted honestly and reasonably having regard to all the circumstances.

- And on a practical level, the risk really only materialises if there is an insolvent liquidation or administration of the company or if there are some particularly active shareholders.
- Directors do need to be aware. They need to take relevant advice – namely from their accountants and from their lawyers about what they should or should not be thinking about in the performance of their role. But having done that, a director, acting honestly and reasonably, should be comforted to know that the law does not expect perfection of them and in these unprecedented times there are a manner of ways in which the law takes account of this very unique economic context.

Stronachs

Making waves

IT TAKES around half a century for Deeside Natural Mineral Water, which is sent around the globe, to filter through the underground rocks below Scotland's unspoiled terrain before emerging naturally at the historic Pannanich Wells near Ballater.

The water is said to have special health-giving properties and last year more than 3.5m bottles were sold, not only all over the UK, but across Europe and in Hong Kong, South Korea and Japan.

It is an outstanding example of the high quality of Scotland's natural products which are sought after around the world.

The water has flowed from the springs for many centuries but it was in 1760 when they became widely known after a local woman was completely cured of a then fatal tuberculosis-like condition by bathing in and drinking the water.

At that time Francis Farquharson, Laird of Monaltrie and an entrepreneur, built the Pannanich Inn and bath houses for visitors and the granite monuments at the springs from where the waters flow to this day.

Ballater was developed as a spa town to accommodate the health seekers who came to drink the 'miracle waters' and among the historical figures who visited it were Sir Walter Scott, Lord Byron and Queen Victoria who wrote

about it in her Highland Journals. She also took many guests staying with her at beloved Balmoral Castle on the nine-mile journey to sample the waters.

In 1996 two modern-day entrepreneurs, father and son George and Martin Simpson, founded Deeside Water to bring this 'gift from nature' to the wider population.

"From a modest start, hand bottling in a single small room and delivering water from the back of the car, we have grown to supply water across the UK and the world, with a modern bottling plant and prestigious customers in many locations," said Martin.

The business is based on site beside the source at Pannanich Wells. "We lie in the Cairngorms National Park, a beautiful protected area," he added. "We are relatively remote and free from pollution so benefit from pure rainfall falling on unspoiled mountains, resulting water of exceptional quality.

"Over one billion litres of rain falls around the springs every year. It filters through the geological system which has been there for thousands of years. It is during this time that the water's unique health-giving qualities are absorbed and captured. After a journey which takes about 50 years it flows naturally under its own pressure from the artesian springs on the heather clad hillside, free from pollution or the influences of man.

"We believe in nature and nurture, which is why we only use what the springs provide under their own pressure. We have a great team of 12 in the business and can produce up to 30,000 bottles a day. UK deliveries leave on pallets by the lorry load around the country. The bottles for export are normally loaded into shipping containers and driven from Ballater to different ports around the UK depending on their ultimate destination."

It's not just our famous rivers which provide economic advantages to the North-east. Peterhead Port's international trade is focussed on fish and it is also a major oil and gas service hub.

There has been a harbour at Peterhead for more than 400 years which has been vital to the prosperity of the area. During the Jacobite risings of 1715 and 1745 it was where reinforcements, money and equipment were periodically landed from France. In the early 19th century it was one of the UK's premier whaling ports but today fishing and the oil and gas sector are its mainstays.

While its proximity to the oilfields of the North Sea make it an ideal location for relatively short voyages with equipment and supplies, the majority of the fish which is landed in Peterhead finds its way all across Europe and often to Asia.

A recent independent study by BIGGAR Economics revealed the



considerable impact the business, with just 64 employees, has on the local and Scottish economies. It calculated that the port contributes more than £800m GVA to the Scottish economy and supports more than 10,000 jobs.

Stephen Paterson, chief financial officer, said in recent years Peterhead has been the biggest port for landings in the UK, and possibly Europe, and has been successful in attracting a record number of vessels and volume of fish.

“Part of that is to do with our £52m investment, the core of which was providing a new fish market roughly twice the floor area we had previously,” he explained. “Market staff have worked hard in recent months to secure various quality and environmental accreditations, including Responsible Fishing Port, Marine Stewardship Council and the SMETA ethical audit.

“It is set up and managed to meet the best quality and efficiency standards and we have also done a lot of work reconfiguring the inner harbour to make access easier for the fleet so vessels can come in on any tide.

“Most fishing boats landing at Peterhead are UK registered but we have French boats use the port on a frequent basis and during the pelagic season landings from Norwegian, Danish, Dutch and Irish vessels as well.

“Last year the port handled £209m worth of fish which was an all-time

record and that represents 153,000 tonnes of product. Most white fish is sold through the market in Peterhead and a significant quantity is processed locally but there is also a sizeable chunk which then is exported to the continent. Some is filleted and processed before export but a percentage will go straight to markets like Boulogne in France which is a major seafood hub Stephen said it was ironic that, given the different preferences of nationalities, 80% of the fish landed in the UK ends up abroad while 80% of fish we eat in the UK is imported.

“A lot of mackerel and herring is landed and the vast majority of that is for the export market. Much of it goes out to the Far East with the premium quality pelagic fish tending to go to countries like Japan. Although we don’t directly ship containers around the world, we do ship fish around the world.

“Meanwhile our oil and gas business splits into two. The first part is the logistics which is handling the day-to-day needs of offshore installations which is everything from drill pipe and chemicals to toilet rolls and food and ASCO handles about 2000 of those supply vessel calls per annum.

“The second part is the subsea sector which is mainly vessels associated with developing, maintaining and improving the existing subsea infrastructure.

“Decommissioning is also something we will try and build up but we don’t

see Peterhead as the sort of port to which whole installations will be towed. It will be more like small pieces coming in and out during preparation for the decommissioning of platforms and subsea infrastructure. It will be the same kind of trade we have had for the last 30 years but with more coming in rather than going out.

“On the tourism side we have a 160-berth leisure marina which takes in about 1,000 nights occupancy a year from visitors on yachts. We also have some cruise ship visits, usually round-UK specialist cruises like golfers who want to play Cruden Bay. In addition, we handle a mix of mainly agricultural type cargo including grain, fertilisers and timber.

“The impact we have on the local and national economy is completely disproportionate to the size of the organisation but that’s because of the great service and expertise offered by companies that the port hosts.

“As a trust port any profits we make are reinvested back into the business which we view almost as an heirloom. We want it to be here in another 400 years and during our time we are trying to improve it, add value and ensure it gives the greatest possible benefit to the local community we are here to service.”

What role do you see our coast and waters playing in the region's future?



“When we stand on the shore and look out at the sea, in many ways it reflects things going on in the wider world. This is especially true at the moment when we look at the effect that COVID-19 is having on our lives, our work and our interactions with others... and also on investment markets.

“When you see the waters breaking on the rocks and sand of the shore, you can see the volatility and turmoil that this causes. However, looking further ahead to the horizon, things are calmer and appear completely smooth. It's the same with investment; there will always be short-term volatility but over the longer term this turmoil often gives way to a more sedate and comfortable looking picture, and is perhaps something to bear in mind as we navigate the next few months.”

David E. Gibson, *team director*, Mattioli Woods



“We are a video animation and digital media company and several recent projects have highlighted just how important our coasts and waters are for the region's future. We made an award-winning promotional film for Aberdeen Harbour Board which is due to host the British Ports Association conference later this year. They have made a huge investment in the South Harbour to make Aberdeen the biggest, best, most sustainable port in Scotland and that will open the doors to significant new international trade.

“We also did a series of films for North-east 250. It gives people a simple and beautiful way to enjoy the attractions along its route – the often deserted beaches, rugged coastlines and stunning mountains and rivers. The North-east has a lot of coast and a lot of wind and our work with oil companies has convinced us they are all working hard on the energy transition which may make these natural assets even more valuable to our communities in the future.”

Mark Turner, *creative director*, SIGNAL2NOISE



“While we're lucky to enjoy the coast and the economic benefits it brings to the region we must be conscious of the greater likelihood of flooding. According to SEPA's most recent National Flood Risk Assessment, an estimated 29,300 properties in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire are at risk, including 5,600 businesses.

“With the increasing impact of climate change, businesses need to take robust and long-term measures to protect their properties and ensure that severe weather doesn't affect their day-to-day operations. If flooding occurs, businesses should move as many contents as possible to higher ground and take plenty of photographs of the damage caused. They should contact their insurance broker on the day of the flood in order to receive guidance. Weather can be unpredictable but a plan of action doesn't need to be.”

Alistair Lang, *account executive – cyber*, Marsh Commercial

National award for Aberdeen International Airport

THE spotlight shone on the individuals and businesses working across Scotland's tourism industry recently at the National Final of the Scottish Thistle Awards.

Aberdeen International Airport and its Northern Lights Lounge food and drinks suppliers was among those honoured with the highest accolade in the Scottish hospitality and tourism sector at the National Final of the Scottish Thistle Awards. It received the Working Together for Tourism award.

The award celebrates partnerships, collaborations and team working between tourism businesses and travel trade to deliver new and innovative campaigns or activity that offer a great and collaborative experience to every guest.

The Northern Lights Lounge has had more than 250,000 visitors since it opened in 2017 and works in partnership with local suppliers to showcase the best the North-east has to offer, such as Brewdog beer, Dean's shortbread, Mackie's crisps and The Bay Fishcakes. Judges praised the entry for its unique and innovative approach as well as plans for continued growth.



Bright new events talent

ABERDEEN Convention and Events Bureau's Jill Sinclair has been awarded a place at a global congress, recognising her as one of the brightest new talents in the UK business events sector.

Jill, business development executive, was selected as a finalist in the ICCA Congress First Timer's Competition 2020, where she has been awarded registration and travel to the 2020 ICCA World Congress. She was awarded the place after impressing judges with her presentation and supporting video at the ICCA UK and Ireland Chapter Annual Conference 2020, held at the International Convention Centre Wales.



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ACCIONA civil engineer Maria Sasso with Greenwell director Scott Brown

Greenwell starts the year with substantial contract delivery

AN ABERDEEN headquartered industry services firm is set to complete a projected six-figure contract on one of the city's sustainable energy projects.

Greenwell Equipment is supplying two large modular buildings for the NESS Energy Project which is Aberdeen's new Energy from Waste plant being developed in East Tullos Industrial Estate by Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray Councils. The project is being built and managed by ACCIONA which is one of the world's largest specialist companies in this field.

The double storey temporary buildings will house the main HQ buildings and the canteen and welfare facilities for the 200 strong team which is set to work on the construction of the new facility. The large 700sqm and 350sqm modular buildings were delivered and erected on site across a four-week period.

The contract kicks off 2020 as Greenwell recorded an end of year turnover of £3.4m, which was a 15% increase on 2018, and with additional contracts already secured for 2020 the business is set to hit a projected £4m turnover this financial year.

Director Scott Brown, said: "Greenwell has worked on a number of large-scale infrastructure projects in Scotland and across the UK. We have a skilled team who understands the requirements of large-scale projects and, of course, it is good to secure work literally on our doorstep in Tullos."



SEM launches Middle East division

ABERDEEN firm SEM, which develops innovative technologies for water and waste remediation, has announced the launch of a Middle East division as part of a global expansion drive.

SEM has partnered with Muscat-based HEMA Energy to work with clients across several sectors including agriculture, marine and oil and gas. An Omani company, HEMA Energy provides value-adding technologies and services to the upstream petroleum industry. SEM MENA is a new business entity based around a shared business structure between SEM and HEMA Energy, reflecting their joint commitment to the energy market.

SEM chief executive officer John Jones welcomed the new partnership, saying: "This is an exceptionally exciting time for us at SEM, as we spread our global reach and bring our environmentally conscious technologies to new markets. Oman in particular is a rapidly developing market which offers a host of new opportunities for the technologies we have driven from prototype to commercialisation.

"Oman's focus on environmentally sustainable technologies and innovative solutions is completely aligned with the SEM core ethos of helping both businesses and the environment they work in, to flourish."

AAB joins Law Society panel

ANDERSON Anderson & Brown LLP (AAB), chartered accountants and business advisors, has been accepted to join the Law Society of Scotland's panel of approved accountancy partner firms.

The Law Society of Scotland is the professional body for all Scottish solicitors. As part of the partnership programme, the Law Society seeks approved accountants to offer services and advice to legal firms and their clients. AAB is one of only two accountancy firms to join the panel thanks to its long-established, successful track record of supporting legal service firms with their varied accounting, regulatory and tax requirements.

Power Jacks win £3.2m of contracts

ABERDEEN-based manufacturer Power Jacks has won £3.2m worth of export contracts in the last three months alone thanks to support from UK Export Finance, the UK's export credit agency. Since 2017, it has won a total of £9.5m worth of export contracts.

Power Jacks qualified for support from UK Export Finance, the government's export credit agency. UKEF supported Power Jacks by underwriting 80% of commercially issued bonds and guarantees, where the bank was unwilling to extend facilities beyond 20%.

Bruce Bultitude, managing director, Power Jacks, said: "We could have potentially lost out on valuable export business without the support of UKEF. We will also be looking into UKEF's Exporting Working Capital Scheme in the future, for upcoming export contracts."

AAB top dealmaker for 15th year

ANDERSON Anderson & Brown LLP (AAB), chartered accountants and business advisors, has been named the top dealmaker in Scotland for the 15th year running.

Scottish Business Insider has recognised AAB's success in completing the most deals in Scotland in 2019. Its latest figures revealed that AAB successfully completed 62 deals in 2019, nearly double the number of any other accountancy firm during the same period and 29 more than its closest rivals.

AAB's key M&A highlights during 2019 included the management buy-out of Arjowiggins Creative Papers; DC Thomson Media's acquisition of PSP Media; the sale of Apollo Offshore to Global Energy Group; and the disposal of Motion Software to Jonas Software.

AAB has significantly increased its focus on deal activity in the central belt following its Edinburgh office launch in June 2018.

Enterprise award for Craigdon

CRAIGDON Mountain Sports has been awarded a 2019 Scottish Enterprise Award in recognition of its outdoor clothing and equipment range and great customer service.

The Scottish Enterprise award came a year on from the Aberdeen and Inverurie based business being voted 2018 Ski Club of Great Britain's Best Clothing Store and highly commended for equipment.

Craigdon put its success down to a focus on making sure the customer gets the right product, regardless of whether they are seasoned mountaineers or skiers, dog walkers or a business buying jackets for company embroidery.



The Hummingbird asset

Spirits lifted by boost from two North Sea fields

PRODUCTION has been boosted from two North Sea fields following successful drilling campaigns.

First gas from the new C6 well at Spirit Energy's Chiswick field in the Southern North Sea was achieved in March and has added up to an additional 15 million standard cubic feet of gas per day to the field.

The Chiswick field, around 75 miles off the coast of Norfolk, has been producing gas since 2007. The new well brings overall production from the Greater Markham Area (GMA) to 110 million standard cubic feet of gas per day – enough to heat nearly 950,000 homes.

Spirit Energy, together with partner Dana Petroleum, has also completed drilling of a new production well at the Chestnut field, extending the life of that field by as much as three years. Initial expectation when the Chestnut field first came online more than a decade ago was for a little over two years' production.

First oil from the new Chestnut well was also achieved in March. Thanks to the £56m investment from Spirit Energy and Dana Petroleum in the new well and a contract extension with Teekay Corporation for the Hummingbird Spirit FPSO, another 2.5 million barrels have been unlocked.

Neil McCulloch, executive vice-president technical and operated assets, said: "The industry faces unprecedented challenges but, taken together, the additional gas and oil from Chiswick and Chestnut provide a boost to production from two UK fields at a time when the secure supply of energy is critical."



LIFELINE SUPPLIES HAVE CONTINUED
THANKS TO THE HARD WORK OF OUR
EMPLOYEES, CUSTOMERS AND PORT USERS.
THANK YOU

We would like to thank all of our employees, customers and port users, whose dedication and tireless efforts have allowed Aberdeen Harbour to remain fully operational during COVID-19. Thanks to them, we have continued to be a gateway for lifeline supplies of fuel, foodstuffs and essential goods for our country, communities and industries. The determination and work of our stakeholders, has been an example to us all and we are incredibly grateful.



On your electric bike for deliveries

BUSINESSES based in Aberdeen city centre which are looking to bolster their sustainability credentials can now apply for a free trial of an electric cargo bike.

Nestrans, the North-east transport partnership, is making six e-cargo bikes available for a free trial of up to one year. The trials will allow organisations to test a means of transport which could not only benefit their business but would also contribute to improved air quality and reduced congestion in the city centre.

Whether it's carrying equipment, parcels and mail or deliveries of groceries, prescriptions or even flowers, it is hoped that businesses which are currently operating vehicles in the area would be able to replace at least one of these by trialling a bike.

The project complements the forthcoming introduction of a Low Emission Zone (LEZ) in the city centre later this year. As part of this, Aberdeen City Council received grant funding from Transport Scotland which has been allocated to Nestrans to develop and manage the e-cargo bike project.



Callum and Peter Sim

Raise a glass to HRAFN GIN Valhalla

A PREMIER gin from Aberdeenshire has won a Silver Medal at the San Francisco World Spirits Competition, considered one of the most influential spirits contests in the world. HRAFN GIN 'Valhalla', created in 2019 by brothers Callum and Peter Sim of Raven Spirits Ltd, was one of a select number of gins from around the world to secure a medal in the competition.

The judging was held in San Francisco when the judging panel blind-tasted around 3,000 entries from 65 countries, across more than 100 individual categories. Silver medals are awarded to outstanding spirits that show refinement, finesse, and complexity, with the winners among the best examples of their categories.

Since its launch less than a year ago HRAFN GIN 'Valhalla' has already won a gold and a silver medal at The Spirits Business' Gin Masters competition. It joins its sister gin HRAFN GIN 'Thought & Memory' in the Raven Spirits range which is also a multiple gold and silver medal winner in international competitions.

A word of advice



Russ Peterson,
director,
Bad Dinosaur

Area of expertise:

I've been working in tech for about 12 years now. Before that I was working on my own projects – at the time we called this being a 'bedroom developer'. Over the years I've become much more product/user experience focused and I'm obsessed with learning how people integrate with technology.

What should people know:

Building a digital or tech product is a lot simpler than people think. If you have an idea but think it will be too much work, there's no harm in talking to an expert to work out how feasible it actually is. It's great to build something that will add value to your business but the real magic is designing products that people actually enjoy using.

What's the biggest mistake companies make?

Too much planning. I've seen so many projects get stuck in 'planning hell'. Every project needs a plan but at some point you just have to start building and trying things out. You can't plan for every single eventuality and outcome so why bother?

What's your top tip?

Don't be afraid to just try things out. Facebook, Google, Airbnb – all of these were far from perfect, polished apps when they first started. They're also all huge tech companies with thousands of employees working on their products every day. Stop comparing your tech project to them and instead focus on your own ambitions and successes.

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People are your biggest asset

by Gary Downs,
managing director,
PBI Ltd



MOST of us believe that the people who do the jobs, day in and day out, know the processes better than anyone else. If we can harness their knowledge and provide a platform for their suggestions to be heard and implemented, we can make significant improvements to business processes.

Can you imagine the power of your organisation if every employee came up with an improvement every single day?

At times the culture of an organisation can prevent employees expressing their ideas. This may be a result of poor experiences in the past such as being shut down, not listened to, or there may not be a suitable mechanism in place to hear and implement ideas for improvement.

Visual management helps achieve transparency by displaying information about the current state of the business. It also acts as a great catalyst in building a culture where it is ok show the true performance of any business, what is going well and what is not going so well.

It is often stated by individuals, that you should not display poor performance, as customers

may see this. In my experience, customers already know of poor performance and have applauded companies for their transparency, as it demonstrates acknowledgement of problems and, more importantly, shows that these problems are being addressed. Let's not lose sight of the importance of being transparent about good performance, as this can be one of the greatest motivators to teams.

Providing a visual communications mechanism helps teams come together, to share information, that does not often get shared via emails. We use communication systems called 'huddles'. These once a day, fifteen-minute meetings allow team members, including supervisors and managers, to get together and express their improvement ideas, raise concerns, ask for help and share the team successes.

This is a key approach which helps to unlock the knowledge that employees have, as it provides a simple, easy to implement, rigorous process that encourages people to share their thoughts and ideas. Some of our clients operate over 180 daily huddle teams working across many geographies. They all use the same approach but with different subjects that are determined by the individual teams.

As culture starts to change and it becomes 'ok to ask for help', the teams begin to embrace new tools, such as Kaizen events, that allow them to challenge waste and inefficiencies that exist within their and other departments. Kaizen events are sessions that involve the people from across the process, who are dedicated 100% during the Kaizen to fix problems that have existed for a long time.

Their goal is to fix problems during the event, not create a 'to do' list. This is a key approach in empowering teams to participate in problem solving, which, if supported by management, is one of the most important approaches in engaging your workforce in solving real problems in a fast and sustainable way.

Java Sea contract for JCE Energy

JCE Energy has been awarded a £1.2m contract for the engineering, manufacture and supply of large solar packages for a client in South-east Asia. The systems will be installed on various remote wellhead platforms in the Java Sea, part of a vital oil and gas development.

The solar power systems will be providing power for locally installed instrumentation, telecoms equipment, navigational aids and process equipment / motors, on each of the facilities. The complete packages will be manufactured and tested at JCE Energy's custom-built facility in Aberdeen, ready to be installed and commissioned on site.



Andrew Robins in action

Torque specialist enhances education links

A COMPANY which specialises in torque machines has enhanced its links to education through a project which aims to give young people an insight into the world of work.

Staff at Enerquip have continued their long-term support of Portlethen Academy's 'Gear Up 2 Go' project and recently welcomed a group of young people to their Altens headquarters for a talk and tour by director Andrew Robins.

'Gear Up 2 Go' is designed to support young people in making the transition from the classroom to the workplace, training or further education. It is delivered by Community Learning and Development's 'Work with Young People' team at Portlethen Academy. Now in its 10th year, the project offers young people the chance to acquire skills and knowledge that will assist them in preparing for the next phase of their work, training or education journey.

Andrew Robins of Enerquip said: "Our link to this important project predates Enerquip itself and we have continued with it because we believe it is crucial to invest in the workforce of the future.

"By sharing information and inviting people to come and see what we do, young people will be better equipped to make informed decisions about their future. We hope that their insight into the opportunities available will help encourage them into our industry."



Team leader Mohamad Fathy

New Cairo team for Cortez Subsea

CORTEZ Subsea has strengthened its pipeline engineering capabilities with the formation of a new team in Cairo.

Six staff members have joined the company to deliver work globally and to position the company for further growth.

Managing director of Cortez Subsea in the UK, Alasdair Cowie, said: "We have enjoyed steady growth since 2019 when we were awarded a contract to lay the first ever mechanically connected pipeline offshore Malaysia. We also continue to build on our track record in delivering inspection campaigns worldwide."

Among the new recruits is Mohamad Fathy who heads up the team."

Ardyne wins orders for wells worth £45m plus

UK FISHING, milling and casing recovery provider Ardyne has strengthened its commitment to the North Sea by securing four long-term contracts for work on 175 wells with potentially more to follow.

The company has won three contracts ranging from three to five years with major operators for fishing, P&A and inner string conductor recovery on 103 wells in the UK and Norwegian sectors, establishing the company as a full service P&A and fishing services provider in the region. The projects will commence in the second and third quarters of this year.

Ardyne has also agreed a contract with a major Norwegian operator for fishing and slot recovery services for 72 wells. The campaign will begin in the third quarter of this year and will run for approximately four years. The recent contract wins follow the decision last year by Ardyne to implement a strategic pivot from being a niche provider to offering full service P&A and slot recovery support, including fishing, milling and casing cut and pull operations.

Add Energy's great start to the year

ADD Energy Asset and Integrity and Management has already surpassed its annual financial target after securing a raft of new contracts worth £12m – making 2020 its strongest year commercially since inception.

The latest business wins include projects with major oil and gas operators, power generation plants and companies from within the mining sector.

The firm will provide its recently launched automated asset maintenance optimisation solution Aim-Hi, as well as services including computerised maintenance management software builds, planned maintenance optimisation and maintenance management training to new and existing clients in the UK, USA and Middle East further reinforcing its international presence.



Roses at Eden development

Bancon Homes lodges planning application

PLANS for the next phase of homes to be built at Maiden Craig South have been lodged with Aberdeen City Council by luxury homebuilder, Bancon Homes.

The proposal is for 208 homes on the site, which is opposite Dobbies Garden Centre, at the Western edge of Aberdeen. This is the latest phase of an approved masterplan which comprises a residential development of approximately 825 homes plus provisions for commercial and retail outlets.

The plans are for a mix of housing types with 172 private homes ranging from two to four bedroom apartments, terraced, semi-detached and detached homes, in addition to 36 affordable homes.

In the earlier phases Bancon Homes completed 128 homes at its developments at Eden and The Reserve and it currently has a development of 40 units on the north side of the Lang Stracht at its Roses at Eden development.



Keith Parrott

Thailand contract for Tendeka

INDEPENDENT global completions service company Tendeka has signed a three-year contract with Mubadala Petroleum to supply sand-face completion equipment in Thailand.

Under the deal Tendeka will supply its FloElite sand screens and FloSure Autonomous Inflow Control Devices (AICDs) to Mubadala Petroleum's Jasmine, Manora and Nong Yao fields in the Gulf of Thailand. The contract also has the option of two one-year extensions.

Keith Parrott, Tendeka's Southeast Asia area manager said: "This contract ensures our presence in Thailand for the next three to five years and serves as a basis to grow further across the region and emphasises our commitment in providing technology to increase oil recovery rates for life of field."

Accelerate productivity whilst working from home

SCOTTISH firms can ensure business continuity during the current crisis by putting systems in place that not only maximise productivity but create room for future growth.

That's the view of Gordon Christie, managing director at IT Hotdesk. He believes that taking a long-term approach to internal processes can help companies benefit from enhanced staff performance and reduced downtime.

Based in Westhill, Aberdeenshire IT Hotdesk specialises in providing IT support and high-performance software, cloud and hardware technology solutions for clients, including those operating in the oil and gas industry.

Gordon said: "A few months ago, we asked some critical questions as part of our team's ongoing business continuity planning and identified various scenarios that could potentially impact operations. Key considerations included how to accommodate changing employee needs, assessing the impact of staff working from home, introducing measures to allow people to keep in touch, and meeting customer service level agreements. Businesses can utilise several practical initiatives which are geared towards keeping operations running, whilst improving remote workers' performance and productivity."

Among other measures, IT Hotdesk recommend including ensuring staff have the right set up at home, ensuring the correct security measures and protection are in place, being on the look out for a rise in 'phishing' emails; and keeping a positive mindset.



One of nature's wonders

ABERDEENSHIRE stretches from 'one of the last great places on earth' – the Cairngorms – to 'one of the world's top-rated coastlines' according to National Geographic magazine.

Scotland has 10% of Europe's coastline, more than 6,000 miles, and the surrounding seas are home to a third of the global population of grey seals; the world's most northerly population of bottlenose dolphins; 23 other species of the world's 82 whales and dolphins; and 43% of all seabirds breeding in the EU.

The Scottish coast also provides summer feeding grounds for the basking shark, which is the world's second largest fish, and the endangered leatherback turtle. Along Aberdeenshire's 165 miles of coastline, as well as a vast range of wildlife, you can experience unrivalled scenery and spectacular beaches.

However, Scotland's seas are under threat from human activity, with much of its marine habitat deteriorating. Helping save the seas for future generations is a daily task for Catherine Gemmell, Scotland

conservation officer for the Marine Conservation Society.

As she explains, there is much which businesses and individuals can do to help with her challenge: "One of the favourite parts of my job is travelling and visiting so much of Scotland's coastline.

“

“It's great to see more and more people waking up to the fact that Scotland's coasts are amazing and I think the Year of Coasts & Waters is such a great way to shine a spotlight on our coasts, the businesses along them, the sustainable seafood we produce, and the incredible wildlife we have year-round.”

Catherine Gemmell,
Scotland conservation officer,
Marine Conservation Society

Many people think they must travel abroad to seek spectacular coastlines, wildlife and beaches but we have it all right here in Scotland.

“It's great to see more and more people waking up to the fact that Scotland's coasts are amazing and I think the Year of Coasts & Waters is such a great way to shine a spotlight on our coasts, the businesses along them, the sustainable seafood we produce, and the incredible wildlife we have year-round.

“Our coasts are such an amazing place for our wellbeing and to go and spend family time or time on our own. So, from Shetland to Solway, I've been able to travel and meet the communities and businesses that are out there making the most of it. We want more people to enjoy the coast in the most sustainable way and maybe give something back when they are there as well.”

She said there were several ways the public could help. One of the areas of focus for the MCS is marine conservation – protecting the ocean and its wildlife through well-managed marine protected areas.



"Anyone can help us by identifying what wildlife is coming to visit us. Leatherback turtles come to Scotland every summer to eat jellyfish," added Catherine. "These are the world's largest turtles which can grow almost to the size of a small car and a great deal of work is being done to protect them. Leatherbacks are very susceptible to plastic pollution because they mistake plastic for jellyfish. If people report sightings, we can make sure measures are in place to protect them.

"As well as the turtles we ask coastal visitors to let us know when they see basking sharks, which come to Scotland to feed on tiny plankton. We are also recording jellyfish information because, as well as an important food source for leatherback turtles, they are very good indicators of climate change impact. We had recent sightings of an Orca off Fraserburgh, and when businesses see and hear of these exciting sightings they can share them through their social media accounts and with clients to highlight how amazing our coastlines are."

Another vital scheme which MCS runs is its seafood ratings.

The charity's Good Fish Guide provides an easy way to find out which fish choices are the most sustainable and the guide is used by industry, retailers, restaurants and consumers.

The job to which Catherine devotes the largest proportion of her time is MCS's clean seas and beaches work: "We get everyone including

“

"We were happy to help, Hopefully this will be just the start of our community support work. I would be disappointed if this is a one off. If we can make a difference to a community and help the people who live where we work then we will."

Paul Williams,
business unit manager,
Premier Oil UK

members of the public, businesses and schools out doing beach cleans. As well as picking up all the litter, they fill in a litter survey. We then use the data to speak to governments and big business to try and get policy and legislation changes. The project, called 'Beachwatch', has been running now for 26 years. (The programme was suspended at the time of print on government advice).

"It's incredible. Thanks to the volunteers we know how many crisp packets, how many bags and how many bottles have been found and we can use that information to demand change. A really good example is the 5p carrier bag charge. We had seen an increase in the number of bags on beaches and our data helped campaign for the charge. Since it was introduced, the number of bags we have seen on Scotland's beaches has fallen by 58%.

"We have had a series of successes recently, including the commitment for a Deposit Return System (DRS) for our bottles and cans and the ban on the sale of plastic cotton buds which was introduced in October 2019 in Scotland. These big changes stop the items turning



up on the beach in the first place.”

And protecting our coast and waters is something many local businesses are behind.

“Beachwatch is a great teambuilding activity and many businesses are taking part in beach cleans. Businesses including Optical Express and Premier Oil have engaged their teams with beach cleans in the past. It would be great if even more could use volunteer days or staff days to give something back. We find that what people learn on Beachwatch has a bigger impact because companies may then decide to get rid of single use cups in their café or carry out litter picks in their car park.

“We would encourage businesses to go out and find out what’s happening on their local beach and what their business could do to reduce their impact on the coastal environment as well. We have a flagship project, the Great British Beach Clean, and this year businesses will have a greater opportunity to be involved as it is for a week, rather than the usual weekend.”

A 40-strong team from Premier

Oil was led into action to clean up Cairnbulg beach last year by the East Grampian Coastal Partnership (EGCP) and after just an hour had collected three tonnes of recyclable material alone. As well as plastic bottles they picked up gloves, overalls, nets, creel pods and a scooter.

Paul Williams, Premier Oil UK business unit manager, said his team had become involved after he was inspired to make a difference following a conversation with a friend who is involved in the EGCP.

“We were happy to help,” Mr Williams said. “Hopefully this will be just the start of our community support work. I would be disappointed if this is a one off. If we can make a difference to a community and help the people who live where we work then we will.

“It has been disappointing to see the material that’s been found on the beach. It’s mostly fishing debris or items that have been left by the public.”

This interview was conducted before the COVID-19 crisis. MCS recommends everyone follows government advice to stay safe and well.

Businesses are like cars

by Jim Reid,
director,
Jim Reid Vehicle Sales and Service



WHEN I was asked to write an Opinion piece for the Chamber back in March, I thought I'm not going to write about the COVID-19 pandemic or the economic crisis that it has caused as I didn't know if we would still be in lockdown.

However, we are so I feel I have no option than to write about it or it would sound like I have lived on another planet for the last couple of months, so here we go.

Despite Boris Johnston's lockdown announcement on March 23 not coming as a major surprise I don't think that any business was fully ready for it or fully understood the implications it would have for them, their staff and their customers.

Being in the automotive industry the lockdown, the subsequent closure of businesses and furloughing of staff right across all industries in the UK made me start making some interesting comparisons between businesses and cars, let me explain.

Like cars, businesses come in all shapes and sizes, the bigger the

car the bigger the fuel tank (bank account) normally is however it needs this because it uses much more fuel as they have bigger engines (staff) and therefore less fuel efficient when at slow speeds or idling. The bigger the engine the faster it goes and the sweeter it sounds. They have fantastic cruising ability at high speed and they are often the most magnificent looking cars on the road.

However the bigger and faster the car the more chance it has of running out of fuel (cash) or even worse crashing and coming to a complete stop because the driver didn't brake at the right time or wasn't taking notice of the change of road (market) conditions.

Smaller cars are much more agile and can handle the twist and turns in the road much better than the bigger heavier cars. However, they have much smaller fuel tanks but at the same time need less fuel to run.

The recent lockdown has meant these cars are all driving on the same road, not knowing where they are going, no map or sat nav to tell them which way to turn. Due to this they have no idea how far the road goes, how

many corners or passing places there are or even where the fuel stations are (government grants and loans) and despite the best planning they have no idea if they have enough fuel to get them to the next filling station. Like you, I'm hoping that we have enough fuel in our car to get to the final destination, wherever that is.

No one knows what the end of this bumpy road will look like but I do know there will be lots of cars getting recovered along the way, let's hope it's not yours.

Let's hope you are driving a super reliable, fuel efficient car supplied by Jim Reid to get you to the other side.

Norco charged with Alcad's UK battery service

ALCAD has appointed Norco Group Ltd as its first ever UK Service Centre for nickel technology industrial batteries, covering backup power systems for the North Sea's offshore oil and gas industry as well as transport, data centres, utilities, hospitals and other mission critical industries.

As an expert contractor in stored electrical energy systems, Norco's team of certified technicians will inspect, survey and maintain the UK's fleet of Alcad nickel batteries, providing customers with technical support and advice.

To be appointed as one of 37 accredited service centres worldwide, Alcad vetted Norco's management processes, facilities and compliance of their test equipment. In addition, all Norco service engineers have completed the Installation, Commissioning and Maintenance course at Alcad's factory in Oskarshamn, Sweden, as part of the approval process. Without this knowledge, a technician may falsely diagnose batteries as being time-served, leading to the unnecessary cost of replacing a healthy battery system.

New division for Flowline Specialists

SCOTTISH energy equipment manufacturer and service provider Flowline Specialists has expanded its service offering as a result of client demand.

The Aberdeenshire-based company which designs, engineers and manufactures a range of cable and pipe handling and deployment equipment for use in the energy sector, has launched a new service and maintenance division. It will operate from the firm's existing workshop facility at its Oldmeldrum headquarters and utilise existing personnel.

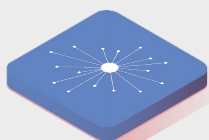
Flowline Specialists, which employs around 50 staff, has been working on developing the new division for about a year, investing around £50,000 to set it up. In recent months the company has refurbished equipment owned by subsea engineering companies and serviced under rollers for a client operating in the renewable energy sector.

Creating the new division is the latest step in the firm's strategy to diversify its business. Chief executive officer Ross Whittingham said: "We have been working to set up this new division for about nine months and it has come about through requests from customers who value our technical expertise and hydraulic and engineering capabilities."

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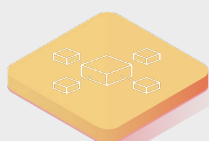
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eLeave



eTime



eReport



OGIC joins OGTC to aim for net zero

THE Oil & Gas Innovation Centre (OGIC) activity has become part of the Oil & Gas Technology Centre (OGTC) creating a single academic and industry focal point for strengthening low carbon technology.

It will be supported by £3m funding from the Scottish Funding Council, Scottish Government and Scottish Enterprise which will be used to develop net zero projects in partnership with industry and Scottish universities.

With fundamental research and academic collaboration critical to unlocking the potential of key technologies, the academic network and early-stage technology innovation developed by OGIC will strengthen the OGTC's existing capabilities. Over the past five years OGIC has supported more than 100 projects, from innovative well plug and abandonment barriers, through to transformational subsea systems.

Some of these projects have progressed through to the OGTC for co-funding and support, therefore this transfer of activities provides an opportunity to align industry and academic innovation, which will now be delivered through the OGTC.

Colette Cohen, chief executive officer of the OGTC, said: "We look forward to developing new collaborative earlier TRL (technology readiness level) projects that will help to bolster our capability and deliver the required energy transition at pace."

Neptune Energy sets out exciting vision for North Sea future

NEPTUNE Energy has underlined its long-term commitment to the UK North Sea and to progressing with major exploration and gas production developments in 2020.

The UK business's strong operational performance, excellent project progress and good reserves replacement were also highlighted as the global group's Full Year Results for 2019 were released for the period ending December 31 2019.

The company invested \$24.3m in development activities in the UK including the sanction of its operated Seagull project and completion of the Cygnus A5 development well, brought onstream in June.

Neptune's UK managing director, Alexandra Thomas, said: "We have a robust, resilient business with an exciting, long-term future of growth ahead of us in the UK North Sea. We recognise strong opportunities to maximise economic recovery of resources with a particular focus on gas which remains enormously important to the UK as a low cost, lower carbon and sustainable energy source.

"Our operated production facility, Cygnus, is a cornerstone asset for the company and the UK, while the Cygnus field holds significant potential to be further developed as a major hub area in the Southern North Sea. We continue to discuss preparations to drill a 10th well next year as per our field development plan with our JV partner, Spirit Energy."

Expro named best in the country

INTERNATIONAL oilfield services company Expro has been awarded the Scotland Trophy at the RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) Health and Safety Awards, and has been recognised with an Order of Distinction for 16 consecutive gold awards.

The Scotland Trophy recognises the company that has demonstrated the highest standard of health and safety management and performance of all participating companies based in or operating in Scotland, across all industry sectors.

Expro has shown commitment towards the continual improvement and raising of health and safety standards through outstanding service quality and safety initiatives. This has been supported through its team of more than 100 HSEQ specialists, who have also driven environmental improvements and health and wellbeing programs that have led to the company's strong safety culture.

Stuart Paterson, Expro's global HSE and service quality director, said: "The strong safety culture that we have cultivated, encouraged and equipped with our entire workforce is testament to the excellent work done by all to champion safety at every opportunity. "We are genuinely proud of achieving these industry accolades for our efforts and standards and we look forward to continuing to set the bar as high as possible for health and safety across the globe."

Why is water safety important?

by Louise Richardson,
chief executive officer,
Absafe



AS CHIEF executive officer of Absafe, a safety charity, I have attended a lot of meetings recently one of which was held by Aberdeen Water Safety Group. I was fortunate to be in the audience during a presentation delivered by the Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS) and was struck by the statistics regarding the number of people that die as a result of accidental drowning.

This devastation can have a profound impact on communities in the North of Scotland, around 700 people die annually from drowning in the UK and you are four times more likely to drown if you are male.

The presentation was developed with the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) and Royal Life Saving Society UK (RLSS UK). They used their expertise in youth education to develop a partnership with Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. This will allow us to educate young people about the dangers of open water drowning.

One of the big contributors of harm are the effects of cold water shock however they have some great advice that we can share that could save a life. I felt if I became involved

in the education of young people in this area it would help reduce harm and incidences of non-intentional drowning and highlight the effects of cold water shock - and what to do if they find themselves in trouble.

Water Safety Scotland and ROSPA identified the majority of accidental fatalities happened in inland water. There appears to be a decline in the overall fatalities in Scotland but 57% of accidental fatalities were the result of recreational water related activities. These included normal daily activities such as going to a walk or run, accounting for one in four deaths.

I feel that due to the current climate education is vital, with more families engaging outside together, taking the time to explore. Taking long walks especially with the warm months approaching and the potential for the lockdown to be lifted, it is important to highlight this risk and dispel the myth that most accidental drownings happen in the sea, for all our community.

We are surrounded by beautiful coastline, lochs, rivers and reservoirs. Even as a mother of four I was unaware of the statistics previously but I am convinced that if we can inform young people and families about the risks, how to reduce the risk

and what to do if they or their friends find themselves in difficulty, then we can continue the trend of reducing the death from accidental drowning in Scotland.

I feel leading a team that are committed to raising awareness of risk and the importance of safety will have a positive impact. Health and safety sometimes can be viewed as a role not important for the younger community however the earlier we can educate, the bigger chance we have to improve their quality and experience whilst saving their lives.

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Veteran status plus new beginnings

by **Steven Alexander**,
managing director,
SFF Services Ltd;
and member of the Chamber's policy council



WHILST being aware for some time now that I've reached the veteran stage of my five-a-sides football career, I do find it hard to believe that 2020 sees me entering my 25th year at SFF Services Limited (SFFSL).

Established in 1986 and wholly owned by the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, SFFSL provides a wide range of vessel and personnel services to the offshore energy and telecommunications industries in areas of mutual interest, including guard vessel, survey vessel support and environmental related services. A major proportion of profits generated from trading is used to fund SFF activity in the promotion and protection of the Scottish fishing industry, helping to support fragile coastal communities.

Specifically in relation to guard vessel duties, the ethos of the company is to spread available work as widely as possible across member vessels without compromising safety and quality standards. Ideally, we look to engage the fishing vessels that find their normal fishing patterns disrupted or end up being temporarily displaced by offshore construction/decommissioning activities.

These vessels bring the benefit of local knowledge, including, in many cases, holding the contact details for the

fishing vessels likely to operate in the project area. A special mention must go to the oil and gas industry on this front for recognising the uniqueness of the SFFSL vessel provision model which allows us to share these alternative work opportunities amongst the fleet. Similar relationships are also being developed with other offshore industries such as renewables and subsea cables.

Since the start of the millennium, we have engaged over 500 different fishing vessels on a range of offshore projects all around the coasts and waters of Scotland. There is no doubt in my mind that the establishment of SFF Services Limited has made a major contribution to minimising conflict, by establishing and nurturing an excellent long-term working relationship between the Scottish fishing industry and other offshore industries.

With the provision of environmental related work contributing to almost half the total SFFSL offshore personnel days in recent years and to assist continual growth in this field, both in Scottish waters and on an international stage, subsidiary company, Marine Environmental Solutions Limited (MES) was created in May 2019. MES is able to provide a number of noise mitigation services, including marine mammal observation, passive acoustic monitoring and acoustic deterrent

devices. These can be used to monitor the movements of protected species during offshore works such as inshore and seismic survey, harbour expansion, construction and piling operations. An oil and gas decommissioning seabed debris clearance initiative, Drag.Net, is currently under development with the aim of being ready for trials in Q2/2020.

The success of SFFSL in reducing conflict at sea and promoting co-existence has led to invitations to present and share, with various joint fisheries/energy industry groupings, the SFF's experiences and knowledge built up from over 30 years of working alongside other users of the sea in the North Sea. Where there has been interest in the SFFSL model, we have provided start-up assistance. Our travels have seen us present in Europe, the United States and Australia – all great experiences, which had the added benefit of allowing others to shine at the five-a-sides while my legs were on 'international break'.

Business leaders need to up their game

Alistair Lang,
account executive – cyber,
Marsh Commercial



THE era of digital transformation has seen businesses in Aberdeen and across the UK unlocking untapped potential and innovating for commercial success. However, as more and more businesses become dependent on digital infrastructure, the threat of cybercrime becomes increasingly worrying.

Cybercrime continues to increase exponentially – a recent cyber-threat landscape report suggested attacks had spiralled upwards by 140% in 2018. The financial impact of those attacks is varied but for the estimated 14,000 business enterprises in Aberdeen, the stakes are incredibly high. Just one attack could reduce a business to its bare bones.

Business leaders absolutely recognise cybercrime as a risk. A recent report from our global parent company, Marsh, and leading platform and productivity company Microsoft Corp, found that 80% of businesses now list cyber security as a top five concern, compared to 62% in 2017.

Sadly awareness of an issue is only the first step to solving it and the same research found concerning levels of apathy from business leaders towards ensuring their company was

as safe as possible from cybercrime. Only 11% said they were confident in their ability to assess threats, prevent attacks and effectively respond to cyber security incidents, and more than half, 51%, said they had only spent several hours or less over the past year focusing on the issue.

When you consider cyber-attacks cost UK businesses \$370bn last year this lack of attention and concern is alarming. It is clear that business leaders need to up their game in the fight against cyber criminals. Greater resource and expertise must be directed to preventative action.

But where should Aberdeen businesses start?

Well, a regimented, sustained approach is key. Building a risk management culture and providing rolling training programmes for employees in cybercrime would see risks identified and thwarted before they result in an attack. Research from Skills Development Scotland found that 82% of employers require employers with cyber security skills.

There's also the techy stuff. Network security, malware prevention, user privileges, data storage...it's crucial to have the experts in to handle this but be sure to get a base level

understanding of how the measures they have put in place secure your business.

And, if the worst does happen, an incident management procedure and detailed scenario planning will ensure roles and responsibilities are clear and minimise the impact of an attack as soon as is feasible.

You should also make sure you have insurance in place that will be the issues an attack causes and help you to repair the damage as fast as possible. Cybercrime is certainly not going away anytime soon, and the sophistication of attacks is increasing, so tackling the issue head on is the only way to ensure your business will be protected.



Linzie McDonald,
director, eGroup

What does your company do that others don't?

It's the whole package. While there are other firms within the supply chain that offer similar services, eGroup is the largest integrated provider in Scotland which means that we can design, fabricate, test, and deliver completed projects to clients' sites from our facility in Kintore. These complementary services are particularly relevant to our oil and gas customers, where we offer significant added value by internally transporting their projects.

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

Both industries we serve, construction and oil and gas, are broadly similar in terms of the challenges they face. As a medium-sized company, the health of the supply chain gives cause for concern: areas such as payment terms and cashflow trickle-down and have a detrimental impact on us all. The issue of drawn-out payment terms in the construction sector has been well-documented. Meanwhile, there needs to be a re-calibration across the oil and gas market to place greater emphasis on the quality and overall value provided by the supply chain, not just a short-term focus on costs above all else.

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

That every curve has a downward slope. Like many businesses in the North-east, we were impacted by the oil downturn over recent years.

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

My dad, who would have turned 90 on his last birthday was a very savvy chap who trusted very few people. He used to say, 'don't trust anyone'. Unfortunately, perhaps, the apple hasn't fallen very far from the tree.

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

One of our most prestigious projects completed to date was the manufacture and original erection of the seating area for the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo at Edinburgh Castle. It continues to be used to this day and I'm very proud to see its image broadcast around the world every year.



Quick fire round

What was your first job?

Working in my mum and dad's gifts and furniture shop.

When would you like to retire?

It's not a good week to ask that question!

What did you have for breakfast?

Natural yoghurt from Rora Dairy with honey.

Who, or what, inspires you?

I'm inspired by people's passion.

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

I'm currently reading 'The Angel at No.33' by Polly Williams. I've just started watching the Peaky Blinders box set.



The Nova topside module

Nova module ready for sail away

NEPTUNE Energy last month announced the load out of the 740-tonne topside module for the Nova brownfield project in the Norwegian North Sea.

The module was lifted onto a barge at the Rosenberg Worley yard in Stavanger and will be transferred to the world's largest crane vessel, Heerema's Sleipnir, then installed on the Neptune-operated Gjøa platform. Neptune has been leading the project on behalf of the Nova-operator, Wintershall Dea, which will provide additional gas and oil volumes and extend the operating life of Gjøa.

Neptune's managing director for Norway, Odin Estensen said: "We are proud to have reached this milestone in what is an important brownfield project for Neptune and the Gjøa platform. Throughout the project we've seen close cooperation of highly skilled teams working to construct the module safely and delivered according to plan.

"Especially today, as the international community and our sector is facing challenges related to both the COVID-19 pandemic and lower commodity prices, milestones such as these are very important and motivating for all those involved."

The module's load-out completes the fabrication phase by Rosenberg Worley which began in November 2018. First gas is scheduled for 2021.



Second charity helicopter air ambulance launched in Scotland

A NEW air ambulance has taken to the skies as Scotland's Charity Air Ambulance (SCAA) launches its second life-saving emergency response helicopter.

The only charity of its type in Scotland has operated a single aircraft nationwide Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS) since 2013 from its base at Perth Airport, saving and impacting on thousands of lives.

Now the charity has doubled its capability, with a second helicopter service launched from an additional base at Aberdeen International Airport.

Together, the charity's two air ambulances will cover the whole of Scotland, working alongside two government-funded helicopters and two fixed-wing aircraft - all tasked through the country's 999 emergency response service.

John Bullough, founding chairman of SCAA, described today's launch as a 'major milestone' for the charity: "There's never been a more crucial time for additional emergency pre-hospital care resources in Scotland and SCAA is proud to be able to strengthen the country's air ambulance fleet.

"Within seven years, this relatively young charity has been able to sustain one helicopter and then fund a second which is a remarkable achievement for everyone involved - not least the public, whose generous support funds our entire life-saving service."

Virtual sign off could signal future pattern

SERVELEC Controls' project team has used technology to overcome the challenges of social distancing and travel restrictions during the COVID-19 outbreak and complete a major project milestone.

The systems integrator has been able to adapt its processes to use video conferencing to take a major critical infrastructure project one step closer to completion.

The Factory Acceptance Test (FAT), which ordinarily brings client and supplier project teams together in one place to rigorously examine a system before it is shipped to site, has been completed using video conference equipment and a virtual meeting environment, which has enabled the client to witness and sign off the tests remotely.

The engineers at Servelec Controls' manufacturing facility have been strictly adhering to social distancing and hygiene recommendations while confronting the challenge of this new way of working.

School of thought on work-life balance

Richard Toley,
headmaster,
Lathallan School



THE benefits of employees achieving a good work-life balance are well documented. Better health and wellbeing, improved productivity, more focussed both at work and leisure, higher morale and feeling more valued.

As a teacher I see parallels between the need to achieve that balance not only at work but at school, ensuring pupils have a good work-life balance which will carry them forwards to their future careers.

A well-rounded education is essential to the personal growth and development of our young people. Preparing pupils to enter the world beyond the school gate must be about more than just arming them with the academic credentials to take them on the next step of their journey towards their chosen career. Just as importantly, it's about equipping them with the life skills and knowledge to approach their future with confidence and enthusiasm.

To do that every pupil should receive the encouragement and support they need to help them reach their full potential, not just in working towards their academic goals but in all aspects of school life.

There is not a one size fits all solution to achieving this. We must always be mindful that every child is an individual with their own aspirations, their own strengths, their own interests.

At my own school, Lathallan, the focus is very much on the individual. As a small school, we can take a tailored approach to each and every pupil, identifying areas where they might need additional support, learning about what they enjoy doing, what that they are good at and what their aspirations are.

Learning and developing skills for life isn't something that's taught as a separate subject, it should be interwoven with every aspect of what we do in our schools. We want children to develop a love of learning. Education should be fun and interesting and have a practical application so that pupils understand how it will be useful in real terms and the impact it might have in the wider world.

It's a learning process which begins at nursery school and continues through to senior school and beyond. Much of it doesn't come from conventional teaching in the classroom, it comes from what children learn in their leisure time or through their

involvement in activities such as sports, music, voluntary work or community groups.

We allocate Friday afternoons as personal development time for senior pupils where they have the opportunity to choose from a very wide range of co-curricular activities. These experiences contribute to developing life skills such as teamwork, decision making, problem solving, resilience, communication and interpersonal skills.

The more children enjoy their learning and experiences, the more they gain from it and the more they tend to remember. This variety of experience helps develop the wide range of skills which they transfer not just to conventional classroom learning, but beyond that into the wider world ensuring they have the tools they need to help them adapt to and flourish in today's rapidly changing work environment.



Understanding the circular economy benefits in the construction industry

THE construction industry in Scotland accounts for around 50% of Scotland's waste, uses 50% of resources and generates around 50,000 tonnes of plastic packaging waste annually- three times more than the packaging waste arising from all UK households.

The Chamber's Investment Tracker estimates that the value of current construction projects committed in the region is £10.1billion which presents an enormous opportunity for the industry to develop knowledge and innovative approaches to tackle these challenges. Circular North-east has launched a Circular Economy in Construction programme to raise awareness and understanding of the opportunities, share best practice and support interested businesses and projects.

What do we mean by Circular Economy in Construction?

A circular approach to construction means improving material efficiency, reducing waste, recovering more and reusing with the aim of reducing the embodied carbon of the development. The embodied carbon is the emissions associated with the production, transport and end of life

of the materials within a development rather than just the emissions associated with its operation. Taking a circular approach should also reduce development and operational costs.

There are generally considered to be five principles of circular economy in construction which should be considered at each of the project stages.

Circular economy construction principles

- Design for longevity, flexibility, adaptability and low impact healthy use
- Design for easy assembly, disassembly & recoverability
- Design out waste and design for resource efficiency
- Adapt, refurbish and reuse buildings & materials
- Use recycled content and recycle any waste

Planning

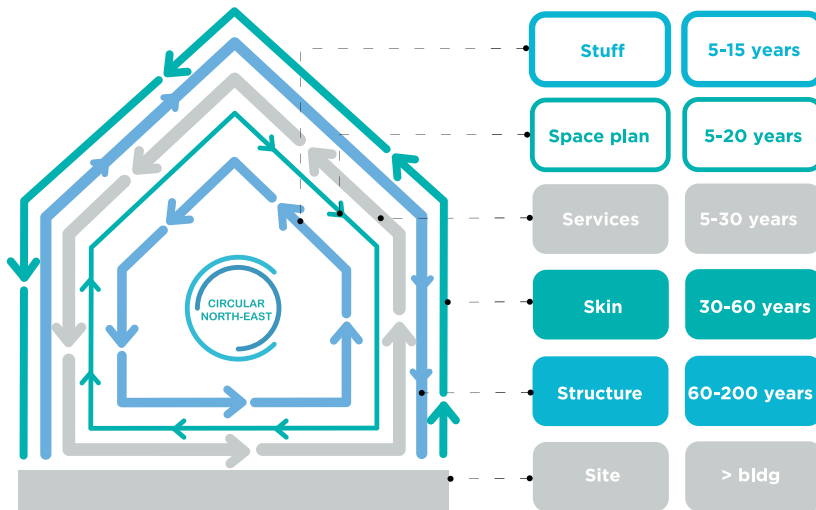
The earlier that circularity is considered the better- ideally even at project planning. At this stage the aim should be to think about how to maximise building and infrastructure utilisation and how any existing buildings and materials can be adapted, refurbished or reused.

As part of planning their office rationalisation programme Aberdeenshire Council have planned to adopt agile working with fewer than one desk per person. This will significantly reduce the office space required and ensure the building use is optimised.

They are also investigating the potential to upcycle and refurbish existing desks rather than buy new and have been actively engaging the supply chain to look at options. Similarly, they are working with TAQA to look at reuse potential as part of a major office move. Another good example is the TECA development where a full pre-demolition audit ensured 99.8% of demolition waste was diverted from landfill.

Design

The design phase is central to

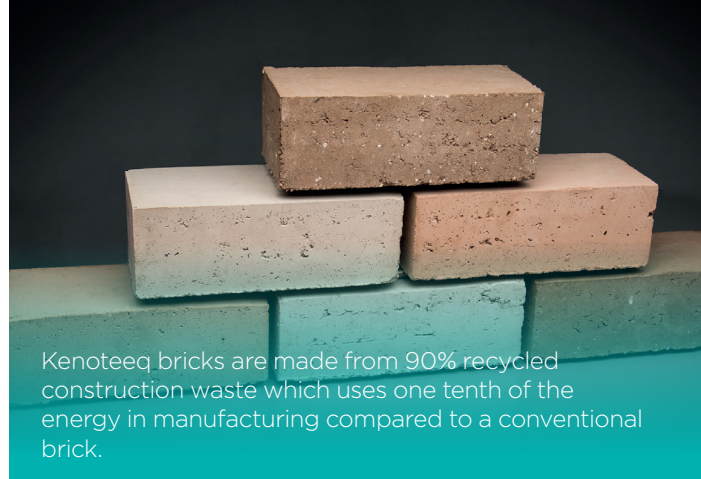


A building as a series of shearing layers. Based on an original concept by John Gilbert Architects.

The concept of thinking in layers is helping project teams to consider the role circularity can play in different aspects of a building. A small but in many ways obvious consideration is easy access to services and layers that may need adaptation and adjustment over time.



The Alliander office (Rau Architects) shows what is possible from else-where. It sets the benchmark for a fully circular renovated office in Duiven, Netherlands. The building is energy positive and 80% of the materials present are reused materials.



Kenoteeq bricks are made from 90% recycled construction waste which uses one tenth of the energy in manufacturing compared to a conventional brick.

unlocking the circular economy potential. Areas often overlooked are design for adaptability, thinking about how a building can be adapted for a different use in the future and also designing for disassembly to maximise reuse at end of life.

The building life cycle should also be considered incorporating operation, management and maintenance. A recent series of Circular Economy workshops between Aberdeen City Council, Balfour Beatty and their supply chain highlighted the importance of considering maintenance early on and options for leasing rather than buying to reduce the maintenance burden are being investigated.

Materials selection is an opportunity to consider recycled content and the embodied carbon of the materials selected. At TECA, 25km's of offshore tubulars were used for piling and recycled plastic granules were incorporated in the tarmac in the car park reducing the embodied carbon of the development. Project teams should also consider how digital technology can facilitate collaboration, visualisation and recording of design and materials to enable more efficient long-term management of buildings.

Construction

The construction phase should aim to maximise efficiency and minimise waste. This will be helped if construction is also considered at the design and planning stages discussed above.

Offsite manufacturing is a way to do this along with digital tools that enable activities to be better co-ordinated and materials ordered to minimise waste. All construction projects should have a Waste Management Plan which accurately measures and monitors waste arising and disposal routes. A free tool developed by Zero Waste Scotland is available to do this at: <https://www.zerowastescotland.org.uk/construction/waste-management-plan>.

Deconstruction

It's vital to plan both pre-demolition audits and work with designers and clients to ensure deconstruction best practices are adhered to. This leads to methods of working which retains value, from the demolition stage to the handling and storage of materials thereafter.

Key learnings

Key learning from the work to date are as follows;

- The earlier a circular economy approach is considered within a development project, the greater the opportunities that can be identified.
- Success will depend on early and effective collaboration and discussions with the supply chain, not all solutions may be apparently available but the supply chain are showing an ability to adapt if challenged.
- There is no one-size-fits-all so options need to be explored in relation to particular projects.
- Advancing technology is supporting the development of more circular economic approaches.

If you wish to find out more about the construction programme, please email terri.vogt@agcc.co.uk. For pre-recorded webinars on circular economy tools to use in construction, plus other useful resources, visit agcc.co.uk/circular-northeast.

Awards success for FG Burnett

FG BURNETT has been recognised for its performance in the Aberdeen office market in 2019 by CoStar Group Inc, the commercial real estate industry's data and analytics leader. The awards recognise agencies which closed the highest transaction volume in commercial real estate deals and leads in their respective markets.

In Aberdeen, FG Burnett has been recognised as being the market leader in the office market for a single branch in: most active acquisition agent for area transacted; most active disposal agent for number of deals done; most active agent in number of deals; most active agent in area transacted.



Andy Stapley

Food manufacturer collaborates amid shortages

SCOTTISH food ingredient manufacturer Macphie is collaborating with Loch Lomond Distillery to make hand sanitiser for frontline services during the coronavirus outbreak.

The organisations are working together to produce a disinfectant hand rub for use by primary care providers including hospitals and care homes amid nationwide shortages.

Loch Lomond Distillery is blending the ingredients supplied by Macphie and its own alcohol before Macphie bottles and packs the final product. Production started in March with around 11,000 bottles created in the first batch.

Macphie's chief executive Andy Stapley said: "We're facing difficult times right now and we want to do everything we can to help the people fighting to get us through this pandemic. Hand sanitiser has been flagged as an important tool in combatting the coronavirus and I'm proud that Macphie is part of this collaboration. We will continue to honour this commitment for as long as possible.

"As a family-owned business, we've built a reputation for doing the right thing and it's at times like these, we have to step up to the mark."

SME Spotlight



Sheryl Newman,
chief executive officer,
Appetite for Business

When was your business established?
March 2016.

What does your business do?

Appetite offers a unique managed service to allow organisations to adopt - and thrive - through effective use of Microsoft 365, SharePoint, Teams and other associated business apps. Through consultancy, training, support, best practice and governance we equip employees with the confidence to embrace IT-led change.

What sort of companies do you do business with?

One of our key differentiators is a customer-first approach. We help empower a diverse range of local, national and global organisations to successfully implement and adopt a modern workplace. As well as oil and gas, the company has entered new industry sectors, such as pharmaceuticals, legal, construction and media.

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

It's been hard with the current situation and the need to quickly change the existing IT set-up. Amidst the rush to implement new systems and working practices, these can often miss key aspects like governance, compliance, security and training around how to use the system.

And the biggest opportunity?

Companies that invest in teamwork are five-times more likely to be high-performing; meaning collaboration could be the difference between profit and loss. We are providing practical and proven solutions to ensure companies have business continuity and strong foundations to support their business as we all come out of this.

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

Helping customers become competent through the successful adoption of technology that aligns with their business needs, especially with the new way of working. We have helped people to work remotely for over 24 years and it's exciting to see companies becoming more agile to ensure business continuity.

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Keeping the wheels of industry in motion

by Alexander Sim,
senior export documentation executive,
Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce



WE FIND ourselves in the midst of exceptional times. Whilst demand for documentation support is down approximately 20% we continue to issue over 1,100 documents a month which tells us that the wheels of industry are still moving, albeit a little bit slower than they were before.

Even at this time of restriction and home working, you can be assured that your export paperwork is still being prepared to our usual high standard. Like many others, we are seeing technology coming to the fore with applications for certificates of origin easily completed online via essCert, the secure portal used by Chambers, authorising bodies, exporters and freight forwarders.

The Chamber's export documentation teams' attention to detail and skills are being put to the test, as is the case in many offices around the country but, so far, we are proud to have played our part in keeping trade moving.

We know that exporters are having difficulty moving goods by air, sea and

road but lack of the correct paperwork will not be an issue – although slight delays may occur due to the constraints created by the coronavirus outbreak.

We are also keeping up to date with all notifications from British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), Scottish Enterprise and HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) and are always available to answer your queries. Even if we don't know the answer, we always know someone who does.

BCC is working with HMRC and trade officials from various countries to facilitate the use of electronic stamps and signatures with online applications including a QR (quick response) code to provide evidence of authenticity.

There are a number of links available on the Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber website which provide much needed support and assistance so would recommend making this your first port of call if you have any questions. If you can't find what you are looking for there, get in touch via documentation@agcc.co.uk where

the team are ready, willing and able to provide support.

Once things return to normal, in whatever guise that may be, the focus will likely return to the issue which just a few months ago was all consuming – the B word – and we will be here to guide you through the intricate maze that is international trade.

Over the past year or so we have both increased our team of specialist people and the services available from the Chamber, including the addition of ATA Carnets and ChamberCustoms to our offering.

We would also remind you that Brexit is still very much on course for the end of the year. Are you prepared? If you require assistance to clear your exports and imports via customs, you know where to find us.





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WATERTON GRANGE, STONEYWOOD, ABERDEEN AB21 9HX

New digital radio platform for the energy sector

ABERDEEN-BASED AVC Immedia has launched a dedicated, digital radio platform for the energy sector.

The media specialist has launched itself into the radio market with support from parent company Immedia Group PLC. TigerLive radio is the UK's first dedicated energy sector radio station, operating from www.tigerlive.co.uk. The station will be broadcast live and roar out across the globe initially from 12 noon to 3pm daily and can be accessed online via computer, mobile device or smart speaker.

AVC Immedia managing director Spencer Buchan said: "What better time to bring the energy community together, sharing sentiment, safety and sounds to unite a very dispersed community.

"I am very excited to be part of the launch team; we have worked on the concept for some time and in December 2019 means tested a live show at Shell HQ in Aberdeen. The feedback was amazing, the need is there and to think we can bring a community together offshore, in the office, at home and on the go is truly amazing."

International expansion during lockdown

SCOTLAND'S first virtual marketing support consultancy has announced successful expansion into new international markets – in spite of the Coronavirus lockdown.

Aberdeen-based Prospect 13 has signed two new international contracts to supply virtual digital marketing and social media support services to New Zealand-based Tumeke Thru Tubing Ltd and Fortress Energy headquartered in Kazakhstan.

Commenting on the new work in New Zealand, Cerri McDonald said: "Winning any new piece of work is exciting but our projects with Tumeke is particularly special because it takes Prospect 13 all the way to the other side of the world, and shines a light on the possibilities which still exist for businesses to grow in spite of the challenging and uncertain times we all live and work in.

"We have also been fortunate to win other new local projects, corporate and third sector, in recent weeks as companies realise the importance of digital marketing and the possibilities this holds, even during a lockdown situation."



Claire Kinloch

Genoa Black launches new pivot strategy

GENOA Black has been working closely with its client network and portfolio to develop a directional, energetic and inspiring approach to address the impact presented to business leaders as a result of COVID-19.

"The economic implications of Covid-19 has the potential to be more severe than any living person today has experienced before. Companies need to act to address the implications, not only on their business, but also on their market and customers", said Claire Kinloch, managing partner.

"Using data unique to Genoa Black, gained from delivering over 700 strategies, which has given us approximately 3,500 data reference points across multiple sectors, we have compiled a report on how to lead your business through economic shock."

The Chaos to Clarity programme has been launched to assist business leaders to firstly identify with a certain type of corporate persona and attitudinal response to current and future challenges and opportunities, and then to provide pivot strategy guidance on how to address for each step of the journey over the next 18 months.

MSD Design Ltd launches hand sanitisation stations

THE ongoing issues created by the COVID-19 crisis has created a greater requirement for upgraded sanitary conditions in all areas of retail and industry.

MSD Design Ltd and GRP Aberdeen Ltd have developed a free standing hand sanitising station which can be positioned in the majority of entrances to hospitals, supermarkets, garden centres, hardware stores and indeed the smaller high street retailers.

The unit clearly defines the 2 metres (6ft) social distancing guidelines between users, and screen guards can be added for the face to face sanitisers if required.




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September

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Pamela Hossick

Lathallan has appointed Pamela Hossick as the head of junior school as it celebrates its 90th year as 'an inspirational learning environment for young people'. Pamela's appointment follows the retirement of Jackie Collins and James Ferrier from Lathallan senior leadership. She has worked at Lathallan for 11 years and will assume the post in August.



Professor Steve Olivier

Robert Gordon University has appointed Steve Olivier as its new principal and vice-chancellor. The professor has held a number of senior roles in UK and South African universities and joins from the University of the West of Scotland. His portfolio has included strategic and operational planning and executive-level leadership of the Deans of School.



Colin Hunter

Robert Gordon University has appointed Colin Hunter as its new chair of the board of governors. Colin was elected to the position by staff and students of the university and will lead the institution's board for four years. He will be focus on delivering high quality and demand-led teaching and research to contribute to economic, social and cultural development.



Barry McLernon

Texo Group has recruited 14 new employees as it ramps up its fabrication operations at Port of Blyth. Texo Fabrication has ambitious expansion plans as it targets the growing offshore oil and gas and wind energy sectors. Barry McLernon has joined as Blyth workshop manager. The other recruits bring with them a range of skills in engineering, manufacturing and welding.



Fiona Hodge

International logistics company Petrasco has appointed Fiona Hodge as client solutions pricing specialist. With more than 25 years' experience in the logistics market, Fiona has taken on role to help support the company's long-term growth strategy. Originally from Troon, she has previously held key roles for various logistics firms, including time spent working in Houston.



Erin Flett

Aberdeen Science Centre has appointed Erin Flett as business development manager ahead of the centre re-opening at the Tramsheds following a multi-million-pound redevelopment. Erin, who is originally from Orkney, moved to Aberdeen in 2013 to study International Tourism Management at RGU. Since then she has spent three years working in a variety of client facing roles.



Alexandra Thomas

Alexandra Thomas has joined Neptune Energy as UK managing director, based in Aberdeen. She joins from Tullow Oil plc, where most recently she was head of exploration, development and commercial for Ghana. Alexandra has 18 years' experience in the oil and gas sector and a strong academic background. She started her career with assignments in both Shell and Equinor.



Lewis Walker

Lewis joined the Chamber in April 2020 having graduated with a BA(Hons) in International Business Management in 2015 and an MSc in Journalism in 2019. Lewis worked within finance, communications and the third sector and latterly was responsible for profile raising and increasing the company's online presence. In his current role, he manages the website and helps members raise their profile among other things.



Rachel Warner, Fiona Kindness
and Kathryn Wynn

INTERNATIONAL law firm Pinsent Masons has promoted two Aberdeen-based lawyers to legal director and an Edinburgh colleague to partner.

In the latest round of promotions 17 new partners joined the firm around the globe, with senior associates Rachel Warner and Fiona Kindness taking up legal director positions at the Queens Road-based practice.

Rachel specialises in upstream oil and gas projects and has a great deal of experience in the acquisition, disposal and operation of offshore assets, Fiona has a wide range of corporate finance experience, focusing on acquisitions and disposals including MBO/MBIs, equity investments, joint venture arrangements and corporate restructuring.

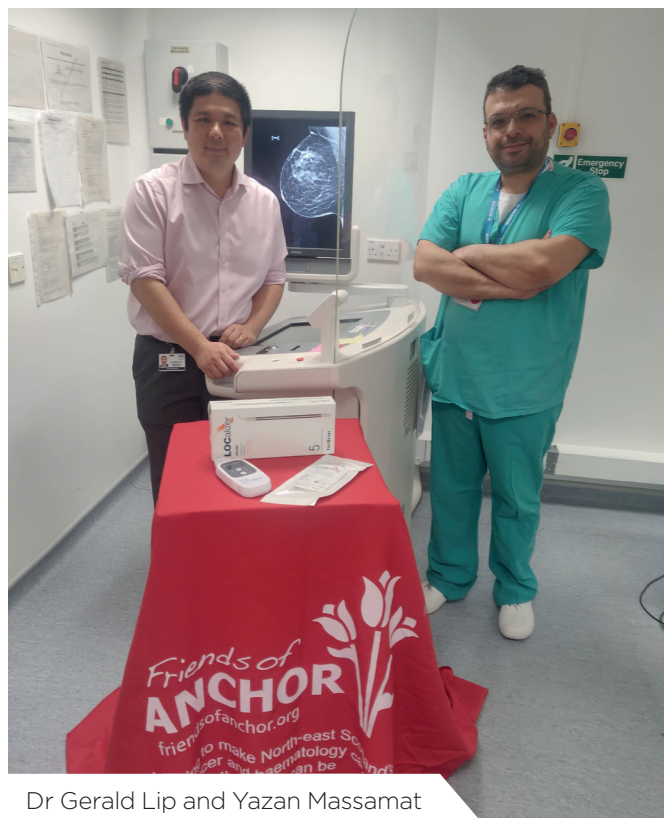
Edinburgh-based Kathryn Wynn, who is a specialist in data protection with a focus on the financial services and fintech sectors, has been appointed partner.

Virtual work experience launched

A SCOTTISH architectural and planning practice has developed a portal of virtual work experience for secondary pupils who are missing out due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Halliday Fraser Munro's team rapidly created the portal when it became clear that they would be unable to host their usual annual intake of young adults for work experience with a bespoke in-house, one-week programme.

The website content, which is freely available, aims to continue to motivate and encourage young people to consider a career in architecture and the construction industry during lockdown. The programme mirrors the Halliday Fraser Munro office-based experience and can be completed at home with no time restrictions.



Dr Gerald Lip and Yazan Massamat

Fast-tracked support for breast cancer surgery

LOCAL charity Friends of ANCHOR has fast-tracked funding that could bring significant benefits to breast cancer patients and the surgical teams treating them.

In anticipation of the extremely busy period expected to befall staff at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary over the coming months, the organisation has pushed forward £27,135 worth of funding for radiofrequency breast tags and detector probes, which are used to prepare patients for surgery to remove breast tumours.

Dr Gerald Lip, clinical director for the North-east of Scotland breast screening programme, applied for the funding at the charity's February committee meeting alongside his colleague Mr Yazan Masannat, consultant breast surgeon at ARI.

Dr Lip said: "This is new technology which we are the first to introduce in Scotland, and it will make a significant difference in patients' pathways and management. This new method is far more comfortable for patients and allows for even greater accuracy during surgery – and it has the potential to considerably streamline the process for both patients and the surgical team. We are extremely grateful to Friends of ANCHOR for accelerating the funding process."

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