

NOVEMBER 2023 | DEALING WITH CRISIS

BUSINESS BULLETIN

Top tips to help you deal with a crisis

Malcolm Gunnyeon offers
his expertise.

Page 4

Local charity providing a light at the end of the tunnel

Meet the team who are turning
lives around in our community.

Page 8

Update on the future of the Granite Mile

The five key action areas which
will rejuvenate Union Street.

Page 17

Exclusive:
**Another world
leading medical
first for Aberdeen**



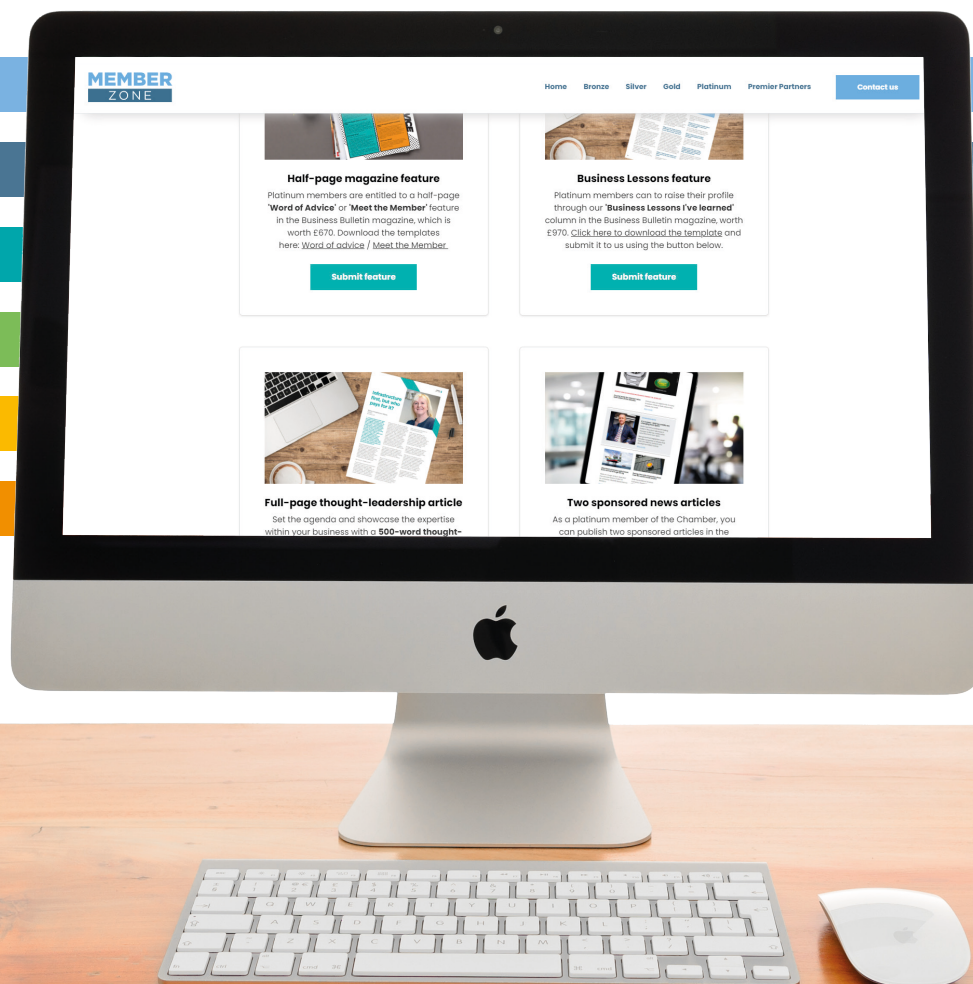
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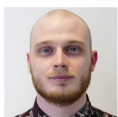
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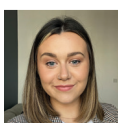
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Contents

NOVEMBER 2023

Focus on Dealing with crisis



Providing the light at the end of the tunnel



It's brain surgery but not as we know it



BBC boss to broadcast thoughts on tumultuous 2023

Regulars

PAGE |

HOT TOPIC

Your thoughts on the burning issues of the day

13

POLICY UPDATE

Ryan Crighton, AGCC

22

TRAINING CALENDAR

Upcoming courses

48

INTERNATIONAL UPDATE

Lorraine Neish, AGCC

53

ON THE MOVE

Who is going places in the region?

56

Top seven tips to help your organisation deal with a crisis

Nobody likes to imagine the worst happening, and no business wants to think that it might have to face a crisis.

Thankfully, most businesses will never have to deal with a major accident or other critical incident, but they do happen, and inevitably occur without warning at the worst possible time.

It is easy to understand why a business might want to take the “it will never happen to us” approach. There is comfort in optimism. However, once a critical incident has happened it is already too late to think about how you are going to deal with it.

There is a reason that the old military adage ‘proper preparation and planning prevents poor performance’ has stood the test of time. There really is no substitute for preparing in advance.

So I thought I’d use this guest column (thanks Russell) to draw on our Health and Safety team’s experience in critical incident response and major accident investigations across a range of sectors to suggest some of the key elements that every business should include in its crisis management preparations.

- **Have a clear, concise plan** – There is an understandable temptation to prepare a lengthy plan which considers every possible scenario and sets out detailed protocols and procedures for multiple permutations of each, but this will be even more unhelpful than no plan at all. Your crisis management plan will only ever be used in the most stressful and challenging of circumstances,

and a cumbersome document which is difficult to navigate will only exacerbate the difficulties. The best crisis management plans are surprisingly succinct, making clear what the key roles are, who will assume them and what the key actions are in the first 24 hours after an incident. They are a user-friendly guide for your teams, not a textbook.

- **Have well-defined teams** – In the immediate aftermath of an incident, irrespective of its nature, your business will have three priorities (i) business continuity, (ii) PR and communications, and (iii) incident investigation. Each must have a separate team focussed on it. The team responsible for keeping the business running cannot be distracted by contact from the media, and those who are trying to understand the root cause of the incident cannot be involved in making public statements in case they inadvertently share information that should not yet be in the public domain.
- **Rehearse the plan** – Make sure that those who are to play a key role in any crisis management are aware of the plan and the part that they are to play. Training the teams in advance on what is required of them should the worst happen will ensure a smooth delivery of the plan, with each key player knowing and feeling comfortable with their role.
- **Give the media a single point of contact** – Any critical incident attracts immediate media attention. You need to retain as much control as possible over the external message. The best way to do that is to have a single point


of contact for all media inquiries. That avoids the risk of two well-intentioned but contradictory statements or, worse still, a comment being made by someone who does not have the most up to date information.

- **Identify your spokesperson** – In the immediate aftermath of an incident your employees, stakeholders, the media, and the wider public will expect you to make a statement. Saying nothing is not an option. However, a clumsy public statement is worse than none at all. Your spokesperson should be senior enough to demonstrate that the incident is being taken seriously, but comfortable enough with the media to cope with the barrage of questions. That will not always be your CEO. Identify the right person in advance, and make sure they receive media training.
- **Don’t be caught out by social media** – In the modern world you will rarely be the first to know about an incident affecting your business. Photographs and video footage of incidents will be on social media within minutes. Plan how you are going to monitor social media – it can be a useful source of information. What about your own social media channels? Will they be suspended, or have the ability for staff to post or comment restricted? Do you have a policy about what your staff can and cannot say on social media about an ongoing incident? All of these issues must be considered in advance.
- **Involve your lawyers and insurers** – Whilst you are managing the media, keeping

the business going and investigating what happened, you don't want to have to think about whether anything you are doing is exposing you to liability, or inadvertently giving the investigating authorities documents they are not entitled to. Get your lawyers, whether internal or external, involved early and let them deal with those concerns. Finally, don't forget your insurers. Particularly when it comes to public statements, approval from your insurers is critical. You don't want to run the risk of cover being declined at the worst possible time.

You would be correct to think that none of these measures are complicated. They are not - indeed most of them are common sense. However, uncomplicated, common-sense steps become incredibly challenging in the face of a crisis which has the potential to cause serious damage to your business, or injury to your people.

Every business should take the time to think about them now and put a plan in place. If the worst should ever happen, the last thing you want to be is unprepared.

A portrait of Malcolm Gunnyeon, a man with short brown hair, smiling. He is wearing a dark blue suit jacket, a white shirt, and a blue and purple striped tie. The background is a blurred blue sky with white clouds.

Malcolm Gunnyeon,
Partner and Health and Safety Expert,
Brodiess LLP

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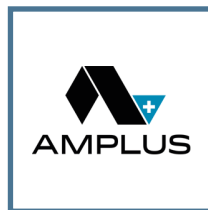
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Local charity providing the light at the end of the tunnel

“From 2021 to 2022, there was a 600% increase in referrals and people presenting and there was an 82% increase in people looking for essentials like food, clothing or toiletries.”

That’s the stark outlook for Aberdeen Cyrenians who, regrettably, are only getting busier.

Amid rising household bills across the board, which are plunging more people into fuel and food poverty, Head of Corporate and Business Services, Donna Hutchison, explains the severity of the crisis facing thousands of families across the North-east.

“For us, it’s not a good thing if we’re getting busier, but unfortunately, we are.

“We are seeing demand increase and we are seeing complexity of issues increase.

“The figures indicate that we will see that continue through until the end of the year.

“December would normally be our busiest month and, for context, in December 2022 we saw a 10% increase into January 2023 and a further 22% increase from January through to March.”

Numbers have increased further since spring, with 150 families (three or more people), accessing the direct access service in the latest figures shown to us from August this year, many of which have one person in the family in employment.

The local charity offers walk-in support to anyone requiring it, ranging from food parcels to advice from a member of staff about energy bills.

Overall, there’s been a 36.6% increase from March to August in families requiring the service. Donna says that’s a glimpse into what the future holds for the charity.

“Going by those numbers it’s only getting busier, unfortunately.”

“The best thing that could happen is that we don’t need to exist. But we’ve existed for 55 years, and I don’t think we will be going anywhere in the next 55 years.”

In Aberdeen, it’s estimated that more than 20% of children are in poverty.

While more and more people find themselves relying on charities to survive, the demand is growing at such a rate that some charities are now facing crisis themselves.

“The reality is, Aberdeen is a relatively small city and there are a number of great charities all competing for the same airtime, for the same funding, each that’s worthwhile in its own cause,” added Donna.

“We are already seeing through

some channels both locally and nationally that smaller charities are closing.

“We are aware of other foodbanks that are potentially having to close or reduce their services because they can’t cope with the demand and the costs associated with keeping the services going.

“We are aware of other local charities in Aberdeen who have had to put out funding pleas to keep the doors open.

“The continued crisis will see more smaller charities go to the wall and unfortunately it will be people like us who need to pick up that demand because it needs to be serviced and supported somehow.



Aberdeen Cyrenians

“

The best thing that could happen is that we don't need to exist. But we've existed for 55 years, and I don't think we will be going anywhere in the next 55 years.”

“Everybody is competing for the same pot of trusts and foundations, and the reality is that it's a lot harder for companies to give money nowadays.

“While corporate volunteering and time is definitely of value, it doesn't replace the things that need to be paid for to keep us going.”

There's no doubt that the myriad of depressing statistics makes for grim reading.

A total of 870 people accessed the Cyrenians direct access service in August, more than any other month this year. That number will almost certainly rise as we head into the winter months as families begin to feel the pressure ahead of the Christmas period.

On the frontline, a caring group of staff, like Team Leader Karen Alexander, meet with anyone who needs support daily.

“We are the first point of contact for most service users. People will come to ourselves at the point of crisis or at intervention stage where they know something is going to happen, and ask what we can do to help them.

“They will come in, get a cup of tea or coffee and we'll have a chat with them to find out exactly what it is they're here for.

“Often it is just contacting energy companies and explaining a little bit about the situation, what can we do to help them, although sometimes you just can't help.

“In that case we support them as best we can, we give them food parcels, we help them do their laundry, let them shower and such like so they're maybe not using so much energy.

“For some people it can just be for food provision, for some people it's energy crisis and they're off the grid completely and don't know what to do or where to go.

“Sometimes people will only come to us when they are in a real crisis.”

Set up as a soup kitchen by students from the University of Aberdeen in 1968, the charity has evolved over time.

Now, their Summer Street building provides service users with more than just a hearty meal.

“We can offer fuel bank vouchers and we can offer to contact energy companies and such like for them.

“We also have a clothes store as it could be the simple fact that people have no clothes and winter is coming.

“We offer shower facilities, laundry facilities and food distribution as well. We can also signpost to other places too if we can't support them.

“We're also helping people that are coming out of the justice system, helping them get houses and such like before they get out, so there's a support in place for them too.

“And as people's mental health is declining, a lot more people are



coming in for emotional support. People are isolated so they are coming in just to have a chat with us, for a coffee, just to get them out the house."

Some 4,983 people accessed the services offered by the Aberdeen Cyrenians between February and August this year. Of those near-5000 people, 897 were families.

"We've seen an increase in families coming to see us. Often two-parent families where one is working and one has lost their job, so they're not meeting the needs of their bills.

"People that have worked in oil and gas and they've lost their jobs during CV19, or they've been self-employed and they're trying to rebuild.

"Previously we were busy, but it was a lot of individuals or just two adults. But there is a lot of people coming in with families, with children, needing help.

"It's getting bad."

Economic uncertainty isn't helping the charity either.

Rising demand means the charity needs more support from businesses, more fundraising activities and more donations.

"Funding is a big thing. If we don't get the funding, we can't get the staff.

"And we run on donations, but people are feeling the pinch, and people that would be donating to foodbanks are now supporting their own families."

However, it isn't all doom and gloom for the charity.

Funding might be a concern for now, but a reliable group of staff and volunteers are able to meet the needs of the thousands of people they see and help on a yearly basis.

"I think social care is always understaffed but our team is sustainable at the moment", added Karen.

"Get involved. We've got a pool of volunteers at the minute and they're thriving just now because they're able to help people. If you're thinking about doing it, come and speak to us.

"It's challenging, but also it makes you feel like you're doing something for your community. You're helping people who don't know where to turn, and sometimes just a few kind words is what changes their way of thinking."

“

**Get involved.
We've got a pool
of volunteers
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people.**



Donna Hutchison and Karen Alexander,
Aberdeen Cyrenians



New rankings score RGU among top of the class

The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2024 is the latest university league table to acknowledge Robert Gordon University (RGU) as one of the UK's best institutions for both teaching quality and student experience.

The guide places RGU as second in Scotland and in the top 10 in the UK for teaching quality as well as third in Scotland and in the UK's top 20 for student experience.

The guide also scores six RGU subjects first in Scotland for graduate prospects as well as six in the top 20 of the UK for the same measure. Physiotherapy was joined by Biological Science as top in the UK for graduate prospects.

Sparrows spreads its wings as Altrad Sparrows

Sparrows Group (Sparrows), the engineering and maintenance specialists for the global energy and industrial sectors, has rebranded to Altrad Sparrows.

The rebrand is a continuation of the acquisition, but will not impact existing or future customers, as the business continues to operate autonomously.

Asthma and Allergy Foundation unveils new city centre office

The Asthma and Allergy Foundation is thrilled to announce the successful opening of its state-of-the-art city centre office in Aberdeen. This momentous occasion represents a significant milestone in the charity's unwavering dedication to providing comprehensive support to individuals living with asthma and allergies.

Nestled in the heart of Aberdeen, the newly established office signifies a remarkable stride forward in the foundation's mission to enhance the quality of life for those affected by asthma and allergies. By establishing a central presence, the foundation has taken a bold step towards extending its reach and ensuring that vital resources and support are easily accessible to those in need, regardless of their background.

Scholes Chartered Accountants on the move in Aberdeen

Aberdeen firm Scholes Chartered Accountants has moved into new office premises at 10 Albyn Place, Aberdeen – just round the corner from its old office at Rubislaw Place.

Commenting on the move, Associate Director Audrey Rennie said: "We're delighted with our new offices, which provide a fresh, welcoming environment for our clients and staff alike. The move has given us the opportunity to design a space that works really well for the team, it offers a great mix of open plan areas where the team can collaborate and support each other, coupled with more private spaces for confidential meetings and calls with our clients."

Director Ryan Allan added: "Scholes is completely committed to serving our clients in the city and all across the region, for the long term. We are delighted to make the move to Albyn Place, creating a modern and pleasant working environment that has really been welcomed by our clients and colleagues."

The team at Scholes Chartered Accountants is also planning to hold an open day for clients to come and see the new offices before the end of the year.

ASCO reports on a year of strong financial growth

ASCO has reported a 52% increase in turnover in a strong year for the Aberdeen-headquartered business, which saw it win new clients, grow its range of services and sectoral support, and expand into new geographies.

Accounts lodged for the year ending December 31, 2022 show that the company, a leading global provider of logistics and materials management services, saw group sales rise to £637.9million, up from £419.4million the previous year.

Mike Pettigrew, ASCO's Group CEO said: "The success and strong performance we saw across 2022 is due in no small part to our workforce whose dedication and hard work ensured that we continued the momentum of the previous year.

"We are particularly proud of the feedback we received from customers who highlighted ASCO's core obsessions on safety and service alongside market leading materials management and process improvement capabilities as being instrumental in ensuring that we remain a service provider of choice.

"We are pleased to have secured a number of important new contracts during the year and that despite challenges, we continue to successfully expand at an international level with our entry into Suriname and by strengthening our presence in the Caribbean."

RUBBERATKINS MARKS 35-YEAR ANNIVERSARY WITH FURTHER GLOBAL EXPANSION

Aberdeen based manufacturing company Rubberatkins, is celebrating 35 years of business and marked the occasion with the official opening of their new manufacturing facility in Conroe, Texas. Rubberatkins has supplied the Oil & Gas industry with reliable, high performance sealing solutions growing to become the leader in the design and development of rubber and plastic components for the Oil & Gas and Space Industries.



*Rubberatkins Owners
Nick Atkins and Jill Webster*



Manufacturing in 1988...

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



...and 35 years later

If you are interested in finding out more about Rubberatkins' technical capabilities or could see yourself joining the team, please visit: www.rubberatkins.com/careers

HOT TOPIC

What is the biggest crisis you have faced in your career? And how did you deal with it?



One of the most significant crises I've faced occurred during the CV19 pandemic, coinciding with a cost-of-living crisis. This dual challenge severely tested our organisation's resilience and adaptability. The pandemic led to an immediate surge in demand for our services as families grappled with economic hardships, unemployment, and food insecurity. Simultaneously, our traditional fundraising sources, including events and in-person donations, were severely impacted by social distancing measures.

Addressing these crises necessitated a multi-faceted approach:

- **Emergency response:** We rapidly adapted our programs to meet the increased demand, expanding food distribution initiatives, collaborating with local businesses for resources. We forged a valuable partnership with Blood Bikes which proved to be a lifeline for our operations. This collaboration enabled us to make crucial deliveries to families in crisis, ensuring that essential support reached those who needed it most.
- **Financial:** To navigate the financial strain, we reallocated resources to essential services, sought additional funding through emergency grants and online fundraising campaigns, and carefully managed budgets.
- **Digital transformation:** We accelerated our digital efforts, launching virtual fundraising events, enhancing website donation functionality, and improving social media outreach to engage supporters.
- **Community collaboration:** We strengthened partnerships with local organisations, coordinating resources and support for the most vulnerable.

Proactive measures allowed us to not just survive but emerge stronger as an organisation, underscoring the importance of adaptability, community collaboration, and financial resilience in fulfilling our vision to support families in need.

Michelle Herd, *Co-Founder and COO, AberNecessities*



I have years of experience helping people with anxiety and overwhelm to untangle their thoughts and find inner peace. I have worked with issues caused by personal crises, including job loss, relationship breakdown, illness, and death. I specially focus on stress and anxiety, imposter syndrome and self-esteem issues. In my work, I make sure clients know that feeling overwhelmed, confused and scared is a normal response. People think they must stay strong and deal with the situation alone but it is actually good to ask for help. Seeking help is a sign of strength, not weakness. I am not the exception because I used to think this way.

A few years ago, I took on multiple projects simultaneously. As time went on, I felt overwhelmed and exhausted. The intensity of my commitments was taking a toll on me, and I was approaching a state of burnout. Constantly exhausted, emotionally depleted, with no motivation, I felt like a burden. I did not want to talk about it or ask for help. Only after a friend noticed what is going on I realised I need to do something.

Here is what I did then, and what I would recommend it to everyone:

1. Self-care, because by taking a good care of ourselves, we develop resilience.
2. Build your support network because we all need a safety net to support us when we are down.
3. Ask for help as going through tough time alone is more difficult and takes longer.

Nara Morrison, *Psychotherapist and Stress Management Coach, Nara Morrison Therapy*

Business lessons I've learned



Gerard O'Hare,
Legal Director Scotland, WorkNest,

What does your company do that others don't?

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

We find that attracting and retaining top talent is one of the most pressing challenges that our sector faces today. The competitive job market, changing workforce demographic, and evolving skill requirements make it critical that we have an effective recruitment strategy and create a positive employee experience to retain our key staff. Aligned with this, it's important to keep on top of addressing employee well-being by prioritising employee wellness programmes, and fostering a culture that promotes work/life balance.

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

Adaptability is key! Job requirements can change quickly whether it be technological advancements or work environments, it's important to embrace the change and evolve.

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

Embrace continuous learning – never stop learning.

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

I'm proud to be where I am today leading a fantastic team of highly skilled professionals and take pride in their own continuous development.

Quick fire round

What was your first job?

Lugging around a very heavy bag of newspapers on my paper round.

When would you like to retire?

Ideally, I'd like to retire at about 57 although that might be somewhat fanciful.

What did you have for breakfast?

I am an intermittent faster and so I don't eat anything between 8pm and 12pm the following day, unless it's the weekend when I usually have pancakes with the kids.

Who, or what, inspires you?

I'm constantly inspired by my wife.

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

The last book I read was *The Handmaid's Tale*, and the last film I watched was *65* which I would not recommend.

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

I would like to see a significant breakthrough in renewable energy technology which would not only create jobs and economic benefits but make the region a global leader in clean energy technology.

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Aberdeenshire Council approves 180 new houses and retail units for Chapelton

A new planning application for 180 houses and retail units at Chapelton has been approved by Aberdeenshire Council, making it the largest development to date at the North-east's newest town.

Expected to start on site in November, the planning application includes a neighbourhood centre, which will become the heart of the community, as well as a range of two to five-bedroom houses available through private sale, shared equity, mid-market rent and social rent. There are also 11 new retail units, including one designed to be a pub and a community building. Completion is expected in 2027.

Designed to offer a sustainable environment where people can enjoy a healthy lifestyle, there will be green open space for the community to enjoy walking, relaxing and gardening, and a network of footpaths which will include a link to the site on which the proposed primary school will be located.

The Duchess of Fife, Director of Elsie Development Company, described the news as 'another major step forward' in the progress of the town.



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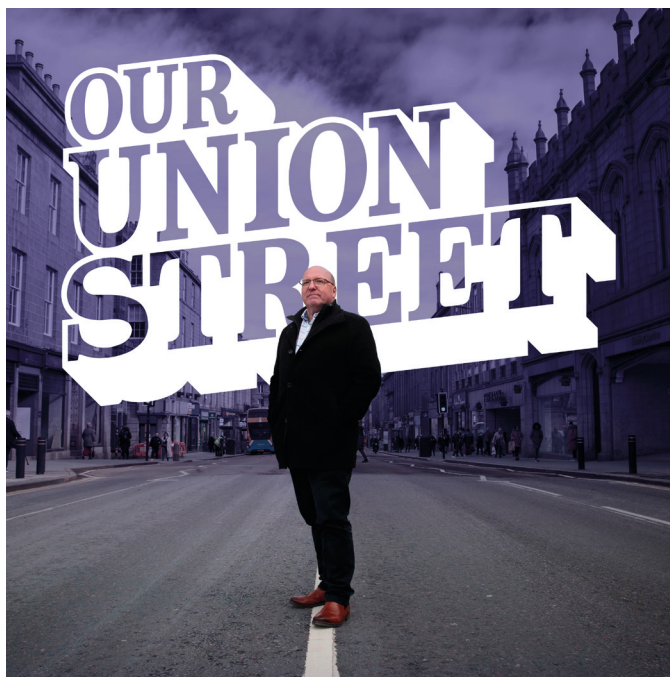
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Our Union Street reveals the five action areas which will rejuvenate the Granite Mile

The community campaign to revitalise Aberdeen's Union Street has set out how it will regenerate, repopulate and reinvigorate the Granite Mile.

The Our Union Street organisation, led by entrepreneur and former FTSE100 Chief Executive Bob Keiller, was set-up in March to arrest soaring vacancy rates and plummeting footfall.

Since then, the group has received over 10,000 ideas from the public and engaged with hundreds of local groups and organisations to plot a new future for the street.

Those 10,000 ideas became 17 themes – and those themes have become five action areas, which have been detailed in a new 26-page whitepaper.

Our Union Street is seeking to:

- **Brighten the street:** Getting the street clean then bringing extra colour and interest to it.
- **Fill the units:** Create and market a compelling offer then attract great businesses to occupy them and bring them back to life.
- **Use the space:** Use the empty shop windows as a fascinating and often changing street gallery that attracts people to the street and brightens up empty retail units.
- **Tell the story:** Creating a single reliable source of information about what's happening in the city centre and creating lots of attractions and events.
- **Engage the people:** Recruiting and deploying the volunteers required to deliver the four action areas above.

The group has also helped pull together what will be one of the most generous packages of incentives available anywhere in the UK for incoming businesses, including up to two years rent and rate free.

Mr Keiller said: "We are building an army of volunteers and skilled trades people who are willing to give their time to clean up the street, and very soon you will see them deployed around the city centre in distinctive purple vests.

"We have also launched one of the best incentive packages available anywhere in the UK, meaning that new occupiers taking on long-term vacant units will benefit from up to two years rent and business rate free under a support package drawn-up and partly funded by Our Union Street.

"We know the leads won't come to us, and that we need to go find them ourselves - so we will be commissioning a new website and digital marketing effort which will, literally, sell Aberdeen and Union Street to business owners locally and all over the UK.

"We have a compelling story to tell, as tens of millions of pounds is invested to improve our city centre and reshape it for generations to come."

In parallel with the five action areas, the group will continue to explore issues around taxi provision, cleaning the upper levels of buildings and identifying ways to get more people living on Union Street.

Mr Keiller added: "We need more people to live and work in the city centre to ensure it remains vibrant and attractive for the long-term.

"However, before we can focus on these areas, we need to address the immediate issues that the public have told us matter most to them. And that is what we will do."

Our Union Street is a community-led, not-for-profit organisation which is seeking to restore pride and prosperity to Union Street, which sits at the heart of Aberdeen City Centre.

It has been set-up by Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce, Aberdeen Inspired, Aberdeen City Council and Opportunity North East, with additional support from Shell, which recently relocated to the street.

AB15 Limited – owned and run by Mr Keiller and his business partner Derrick Thomson – is also funding the organisation, and both businessmen have committed to running the organisation free of charge.

Visit www.ourunionstreet.com to learn more.

MEET THE



Ann McRobb,
Founder and Director,
Ann McRobb Associates

WHEN WAS YOUR BUSINESS ESTABLISHED?

With 20 years' experience in the training and competence field, I established Ann McRobb Associates in July 2012 to lead the delivery of a range of onshore and offshore courses.

WHAT DOES YOUR BUSINESS DO?

We are a specialist consultancy delivering nationally accredited and in-house assessor and internal verifier training as well as auditing, gap analysis and development programmes for training, competence. I'm also a CITP qualified, auditor and an SVQ Management assessor. We have extensive knowledge and experience in competence assurance, health, safety and environment and quality, industry compliance, training and development and auditing services.

WHAT SORT OF COMPANIES DO YOU DO BUSINESS WITH?

We deliver large-scale projects supporting major energy, marine, technology, drilling and industrial organisations in the UK and globally. We also offer a wider complimentary service offering to further support our clients in the fields of HSEQ, inspection, lifting and industry compliance by collaborating with trusted expert associates.

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

We are in a very fortunate position in that we typically don't find ourselves working through any major challenges in our business. We are grateful for having built a solid client base who we have forged great working relationships with. If I had to name one issue, for me, it would be that I would love to be able to be in two places at once! I absolutely thrive on being busy and working hard so striking that all-important home/work life balance can sometimes be challenging.

AND THE BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY?

We've focused a lot of our efforts recently on international growth with some global clients coming on board. The scope of work we deliver is transferable to a host of cross-sector industries and we have been delivering auditing, QMS, training and SME support to companies in Norway, Singapore and Brazil, so we're continuing a focus on widening our global client base going forward.



Heather Griffiths,
Commercial Director,
BoConcept Aberdeen

WHEN WAS YOUR BUSINESS ESTABLISHED?

BoConcept Aberdeen became the fourth Scottish showroom in the BoConcept Scotland franchise, opening its doors in July 2022. After 20 years of operating in the Glasgow, Edinburgh and then Tillicoultry, the timing was right to open another showroom up North, creating a local showroom for both retail and B2B customers.

WHAT DOES YOUR BUSINESS DO?

BoConcept is a Danish design company, offering world class interior design solutions for residential, commercial and hospitality projects. We specialise in contemporary, customisable, furniture and accessories, and have an established track record of delivering high quality, aspirational designs that bring great value to both consumers and businesses.

WHAT SORT OF COMPANIES DO YOU DO BUSINESS WITH?

We are specialists in the build-to-rent market, working closely with developers, architects and interior designers creating world class showhomes and bespoke packages for projects; Student Accommodation, redesigning common areas and bedrooms; Business owners users wishing to redesign their workplace. We work well with any premium residential, hospitality or commercial company.

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

Because of our location, potential clients have an incorrect perception of us. We offer a trade interiors service and wholesale supply service, however they assume we are just a furniture shop. We need to get the word out to property developers, builders, architects and specifiers about what makes BoConcept different.

AND THE BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY?

We manufacture most of our goods in Denmark which mitigates transportation challenges and gives us the shortest lead times for modular furniture. We also offer a free toolbox for our clients. Specifiers can download BoConcept designs to use in their CAD drawings for clients, resulting in a high-end premium look.

MEMBERS



James Taylor,
Manager,
CORINJ

WHEN WAS YOUR BUSINESS ESTABLISHED?

May 2022.

WHAT DOES YOUR BUSINESS DO?

CORINJ specialises in supplying the highest of quality bespoke chemical injection and corrosion monitoring fitting solutions. We

understand that for a lot of our customers it's not a case of grabbing what's already on the shelf.

WHAT SORT OF COMPANIES DO YOU DO BUSINESS WITH?

We work with EPC's, operators, and corrosion and injection service companies.

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

As a startup, the biggest challenge is getting the company products out there and being able to demonstrate what CORINJ has to offer.

PASSIONATE AND PROUD OF WHEN IT COMES TO YOUR BUSINESS?

Being able to give great customer service. Every order is personal, so emphasis on quality and delivery is imperative to ensure that our customers are always happy. Being able to take ideas to help and improve products from concept through to delivery.

AND THE BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY?

To grow CORINJ to be a leading supplier in chemical injection and corrosion monitoring products.

WHAT ARE YOU MOST



David Paterson,
Managing Director,
C-SAM

WHEN WAS YOUR BUSINESS ESTABLISHED?

2001.

WHAT DOES YOUR BUSINESS DO?

We provide bespoke asset management and rental solutions.

WHAT SORT OF COMPANIES DO YOU DO BUSINESS WITH?

From small businesses to blue chip companies, primarily based in the oil and gas sector due to our Aberdeen roots, our software can work in any industry where assets play a key part in their everyday business.

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

Dependence on existing customer base and brand awareness. C-SAM has been successful due to our excellent customer service and great products. We have relied heavily on customer referrals for sales. We have started to address this challenge by increasing our marketing spend and having more of a presence on social media.

AND THE BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY?

The government's decision to award 100 North Sea oil and gas licenses should hopefully help stabilise the

market and allow companies in that sector to focus on longer-term plans. This will give the security of future income to allow potential clients to look at increased budgets to spend on technology to help improve their business.

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

Customer relations. C-SAM has been in business for over 20 years and with very little spent on marketing, we have focused our attention on great customer service. The software must be great, that's a given. Many clients have been with us for over 10 years and for some, their entire business is fully managed using our applications. Where I feel we really stand out is our relationships with customers. With our regular client review meetings, we build up lifelong relations with key super users.



VisitAberdeenshire invites locals to 'Make a Day of It' with new campaign

VisitAberdeenshire has launched a new campaign promoting Aberdeen to North-east residents, in a bid to celebrate the city this autumn.

'Make a Day of It' aims to inspire and enthuse people living in and around Aberdeen to explore the city deeper and extend visits beyond a lunch stop or shopping trip to include a day's worth of activities.

VisitAberdeenshire's multi-channel campaign – delivered in partnership with DC Thomson, and supported by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund – will feature radio adverts on Original 106, a pull-out supplement with the Press & Journal, online articles on the Press & Journal's website, as well as inspirational content across print supplements including Your Life.

'Make a Day of It' this autumn is the first of four waves of Aberdeen-focused promotion, with further campaigns planned in 2024 and early 2025.

EnerQuip unveils Middle East commitment

Multi award-winning torque specialist EnerQuip has underlined its commitment to the Middle East as part of a £1.5million investment across its global operations.

The leading provider of innovative torque machine solutions for the energy industry has unveiled plans to expand its existing site at Findon on the outskirts of Aberdeen in a bid to cope with growing demand for its groundbreaking mobile torque unit, both at home and in the Middle East.

The extended facility will increase indoor floor space dedicated to manufacturing by 60% with a new welfare facility and stores also to be added. In addition to this expansion at the company's headquarters, the business is also reviewing options for a larger facility to support service demands in Houston, TX.



Peter Bruce and Euan Rennie

From an apprenticeship at 19 to a leadership role at 26

An Aberdeenshire based global catering and hospitality company has announced that Euan Rennie, who joined Entier's apprenticeship programme in 2017 has been promoted to their leadership team.

After leaving school at the age of 17, Euan had originally wanted to pursue a career in mechanical engineering. After completing two years at college, Euan realised that this was no longer a career he wished to pursue, however, it was during these two years that Euan had completed a module in quality management and realised that this was where his passion and interests lay.

Euan successfully applied to Entier's 'Fresh Olive' apprenticeship programme in 2017 and joined the company as an HSEQ apprentice which he graduated from in 2020. During his time with Entier, Euan has successfully completed his Food Safety Diploma, NEBOSH, Internal Auditing courses and is also a trained Mental Health First Aider. As part of Entier's commitment to further continuous professional development Euan has also been undertaking a Graduate Apprenticeship in Business Management with Honors at Robert Gordon University and will graduate later this year.

Speaking about his senior leadership appointment Euan said: "I am very grateful to Entier for the opportunities, experiences and continued professional development that I have had over the years. I never imagined when I started as an apprentice that I would be celebrating securing a leadership role at such a young age. With the nature of our business, global footprint, and the industries our clients work in HSEQ is of critical importance and everyone at Entier plays a part in our success."

Peter Bruce, Chief Executive of Entier said: "I'm immensely proud of Euan's accomplishments over the years and I have been impressed by his commitment and his work to continually enhance the HSEQ across all of our business globally for the benefit of our people, our business and importantly our clients. Euan displays all the qualities and values we expect for our senior business leaders and is a great inspiration to all."

Business Breakfast

INSIDE THE BBC

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As Director General of the BBC, Tim Davie CBE runs one of the most high-profile organisations in the world, and is responsible for an annual turnover of over £5billion.

But running a gigantic organisation comes with gigantic challenges.

From the pressure-cooker environment of public service journalism, to dealing with legacy scandals that rocked the British institution to its core, the former Comic Relief chairman has rarely had a quiet moment since taking to top job in 2020.

Join us for this special Business Breakfast to hear how he has navigated some of the most difficult corporate challenges imaginable, whilst plotting a digital future for this pillar of British life.

About Tim Davie

Tim Davie became Director-General of the BBC on 1 September 2020. He is the 17th Director-General of the Corporation.

Prior to this, Tim was Chief Executive of BBC Studios, the BBC's principal commercial subsidiary. Responsible for creating and distributing leading British content globally.

Before joining the BBC, he was Vice President of Marketing and Franchise at PepsiCo Europe. Before this, Tim worked for Procter and Gamble after leaving Cambridge University where he read English.

Tim is a Trustee of the Tate, a Trustee of the Royal Television Society and former co-chair of the Creative Industries Council; he is a former chair of Comic Relief.

Tim was appointed CBE in 2018 for services to International Trade.

Date: December 14, 2023

Time: 7am-9am

Place: The Marcliffe Hotel & Spa



North-east economy 'showing signs of outperforming the UK'

The North-east economy is now outperforming the UK in a number of key business metrics, according to a new report.

However, inflation – driven primarily by rising labour costs – continues to squeeze profitability among companies based in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire more than elsewhere.

The North-east Quarterly Economic Survey, launched by Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce, in a new partnership with law firm Gilson Gray, benchmarks key indicators in the region's economy against the wider UK.

The report reveals that companies here are performing better in international activities than the rest of the UK.

It also shows a higher proportion of North-east businesses feel their turnover will improve in the next 12-months (62%) compared to the UK (53%).

Four key findings were outlined and discussed at a special Chamber Business Breakfast at the Chester Hotel in Aberdeen.

Key findings:

1. Strong sales underpinning growing local confidence

More than a third of companies (35%) in the North-east report that domestic sales increased in the period, in line with the UK average. And fewer local companies (15%) are reporting a decline in sales than the UK as a whole (23%).

The data shows that North-east businesses are performing far better in global markets.

Again, 35% of our regional businesses have seen an increase in international sales, outpacing the national average (27%) by eight-percentage points.

Future overseas order pipelines are also stronger in the North-east (30% vs 27%).

2. But higher turnover not always converting to profit

A higher proportion of North-east businesses feel their turnover will improve in the next 12-months (62%) compared to the UK (53%).

But more local businesses think the price of their goods/services will have to increase over the next three months than across the UK as a whole, due to a range of pressures.

The number of regional companies concerned about interest rates has also risen sharply since Q2, from 41% to 50%, suggesting the cost of borrowing is also having an impact on bottom lines.

Inflation continues to be the biggest concern for businesses in the North-east, with 71% of those polled listing it as a concern, six percentage points higher than the UK average (65%).

This is squeezing margins with only 41% of firms in the North-east expecting profits to rise over the next 12 months, compared with 45% in the UK.

3. Recruitment struggles drive local inflation

There is no sign of the local labour market easing in the short-term, with four out of five companies (83%) in the North-east reporting issues with recruiting suitable staff,

10 percentage points higher than the rest of the UK.

This tight labour market leads 78% of respondents to say another key factor in upward overhead pressures is funding pay awards and other rising labour costs. Other cost inflation factors (fuel, utilities, raw materials) remain but abated during the quarter.

4. Business rates remain a challenge

The research also suggests that business rates remain a significant barrier to growth in the North-east, despite the broadly positive outcome of the recent non-domestic rates revaluation.

More than a third of firms (34%) said that business rates were a constraint to growth, far higher than the 25% average across the UK, suggesting that rates still have not fallen by enough.

Seven out of 10 properties in the Granite City have had a decrease in their rateable value since April, while there is no change for 14%, and the remaining 16% were landed with rises.

However, properties in Aberdeenshire have not fared as well as the Granite City in the latest revaluation – 48% saw rises, 36% saw decreases and there was no change for 16%.

Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce said the report will provide an evidence-base to support the group's lobbying of all three tiers of government on behalf of its members and the region.

Chief Executive Russell Borthwick said: "We are hearing the same story from many companies –



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The importance of onshore wind in addressing the climate emergency, cost of living crisis and energy security issues

Gavin Shirley,
Development Project Manager,
RES



RES, the world's largest independent renewable energy company, has been at the forefront of onshore wind energy development for over 40 years.

Since RES built the UK's second commercial onshore wind farm in Cornwall, in the early 1990s, the technology has grown from strength to strength – particularly in Scotland which boasts some of the highest wind resource in Europe.

Onshore wind comprises approximately 66% of Scotland's installed renewable generation capacity. As of 2020, onshore wind had the largest economic output of renewable energy, with a total of £2,439 million to the economy.

Onshore wind has proven its worth over the decades as a form of electricity generation, and recent polls confirm strong public support. Crucially, onshore wind can also help address the climate emergency, cost of living crisis, and issues we face with security of energy supply.

Climate emergency

With the ever-growing threat of climate change and the catastrophic impacts that it could have, it is critical that we transition to a zero-carbon future.

The Scottish Government declared a 'climate emergency' in 2019 and set a legally-binding target of reaching net zero emissions by 2045. Targets to more than double existing operational onshore wind capacity across Scotland by 2030 have been set to help achieve net zero. Aberdeenshire Council was the first local authority in Scotland to implement a carbon budget with a target of reducing carbon emissions by 75% by 2030.

Once consented, onshore wind is also quick to build (12-24 months) and typically achieves carbon payback within 1-3 years of operation.

Cost of living crisis

Onshore wind, alongside other renewable energy technologies, can provide the lowest-cost form of electricity generation.

Security of energy supply

Onshore wind also increases energy security by reducing our reliance on imports and building our resilience to sudden price fluctuations or the uncertainty of global markets.

Hill of Fare Wind Farm

As part of the response to addressing these crises, RES is submitting an application to develop its 16-turbine onshore wind farm proposal at Hill of Fare, near Banchory.

If consented, the >£100 million infrastructure project would maximise local economic benefit, be capable of generating enough clean, low-cost electricity for more than 101,000 homes and operate carbon free for close to five decades.

For more information visit
www.res-group.com or
www.hilloffare-windfarm.co.uk

Business lessons I've learned



Martin Suttie,
MD and Chairman, First Integrated Solutions

What does your company do that others don't?

The oil and gas industry in the North Sea is a declining market but that doesn't mean we cannot seek growth and invest for the future in our people, in our equipment and service offering. What we at First Integrated Solutions (FIS) provide to the industry will be required for many years to come we just need to continue to be the best so we can continue to grow market share and make that rewarding for ourselves and our customers.

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

I think there is a shortage of people either skilled or young people wanting to join the industry. This has been caused by the perception of the oil and gas industry and perhaps some short termism in the past in relation to personnel. At FIS we are keen to recruit, train and retain our team but to do this we need to ensure we have the appropriate revenue coming in to adequately reward our team for their efforts.

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

Business is like life, it is not always fair. You can do all the right things as a company and still you might feel you have not got the rewards you hoped for. There is not much you can do about the past, so you just have to roll your sleeves up and make sure you keep doing the right things to the best of your ability.

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

I have worked for my dad for the last 17 years and I have learned a lot from him. I suppose the thing that I learned from most of all is that although it is important to have a strategy it is also important to be opportunistic as well. If you are too rigid in your approach you can miss a great opportunity that is staring you in the face.

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

I am very proud to be a Chartered Accountant but by far the proudest achievement I have is being part of

Quick fire round

What was your first job?

During school holidays I worked 12-hour days at Orwell Group doing various admin tasks in the office.

When would you like to retire?

I have all my hobbies lined up for retirement – golf, curling and recently taken up green bowls with my eldest daughter, but retirement is a long way off for me.

What did you have for breakfast?

Raisin Wheats cereal.

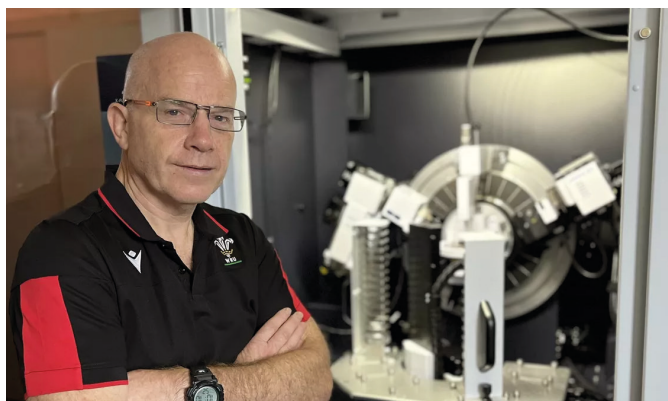
Who, or what, inspires you?

My colleagues inspire me, I am proud to work with them all. I think when you see people are trying their best for the team and themselves it is easy to get inspired by that.

a team that has seen exponential growth in the last 12 months. Across the group we have more than doubled turnover, we have seen even better growth in profitability and grown headcount by more than 50% to c.220 within the team. The Group's turnover is now more than 50% within the renewable sector – it has been quite the year!

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

The North-east of Scotland is a huge success story, with many successful entrepreneurs but we have failed to take politicians along the journey with us. The oil and gas industry and the renewable industries requires long term decision making and our political systems have given us almost no predictability in the 23 years I have been working in this industry sector. If you are deciding to drill an exploration well or develop a wind farm you are thinking 20 years into the future, we could have five different fiscal regimes during that period – how can you run economics for that?



Hutton boosts soil and rock analytics capacity

The James Hutton Institute in Aberdeen has invested in the latest hi-tech laboratory equipment to help keep it at the top of the world league in mineralogy and address challenges across soil health, from food security to carbon storage.

The independent research institute's new £140,000 X-ray diffraction (XRD) machine will boost the institute's analytics capacity, especially around the precise determination of mineral content in rock and soils.

This will support Hutton's own research, including its world-leading work around soil quality and health, and expand its capacity for commercial analysis for industries ranging from mining to medicine.

Past and current customers using Hutton's XRD capability range from pet litter produce to mining companies, with customers coming from as far away as Australia to more locally in Aberdeen.

TWMA secures major contract with Norwegian giant Equinor

Drilling waste management specialist TWMA has secured a long-term contract with Equinor.

The 10-year agreement, including options, allows TWMA to extend its global drilling waste management services to Equinor's operations, allowing the company to process its drilling waste safely and sustainably.

The contract is inclusive of five scopes of work, including bulk transfer, slop treatment, swarf treatment, skip and ship and TWMA's award-winning offshore processing technology, the RotoMill®.

Jan Thore Eia, TWMA Business Development Manager in Norway, said: "Our collaboration with Equinor marks a significant milestone for TWMA. This collaboration is a testament to our expertise in providing innovative and sustainable drilling waste management solutions. We look forward to delivering these solutions to Equinor and supporting drilling operations in Norway."

The Big Hop Trail raises over £200,000 for Clan Cancer Support

The Big Hop Trail 2023 has raised £202,600 at auction for Clan Cancer Support.

All forty large hares and five specially commissioned leveret sculptures went under the hammer with Bargain Hunt presenter Charles Hanson at the Music Hall, Aberdeen in September.

The Big Hop Trail, sponsored by Hellmann Worldwide Logistics, was delivered by Clan Cancer Support over a nine-week period this summer, with more than 240,000 participants collecting the hare sculptures across the North-east, Moray, Orkney and Shetland.

In partnership with Wild in Art, the trail aimed to raise awareness for Clan Cancer Support which runs six support centres and additional outreach programmes across Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, Moray, Orkney and Shetland and generate vital funding for its services.

Fiona Fernie, Clan Cancer Support's CEO, said: "Clan Cancer Support will mark its 40th anniversary this year and we could not have asked for a better birthday present than this. We are so grateful to everyone who came along to raise a paddle for the chance to own one of these beautiful sculptures."

Willbox thrives in Scotland with remarkable growth

Willbox has witnessed a surge in its shipping container hire division, marking a remarkable journey of continued growth in the Scottish market.

Since April 2023, Willbox has doubled its rented fleet size and secured new contracts, solidifying its position as a leading provider of shipping containers and site accommodation units.

With three key locations in Scotland; Aberdeen, Falkirk, and Inverness, Willbox has strategically expanded its presence to serve a diverse clientele. These locations have become pivotal hubs in the region for various industries.

When Matthew Pirie, Scotland's Regional Manager joined Willbox earlier this year, he wanted Willbox to grow and become one of the leading site accommodation and shipping container suppliers in Scotland. His plan for the expansion of Willbox is still in motion and this landmark figure of doubling their rented fleet is a step in the right direction.

"Our continued growth in Scotland reflects not only our commitment to delivering top-quality service but also our adaptability to meeting the evolving needs of our clients," said Matthew. "We are excited about the opportunities in the Aberdeen area, where we see significant potential for collaboration and contribution to the region's sustainable future."



STEM in the pipeline welcomes it's latest cohort

STEM in the Pipeline: Energising the Transition, which sets school pupils a realistic energy sector challenge, got underway recently with an introduction day at Robert Gordon University.

The TechFest project welcomed its latest cohort of students at the launch event.

During the course of the project, more than 100 secondary school pupils from 16 secondary schools across the North-east will put their science, technology, engineering and maths knowledge to the test as part of a fictional oilfield project.

STEM in the Pipeline is sponsored by bp, Harbour Energy, the North Sea Transition Authority and Apache North Sea. The project is also supported by CNOOC International.

Bridging the knowledge gap between education and the energy sector's workforce, STEM in the Pipeline provides pupils aged 17-18 with a chance to use knowledge gained in STEM subjects at school to solve TechFest's energy industry challenge.

Albyn School pupil donates hair to The Little Princess Trust

Albyn School pupil Iona Hamilton has braved the chop to support children suffering from hair loss.

The kind-hearted nine-year-old has recently donated 33cm of hair to The Little Princess Trust charity which creates real hair wigs for children and young people who have lost their own hair through cancer treatment or another condition.

This is the second time Iona has donated her hair in less than two years. In November 2021, she donated 35cm of hair and raised more than £1,400.

Headmaster Stefan Horsman said: "Our whole Albyn School community is proud of our pupil Iona whose thoughtful act demonstrates the empathy and social responsibility we strive to instil in our pupils. Her gesture reminds us all of the positive impact one individual can have on the world, regardless of their age."

Kirkwood Homes wins award for prestigious North-east showhome

Luxury housing developer Kirkwood Homes has been awarded the 'Best Show Home' accolade at The Herald Property Awards for its 'Gullane' showhome in Inchmarlo, Banchory.

The only showhome situated in the North-east of Scotland to be shortlisted within the award category, the five-bedroom detached housetype boasts almost 300m² of internal floor space and is the largest in Kirkwood's portfolio.

Featuring an impressive triple-aspect formal lounge, spacious open-plan kitchen, dining and family area, as well as generous sized bedrooms all complete with built-in storage, the home provides an unrivalled layout for family living.

Designed by Thomas Fischer Interiors, the 'Gullane' incorporates inspiration from the surrounding beauty of Royal Deeside - creating a welcoming and desirable home for prospective buyers to explore.

Loganair named Airline of the Year

Loganair has been named Airline of the Year for 2023 by the European Regional Airline Association (ERA).

The UK's largest regional airline collected the prestigious accolade at a formal awards dinner held as part of ERA's General Assembly in Innsbruck, Austria.

Loganair, which employs more than 850 people across its network, was honoured in recognition of its "impressive performance" in returning to profitability following the pandemic, whilst at the same time improving terms for its staff.

Jonathan Hinkles, CEO, Loganair, said: "It is an incredible honour to be named the ERA Airline of the Year award for 2023 and I'd like to thank our magnificent employees for their extraordinary efforts in recent years. We were one of the very few airlines to continue flying daily throughout the pandemic, providing essential travel to remote communities, air ambulance services for CV19 patients, and energy industry charter services that ensured the UK's lights remained switched on.

"It is also very rewarding to be singled out for our environmental innovation. Developing sustainable aviation is vital for the future of our planet and people, as well as the industry."

Caber Coffee spills thousands of pounds into charity coffers

Aberdeen-based Caber Coffee has announced that it has served up more than £6,000 for charity in the last two years, thanks to a special initiative.

In September 2021, the family-run company launched its innovative "Spill the Beans" blend which shines a light on the importance of communication when it comes to looking after mental health and encourages coffee lovers to chat with others over a cup.

With £8 from every case sold donated to Mental Health Aberdeen to help provide valuable resources including counselling services and educational programmes, the project has poured in more than £6,000 of support in the past two years.

The total to date has been boosted thanks to the support of a growing band of customers across the region such as Serco NorthLink Ferries who, earlier this year, took the reduced caffeine Spill the Beans blend on board for passengers to enjoy during journeys between Aberdeen and the Northern Isles.

The Spill the Beans product and philanthropic initiative were spearheaded Caber Coffee Managing Director, Findlay Leask, driven by a desire to highlight the importance of both seeking and giving mental health support. He said: "From the start, customers were quick to lend their support to the Spill the Beans project and we are grateful that they continue to do so – and in growing numbers.

"The demand for mental health services is huge and complex, and it's important to not only make sure conversations are made possible by highlighting the need for communication, but also by doing something practical to ensure that avenues which deliver help, such as MHA, are bolstered."

Graeme Kinghorn, Mental Health Aberdeen (MHA) Chief Executive, added: "Everything that MHA does has a local aspect to it. We are a local charity, we support people in the local community, we engage with local businesses and organisations and a mentally healthy workforce is essential for a thriving local economy.

"Spill the Beans' is a perfect example of how vital resources can be channelled into local support services by a proactive, compassionate local business that obviously cares about others. MHA are proud to be associated with Caber Coffee and their endeavours."

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Game-changing brain surgery could have patients home in 48-hours

Exclusive:

From the invention of insulin, to the creation of the very first MRI scanner, Aberdeen has a proud history of producing medical firsts.

Now a doctor at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary looks set to write his name in the North-east's rich research lineage with a "game-changing" new surgical technique.

Neurosurgeon Anastasios Giamouriadis has pioneered a new form of keyhole brain surgery that can have patients back at work within a month of going under the knife.

Anastasios Giamouriadis moved from London to Aberdeen in 2019, just a fortnight before becoming a father. Shortly after, he developed and created minimally invasive brain tumour surgery, a potentially life-changing and life-saving operation for countless people in the North-east.

It removes large tumours from the front of the brain by making keyhole incisions through the eyebrow.

Rather than spending weeks in hospital, including time in intensive care, the new surgery will have patients home within 48 hours.

"For very large tumours, especially in the frontal area, the traditional access is normally a very large cut. From one ear to the other, or from one ear to the top of the head," Anastasios explained.

"You do extensive craniotomy in order to remove a very large brain tumour. That's the standard

approach and it's a very lengthy operation. The brain is exposed for many hours, it's quite morbid and there are a lot of risks.

"Patients go into intensive care for a few days, at least, then they spend lots of time on the ward and many times a year they can end up in rehab. They are back home, probably, after six or nine months, or even a year.

“

The scar is barely visible after a few weeks or months. They are back to normal life very quickly. Within two to four weeks, maximum, patients can go back to their job.

"What I do is I remove these tumours through a keyhole approach through the eyebrow.

"That approach has been established for a long time in neurosurgery all around the world, but only for small tumours."

With the new approach, that has been formally acknowledged by neurosurgeons across Europe, Anastasios has been able to cut recovery time to a fraction of what it was for patients in the North-east.

"I have modified the standard eyebrow approach and I'm able to remove very large tumours through the eyebrow. The big difference is that patients go home on the second day.

"It's still very complex and it's even more technically challenging than having a very big craniotomy, but patients are back home on the second day with a swollen eye which goes back to normal after a few days.

"The scar is barely visible after a few weeks or months. They are back to normal life very quickly.

"It's a game-changer for patient outcome but it also has a very significant socio-economic impact.

"We save a lot of money for the NHS. No intensive care and no rehab. Essentially, it's just two nights in the hospital and patients go back to their everyday lives very quickly.

"Within two to four weeks, maximum, patients can go back to their job.

"With this surgery, which is technically more challenging, there is no other way you can get a patient back to normal so quickly.

"Minimal invasive surgery is the future for any surgery in any part of the body, but especially in the brain, it makes a huge difference for patient outcomes, it's a huge step forward.

"Every Thursday for the next two months I'm doing another surgery. We've done 40 already and we haven't had any major problems directly related with the minimal invasive approach."

Exposing the brain for less time and making a smaller incision has a number of patient benefits.

The keyhole approach allows Anastasios to focus in on the tumour in a fraction of the time that it would take during the standard approach.

"I started by thinking that we have exposed a lot of brain to begin with. That, on its own, without any other problems, will delay the recovery of the patient," added the 43-year-old.

"Through minimal invasion brain tumour surgery, we expose as little brain as possible. That makes a big difference.

"With big operations, you spend about a couple of hours just to get to the tumour. With my approach, I'm on the tumour within 20 minutes. This way, we minimise complications."

Despite what is usually a lengthy operation, the final moments of removing the tumour generally prove to be

the most difficult. Removing the last part, which is stuck on to tiny vessels and nerves, can have a devastating impact on the patient.

"If anything goes wrong, best case scenario, you're looking at a massive stroke. If not, then death," added Anastasios.

That was the turning point for the Athens-born neurosurgeon.

"It drove me to think: 'we are doing something wrong here'.

"These patients, with big tumours at the front of their head, develop cognitive impairment, mobility

impairment and significant visual impairment, so they can go blind.

"If you are operating on a large tumour the normal way, you're operating for 8-10 hours.

"With this operation, we've stopped them from further deterioration and, in most cases, they have gained back normal vision. So, patients can be back driving after a few months, which is crucial for them."

Within a year of moving to Aberdeen, the first patient went in for minimal invasive brain tumour surgery in the summer of 2020, less than a year after Anastasios began working on the new approach.

"CV19 pushed me further to do this. We didn't have theatre, we didn't have beds, we didn't have staff. But people were still going blind



or dying from these large brain tumours.

“So, I had to sort them out. CV19 was another good reason to get them in, expose as less people as possible to any CV19 risk, and get them back home as soon as possible, rather than catching CV19 in hospital.”

And he’s now presenting his work across the continent.

In September, Anastasios presented his work to the European Congress of Neurosurgery in Barcelona after doing the same to the Society of British Neurological Surgeons earlier in the month.

“Our series has been well recognised and acknowledged as one of the most pioneering, at least in Europe.”

Anastasios is now a Consultant Neurosurgeon at NHS Grampian, Honourary Senior Clinical Lecturer at Aberdeen University and the Lead Minimally Invasive, Skull Base and Pituitary Surgeon for the North of Scotland Brain and Spine Centre.

Born in Greece, he moved to London in 2010 where he stayed for six years before moving to New York where he became a Fellow in Minimally Invasive Brain Surgery. He moved back the UK’s capital a year later before finding his home in the Granite City.

He says moving north to start his family was a “no-brainer” after seeing the city.

“I moved to Aberdeen for quality of life. It came out of nowhere, but my wife was approaching 37 weeks pregnant.

“The lifestyle in London is very different and it’s not family friendly under any circumstance. I was seeing friends and family who were a step ahead of me with young kids and it was quite hard, I could see they were struggling.

“I travelled up here thrice before my interview and I was trying to find something wrong, and I couldn’t. I was going back home to my wife and saying ‘it’s a no-brainer’.

“It’s the best thing we ever did. There’s a great community, it’s multi-national, it’s progressive, it’s been through challenges, but I think it’s a rising area again now.

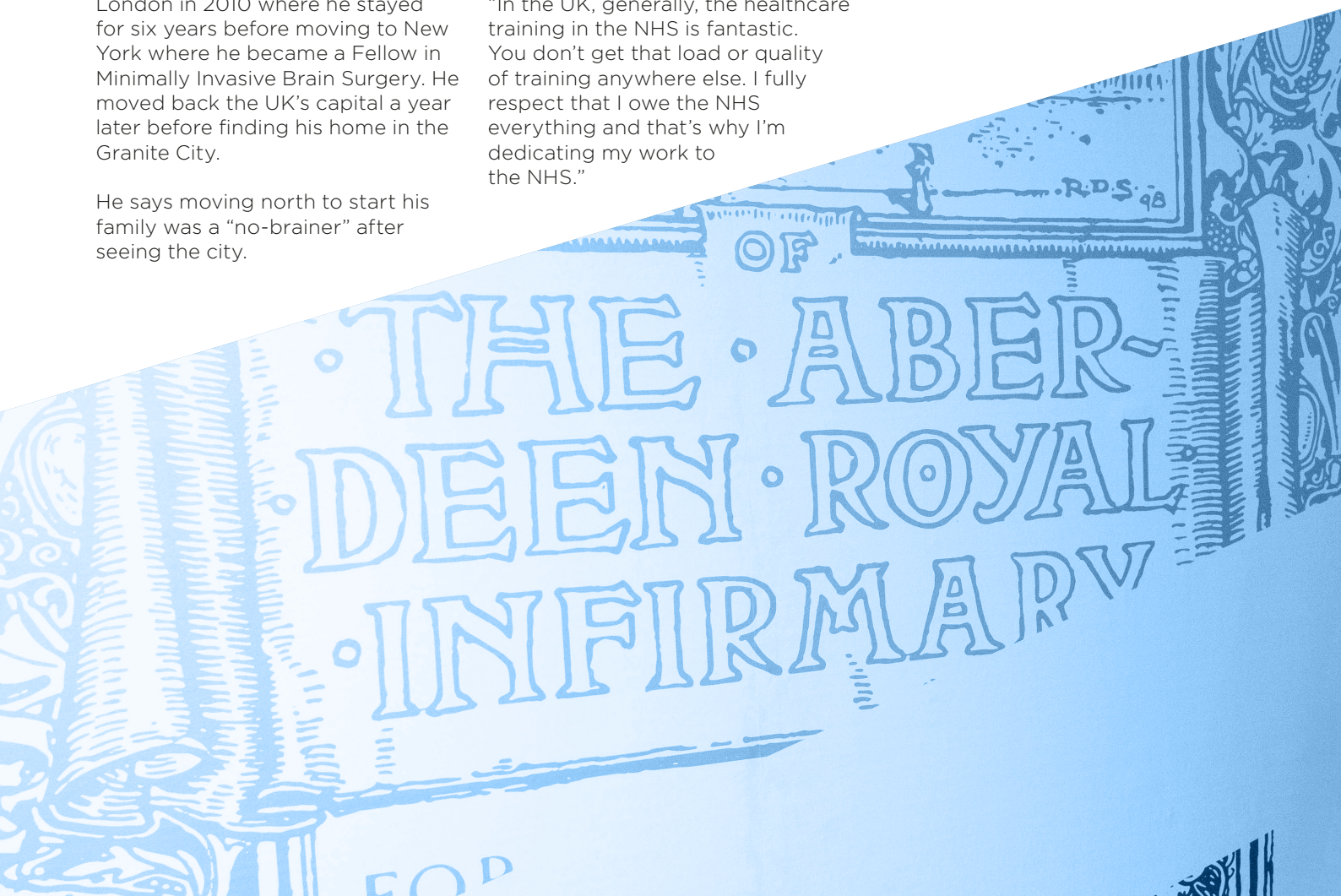
“My job is very demanding but here I have quality of time for my family, otherwise they would never see me.

“We drove up here from London 37 weeks pregnant. I worked for two weeks exactly (when the baby was born), and I didn’t take my parental leave.

“In the UK, generally, the healthcare training in the NHS is fantastic. You don’t get that load or quality of training anywhere else. I fully respect that I owe the NHS everything and that’s why I’m dedicating my work to the NHS.”

“

With big operations, you spend about a couple of hours just to get to the tumour. With my approach, I’m on the tumour within 20 minutes. This way, we minimise complications.





Kevin and Kelly Forrest

Forrest Training increases monthly sales by 65%

An Aberdeen-based first aid and mental health training business has successfully entered new markets and increased its monthly sales by 65% after receiving business advice and guidance from Business Gateway.

Inspired by their passion for providing quality training services, husband and wife team, Kevin and Kelly Forrest, launched Forrest Training in July 2018. The business has since transformed into a high standard training provider, offering a wide range of engaging courses across every industry in Scotland, with a particular focus on first aid, mental health and social care.

Both Kevin and Kelly had extensive experience in training businesses and individuals, with Kevin spending time working with a social care charity, as well as in the hospitality sector. Having initially worked as a nurse, Kelly also boasted experience in training and working on programmes that encouraged the integration of people with disabilities into the workforce.

Having successfully run Forrest Training for a few years, the couple approached Business Gateway in 2022 for advice and support on how to grow their business operations further.

Kevin and Kelly benefitted from a range of Business Gateway's growth business services, including one-to-one guidance from a dedicated business adviser, as well as a strategic review of their business.

The pair also benefitted from advice and assistance from experts through specialist workshops, marketing support and tender expert help support. Business Gateway's input and marketing direction has resulted in Forrest Training entering new markets and opportunities, while boosting their revenue at the same time.

Since approaching Business Gateway, Forrest Training has enjoyed rapid growth, acquiring a range of clients including Macphie's of Glenbervie and partnering with AquaTerra Training. Most recently, Forrest Training won a competitive tender to deliver first aid training to The Highland Council, through Public Contracts Scotland, enabling the business to expand its client base outside Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and Moray.

Aberdeen family raises more than £13,000 for Charlie House

A local family supported by Charlie House has helped raise £13,055 for the charity, having completed 10 challenging 10k runs across consecutive Saturday's throughout the summer months.

Originally setting a target of £2,500, Jill Cameron who works for Charlie House, planned the ambitious fundraiser in recognition of her son Harris turning 10 this year. Harris lives with a condition called Pfeiffer Syndrome, is registered blind and also has epilepsy and hydrocephalus.

Following the challenge's announcement in April, Jill trained regularly with Harris in his all-terrain jogger buggy, and enlisted the support of other keen runners to help raise funds. Working as a team, the fundraiser was aptly titled Harris' Running Heroes 10x10k Challenge.

John Brebner, CEO of Charlie House, said: "Jill, Harris and the rest of their team are an inspiration! We are so proud of their incredible achievement and are so grateful for their contribution to our cause.

"Thank you to everyone who took part in Jill's challenge and to those who so generously donated, your support is integral to the development of our physical Charlie House, which will provide practical and emotional support for local families."

A new way to test for life on Mars

Space scientists have discovered a new process to test for life on Mars and on Earth, using cutting-edge technology to sequence DNA using the tiniest possible sample of DNA mass.

The researchers from the University of Aberdeen's Department of Planetary Sciences used a MinION DNA sequencer developed by Oxford Nanopore Technologies to detect microorganisms present in tiny amounts of terrestrial soils, and to investigate how they replicate in ambient conditions.

As a result, they have designed a procedure that can detect and characterise soil DNA with as little as 2 picogram of DNA mass (the genome of a single cell of a hummingbird has one picogram of DNA).

The discovery has important implications for studying rock and soil samples taken from Martian and terrestrial landscapes to see if they contain traces of DNA needed to support microbial life.

PhD student Jyothi Basapathi Raghavendra produced the research under the supervision of Professors Javier Martin-Torres and Maria-Paz Zorzano. The research has been published in the journal Scientific Reports.



AJ Johnstone,
*Cyber Security & Solutions Architect,
IT Hotdesk*

Area of expertise?

IT Hotdesk is a dynamic IT solutions provider dedicated to delivering high-quality services to businesses in our local community and beyond. We support customers with a range of IT solutions, including network management, cloud services, cyber security, and IT consulting. Using extensive experience across the full IT landscape, we are on a mission to help our clients achieve positive business outcomes.

What should people know?

It's not just large organisations that are a target. Cybercriminals target small businesses all the time. Many SMEs may underestimate the value of their data and do not invest in the staff or technology platforms to protect their business from modern security threats, making them the perfect target.

What's the biggest mistakes companies make?

Companies often bolt on security measures as an afterthought which frustrates users and slows down productivity. Incorporating security into workflows will streamline the process, increasing employee engagement and as a result, maximising the level of defence.

What's your top tip?

It is vital that you invest in security awareness training for staff, helping them understand the different threats and the precautions they can implement. This, combined with turning on multi-factor authentication for everything that supports it can strengthen your cyber security posture massively.



Thaigo Carmo,
*Managing Director,
Passion4Social*

Area of expertise?

Passion4Social aims to help create a more equal, inclusive society in which the potential of disabled people and those from diverse backgrounds is recognised and capitalised on. We are working towards this vision by bridging the digital skills gap with their unique talents and promoting the benefits of making workplaces/the internet inclusive and accessible.

What should people know?

Embracing diversity and inclusion is how you drive success in today's rapidly evolving business landscape. Incorporating accessible design into every aspect of your business and harnessing the talents of disabled people bridges skills gaps, leads to greater innovation/ decision-making, promotes sustainable growth and fosters more connected diverse communities.

What's the biggest mistakes companies make?

Neglecting inclusivity is costly because it limits growth! Failing to prioritise accessibility on your website and other digital platforms not only alienates a potential 14 million customers in the UK, (with a spending power of £274billion); it results in you losing out on the benefits of a diverse talented workforce.

What's your top tip?

Prioritise accessibility and inclusion across all your digital channels, from website to social media. It is both the socially responsible thing to do and a smart business move. Also fostering a culture of belonging, where diverse perspectives are valued and celebrated, is the source of great innovation.



John Gillies,
Managing Director,
CyberLock

Area of expertise?

Cyber compliance and risk management.

What should people know?

Cyber is an opportunity, not a threat. By engaging with compliance standards such as Cyber Essentials and IASME Cyber Assurance, organisations can align their IT and data systems with their business goals and define and manage risk more effectively. These standards provide the magnet for the iron filings, bringing clarity, not fear to the cyber challenge.

What's the biggest mistakes companies make?

Assuming that they can't do anything or that they don't know where to start. Engage with a Cyber Essentials Certification Body and start simplifying the challenge.

What's your top tip?

Start biting the cake in bite sized chunks. There is a clear pathway to follow if you engage with the right people.



Andrew Leggat,
Manager,
Pittodrie House Hotel

Area of expertise?

Nestled at the foot of Bennachie, Pittodrie House Hotel is a luxury venue set within its own ancient grounds and offering natural scenery, including woodland, extensive lawns and a walled garden. The hotel's picturesque setting within 300 acres of stunning estate land makes it a popular choice for corporate events, conferences and team-building exercises, which are all available for private hire.

What should people know?

Pittodrie House offers traditional meeting and conference facilities surrounded by the breathtaking Scottish landscape and a tranquil location – providing the perfect setting for business events and away days. We can cater for up to 100 delegates and personalise the design of every event that we host, including tailoring menus to suit specific dietary requirements.

What's the biggest mistakes companies make?

When it comes to planning, it's important to fully utilise the venue – including any outdoor space to help keep concentration levels high. We are proud to showcase Aberdeenshire's larder and the hotel is committed to offering locally-sourced produce and fresh ingredients. This gives our team an opportunity to incorporate variety and creativity into event planning, instead of serving up the usual soup and sandwich fare.

What's your top tip?

Go and see the venue in-person. That way, the team can dissect exactly what it is you are looking to achieve from your event and how they can add special touches to make it a memorable occasion. By working closely with the staff, you can rest assured there will be no surprises during the event itself and delegates will have a positive experience from start to finish.



Nicky Walker

Walker's Shortbread's annual turnover climbs by 16% in 2022

Walker's Shortbread has seen its annual turnover climb by 16%, rising from £142.4million to £164.6million in the past financial year.

The Aberlour-based business released its annual results for the year ended December 31, 2022, revealing top-line growth fuelled specifically in US and UK markets, the latter resulting from a strong post-pandemic festive season.

Walker's benefitted from increased sales in domestic and overseas markets during the trading period, with UK sales increasing by 23% from £62.6million to £77million and export revenues rose by almost 10% to £87.6million.

Growth was underpinned by Walker's successful rebrand, which launched in 2021 and continued through 2022, with strong performance in global travel retail coinciding with a return to air travel for many passengers.

However, ongoing pressures on global supply chains - intensified by the conflict in Ukraine - and a challenging inflationary environment impacted the business, as costs of raw materials rose, and service levels were squeezed. As a result, profits dipped from £6.2million to £6million compared to the previous trading year.

The business sought to mitigate these challenges by introducing new production efficiencies and procurement strategies, both which contributed gains in the year, however, it was insufficient to mitigate the cost pressures in full meaning profits remained static at £6million.

Walker's Shortbread's Managing Director, Nicky Walker, said: "It was pleasing to see demand return in a substantial

way through 2022 after a couple of challenging years during the CV19 pandemic.

"The year presented numerous hurdles however, not least the continuing restrictions in the local labour market, but also substantial price increases coming from our suppliers. This volatility forced a review of all our incoming costs, with proactive conversations held with our entire supply chain."

Mr Walker said that despite the challenging global environment, a post-pandemic lift and return to travel and tourism was key to achieving topline growth, along with the successful brand relaunch which is continuing in 2023 and 2024 as part of a global roll out.

He added: "The Walker's brand relaunch was exceptionally well received last year, and we are excited at the prospect of the continued roll out through the remainder of this year and into next as we look forward to support the business' aspiration for sustainable growth.

"I'd again like to acknowledge the support of our incredible team, whose efforts are invaluable to the business. It was especially pleasing that as part of our 125th anniversary celebrations in June we were able to say thank you to them in person, along with their families, at a company event.

"I, along with the Board and Executive Committee, continue to focus our efforts on moving the business forward, further developing it for a bright, sustainable future".



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Business lessons I've learned



Jeff Knight,
Director, Drilltools Ltd

What does your company do that others don't?

Drilltools Ltd supply various sizes of drilling flapper safety valves to oilfield operators and service companies, all of which are built and tested to API specification 7NRV. I believe we are the only company in the UK who build valves to this spec.

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

Getting the industry to recognise that the old-style equipment they are using does not meet current accepted specifications and is not fit for purpose. As drilling techniques have developed, the demands on conventional downhole non-return valves have increased. The reliability of conventional valves has proved an issue, leading to significant non-productive drilling time in some cases compromising the drilling and reservoir objectives.

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

People tend to stick to what they know and what has been done before rather than trying new things. There are many innovations which have improved safety and reliability in drilling if companies are just willing to try something different.

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

Contracts are weapons.

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

Keeping two businesses afloat during the CV19 lockdown and the current economic downturn has been a challenge. I'm proud that as a team we have come out the other side and are now going from strength to strength.

Quick fire round

What was your first job?

Park time sales assistant in Dixons Electrical Store.

When would you like to retire?

Never!

What did you have for breakfast?

Cereal and a cup of coffee.

Who, or what, inspires you?

The natural world because it's incredibly adaptable and very resilient!

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

The Feynman Lectures on Physics vol 3 (Quantum Theory) by Richard Feynman.

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

I'd like to open people's eyes to what ceasing oil production in the UK, and indeed around the world, will actually do to their lifestyles. The transition to renewables is essential but there will still be a need for oil and gas for many years to come. We have the resources on our doorstep to produce and export oil, rather than importing from abroad at a greater economic and environmental cost.

Former Dons captain wins support for his charitable foundation

Dons legend Russell Anderson will see his charitable foundation take centre stage in the UEFA Conference League group stages thanks to the generosity of Aberdeen FC Partner, RAM Tubulars.

Russell, who ended his playing career with the Dons in 2015 will see the name of his charity, The Russell Anderson Foundation, feature on the back of the Dons home and away kits for the European group stage fixtures.

RAM Tubulars, led by Managing Director, Jim Stewart, has had a close association with AFC for many years as supporters of the Youth Academy and that relationship was enhanced at the start of the 2022/23 season when RAM Tubulars sponsored the back of the men's first team playing kit.

That agreement has carried on into this campaign and now RAM has generously donated the space for the duration of the Conference League group stages to the local charity.

£60million city centre regeneration scheme approved

New pictures have emerged of a student accommodation block which will soon be added to Aberdeen's city centre skyline.

City councillors have approved ambitious £60million proposals for wasteland on John Street.

Getting more people to live in the city centre is a key strand of plans to regenerate Union Street and the surrounding area, and it is anticipated that the new accommodation will range between four and seven storeys in size and have a private courtyard for students.

The 92-126 John Street site was previously occupied by tenements, then later a small shopping centre and finally the Ambassador snooker hall.

City-based firm Levelling Up Real Estate will now transform it with a 383-bedroom energy-efficient building that will also feature a cinema room and study facilities.

Two public consultations were held earlier this year to give residents the chance to have their say on the proposal for the land.

Feedback revealed there were some concerns about the height of the building, which has since been reduced.

In papers submitted by architects Halliday Fraser Munro, the developers say that the proposals would deliver a "well-designed brownfield redevelopment scheme" and it would contribute towards bolstering the limited supply of student housing in the city.



Stuart McPhee

Landmark sales target hit for new Belmont Street business

Dough & Co, situated in the heart of Aberdeen's city centre, have recently reached their latest milestone, selling their 10,000th doughnut in their first 24 days of trading.

Since opening the business, situated next door to its sister venue Siberia Bar & Hotel, Dough & Co has seen a hugely positive reaction in store and across social media having also reached 3,000 Instagram followers within its first few weeks of launching.

Co-founder Stuart McPhee stated: "We are completely humbled. Not in our best laid plans would we have expected such an overwhelming response to our project. Thank you from all of us here at Dough and Co. How long will it take to get to one million?"

The cafe, which boasts indoor seating, alongside takeaway facilities, continues being open seven days a week between 8am and 8pm. The business is also welcoming pre-orders for offices, home, birthday parties and a whole array of other special occasions - any enquiries can be directed to orders@doughandco.uk.

Your expert partner for a stress-free corporate Christmas party

With the festive season fast approaching and calendars filling up, Luxe Scot Events is here to be your guiding star in creating a memorable and hassle-free corporate Christmas party.

Luxe Scot Events understands that everyone is strapped for time during this joyful yet busy season, and they are uniquely positioned with a seasoned team and industry experience to not only meet but exceed your expectations.

To discover how they can help you create a stress-free and extraordinary corporate Christmas party, visit their website/ call their expert team **01224 600086** / email team@luxe.scot.

Crisis? What crisis? BBC boss to discuss tumultuous 2023 at Aberdeen business breakfast

“Can anyone survive running the BBC?”

When Tim Davie was briefly catapulted into the BBC Director General role in 2012, amid the fallout from the Jimmy Savile scandal, he put that question to the corporation's official historian.

His predecessor, George Entwistle, had lasted just 54 days before scandal engulfed his tenure at the top of the world's largest public service broadcaster.

In that two-month spell, Mr Entwistle was hit by the extraordinary revelations that Jimmy Savile, one of the BBC's biggest stars, had been a serial child abuser and had molested underage girls on BBC premises.

He was immediately put on the back foot when it emerged that the BBC had quashed a Newsnight investigation into Savile the previous year, just weeks before three tribute programmes were due to be scheduled.

Another botched Newsnight investigation finished Mr Entwistle off, plunging the BBC into the deepest crisis in its history.

In its darkest hour, the corporation turned to Mr Davie, appointing him as temporary Director General in late 2012 in an attempt to restore stability.

Eleven years on, the 56-year-old is now in his second stint in the £525,000 per year top job, proving that you can survive – perhaps even thrive – in one of the most high-pressured leadership roles in the world.

But the role has certainly not become any easier. In fact, crisis at the BBC is something which now happens with monotonous regularity.

This year alone, Mr Davie has had to fend off four major scandals – including stars such as Gary Lineker, Huw Edwards and Russell Brand – which most other leaders would not have survived.

However, by retaining the coolest of heads in the most scorching of corporate heat, he did survive – and next month (December) he will be sharing some of his secrets in Aberdeen.

On December 14, he will join Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce at the Marcliffe Hotel for a special business breakfast which will lift the lid on life at the top of the BBC.

So, who is Tim Davie?

A keen marathon runner, Mr Davie was in contention for the role of Chief Executive of the Premier League before landing the BBC job.

He joined the corporation in 2005 as its Head of Marketing, having held a similar role at Pepsi in Europe.

The Cambridge-educated executive has scaled the heights of BBC management for more than a decade.

Following his interim Director General spell in 2012, Mr Davie was appointed permanent Director General in 2020, with a mission to restore “trust and confidence” to the corporation.

The Director General is the Chief Executive Officer of the BBC, its Editor-in-Chief and the person ultimately responsible for its output.

This means he is the man in the firing line when things go wrong, as we have seen on several occasions this year.

Impartiality row

Mr Davie started 2023 with a media storm over the corporation's Chairman, Richard Sharp, who was wounded by an impartiality row regarding his political links.

As Chairman of the BBC's board, Mr Sharp had been in charge of upholding and protecting the BBC's independence and ensuring the BBC fulfils its mission to inform, educate and entertain.

But Mr Sharp found himself at the centre of two investigations over his appointment after it emerged he had donated £400,000 to the Conservatives and helped facilitate an £800,000 loan facility to Boris Johnson, weeks before the then prime minister recommended him for the job.

Suspending Gary Lineker

In the midst of that crisis, another emerged when the BBC's highest-paid presenter Gary Lineker was suspended and swiftly reinstated in March during another impartiality meltdown that rocked the broadcaster.

The former footballer, who has hosted Match of the Day for almost a quarter of a century, became embroiled in a major row after comparing the language used by the UK Government to launch a new asylum policy with 1930s Germany.

The comparison saw Mr Lineker suspended from the helm of the popular BBC show – prompting several fellow pundits, including Ian Wright, Alan Shearer, and Alex Scott, to announce they would not be taking part in solidarity with the former England striker.

The row resulted in Match of the Day being cut to just 20 minutes of highlights – and calls for Mr Davie to go.



Tim Davie

The BBC later performed a swift U-turn to bring Mr Lineker back and apologised to viewers after the row torpedoed its sports coverage.

Mr Davie announced an independent review into what he described as “the potential confusion caused by the grey areas of the BBC’s social media guidance” for freelancers outside news and current affairs. It was also reported that Mr Lineker had received a direct apology for the row.

Huw Edwards scandal

As the dust settled on the Lineker crisis, another emerged from nowhere.

Huw Edwards – to many the face of BBC News – was named as the presenter who had paid a young person £35,000 for sexually explicit images over a period of three years.

His wife identified him as the presenter at the centre of allegations about inappropriate conduct following five days of speculation and mounting claims published across Britain’s media, including by colleagues at BBC News.

She said he was in hospital after a serious mental health episode and would respond to the stories published about him when well enough to do so.

Police later found no evidence of criminality, but Mr Davie said the controversy has been a “difficult affair” in which the BBC has tried to “calmly and reasonably navigate some difficult concerns”.

And now Russell Brand

More recently, Mr Davie has had to navigate the organisation through allegations about the comedian Russell Brand.

The BBC has pledged to investigate whether Russell Brand used the broadcaster’s taxis to pick up a 16-year-old girl from school.

Mr Davie recently told staff he had now launched a full investigation into Mr Brand’s time working for the corporation between 2006 and 2008, when the comedian presented shows on 6 Music and Radio 2.

In 2008 Brand resigned from the BBC after leaving voicemails for the actor Andrew Sachs about sleeping with his granddaughter.

Mr Davie was the corporation’s Director of Audio when Mr Brand left the messages in 2008 and as a result, he was in charge of investigating the comedian and actor the first time around.

Business Breakfast

INSIDE THE BBC

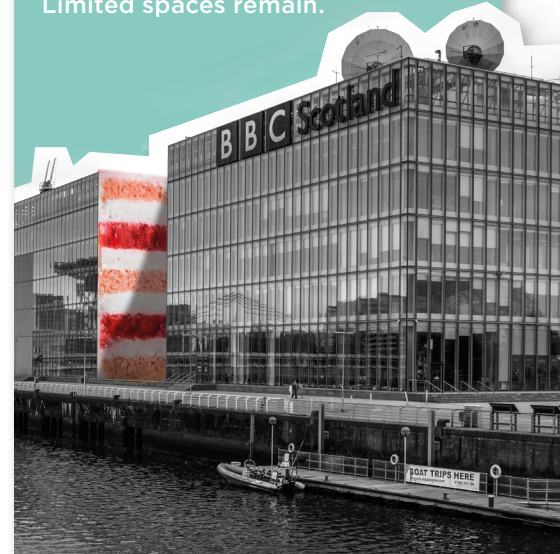
Join us to hear more

So, it is clear that running a gigantic organisation comes with gigantic challenges.

From the pressure-cooker environment of public service journalism, to dealing with legacy scandals that rocked the British institution to its core, the former Comic Relief chairman has rarely had a quiet moment since taking the top job.

Join us for this special Business Breakfast to hear how he has navigated some of the most difficult corporate challenges imaginable, whilst plotting a digital future for this pillar of British life.

To book a ticket at the Chamber’s ‘Inside the BBC’ Business Breakfast, visit agcc.co.uk/events. Limited spaces remain.



MEET THE



Scott Ramsay,
Project Director,
Doig+Smith

WHEN WAS YOUR BUSINESS ESTABLISHED?

Doig+Smith was established in 1936 with offices now open in Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow, and London. We have successfully served clients and the construction industry for over 85 years. Our Aberdeen office has been in operation since 2005.

WHAT DOES YOUR BUSINESS DO?

We provide consultancy expertise in project management, cost management, building surveying and as principal designer. The specialist knowledge and skills of our multi-disciplined teams enables us to drive efficiency on every project, providing solutions that will manage and reduce risk, save time, and cut down on cost.

WHAT SORT OF COMPANIES DO YOU DO BUSINESS WITH?

Doig+Smith operate in the public and private sector. Our clients include local councils, Scottish Government, private schools, universities, and private companies in the North-east. Delivering a diverse range of projects for education, healthcare, leisure, aviation, ports, and commercial real estate.

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

The challenge of delivering complex projects more efficiently, to tighter budgets and doing it faster whilst ensuring the clients requirements

and expectations are always met. Current market conditions including high inflation, high energy costs, supply chain issues, increasing costs of borrowing makes it an interesting and challenging time.

AND THE BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY?

With our knowledge and expertise covering all industries we have the great opportunity to expand our private and public sector client base in the North-east in the coming years. We want to help deliver projects which ultimately improve the northeast of Scotland for the residents and visitors to this area.

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

At Doig+Smith we are passionate about delivering different types of projects from concept through to completion. I'm really proud of our teams' professionalism, quality of our work, attention to detail, dedication, and flexibility in our approach to delivering projects that meet our clients' requirements.



Sarah Phillips,
Owner & Trainer,
First Aid at Work Aberdeen &
Aberdeenshire and Mini First
Aid Aberdeen

WHEN WAS YOUR BUSINESS ESTABLISHED?

January 2020.

WHAT DOES YOUR BUSINESS DO?

At First Aid @ Work, my mission is to ensure that individuals are armed with the skills they need should an emergency arise. I offer educational courses designed to instruct people on how to administer first aid, so people

know what steps they must take when seconds count and have the confidence to act.

WHAT SORT OF COMPANIES DO YOU DO BUSINESS WITH?

I work with a multitude of businesses across many industries because health and safety is required in all workplaces, from construction and childcare to oil companies and fish factories and everything in between. First aid is essential knowledge for everyone and it's a law that is implemented across the realm, and yet the knowledge I teach is universal to everyone.

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

I'm a big believer that challenges are in fact goals to aspire to, and my goals are to secure long-term contracts and become the preferred company of choice when it comes to first aid.

AND THE BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY?

To be able to share my knowledge with people from all walks of life at all ages, from three years to 103! It's a chance to help others to potentially save someone's life and that is the most rewarding opportunity.

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

Providing people with the knowledge and skillset to help someone in need, to save someone's life, or to identify a hazard before it becomes an accident. The thought of making a positive difference to someone's life and training them to have the confidence to say 'yes I can do this' makes me so proud of what I do.

MEMBERS

MEET THE MEMBER
NOVEMBER 2023



Peter Overton,
Director of Operations UK,
Laeso Fish Ltd

WHEN WAS YOUR BUSINESS ESTABLISHED?

Laeso in Scotland was first registered 25 years ago. The parent company from the Island of Laeso in Denmark began 60 years ago.

WHAT DOES YOUR BUSINESS DO?

We are a food business that processes and packs fresh and frozen langoustines caught from the waters around Scotland and other seas of the UK. We supply to UK, European, Far East and other worldwide markets.

WHAT SORT OF COMPANIES DO YOU DO BUSINESS WITH?

A vast number of customers and suppliers both locally in Scotland, European, or worldwide. We supply retailers, wholesalers, online, or through retail outlets and ask local businesses to supply our services.

AND THE BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY?

Our product is of the highest quality and markets continue to demand the best. Our flexibility and customer service to fill those markets gives us the opportunity to meet and exceed those customer demands.

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

My team. Our product. The progression and future growth plans of the business.

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

Costs keep rising, and this is an issue for all businesses. As we continue to grow our market share, we are investing in staff and equipment to keep us competitive and efficient.



Gillian Fowler,
Founder and Lead Coach,
Usana Mindset

WHEN WAS YOUR BUSINESS ESTABLISHED?

I set up Usana Mindset in 2021, having already been a coach and mentor for some years. It was clear to me that there was a place for transformational and mindset coaching and a bespoke service offering individuals the means to bring about positive change in their personal and professional lives.

WHAT DOES YOUR BUSINESS DO?

Usana Mindset offers transformation and mindset coaching for personal and executive clients, as well as coaching and consultancy for corporate clients. Usana Mindset also offers Walk & Talk in the Hills, uniquely blending coaching, wellbeing and nature, thus providing clients the opportunity to gain fresh perspective and inner calm.

WHAT SORT OF COMPANIES DO YOU DO BUSINESS WITH?

I work with a wide range of clients, from individual business owners to those working within SMEs and global organisations. Clients are from a mix of industries including energy, finance, property, QHSE, telecoms, media, food and drink, and business services.

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

While the recent financial crisis has definitely impacted how people choose to spend their money, I am seeing an increasing number of clients who understand the benefit of prioritising

and investing in their mental and physical health and overall wellbeing and, as such, are making more considered life choices.

AND THE BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY?

The pandemic had a profound impact on the way we live our lives, and how we view our present and future. Usana Mindset works with individuals at all levels of business, providing a safe environment to explore and address behaviours, habits, and mindset. The companies they work for often reap the rewards from such positive change.

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

Helping others to see we are not defined by our past and that we can learn to re-navigate and move forward, even in the darkest of times. It is humbling and rewarding to see the impact transformation and mindset coaching has had on client lives, whether it be through online coaching or Walk & Talk.



Ann and Howard Johnson

Blaze collects international award

Aberdeenshire-based Blaze Manufacturing Solutions picked up the prestigious 'service and solutions' award at the EIC Middle East, Africa and CIS regional awards ceremony held in Dubai in September.

Rounding off a successful 12 months, Blaze Manufacturing Solutions has achieved remarkable growth by expanding its capabilities and services into new markets and securing both national and international contracts. With a renewed commitment to delivering added value and innovative fire safety solutions, Blaze continues to play a pivotal role in detecting, preventing, and safeguarding high-risk assets against fire incidents.



Fierce Beer transforms taproom into visitor centre

Fierce Beer has transformed their taproom into a visitor centre with a full tour and tasting offering.

For just £20 customers will get an in-depth tour of the brewing facilities and packaging line, followed by a guided tasting of four of the most popular beers, accompanied by a hand-picked food pairing.

There will be a full timeline tracking Fierce Beer's progress through the years, as well as detailed brewing graphics and interactive stations to accompany the tour.

Burnett & Reid make legal history with landmark decision

In a landmark decision, the Private Client and Litigation team at Burnett & Reid achieved a new legal first by appointing an attorney as executor in a case where no other person was eligible to act.

With a legacy of over 250 years of setting precedents, Burnett & Reid continues to lead the way in innovative legal solutions. The recent case involved a mentally incapacitated widow and her late husband's estate. Despite initial dismissal, Sheriff Philip Mann eventually appointed the Attorney as the executrix-dative.

This achievement by the specialist Private Client and Litigation teams at Burnett & Reid showcases their commitment to providing innovative solutions to unprecedented situations that arise in their client's needs. With over two centuries of experience, the law firm has a track record of going above and beyond to ensure that their clients receive the best possible legal advice.

This groundbreaking decision has far-reaching implications for future cases under similar circumstances. With Burnett & Reid's leadership and expertise in Private Client and Litigation, the legal community can expect to see continued innovation and forward-thinking solutions.

Hutton shortlisted for RSPB Nature of Scotland Award

Work to drive the understanding of the importance of Scotland's peatland to the natural environment and greenhouse gas emissions budgets by The James Hutton Institute's peatland research team has been shortlisted in the Conservation Science Award at RSPB Scotland's prestigious Nature of Scotland Awards.

The work of the team is enabling direct action, informing mitigation, restoration and protection efforts of peatlands. This has been through the production of a wide body of research by the Hutton's interdisciplinary peatland team. Dr Rebekka Artz, who leads the Restoration and Adaptive Management team at the Hutton, says: "We're honoured to be shortlisted for this award amongst such a selection of impactful conservation science teams. The peatland research team at the Hutton is a truly fantastic group of people, who focus our combined energies on delivering scientific evidence with integrity and impact."

"The work across the team has contributed significantly to understanding the effectiveness of peatland restoration, the condition that peatlands as a quarter of our land mass is in, the greenhouse gas emissions from damaged peatlands and the mitigation potential and other ecosystem function gains that can be achieved through rewetting."

"This has included, for example, putting a first estimate on the total net losses of carbon from damaged peatlands in Scotland, which then supported the development of realistic targets for restoration. We pleased to have this work, which builds on decades of research, recognised."



Many Aberdonians are probably not aware of a great asset that their community has in the form of the Aberdeen Surf Lifesaving Club. Once known as the most northerly surf lifesaving club in the world, its facilities are located down at the beachfront. Its primary aims are to save lives, prevent tragedies, to educate and train young and old alike in lifesaving skills, and ultimately to compete at national level in surf lifesaving events.

Professor Steve Olivier, Club President (and Principal of Robert Gordon University) feels that “surf lifesaving in Aberdeen can deliver an invaluable public service, at the same time providing opportunities for people of all ages to learn important skills in a fun environment”.

Surf lifesaving is a demanding, multifaceted activity that combines lifeguard skills and competitive sport. World powerhouses are Australia, South Africa, New Zealand and the USA, and in the UK the sport has deep roots in Devon, Cornwall and Wales. Surf Lifesaving Great Britain (SLSGB), to which the Aberdeen club belongs, has over 10,000 members with clubs spread throughout the UK.

So how did surf lifesaving reach Aberdeen? Although Aberdeen beach does not currently have lifeguard patrols this was not always the case, as the beach used to be patrolled by paid lifeguards. Around 1992, the paid service was withdrawn, but the lifeguards volunteered

for the rest of the summer and formed Aberdeen Surf Lifesaving Club (ASLSC). Since then, we have maintained a presence down at the beachfront where we have a small office, changing space and storage for our rescue equipment and inshore rescue boat (IRB). Over the last few years, we have been expanding our membership and working with SLSGB to lay the groundwork to see Aberdeen’s club flourish.

Integral to surf lifesaving are the “nippers” and “juniors”, where clubs teach surf lifesaving skills to children from age seven upwards. To begin with, sessions focus on having fun and developing beach awareness and confidence in the water. From age thirteen onwards, juniors can start on the “Graduate Lifeguard Programme” and become a fully qualified surf lifeguard at age sixteen. This summer, we were able to run our first juniors’ sessions and it is our hope to have a fully established juniors section in 2024 and even send our juniors to surf lifesaving competitions!

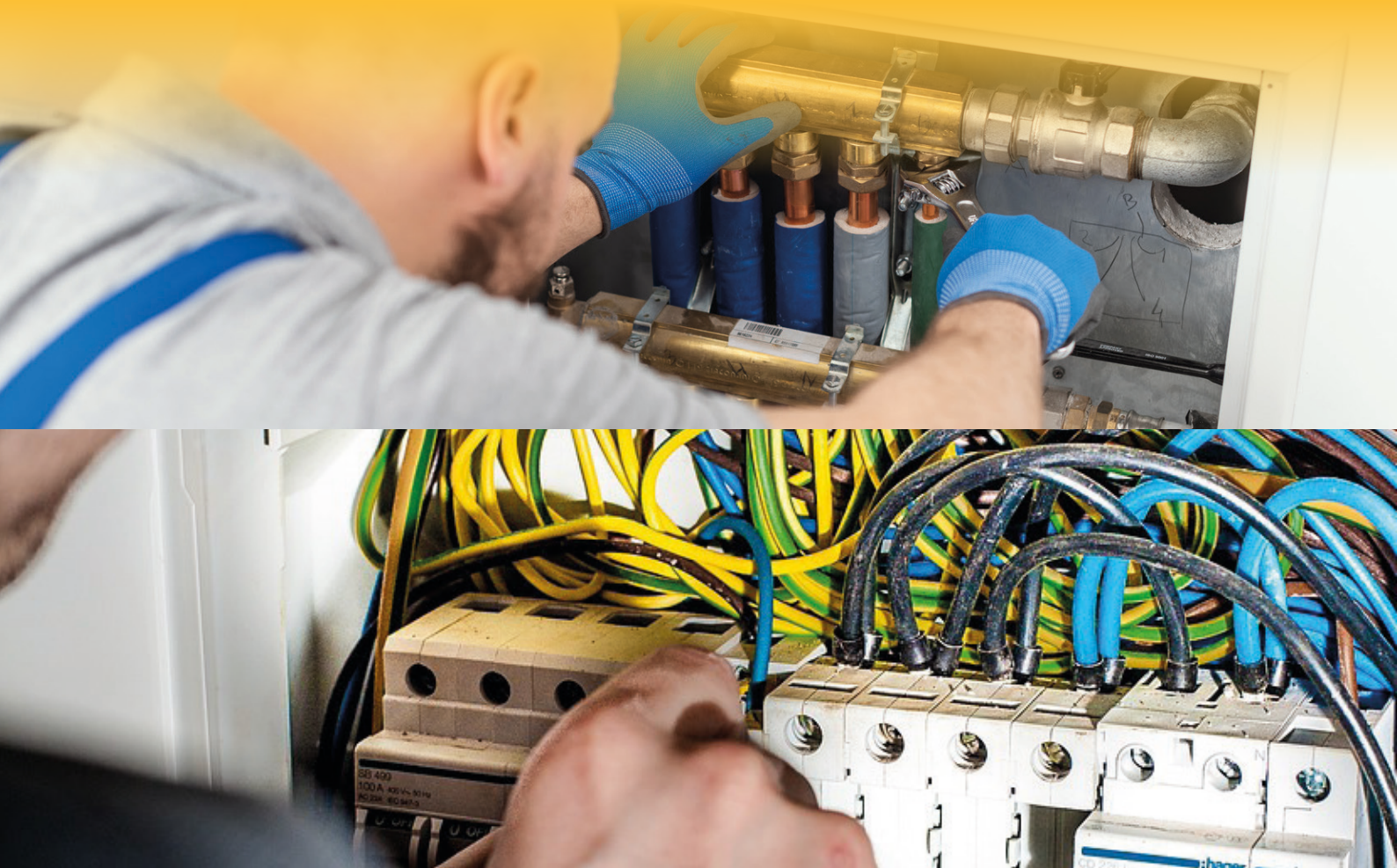
ASLSC has had an impact on beach safety over the years, with direct involvement in first aid incidents and preventative intervention. As well as training people up to be lifeguards, we provide water safety education and have run several safety sessions for cold water swimming clubs. We also sit on the Aberdeen Water Safety Group committee and have provided lifeguards at events such as the Ythan Challenge and Scottish Surfing Federation Student Nationals competition.

With more and more people using Aberdeen beach for “cold water dooking”, wild swimming, surfing and paddleboarding, there is a need for a club like ours to provide water safety advice and lifesaving skills to the next generation of beachgoers. We are currently engaging with the Beach Masterplan and our vision is to see surf lifesaving participation increase across Scotland, with Aberdeen leading the charge.

As a voluntary organisation our biggest challenges are funding, attracting volunteers and spreading awareness of what we do. We have been supported by Intermoor who sponsored our patrol kit, and recently received significant sponsorship from Peterson (AGCC Premier Partner), our first Tier 1 sponsor, who’s CEO Sarah Moore, said: “As a proud stakeholder at the Port of Aberdeen, we are delighted to support ASLSC. As we see the beach community continue to develop, the club will play a critical part keeping our beaches safe and educating all beachgoers who use them in how to navigate the waters safely.”

We would welcome and appreciate any further support from Chamber members, and if you are in a position to assist us from your social responsibility budgets or elsewhere, please contact either Professor Steve Olivier (President, stephenchrisolivier@sky.com, 07719 013034) or Adam Rofo (Club Captain, adamrofe@gmail.com).

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Local creative marketing agency celebrates national win at UK Agency Awards

Local creative marketing agency Mearns & Gill is celebrating after winning the 'Best Integrated Campaign' at this year's UK Agency Awards in London. Members of the team attended the glitzy ceremony at the Sheraton Grand in London's Park Lane.

The team battled against stiff competition to win the award for their 'Love Story' campaign for Aberdeen family-run jeweller Jamieson & Carry. The campaign included a bespoke photoshoot, multi-platform paid and organic social media campaigns, Google Ads, email marketing, website optimisation and traditional advertising.

Mike Wilson, Managing Director of Mearns & Gill says: "We were delighted just to be recognised as finalists in this year's UK Agency Awards, so to walk away with the award was a fantastic feeling. Being acknowledged with a national award is a testament to the hard work the team has put in over the past 12 months to create and deliver this impactful campaign. It was great to celebrate our win at the event alongside our peers on a national stage and to showcase the creative and results-driven work that our clients trust us to deliver."

Andrew Spence, Account Manager for Jamieson & Carry and 'Love Story' campaign lead says: "Jamieson & Carry is a valued long-term client of Mearns & Gill. Winning the award for the 'Love Story' campaign cements the value and trust that our clients put in the team, always knowing that we are committed to delivering the best results on their behalf. Every creative aspect of the campaign was carefully crafted to appeal to the target audience and was a pleasure to work on. It was a real combined effort pulling in all expertise from our 20-strong team."

Mearns & Gill is Scotland's longest-established creative marketing agency, serving a diverse range of clients for decades. Its longstanding partnership with clients, some dating back to the late 1970s, highlights its commitment to delivering consistent services while adapting to the digital landscape. In July the agency announced it was a finalist in four award categories in this year's awards including; Best Small Agency of the Year, Best Integrated Campaign, Best Event and Best Local Campaign.

KPMG's new social mobility initiative opens doors across Scotland

KPMG UK, one of the leading professional services firms in Scotland, invited young people into its offices throughout September as part of its new initiative, Opening Doors to Opportunity.

Designed to combat the influence of social class and nepotism in career progression, the initiative gives young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds a better chance of accessing early career opportunities.

150 school pupils took part in visits to KPMG's offices in Aberdeen, Edinburgh, and Glasgow where they experienced life at a Big Four firm by taking part in activities mirroring real client problems requiring teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving skills.

Research conducted by KPMG UK revealed that social class and nepotism significantly affect the early career prospects of young people. The study, based on responses from 2,000 adolescents, showed that those from low socio-economic backgrounds were less likely to have gained formal or informal work experience compared to their peers from more privileged backgrounds. While around half of the average young population had some exposure to the world of work, only 40% from low socio-economic backgrounds had similar opportunities.

An overwhelming 71% of those surveyed believed that certain professions, like medicine, law, or accountancy, are easier to access if their parents or guardians also work in similar fields. Moreover, the research highlighted that family connections played a significant role in arranging work experience, with 45% securing opportunities through relatives or friends, while only 32% obtained them through schools.

MODS reinforces commitment to women's football

Aberdeen FC Ladies FC under-16s National Academy Performance (NAP) team will be sponsored by digital solutions company, MODS, for the 2023/24 season.

MODS, headquartered in the Granite City, has been a long-term supporter of the grassroots club and the upcoming campaign will be its fifth consecutive sponsorship of playing strips and training kits for various teams.

Tim Bell, Chief Customer Support Officer at MODS, said: "We are extremely proud to be sponsoring the stars of tomorrow and playing a role in the development of girls' and women's football in the region.

"For the sport to continue its upward trajectory, investment in the grassroots game is essential. We hope that by sponsoring the team, we can have a positive impact on the next generation of women's footballers coming through the ranks in the North-east. We wish the team all the best for the new season."

UPSKILL YOUR STAFF

Grow your business with the Chamber's training courses



November 13 *£330+VAT **Dealing with difficult situations**

This highly interactive course uses discussion groups and activities to develop your understanding of the challenges involved so you can handle them with confidence.



November 14 *£330+VAT **Advanced supervisory skills**

This course is the next level of learning for supervisors who have already developed and embedded the basics.



November 22 *£330+VAT **Essential HR skills**

This course help delegates understand their responsibilities with regards to HR issues, the potential penalties for getting it wrong and techniques for performing their duties.



December 01 *£330+VAT **Emotional intelligence for business**

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is a great motivational tool that can be used to improve performance and wellness in the workplace.



December 07 *£330+VAT **Essential supervisory skills**

For those stepping up to a supervisory role for the first time, it can be a big leap. However, we have designed a course to equip them with the core skills that they need to succeed.



December 11 *£330+VAT **Corporate social media for beginners**

This workshop will show delegates how social media marketing can help businesses and organisations to increase brand awareness, generate more leads and sales.



November 15 *£270+VAT
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This interactive course has been designed to give you the greatest gift of all... the gift of time!



November 20 *£330+VAT
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This course has been designed to help organisations engage positively with stakeholders and build long-term strategic relationships.



December 04/05 *£620+VAT
Advanced management skills 2 days

Delegates will acquire skills and tactics to help grow and nurture the talent in their teams and get them delivering to a higher standard.



December 06 *£330+VAT
Report writing

Good report writing is an art – one which can be perfected with the help of this course, that equips delegates with writing skills which can be applied to a wide range of situations.



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OUT MORE**

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Works start on brand new £10million Aberdeen Wickes store

Works have started on a brand new £10million Aberdeen store for national improvements giant Wickes.

Knight Property Group has commenced on site with the construction of the store, to be based at Phase

3 of Kingshill Park, at Westhill in Aberdeen. Planning consent was granted on the three-acre site by Aberdeenshire Council in March this year.

When complete, the new store will bring around 25 new jobs to the local economy and will see Wickes make a welcome return to the Granite City.

Knight has agreed a 20-year lease with Wickes and has appointed Clark Contracts as the main contractor to deliver the 25,000 sq ft bespoke store, which will also include 79 parking spaces and an outdoor projects centre for landscape and garden projects to the rear of the store.

The construction process will take around six months, with completion scheduled for Q2 2024.

Howard Crawshaw, Managing Director of Knight Property Group added: "The new Wickes store will be a welcome addition to the local area. The building has been designed to meet the tenant's specification and sits well with our other surrounding properties and complements the other amenities available at Westhill. It will be an excellent destination for both staff and customers.

"We're delighted to collaborate once more with Clark Contracts, known for their consistent delivery of high-quality work, and we're eagerly anticipating the development of this new store taking shape in the upcoming year."

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Keeping people and systems securely connected is critical for the renewables industry.

Deploying and operating these technologies, however, can be challenging they need to operate in harsh and remote locations, a secure and reliable network is required, and that network must work flawlessly.

4MS have recently been working alongside a valued global Renewables client on the commissioning of networks, security, Wi-Fi, CCTV, telephony and met systems for an offshore windfarm and onshore substation.

The client required 4MS to review the status of these systems, then develop a plan to install, test, and commission these critical integrated systems.

We utilised our network engineering, telecoms engineering, GWO certified field engineering, service delivery and procurement services, to successfully complete the project in a challenging multi-vendor environment to the satisfaction of our valued client.

Get in touch if you'd like to find out more about the 4MS service portfolio and how we can help your organisation deliver your critical project.

t: 01224 825088

e: info@4ms.co.uk

68 Queens Road, Aberdeen, AB15 4YE



Dave Acton and Karim Attiyah

Motive Offshore enhances offering in MENA region with new partnership

Motive Offshore Group, which specialises in engineering, inspection and rental equipment for the energy sector, has partnered with Emirates Specialized Contracting & Oilfield Services (ESCO), a leading provider of support services to the offshore oil and gas and marine sectors. The deal will bring a suite of innovative offshore services and solutions to support the burgeoning market in the MENA region.

ESCO will provide access to a range of sites and facilities for storing equipment, including vital access to marine ports in Abu Dhabi. Clients will benefit from an efficient turnaround of time of equipment and personnel – providing a greater economic support structure with added expert local knowledge. Together Motive and ESCO's inspection expertise will maximise value for clients in the region, delivering pioneering offshore solutions in response to high market demand.

Dave Acton, CEO at Motive Offshore, comments: "Our partnership with ESCO marks the next stage of our journey in this buoyant energy region. MENA has always been an important location for us and our growth as a company. We committed in 2016 to putting boots on the ground and I am pleased to say our team has grown from a team of 3 to a team of over 30 since then. We look forward to collaborating with ESCO to deliver advanced offshore solutions and accelerate our footprint further."

Karim Attiyah, Managing Director and Group CEO at ESCO, added: "Motive was a natural fit for us and will add greatly to our marine and energy expertise. Our partnership will provide essential benefits to the offshore energy sector in the region and will ensure the delivery of reliable, high-quality offshore solutions with efficient execution."



The countdown is on for Aberdeen's first TAG Heuer boutique

Renovation works have begun at what will become Aberdeen's first TAG Heuer boutique. The new flagship store for the dynamic Swiss watch brand will be run by Jamieson & Carry, the family-owned jewellery business founded in 1733 in Aberdeen.

Located adjacent to Jamieson & Carry's existing store at 142 Union Street, the new TAG Heuer boutique will anchor the luxury Swiss watch brand in the heart of the granite mile. An extensive refurbishment of the existing unit at 132 Union Street is now underway with the new TAG Heuer store scheduled to open in December 2023.

Philip Carry, Partner at Jamieson & Carry, says: "We are delighted to see work now well underway to turn our dream of opening Aberdeen's first TAG Heuer boutique into a reality. TAG Heuer and Jamieson & Carry have enjoyed a long partnership dating back to 1980s and the brand has always been very popular with our customers in Aberdeen and beyond.

"The standalone store solidifies the partnership between Tag Heuer and Jamieson & Carry and shows our commitment to the brand and city. The new boutique will allow us to offer a wider collection of TAG Heuer watches within a space that delivers the full TAG Heuer experience to our customers.

"A lot of work has gone on behind the scenes to get to this stage and we are very grateful to TAG Heuer for supporting us to make this happen. Aberdeen has been our home since 1733 and we are committed to investing in our presence within the city centre, helping us to deliver the best retail experience possible for our valued customers."

The opening of the TAG Heuer boutique is part of several significant investment projects Jamieson & Carry is undertaking in Aberdeen city centre. This project follows the completion of a major upgrade to the exterior of their Union Street store in partnership with the Aberdeen City Council and the CARS grant scheme.

Jamieson & Carry also purchased the unit next door at 136 Union Street in 2019 which will become part of an expanded Jamieson & Carry. Once complete the newly expanded shop will see Rolex, Patek Philippe and Tudor have new dedicated and larger shops in-store sitting alongside the impressive jewellery collections. The expansion of their main Union Street store is scheduled for completion in the autumn of 2024.



Scotland's first combined cocktail bar and escape room experience opens in Aberdeen

What do you get when you blend a wicked taste in delicious drinks, a creative streak and adventures that will tantalise? You get ShapeShifters, a brand-new cocktail bar and escape rooms.

It is the latest venture from Hollie and Gilan Kelly, the team behind the award-winning Breakout Games.

The Aberdeenshire entrepreneurs have combined their passion for mixology and mystery to create an intriguing and immersive puzzle game experience in a dramatic cocktail bar setting.

Located in Windmill Brae, just off Union Street, ShapeShifters features a stunning bar, serving cocktails like no other. Their selection fuses classic and unexpected flavours, supports sustainable suppliers, integrates seasonal and local ingredients, and dedicates half the menu to NoLo alcohol creations.

Spread across 6500ft, the incredible venue also houses several purpose-built escape rooms, offering the chance for players to immerse themselves in worlds of mystery, fantasy, and excitement as they try to solve fiendishly tricky puzzles and challenges.

The new venue is the latest boost to the current efforts to revive Aberdeen city centre as a destination and will help to build the night-time economy of the Granite City.

ShapeShifters has invested half a million pounds into transforming the building and has created 15 new jobs, with the owners confident of increasing the team further by the end of the year.

Sustainability is also a key value for ShapeShifters, with the business working towards BCorp status, the global standard that measures a company's social and environmental impact. The bar and escape rooms showcase eco-friendly practices throughout and source local ingredients and suppliers wherever possible.

Hollie Kelly, Co-founder said: "We are thrilled to be launching ShapeShifters in Aberdeen, the city we love and call home. Creating the venue has been a labour of love and when you step through the doors you will experience the magic of truly incredible cocktail mixology, the thrill of solving puzzles, and escape into new worlds!

"We are also raising the bar for hospitality and sustainability with sky-high service standards, as well as celebrating the culture, folklore, and history of Aberdeen by weaving them into our venue, menu, and challenges."

Steel sanctions start to bite

Lorraine Neish,
International Documentation Team Leader
Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce

As of September 30, European sanctions against a large proportion of Russian steel products came into force.

This means that neither steel nor stainless steel products originating in Russia may be imported into the EU.

From this date, importers into the EU will also have to prove that their products do not contain Russian steel.

The fact that goods have been processed in the UK and acquired either preferential or non-preferential UK origin does not exempt goods from these sanctions.

If they contain Russian steel or stainless steel they will be affected.

What you need

Traders should be prepared to have documentation available to demonstrate evidence of a good's supply chain, which must be consistent with the prohibitions under the regulations.

Evidence requested to be provided through documentation could include:

- the country of origin of the iron and steel products processed in the third country (or third countries) after the fact.
- the date that the iron and steel product left its country of origin.
- the country(s) and facility(s) where processing has taken place.

An example of evidence may include, but is not limited to, a Mill Test Certificate (MTC), or Mill Test Certificates (MTCs) where the relevant information cannot be summarised in a single document.

Chamber lobbying

We are aware that these new sanctions are causing significant issues for UK traders and the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), have been lobbying various UK Government and EU bodies to clarify and simplify the process.

William Bain, Head of Trade Policy at the British Chambers of Commerce, met with the DBT Minister Lord Minto in October and the DBT/FCDO Special Advisor Victoria Hewson and they said they would take the issue away for further consideration.

It is an EU policy so the UK cannot directly influence its implementation, but it can be raised in the normal diplomatic channels and if it is affecting areas in the TCA through relevant TCA specialised committees.

William also contacted the EU Embassy about this they will notify DG Trade in the European Commission in Brussels about the escalation of sanctions compliance difficulties.

As ever, we will keep a watching brief on your behalf, and share local examples of issues as they arise.

If this is something you would like to discuss with us, get in touch via email: documentation@agcc.co.uk





Barry Robson wins sports personality award

Inverurie Events announced the recognition of Barry Robson, Manager of Aberdeen Football Club, as this year's Sports Personality of the Year.

This prestigious award is a testament to his outstanding contributions to the world of sports and his deep-rooted connection to Inverurie.

The Pride of Inverurie Awards celebrate individuals who either hail from Inverurie or have significantly contributed to the town's success. Barry has undoubtedly left a huge mark on the sporting world, the town he was raised in and continues to inspire many locals, making him a deserving recipient of this award.

The Sports Personality Award was kindly sponsored by Lokali.Shop with the public nominating Barry, Jason Banks and Greg Mitchell as finalists this year.

Mo Khan, Founder of Lokali.Shop, said: "Throughout his very successful career, Barry has demonstrated exceptional leadership, dedication and a passion for football that has inspired countless individuals in the Inverurie community and beyond. He's a very deserving recipient of this award."

Derek Ritchie, Manager of We Are Inverurie BID, said: "On behalf of all the organisers, we'd like to extend our warmest congratulations to Barry Robson on winning this year's award. His achievements serve as an inspiration to all and the whole of Inverurie look forward to celebrating his continued success."

TaxAssist Accountants opens new office in Altens

TaxAssist Accountants, based in the North-east of Scotland, announced that it has recently opened their latest office in Altens.

The new office expands its presence in the region alongside its existing offices in Inverurie, Banchory, and Aberdeen city. TaxAssist Accountants provides a wide range of accounting and tax services to local businesses and individuals.

IFB partnership secures 300k contract for Aberdeen City Council

Connectivity, cyber security and IT Service provider IFB has recently been awarded a 300k contract to deliver and support a full fibre network and high-capacity hardware to nearly 50 key Aberdeen City Council (ACC) education locations.

The agreement – in partnership with leading Cloud, IT, and network services provider EXPO.e – means ACC now have access to multi-gigabit speeds between key locations allowing them to future proof the delivery of critical services across schools and educational resources across the city.

IFB CEO, Graeme Gordon, said: "We are delighted to have been selected by EXPO.e to design, deliver and support them with this key upgrade for Aberdeen City Council. This will mean faster, more reliable, and more secure connections across many locations and schools which increasingly rely on digital connectivity everyday as part of core teaching and education."

Graeme continued: "IFB's selection for this project demonstrates that collaboration between the public sector, enterprise scale organisations like EXPO.e, and indigenous SME's like IFB not only delivers creative solutions to problems, but innovations in how these can be procured and delivered, maximising the resulting economic benefit to a city or region."

Major expansion for The Alternative Board

Exciting expansion plans have been revealed for the Aberdeen arm of peer-to-peer advisory and networking organisation The Alternative Board (TAB).

TAB boards meet monthly with support from a facilitator and each comprises up to eight business owners, directors or company decision-makers. These boards provide a trusted space for experienced entrepreneurs to share their experience and knowledge.

Currently, TAB Aberdeenshire East covers the Aberdeen area, from Peterhead to Stonehaven. However, this will now expand further south, servicing the Angus, Dundee and the Perth areas and will become known as TAB North East Scotland.

This will provide businesses in the extended area with a powerful combination of advisory boards, one-to-one business coaching and exclusive access to a suite of bespoke business tools – which provides a practical approach to creating and implementing a strategic plan, helping business owners focus on the activities that will have the greatest impact.



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Isabel Wilson-Beales

Isabel Wilson-Beales joins partner divisions Corporate Moves and Recycle Scotland as their newest Business Executive. With her passion for sustainability and a keen eye for fostering growth, Isabel will play a pivotal role in driving their collective efforts to deliver seamless and sustainable workplace solutions across the UK.



Ben Yousef

BME Nitech has appointed Ben Yousef as Senior Global BD and Marketing Manager to lead the expansion of the firm's innovative hazardous area temporary and portable lighting products in the UK and internationally.



Simon Shaw

Simon Shaw joins Hampton as Creative Director with more than 35 years' award-winning industry experience, having worked for a number of London-based agencies and in-house for craft beer phenomenon BrewDog, where he was Creative Director for eight years.



Sarim Sheikh

The NZTC has announced international business leader, Sarim Sheikh, has joined its board as an independent Non-executive Director. Mr Sheikh has nearly three decades of international experience in the renewables and energy industry working in Europe, Latin America, Africa, and Asia with General Electric and Shell.



Greg Center, Matthew Crews and Emma Taylor

Leading North-east solicitor and estate agent Raeburn Christie Clark and Wallace LLP is continuing to support the development of local legal talent with the recruitment of three trainee Solicitors. Greg Center, Matthew Crews and Emma Taylor have commenced their two-year traineeships with the firm and will look forward to developing their legal skills across several seats within the firm over the next 24 months.



Kevin McColgan

Aberdeenshire head-quartered construction group, Bancon, has appointed Kevin McColgan as its new Chief Executive. The experienced construction industry leader will take over the reins of the group, which comprises Bancon Homes, Bancon Construction and Deeside Timberframe, in September this year.



John Scott

CHAP Group is delighted to introduce John Scott as its newly appointed Design Manager. Formerly serving as the Technical Director at a prestigious Scottish architectural firm, John brings a wealth of experience and expertise that will enhance CHAP's ability to deliver innovative and large-scale construction projects.



Vanessa Kennedy

Full-service legal firm Gilson Gray has promoted Vanessa Kennedy to Director of Marketing and Business Development, after heading up the marketing division for the past six years. The newly created post, which merges leadership of the two functions, will see Vanessa take responsibility for all of Gilson Gray's marketing and business development activities, overseeing a team of five.



Sam Clarke

Sam Clarke has joined Shepherd and Wedderburn as a Partner in the real estate finance group. Sam brings over 16 years' experience advising financial institutions, developers, investors and listed corporates on real estate finance transactions in the UK and Europe.



Graham Mutch

P&J Live, North Scotland's largest live events venue, announced the appointment of Graham Mutch as Head of Food & Beverage, leading the Aberdeen-based catering team and supporting in the delivery of ASM Global Europe's F&B plans for the iconic venue.



Rhys Humphries

EnerMech has appointed Rhys Humphries as General Manager and Country Lead for the New Zealand arm of the business. His key focus is to continue to work collaboratively with current clients and expand the company's increasingly diverse portfolio in the region.



Jacqui Johnston and Shannon MacVicar

North East Services has expanded its team in response to the company's exponential growth. Jacqui Johnston has been promoted to the pivotal role of Business Development Manager due to the organisation's sustained expansion. Shannon MacVicar has ascended to the role of Office Manager.



Malcolm Thomson and Rachel O'Donnell

Malcolm Thomson, Senior Contracts Manager at CHAP Group (Aberdeen) and Rachel O'Donnell, HR Manager at W M Donald have joined the Board of Directors of Grampian Construction Training Ltd (GCT). Malcolm Thomson has worked within the construction industry for twenty years starting out as an Architectural Technician before transitioning into project management in 2014. Rachel O'Donnell has held senior Human Resource management positions for almost twenty years.





Doug Barrie

Gilson Gray has appointed Doug Barrie as an Energy and Oil and Gas Consultant, supporting its energy division and corporate team. Doug has over 30 years' experience in the oil and gas industry, working in private practice and as in-house general counsel for various multinational corporates with operations across Africa, India, the Middle East, Asia, the USA and the UK.



Jo Campbell

The Energy Industries has appointed Scotland-based Jo Campbell as the Director of Global Events and Campaigns. This strategic appointment underlines the EIC's commitment to enhancing its events portfolio and furthering its mission to support the energy industry's supply chain worldwide.



Paul Smith and Michael Pallister

Paul Smith, Business Development Director and Michael Pallister, Operations Director have joined Glacier Energy's Machining Solutions division to contribute towards the continued growth of the company and to establish entry into new markets, including those involved in the energy transition.



Tony Rosenthal

CBRE has announced Tony Rosenthal has been appointed as the new Scottish President of the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation (IRRV). Tony takes over from outgoing President, Paula Doherty.



Cameron McCready

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



Jock Gardiner

Fierce Beer has appointed Jock Gardiner as Chairman. Jock brings with him a wealth of experience in finance, investment, and growth management, as well as a passion for his community and a reputation within Aberdeen as a trusted business leader.



Adam Mason

Aberdeen-based PBS announces the appointment of Adam Mason as General Maintenance and Operations Contract (GMOC) Director. This strategic appointment demonstrates PBS' commitment to expanding its presence within the energy industry.



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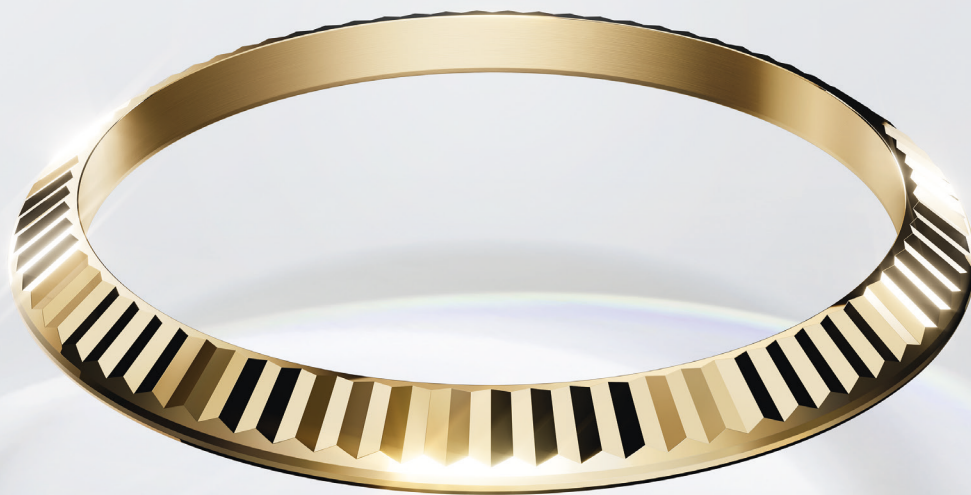


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