

Electric avenue

On the road to a low carbon future

Movin' on up

Transporting our regional connectivity

Higher power

Meet Aberdeen's transport pioneer

Charging ahead

Business Breakfast

Moving Forward with Investment in Connectivity

March 5 | 7.30am – 9am | The Chester Hotel

Transport is a key priority for businesses across the region.

Hear from high profile speakers including Lisa Childs, senior external affairs manager at Heathrow, who will provide an update on the third runway, outlining benefits of the 'hub and spoke' model as well as outlining what the impact may be for businesses in the North-east of Scotland.

Alison Irvine, director of transport strategy and analysis at Transport Scotland, will cover the upcoming National Transport Strategy, the process to consult with communities across Scotland, implications for local businesses and the likely future focus for the organisation in driving the low carbon agenda.



Book your place today
at **agcc.co.uk**

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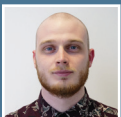
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Cover image

Transport and infrastructure

March's theme

Technology

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Our partners

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

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

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

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Transporting the region to success

WE ALREADY have a new road that is revolutionising traffic flow in and around Aberdeen and will generate over £6bn and 14,000 jobs in the area. Add this to a revamped international airport with flights to 40 destinations, new rolling stock on our railways and the South Harbour opening in the next year and we should be happy with our lot. Shouldn't we?

No! If we are to remain competitive, accessible and deliver our economic vision while responding to the climate emergency, our next phase of transport requirements and upgrades must be clearly articulated, with a single voice, and must not be allowed to run to AWPR-like timelines. On a recent visit to this Chamber, Transport Scotland's director of rail suggested that this region doesn't know what it wants so we need coordination and clarity to de-rail such views.

It seems that transport and related policy-making is like buses. Not a lot, then we have all of this coming along at once: The National Transport Strategy was due to be published just as this issue hits your desks yet we have the Strategic Transport Project Review consultation with a closing date of January 10. Then there's Nestrans 2040, our own regional vision for transport in the North-east and the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan. But does the timing and format of all of these enable them to be fully aligned and is this region simply responding to national priorities or shaping these with our own?

So what do **we** want? The Chamber is clear:

Joined up thinking with Government clearly informed of and acting on regional priorities that can demonstrate how they will drive economic activity.

If we really are in emergency mode then we need to inject more pace. The machinery behind all of this is painfully slow, mired in red tape and needs urgent reform.

Commitments have been made to various transport projects in this region but the time is right to pause (briefly),

reflect on what it is that will truly unlock our economic potential and be prepared to be imaginative and brave in asking that funding is re-purposed accordingly.

Burness Paull Scotland's Urban AGE report highlights the vital role of Scotland's three major city regions in driving 80% of the nation's future economic growth. It confirms that 'the missing link between the Central Belt and the North-east must be tackled as a matter of priority. Aberdeen, Glasgow and Edinburgh must be connected by fast-track rail to tackle Scotland's connectivity surcharge'.

Our ask is not unreasonable. If it's possible to cover the 281 miles from Newcastle to London in 155 minutes, why does it take three minutes longer to trudge the mere 145 miles between Glasgow and Aberdeen? Despite lots of talk, whispers of electrification and some tinkering with trains, timetables and signals we are none the wiser about whether this is being taken seriously. A kind of slippery metaphoric leaves on the line message that renders us unsure why it's a problem and with no idea of arrival time.

We need a balanced view to be formed and decisive action taken on whether further part pedestrianisation of the city centre will support our masterplan ambitions while contributing to low emission zone targets.

And finally, a commitment that if the promised reduction in Air Passenger Duty really is off the table that alternative ways of supporting our airport in attracting new routes in the face of unfair competition are examined and implemented.



Russell Borthwick
chief executive





The Loganair team with TV personality Sean Batty

Loganair wins Domestic Airline of the Year

LOGANAIR has been awarded the Domestic Airline of the Year title at the Scottish Passenger Agents' Association annual travel awards (SPAA).

Scotland's Airline underwent significant expansion last year, adding 29 new routes to its network as well as implementing a number of codeshare and interline agreements with some of the biggest names in aviation.

Now the 5th biggest airline in the UK by number of destinations served, Loganair introduced new routes from Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Inverness and recently launched its revamped website and unveiled a mobile app.

Greig White, Loganair's sales manager for Scotland was also runner-up in the Airline Representative of the Year category.

The Chester opens 21 new rooms

FOUR silver star Aberdeen venue The Chester Hotel has opened 21 new guest rooms as part of a seven-figure investment to increase capacity.

The west end hotel has increased its accommodation capacity by more than a third in response to a growing demand for high-end hotel rooms in the city, in a significant expansion into a neighbouring property.

The work has taken 12 months to complete and has breathed new life into the building which had lain empty for four years before being bought by The Chester Hotel.

The expansion into 55-57 Queen's Road brings the overall number of rooms and suites to 71 and is part of a wider redevelopment.

CFINE wins Enterprise of the Year award

COMMUNITY Food Initiatives North East (CFINE) has been awarded the Social Enterprise of the Year Award by Social Enterprise Awards Scotland.

The goals of the organisation are improving health and wellbeing, tackling poverty and building resilience for and with vulnerable, low-income and disadvantaged individuals, families and communities in the North-east.

Dave Simmers, chief executive officer of CFINE said: "It is an honour that CFINE's social enterprise has received this distinguished award. A large proportion of our corporate customers operate in the energy sector therefore the oil downturn had substantially affected CFINE.

"With the support of the Scottish Government, Aberdeen City Council and other funders, we navigated through this difficult time with an even greater focus on enhancing the profile of CFINE's social enterprise to increase the impact that we make within vulnerable communities."

University initiative to tackle GP crisis

FIRST year medical students will get more experience of 'real life' healthcare situations than ever before as part of new measures by the University of Aberdeen to tackle the GP crisis.

Students will have the opportunity to attend real calls with out-of-hours doctors, work alongside GPs in practices and visit and speak with care home residents as part of attempts to attract more to target a career as a GP in Scotland.

In May this year, the Royal College of General Practitioners Scotland warned that the country faced a shortfall of 856 family doctors by 2021.

All medical students will be invited to take part in the new GP Enhanced programme at the University of Aberdeen with 32 given the chance to attend extra sessions within a GP practice.

The programme builds on successful initiatives from the university to encourage medical students to focus on a career as a GP early in their studies.

£1m Moroccan contract for Zenith

ABERDEEN headquartered well engineering and project management firm Zenith Energy has started operations on a six-month contract in Morocco worth an estimated £1m.

The contract, with SDX Energy Morocco, is a 12-well onshore drilling project in the north of the country, near the city of Kenitra, which is 50 miles north of Rabat.

Zenith is project managing the drilling campaign, which includes well planning, overseeing equipment requirements and procurement, as well as contracts with third party services and rig inspection. The Zenith team of 10 will also provide engineering support and wellsite supervision throughout operations.

Living in electric dreams

ABERDEEN is, and for the past 180 years has been, the home of the electric vehicle. While we now lead the world with the first fleet of 15 hydrogen double decker buses due to arrive in the city within a matter of weeks, it was outside what was then the County Assembly Rooms in Union Street in 1839 – 19 years before it became the Music Hall and Charles Dickens appeared there – that Robert Davidson first demonstrated to the world the first ‘electric carriage’.

Davidson, an inventor and chemist who must be one of Aberdeen’s best kept secrets, operated out of premises in Canal Road. He also demonstrated his electric carriage in Edinburgh and London before going on to build the first electric railway locomotive in 1842.

“It is very sad that hardly anyone knows anything about him,” said Mike Ward, curator of the Grampian Transport Museum at Alford, where visitors can learn about Davidson and see a full-size working replica of his ‘reluctance motor’ and a replica of the 20 cell battery which powered the vehicle.

“The world is nearing the tipping point when we will all be driving electric cars and this technology was developed in Aberdeen long before it was the European oil capital or a centre for energy,” said Mike.

When the museum opens for the season at the end of next month visitors will be able to follow the

development of electric vehicles which enjoyed a golden era at the turn of the last century until Henry Ford’s Model T was produced. The exhibition follows the evolution through the various stages until it came “to a shuddering stop” around the 1960s when milk floats, silently going about their night-time business, were about the only electric vehicles left on the roads.

“Suddenly they came back and that has a lot to do with the development of hand tools and mobile phones because the battery technology was forced to improve,” said Mike.

“Lithium ion found its way into the world of electric cars and the rest is history.

“The mobility revolution which is

“

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Mike Ward,
curator,
Grampian Transport Museum

coming is far more significant than things like Brexit and with far-reaching effects and massive social changes and it is relentless.”

The museum’s ‘Probing the Future’ exhibition highlights how things might change and how self-driving cars, fully autonomous vehicles, could be hard on the heels of the electric revolution. The switch from petrol and diesel internal combustion engines, which Mike believes is far closer than most of us realise, means far fewer moving parts, motors which will last for a million miles and the end of oil changes and replacing filters and exhaust systems.

“We are not at the tipping point yet and cars like the Tesla now have a high-performance range of around 370 miles. There are more and more charging points and the rate of charging is accelerating with the aim of 10 or 11 minutes. In the early days of petrol cars there were no petrol stations and it will be the same with the electric car and people will have to be patient. The UK’s first petrol station was built and run by the AA in 1919 and before that there were only handpumps at roadside shops and widespread use of the famous two-gallon cans.

“A university in Ohio has developed an even better battery called the potassium oxygen battery which many commentators believe will take over from lithium ion because as well as less environmental limitations it has at least double the energy density of lithium ion. That could double the range and



mean the end of range anxiety.

“The mobility revolution includes a massive increase in public transport provision and things like car clubs. All the big cities in the UK have car clubs and loads of people aren’t bothering to own a car and a really interesting statistic is that 80% of new car registrations at the moment are leased, which means people don’t actually own them.”

There are a growing number of rapid, fast and standard charging points across the North-east and the rest of Scotland. The rapid ones can deliver an 80% charge in around 30 minutes; the fast are capable of recharging a car fully in around three hours; and standard chargers fully recharge cars in around six hours.

Councillor Philip Bell, Aberdeen City Council’s environment/hydrogen spokesperson, said that the council now uses electric car club vehicles as pool cars which is a cost-effective way of providing staff transport.

He believes developing the right battery technology is key to the widespread use of electric vehicles in the future and hydrogen could provide the most effective fuel because of its ability to store energy from wind and solar power to be converted to electricity when required.

“Also, the faster you charge the battery the shorter its lifetime whereas with hydrogen you can refuel it as many times as you want,” he said. “We are getting very good uptime now and

there is more development going on with fuel cells and it has to be the way forward.”

Stagecoach and First currently have 10 Van Hool single deck hydrogen fuel cell buses operating in the city and in March, 15 double decker buses manufactured by the Bamford Bus Company will arrive in the city.

“In 2018 the council had 35 hydrogen vehicles and that included cars, vans, buses and waste trucks,” said councillor Bell.

“In 2019 we had 27 new vehicles which included two road sweepers, 20 cars and five vans. We anticipate that in 2020 year we are going to get 15 new buses, one waste truck, two road sweepers, four cars and seven cargo bikes.”

He said the cargo bikes have a hydrogen fuel source with a range of 300km and a big box on the back.

“It has yet to be decided how the bikes will be used but, for example, all the Camphill establishments have farms and they want to start selling their produce into the local community.

“Wouldn’t it be great if they got one of these cargo bikes? This is a pilot scheme and I would like to think that groups like Camphill will get one of them. This is very green transport and it just shows how versatile hydrogen is.”

Transport forms a significant part of moves individual companies are making towards a sustainable future.

Mac Mackie, managing director of Mackie’s of Scotland, has been driving purely electric cars for more than three years and sees them as the optimal solution to reducing your carbon footprint.

“The designs are now also attractive and fun to drive,” he said. “I’ve had a Tesla car for three years and have just received their new model 3.

“There are very few limitations to driving electric vehicles apart from making small changes to driving habits. As charging points are less frequent than petrol stations, greater planning and understanding of the route is required. However, charging times have decreased significantly and it appears to be an insubstantial adjustment for what brings great benefits.

“In Aberdeenshire and across Scotland, the movement towards electric cars is clearly visible. Previous issues regarding driving distances and charging are continuously being addressed and no longer incur the same problems for drivers. My car has a capacity to drive for about 250 miles without charging, while the hybrid cars obviously have unlimited distance.

“For councils, the increased popularity of electric vehicles may be difficult to keep up with in terms of developing a solid infrastructure. However, they are



the future, I think we will soon arrive at a point where few people are still interested in petrol and diesel cars.

“Renewable energy is a cornerstone of Mackie’s success with a large sum of our investment being targeted towards on-site renewables such as our wind and solar farms. Using these energy sources, we have installed two charging points on the farm to tap directly into our own power supply. We’d like to be able to launch a company car scheme with electric vehicles for our staff and more opportunities to charge at work.

“The all-electric ice cream van concept recently developed by Nissan to serve our climate positive ice cream is another nice example of how much interest there is in the chance to change away from diesel vans for a cleaner electric future.”

Other firms are thinking really big. Global transport and logistics provider Kuehne + Nagel, which has a base in Aberdeen, is aiming to be CO2 neutral for its own emissions by the end of this year. The group is also aiming to be CO2 neutral for shipments of suppliers by 2030.

The new targets follow a successful decade-long effort to reduce its environmental footprint. Over that period its site emissions have been cut by almost a quarter, thanks to the hard work of colleagues across the world.

“The new ‘Net Zero Carbon’ programme is a core pillar of our

environmental initiatives,” said UK managing director Brian Cox. “We have significantly reduced and will continue to reduce our emissions, including using renewable energy, solar cells in our warehouses and LED lamps. From 2020 onwards we’ll offset the remaining CO2 emissions produced by sources owned or controlled by the company which can’t be avoided.



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Mac Mackie,
managing director,
Mackie’s of Scotland

“Although we are not directly accountable for this, we also want all transports by our suppliers – airlines, shipping lines and road hauliers – to be CO2 neutral by 2030 at the latest. Initial discussions with some major global customers and suppliers indicate that they are interested in climate neutral supply chains.

“As one of the leading logistics companies worldwide, we acknowledge the responsibility we have for the environment, for our ecosystem and essentially for the people. With Net Zero Carbon, we support the aim of the Paris agreement to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C.”

Currently, CO2 emissions of shipments can’t be 100% avoided. Until the technology is developed which could make this possible, emissions can be offset by investing in nature-based projects which help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. CO2 credits are generated and each credit, which represents the avoidance or removal of one tonne of CO2, is subject to a third-party verification process.

Kuehne + Nagel has partnered with various non-government organisations and developers and is working with nature-based projects around the world which help reduce greenhouse gas emissions while improving the livelihoods of local communities and preserving biodiversity and wildlife.



ROBERT Davidson is an unsung hero of Aberdeen – an inventor who, thanks to the Grampian Transport Museum at Alford, may finally receive the recognition he deserves.

We are on the cusp of a global transport revolution in which many expect petrol and diesel cars to be replaced by electric powered vehicles and it was in the heart of Aberdeen in 1839 that Davidson demonstrated the world's first 'electric carriage'.

Davidson was a chemist, colouring dye manufacturer and even a dentist but it was his ability as an inventor which should, perhaps, have made him a household name.

He was born in Aberdeen and attended Long Acre (school) and Aberdeen Grammar before Marischal College.

In the 1820s he set up in business close to the Aberdeen-Inverurie Canal, at

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Mike Ward,
curator,
Grampian Transport Museum

first supplying yeast, before becoming involved in the manufacture and supply of chemicals.

His interest in chemistry may have been rooted in the fact that his father and uncle were among the founders of the Glendronach Distillery but it

was electromagnetism which became his passion and in 1837 he made his first electric motor and in 1839 he gave his first demonstration of his 'electric carriage' in Aberdeen before exhibitions in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

“Until recently any publications dedicated to telling the story of the electric car would commence with a two sentence paragraph crediting a little known Scotsman called Robert Davidson in Aberdeen who demonstrated an electric carriage as early as 1839 about whom very little is known,” said Mike Ward, curator of the Grampian Transport Museum.”

GTM funded the completion, last year, of Davidson's biography which had been started in 1967

“As an educational charity GTM is proud of this achievement and hopes that Aberdeen City and Shire embraces this quiet pioneer of the EV...another clear first, by several decades, for Aberdeen.”



150th Anniversary

From a person's first breath through to their last, VSA has stood next to the people of Aberdeen for 150 years offering care, support, and vital services to vulnerable people living in our communities as and when they needed it.

As times have changed, so has the way we have delivered our services, but always with one ambition; to give the people of Aberdeen the best of care to enable them to live the best of lives.

VSA, changing lives every day for 150 years, yesterday, today and with your help tomorrow.

To get your Tea Party Fundraising Pack visit our website or email: fundraising@vsa.org.uk



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What are the greatest transport challenges facing the North-east?



"We have seen great investment within Aberdeen recently. It's vital the city keeps strong regional connectivity to key cities for continued business growth, especially the central London hubs. Aberdeen no longer has flights to London City, London Gatwick and only one airline flies to London Heathrow.

"As a business, Grace May helps key partners build their technology teams, through search based recruitment. Aberdeen is faced with a digital skills shortage in key areas including data management, software development and cybersecurity. This shortage in the short term cannot be met by universities or training programmes, as companies require commercially experienced talent. We have used our experience in other markets such as London's Fintech market to meet requirements and also develop local talent. As flights have reduced, this has made it more difficult as the prospect of weekly commuting or relocating to the city becomes less attractive."

Sasha Jaypalan, *director*, Grace May



"Our company works hard at bringing positive business change to our clients and, like most people in business, our time is very important to us. As we maintain offices in both Glasgow and Aberdeen, our staff regularly spend time travelling between the two cities, time which should be utilised productively working on a train. I say 'should be utilised' because in reality, the majority of journeys are undertaken by road – a situation which, from an environmental perspective, we would rather avoid.

"The simple fact, however, is that with rail journey times averaging 2 hours 40 minutes they continue to be insufficiently attractive versus the convenience of a car journey. I know it's been said many times by many people, but we really need to see rail journey times becoming attractive to the point of 'no contest' use."

Donald McIvor, *director*, Chasqui-Team Ltd



"In a world that is continually looking for new, greener methods of transportation, the North-east seems to be falling behind on one of the easiest ways to reduce carbon emissions – usage of public transport. A constant complaint for many people relying on bus services is that they are becoming more infrequent and serve less areas. There are parts of Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire where, to get to the next area, you have to travel into the city centre, to come straight back out on the next bus turning a 15-minute journey into one of an hour or longer.

"Many areas in Aberdeenshire aren't even serviced by a bus route. Whilst it's a Catch 22 scenario in that the bus companies need people on the buses to justify new routes, the routes need to be available and reliable so people can plan their journeys, whether for commuting or pleasure."

Lewis Sim, *managing director*, Legasea



by Joan Young,
*School and business coordinator,
DYW North East*

“The hour I spend with my mentee is the highlight of my week. The MCR Pathways programme exists to support young people who are either care experienced or carers themselves and seeks to help them achieve fantastic outcomes but also to give them someone who is there for them to talk to.

“After completing an online profile and an interview I was paired with an S3 student in the North-east. We meet once a week in school during term time and we chat about all sorts of things, films and games, things that are happening in her life, things she’s excited about or what’s worrying her.

“The programme gives me the opportunity to continue working with her right through secondary school and I’m learning a lot from it. The partnerships are not only based on the attributes you have in a

work environment so it’s a different kind of mentoring to other programmes but just, if not more, rewarding.

“She has a totally different outlook on life and spending time with her has made me change my perceptions, allowing me to understand why she has behaved or dealt with emotional situations. Without judging, I can get her to look at and reflect on how her actions/reactions have impacted on others and to consider changing some behaviours.

“I can see how smart she is and how much potential she has and I’m really proud to be playing a part in supporting her to reach it.”

For more information visit mcrpathways.org



by Hannah Duthie,
*School and business coordinator,
DYW North East*

“I signed up to become a Career Ready mentor initially because I was lucky enough to be mentored from the beginning of my career journey and I wanted to give that opportunity to someone else. I thought it would be a good thing to do but what I’ve discovered is that it’s really, really rewarding.

“The two-year volunteer programme pairs working professionals with disadvantaged S5 pupils who perhaps lack the opportunities, networks or confidence that their peers have and need a bit of additional support to kickstart their careers.

“My mentee and I meet once a month at a minimum. We were matched based on common interests, my work history and areas of expertise and the type of careers he’s interested in. It was a bit awkward when we first met but we quickly

realised how to work well together and now we get on like a house on fire.

“I’ve been able to help with practical things like CV writing and presentations, anything that he has questions about around gaining skills for career success; but being a mentor has changed me for the better too, personally and professionally.

“There’s huge satisfaction from seeing a young person grow in confidence in front of your eyes and to aspire to things that they perhaps thought were out of their reach before. For such a small commitment in terms of time, the rewards are boundless and I would urge anyone thinking about becoming a mentor to do it.”

For more information visit careerready.org.uk

Customs consultancy has clear vision for 2020

OLDMELDRUM based Bethan Customs Consultancy celebrated its fourth birthday with an expanding client base, boosted turnover, and an ever growing team.

With experience across all areas of customs, logistics and supply chain, the resolutely independent firm supports businesses in international trade and compliance, helping clients to navigate the complexities of HMRC Authorisations and customs regimes. Bethan's client base spans a wide range of sectors, from oil and gas to food and drink and retail.

2019 has been a pivotal year on a number of fronts for the firm. Bethan's turnover has tripled between the end of year one and year four, while their client list has multiplied five-fold during the same period. Their geographical reach has also grown, with several clients based in the south of England, and plans in the pipeline to push further afield.

Over the last 12 months, 19 new clients have come on board, following a similar number the previous year. The Bethan team have secured 17 Authorisation approvals for their clients and provided support on trade compliance and HMRC audits for a further five clients.



Embraer E-Jets return to Aberdeen Airport

EASTERN Airways, which operates flights from Aberdeen Airport, re-entered the E-Jet market in January with the initial return of the Embraer 170 aircraft type to its fleet.

The UK regional airline is seeing significant growth in the ad-hoc charter market for 70-100 seat jets. The Embraer 170-100 LR jet has a range of over 1,800 miles and is powered by two General Electric CF34-8E 5A1 jet engines with a maximum cruise speed of 553mph.

It brings routes such as Norwich – Aberdeen within an hour's flight time, and most European destinations, including the Mediterranean, to a little over two hours.

As part of the expanding E-Jet fleet, the regional operator will also add three of the larger Embraer 190 during the year, a type already commonly operated by both UK and European airlines. This will offer expanded larger capacity scheduled and charter opportunities to fit the airline's growth plans, complementing the Embraer 170.

Roger Hage, Eastern Airways' general manager commercial and operations, said: "We are pleased to see the return of the E-Jets to our fleet giving us an entry into new ad-hoc charter and ACMI markets, alongside an option to evolve our scheduled service network, especially as we expand this fleet through the year."

First minister launches £6m Scottish Enterprise fund

NICOLA Sturgeon last month launched a £6m Low Carbon Challenge Fund to support SMEs to grasp opportunities around climate change.

The Scottish Enterprise administered fund will be open to public, third sector and academic institutions working to create opportunities to advance the low carbon capabilities of SMEs within Scotland.

The First Minister said: "The launch of the Low Carbon Challenge Fund is another step towards our target of ending Scotland's contribution to global climate change by 2045. Being at the forefront of the global transition to a low carbon economy is not just good for the environment - it is stimulating innovation and opening up new opportunities for our businesses. This fund will back projects that help small and medium size companies across Scotland expand their expertise, develop products and build partnerships to enable them to exploit these new emerging markets."

The fund will create initiatives for SMEs in a range of areas from innovation, supply chain to market expansion with expertise sought across the low carbon spectrum from electric vehicles to low carbon homes of the future.

Centrum serviced offices

SIOBHAN Jaffray was appointed as centre manager at Centrum Serviced Offices in December 2019.

The property group Stelmain who also owns Centrum has employed Siobhan Jaffray, whose formal roles include reception manager and sales and events manager.

Commenting on the recent appointment Siobhan said, "Although this is a completely new sector for me I believe my skills are transferable and I am really looking forward to using the skills I have learnt in my 15 years hospitality experience in my new role".

Centrum offices have been open just over a year and offer serviced offices in the city centre of Aberdeen.

Bon Accord Aberdeen installs water refill on upper mall

BON ACCORD Aberdeen has installed a water refill station on the upper level of the centre. Visitors can fill up cups or bottles with chilled water, dispensed using an automatic sensor. The refill station also tracks the number of single use plastic bottles it has helped to eliminate.

Craig Stevenson, centre manager said: "The water refill station has been installed as part of our ongoing commitment to be more sustainable.

"We hope that this makes it easier for our visitors to reduce single-use plastic and enjoy some freshly chilled water whilst they are out and about."

The refill station can be found on the upper mall of the centre, opposite the John Lewis café.



On the right road?

ABERDEEN'S transport systems are lagging behind similar sized European cities which could impact on its ability to attract highly skilled personnel, according to a sustainable transport charity.

Physical and digital infrastructure act as the backbone for business growth. With the AWPR, harbour expansion and well-connected regional airport, our region has solid foundations which allow us to export our products and talent beyond our boundaries and welcome new visitors to our shores.

However continued delay on major national infrastructure projects, whether that's digital connectivity or Heathrow, could constrain the ambition of North-east businesses.

Chamber members want support for guaranteed ringfenced slots for Aberdeen International Airport linked to the Heathrow expansion, strengthening our connectivity to key hubs. They want a commitment to work alongside the aviation industry and the Scottish Government to realise the long awaited devolution of Air Passenger Duty; and a commitment to a structured consultation and discussion with key regional stakeholders regarding policy which maximises economic development

opportunities for the maritime and ports sector in North-east Scotland.

Paul Tetlaw, policy forum convener at Transform Scotland, a charity which campaigns for walking, cycling and public transport to be the easiest and most affordable options for everyone, believes improvements in the rail and bus networks and facilities for cyclists would result in a significant impact on the North-east environment.

Paul said that Aberdeen is very car dominated with mostly single occupancy cars at peak times which is an extremely inefficient use of valuable road space.

"If you have 60 or 70 people in single occupancy cars, they take up an incredible length of road space compared to what they might if they were on a bus," said Paul

"So, inefficiency is one driver for change but transport is the biggest single source of climate emissions and that is heavily dominated by road transport. The actions we need to take to combat climate change certainly involve looking seriously at how we all travel. A third driver is public health because there is a huge amount of obesity in the population and that brings problems like diabetes and heart attacks for an already struggling

health service. The more we can do to get the population active and healthy the better and that is good news for employers because the fitter and more active a workforce the more productive they are.

"If you compare Aberdeen with competitor European cities of a similar size most will have a fairly intensive rail network and are likely to have a light rail network as well, some sort of tram or metro system.

"They will certainly have a large pedestrianised central area of high-quality public space for people to roam around freely. Northern European cities are also likely to have a huge network of segregated cycleways.

"I think the only way more people are going to be encouraged to cycle is if they get separate safe cycleways."

He said that the counter argument to that is usually the Scottish weather or hilly terrain.

"Believe you me it rains in the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway and in all northern European countries but they still have many more people cycling than we do. Aberdeen stands up poorly in terms of its transport offering. The highly skilled people



we want to attract to live and work here will look at the transport and the quality of life. Those are important factors for them and while a lot of wealth has gone through Aberdeen in the last 30 or more years with the booming oil industry it doesn't seem to have been spent on all those transport improvements it needs if it is to compete properly with other comparative cities."

Paul said it was certainly not too late: "In London 20 years ago, you hardly saw a cyclist and now there are huge numbers of people cycling. There is no reason why it cannot be done here but it needs political will and key individuals to drive change forward."

He added that the city was very poorly served by rail with single track sections on the only two routes to the south and to Inverness. He said there were three other corridors – to Deeside, to Ellon and Peterhead and to Westhill and they might be suitable for lines or a light rail line which could easily circumvent any obstacles.

"It might be more expensive in the short term but if you look at more roads you're just locking in the problems and making them worse. There is potential for rail to do a lot more. Light rail transit is cheaper and has the flexibility to come off and

run to the centre of the city which is what happens in Europe and research shows that motorists are six times more likely to leave the car behind to take a rail option.

"The city also needs more dedicated bus lanes because it's difficult for buses to attract to motorists if they see them being held up in the traffic that they are sitting in.

"The city must look beyond oil and gas and how it is going to reinvent itself and attract a high-quality workforce."

A recent report from regional transport partnership Nestrans shows the number of cars using park and ride sites across the region is on the increase.

Over 440 drivers per day are making use of bus-based park and ride sites in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire, an increase of 6.8% on last year's numbers.

The figures come after Nestrans completed its annual patronage spot-surveys across the five bus park and ride sites (Bridge of Don, Ellon, Kingswells, Craibstone and Newtonhill). The data collected was also used alongside detailed figures from in/out camera counts. It is estimated that, if these results were

replicated daily, around 132,000 cars are removed from the city network in a year. This is an annual reduction of over four million kilometres, which is likely to have a net reduction of carbon emitted by over 741 tonnes per year.

The board also heard how the newly launched park and ride informational website, developed by sustainable travel partnership Getabout, has been well utilised.

Chair of Nestrans, councillor Sandra Macdonald, said: "Park and ride plays a valuable role for the North-east, particularly given the rural nature of Aberdeenshire, as it provides an important opportunity to encourage a shift to bus use for those who cannot easily access a bus route.

"Whilst I am encouraged to hear that usage of the sites is on the increase, we know from these figures that there is still significant capacity available for more people to use these facilities. How we continue to encourage this behaviour will be an integral part of the forthcoming Nestrans 2040 strategy."



TRANSPORT connections across the North-east will come under the spotlight in the Chamber's business breakfast next month.

The panel of speakers will include **Lisa Childs, senior external affairs manager at Heathrow**, who will provide an update on the third runway, outlining benefits of the 'hub and spoke' model as well as outlining what the impact may be for businesses in the North-east of Scotland.

She will be joined by **Alison Irvine, director of transport strategy and analysis at Transport Scotland**, who will talk about the upcoming National Transport Strategy, the process to consult with communities across Scotland, the implications for local businesses and the likely future focus for the organisation in driving the low carbon agenda.

Our flagship series, brought to you in partnership with the University of Aberdeen Business School, seeks to translate thinking into action by providing a learning and networking forum to discuss the topics essential to successful economic growth in our region.

The breakfast, Moving Forward with Investment in Connectivity, takes place on **March 5** at The Chester Hotel. For more information or to book your place, visit agcc.co.uk

A key player for a resurgent region

by **Steve Szalay**,
managing director,
Aberdeen International Airport

I WAS delighted to attend the BBC Sports Personality of the Year awards in December which really put our region into the spotlight on a national scale.

It was a fantastic evening and huge congratulations must go to P&J Live and all their partners for such a wonderful event.

The airport had a really busy weekend giving visitors both a warm welcome and a fond farewell. Many were impressed by the campus-like approach given by the proximity of P&J Live to the airport. This is something we must capitalise on to win future events.

Our airport is the North-east's biggest transport hub and is a vital economic driver for the region. We help support more than 3,500 jobs as the gateway to Europe's energy capital and are Europe's busiest heliport with four helicopter operators. With 16 airlines, serving 42 destinations, including 24 international locations in 13 different countries, we are proud to support three million passengers every year.

Like any business, we do have challenges to deal with. 2019 was a tough year for aviation, with higher oil

prices affecting airline profitability and the sad demise of both FlyBMI and Thomas Cook.

The loss of our Gatwick route has had a huge impact on our connectivity and my route priorities remain Gatwick and Frankfurt – we simply must be connected to these two important hubs.

I'll sound like a broken record if I mention Air Passenger Duty (APD), but it has such a major impact on our ability to win back routes. This topic has been covered extensively elsewhere so all I'll reiterate here is my desire for a level playing field when competing with Inverness for London and overseas routes (NOT the routes to the Highlands and Islands – we can leave them well alone).

Looking ahead we are excited for what the future holds for the North-east. With P&J Live attracting high quality events and acts to the city, the new harbour coming in 2021 and the AWPR delivering passengers right to our front door.

The new bypass allows people from the Dundee catchment area travel to our airport in an hour and gives them greater flight options. I feel we've been

dealt an amazing hand to play and it is now up to us all to make the most of the opportunities.

I'm very keen that the airport is seen to be a key player in this resurgent region. For our part, our terminal has been completely transformed and our improved customer satisfaction scores reflect this. The next significant round of investment is absolutely vital and will see us resurface our runway and taxiway tarmac.

So, a new decade dawns and our region is bursting with creativity and opportunity. I've been hugely impressed by the way so many diverse stakeholders work together with a common goal of future prosperity and opportunity. There is a clear narrative and a diversification strategy which recognises the importance of the oil and gas sector but also encourages developments in renewable energy, life sciences, food and drink, agriculture and tourism. There are so many things to be proud about in this great region, I want to ensure the airport is one of them.

A word of advice

The best tips, hacks and words of wisdom from experts in their field across a variety of topics which impact on local businesses.



Sally Cassidy,
group director of sales,
Travelleads, part of Global
Travel Solutions Group

Area of expertise:

I specialise in corporate business travel for the energy sector and have a breadth of experience supporting clients across the North-east of Scotland with their complex travel requirements.

What should people know:

If your business travels extensively domestically and overseas, a great travel management company (TMC) is worth their weight in gold. They do so much more than just booking your travel. On paper they all appear to do the same thing so choosing the right one can be a bit of a minefield.

What's the biggest mistake companies make?

Thinking that a transaction fee makes a TMC 'more expensive' and selecting a provider based mainly on how much the service appears to cost. Worse still, they remain 'self-bookers', compromising on duty of care for travellers, expert account management, not to mention the invaluable vendor negotiations that they'd be missing out on.

What's your top tip?

When choosing your TMC, look for a partner not a provider. Ditch the old method of a request for quotation – get to know the people. Is there a personality match? Do they understand your objectives? A great partner will buy for you rather than sell to you and this will make a world of difference to your travel budget, levels of efficiency and end-user experience. Choose the personality of the brand and its people.



Emma and Nick Smalley

The Masters of the gin

ABERDEENSHIRE gin producer The Teasmith Spirit Company has received a commendation at The Design & Packaging Masters - part of the internationally renowned Global Spirits Masters series.

A panel of experts awarded a Master Medal to the Udney-based spirits company in a category judged on aesthetics, materials, creativity and strong branding on display. The Global Spirits Masters awards are run by The Spirits Business - a spirits trade magazine, based in London.

The Master Medal is the highest commendation in the category and caps another year of achievement for the company - which recently launched the first ever gin distilled with a batch of Scottish-grown tea - Broich Single Estate.

Aberdeen's strategy for climate change

A STRATEGY for combating climate change and dealing with its impact has been adopted by Aberdeen City Council.

'Aberdeen Adapts' identifies measures to safeguard people, the place and the economy from extreme weather events in the years ahead.

The City Growth and Resources Committee has approved the final version of the 'Aberdeen Adapts: Climate Adaptation Framework', which builds on work ranging from emergency planning to education programmes to technological innovation.

Climate change is expected to bring wetter winters in Aberdeen as well as hotter, drier summers and carries risks around the world from flooding to heatwaves.

Transport connections, food production, energy supplies, natural habitats, the built environment – all are at risk from the effects of global warming. For vulnerable people, the impacts could be even greater, widening inequalities.

More than 40 local groups were involved in drawing up the Framework, which was subject to an eight-week public consultation.

An apple is not an orange

by Maggie Hepburn,
chief executive officer, ACVO TSI



'I WOULD have thought that' is commonly heard when considering supporting good causes. But is it sufficient evidence for decisions on Aberdeen's ability to achieve its goals? 'I would have thought that the police, council, NHS etc would provide for that'...surely you need to know more?

Perhaps we need to talk – your colleagues and my specialist team at Aberdeen's third sector interface. We ask on behalf of the thousands of organisations ACVO exists for in a sector which has been passionately innovating for centuries to change lives and communities.

Once Aberdeen was the poorest city in Scotland, then came charity (before oil). My team of 13 works hands on with the organisations problem-solving locally, providing team-building opportunities.

Where does CSR end and statutory obligation begin? Is it enough for your charity committee to have thought that? Is the appeal before you really for work already fully funded or someone else's responsibility? Are you correct in thinking that the project already exists? In the city with the smallest public sector in the country, most reliant on the third sector, are you well informed? At ACVO our

knowledge comes from third sector staff, volunteers and service-users and partners. Think of us as a crossroads where both they and you can find a new direction in your thinking.

We want to proclaim the scale of the charity/social enterprise sector (across Scotland managing £3.2bn) but worry that, on knowing there are 800 Aberdeen charities or of our database of 4,000 organisations, you will react with 'I would have thought that' and 'there is a lot of duplication'.

You may not apply the same principles to charities as to commerce – isn't competition healthy? Why should a cancer patient be limited to one essential service? When we choose a plumber or a lawyer we can do so because of location, personality or niche. By having distinct organisational personalities charities are able to reach life's darkest corners.

Looking outwardly similar, they work differently. What matters is what works. Our sector's goal is not to pick the most profitable fruit but to collect the fallen. When you make your judgements based on commercial thinking are you mistaking apples for oranges?

Charities do merge to rationalise costs but is the playing field equal for all? What overheads are acceptable? Do

you know what current percentages the third sector works on? Does the race to the bottom protect the 130,000 staff and 1.2million volunteers in Scotland?

Many charities already work in insalubrious buildings, with begged for furniture, with no marketing or R&D budget, required to innovate constantly, scrimping on overheads you 'would have thought' were already funded.

The sector's incredibly strong value base does not actually pay for our graduates to afford to live in Aberdeen and sometimes its teams feel like hamsters on a wheel not professionals making our city a better place to live and do business.

If you want to make change, here we are, your third sector interface, part-funded by government to do just that. We know the city's priorities, who reaches where. If you want to know, rather than think, how to respond to the city's goals, come and meet us. We want to help you to have the evidence for your decisions.



Comedian Gary Meikle

A bigger and better Comedy Festival for 2020

THE Aberdeen International Comedy Festival has announced it will return from October 1 to 11 this year.

The first headline act is Scotland's favourite viral comedy sensation Gary Meikle who will play his biggest city gig to date at Aberdeen's Music Hall on Friday, October 2. Also announced for the opening weekend is Tez Ilyas who in his first three years as a stand-up reached eight competition finals including the prestigious BBC New Comedy Award and Leicester Mercury New Comedian of the Year.

Adrian Watson, chief executive of Aberdeen Inspired, which organises and delivers the festival said: "We expect 2020 to be the biggest and best festival yet. In just five years the festival has grown from relatively modest beginnings to be the North-east's biggest and best celebration of comedy and has established itself as an essential part of the North-east cultural calendar."

Combining to improve integrity management

INTEGRITY management specialist PIM is joining forces with EPCC, a high-performance computing research specialist based in Edinburgh, to investigate the benefits of cutting-edge data analysis and artificial intelligence to the integrity management sector of the oil and gas industry.

The project will examine opportunities for using novel automation and data analytics technologies to improve the effectiveness and productivity of asset integrity management services.

Tyler Stewart, project lead, said: "The oil and gas industry has unquantifiable amounts of historical data. Over the last eight years PIM has delivered risk-based inspection services to this sector and as a by-product understands that there is a considerable amount of historical data which is underutilised. We believe that this data has untapped potential and if the past experience which this data represents can be leveraged then this information could be used to optimise future inspection services."

Aberdeen take the lead in ticketing

ABERDEEN FC is to be the launch customer for a new open distribution ticketing product, never before seen in the UK. The innovative new ticketing product, launched by the Scottish Premiership team's ticketing platform SeatGeek, will allow Aberdeen FC to sell tickets in more places than ever before, without the need for any additional software.

Match tickets are traditionally sold exclusively through football clubs themselves, via their website and over the phone. This move will allow Aberdeen FC to open tickets to a wider audience with the aim of increasing the club's following.

Using the new SeatGeek Open distribution network, which works through its existing SRO technology, tickets will now be sold through numerous online travel brands, including Ryanair, through distribution partner Coras. Travellers will be able to discover Aberdeen FC match tickets whilst doing things like booking a flight or looking for weekend plans.

READ's new Houston and Anchorage offices

READ Cased Hole Limited, has reinforced its commitment to the North American oil and gas market by opening new facilities in Houston and Anchorage.

This strategic move enhances READ's capacity to meet increasing demand for high quality well integrity, production logging, reservoir evaluation and data analysis services throughout the region.

King's College campus in £50m transformation

THE University of Aberdeen has approved transformational £50m investment plans to revitalise the heart of its historic King's College campus to continue to provide a 'world class' learning experience for its growing student population.

Formal planning applications will now be submitted to Aberdeen City Council by spring 2020.

The plans - part of a wider package of ongoing and proposed campus regeneration projects with a combined cost of almost £100m - include a new home for the University of Aberdeen Business School, plus sweeping improvements to the university's historic core, to deliver new teaching and learning space while maintaining and drawing upon its unique heritage.

Central to this major investment is an anticipated growth in the university's student population over the next 10 years, requiring enhanced teaching and learning facilities to meet the needs of students and staff.

The plans involve the Business School relocating from its current home in the MacRobert Building to a new single-site home in the currently dormant Johnston Halls, which will undergo a major refurbishment.

The new Business School is scheduled to open by summer 2022, while the King's College improvements are expected to be completed the following summer.



Philip Grant of Lloyds

Not growing digital skills could cost opportunities

SCOTTISH businesses have stepped up their protection against cyber threats in 2019, but a lack of interest in other digital tactics could be holding them back, according to Bank of Scotland's latest Business Digital Index.

The report combines survey data with businesses' transactional data to understand their digital behaviours and intentions. The security index for the region, which outlines whether firms are protecting themselves against hackers and fraudsters, has shot up by 18 points on last year to 50. An index reading of zero indicates a lack of online cybersecurity capabilities while 100 shows robust defensive measures are in place.

Local firms also have a higher-than-average interest in security. Four in five (81%) had already invested in their cyber security skills, or planned to in future, compared with 78% nationally.

But despite these advances in cyber security, a lack of essential digital skills could be hampering opportunities to boost sales or productivity. Four in 10 (41%) Scottish firms lack the full range of essential digital skills, compared with the national average of 44%.

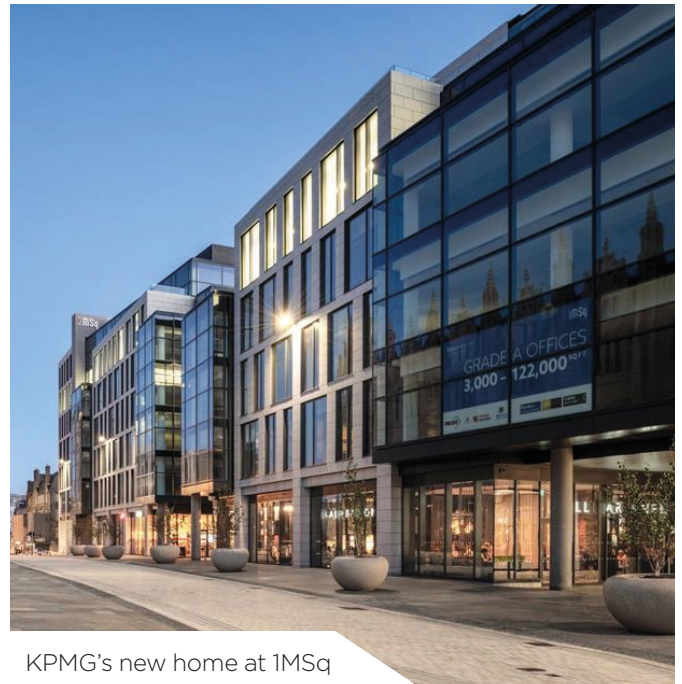
Philip Grant, Chair of Lloyds Banking Group's Scottish Executive Committee, said: "Scotland boasts an ideal environment for success and is home to some of the UK's most innovative start-ups. But by not actively growing wider digital skills, businesses could be missing out on opportunities."

Parent Power success for St Margaret's

ST MARGARET'S School for Girls has been named Scottish Independent Secondary School of the Year by the Sunday Times Good Schools Guide, Parent Power.

Head teacher Anna Tomlinson said the accolade was a "reflection of the outstanding commitment of all our staff, pupils and parents of St Margaret's".

She added: "While supporting each girl to be the best she can be academically is at the heart of a St Margaret's education, we also provide a wealth of extra-curricular opportunities to enhance and develop our girls' interests and skills."



KPMG's new home at 1MSq

KPMG to move to Marischal Square

KPMG has announced plans to relocate to the multi-million-pound Marischal Square development in Aberdeen, as it eyes further growth in the city.

The professional services firm will relocate from its current base in Albyn Place to the new city centre location in the spring.

Final designs and planning are currently underway, with more than 140 auditors and advisors moving to KPMG's new North-east home, which will be located on level four of 1MSq.

The relocation has been designed to create greater flexibility, bringing teams together for the first time in one open-plan, collaborative space. Plans are also underway to enable clients to make the most of the central location, with event, breakout and shared working spaces.

Martin Findlay, KPMG's senior partner in Aberdeen, said: "We've called Albyn Place home for 25 years and have some great memories here but we're incredibly excited about our next move. KPMG has been part of the fabric of Aberdeen since the nineteenth century, so we felt it was only fitting to make our next base a development which truly reflects the city's optimistic future."

John Lawrie Decom's new Aberdeen facility

JOHN Lawrie Decom, working in partnership with energy logistics specialist, Peterson, has launched its latest decommissioning facility at Aberdeen Harbour's Poca Quay.

This new facility will enable the steel tubulars, metal recycling and decommissioning company to offer oil and gas operators an Aberdeen based location for the reception, dismantling and processing of oilfield structures and subsea infrastructure. This new facility has the necessary SEPA approvals to allow it to accept material across the Peterson quayside.

The high cost of paying for your payments. Solved?

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



SOUNDS ridiculous doesn't it? Paying for payment. But that's the reality for many contractors and sub-contractors in the UK's tough and often razor-thin margin construction industry. For those in the industry, you already know what I'm talking about. For those who are not, you may still recognise this phenomenon.

A standard feature of contracts in the construction industry is the making of regular payments to the contractor (and thereafter sub-contractors) during the life of the project. This maintains cash-flow and therefore allows contractors to continue to trade without the need for the disproportionately large working capital that would be required to fund construction all the way to completion.

The 'pay for payment' problem arises all too frequently where, for whatever reason, the employer (or main contractor) decides it's not going to pay for a month or two or more. A dispute arises and the contractor/sub-contractor finds itself paying claim specialists or solicitors to raise court or adjudication proceedings – a cost they won't likely get back. They have to pay for their payment.

There have been recent attempts to

remedy the issue by seeking to reduce the cost of resolving these disputes. Late last year, a six month trial by the Technology and Construction Solicitors' Association (TeCSA) was made permanent. The trial initiative was aimed at so-called low value disputes (up to £100,000) and involved adjudicators' fees being capped depending on the value in dispute.

Another recent initiative was a consultation by the Construction Industry Council (CIC) with a view to developing a Low Value Disputes Model Adjudication Procedure (LDV MAP). The CIC put together a working group of key industry bodies including the Adjudication Society, CIC, CEDR, ICE and the RICS.

The problem is that neither of these efforts really gets to the root of the problem – namely the cost of hiring advisors/representatives to act for the parties. Is there a solution to that?

Until such time as Google or IBM have mastered artificial intelligence to a sufficient level to provide expert level advice at minimal cost there is no way around the fact that parties will need to hire well-qualified and experienced professionals to advise and represent them. That, like any other service, comes at a cost.

As a disputes advisor to a number of construction businesses I see the key to mitigating that cost issue is making sure you have the type of advisor appropriate to the dispute in question. The industry is awash with (non-lawyer) claims consultants, many of whom are extremely experienced and technically excellent. They tend to be cheaper than solicitors and may therefore be the perfect choice.

Alternatively, the dispute may have a particularly 'legal' aspect to it or could likely require the raising of court proceedings. In that case it may prove appropriate to go straight to a solicitor. The key is knowing who to go to for which dispute. That in turn involves having an appropriate network of trusted advisors who will say right at the outset whether the claim is one they should be dealing with or whether it should be dealt with by someone else. Cost vs reward must always be at the forefront.

The TeCSA and CIC initiatives should be welcomed but have they solved the pay for payment problem? Not yet. Unfortunately. For the time-being the contractor's trusted advisors remain the best hope for keeping a lid on the 'pay for payment' problem.

Stronachs



Chief operating officer Graeme Chalmers

Flowline Specialists CEO joins GlobalScot

THE chief operating officer of Scottish energy equipment manufacturer and service provider Flowline Specialists has joined the ranks of Scotland's respected international business network GlobalScot.

Graeme Chalmers was formally welcomed into the network by the Scottish Government's Minister for Trade, Investment and Innovation, Ivan McKee MSP, at a networking event in Abu Dhabi organised by Scottish Development International during ADIPEC (Abu Dhabi International Exhibition & Conference).

GlobalScot is a diverse worldwide network of business leaders, entrepreneurs and executives with a connection to Scotland. Headquartered in Oldmeldrum, Aberdeenshire, Flowline Specialists operates internationally, providing equipment and personnel to manage flexible pipe, cable and umbilical handling and deployment projects in the oil and gas, subsea and renewable energy industries.

Offshore service specialist nets success

AN INTERNATIONAL Aberdeen offshore service specialist is celebrating its fifth anniversary and worldwide accreditation success.

Allied Perimeter Safety Netting (APSN) was first established in 2014 to provide helideck perimeter safety nets, inspection, testing, recording and certification. It is the only company in the North-east to be certified by the world's leading helideck safety agency Helideck Certification Agency (HCA) for its testing, supply and fit of helideck safety netting, and as a result is recognised as a leading safety partner for oil and gas companies across the globe.

Managing director Danny Lonie said: "Celebrating five years of a growing family business is a major achievement for APSN, which was born during one of the most difficult times we have had in the offshore industry. We started APSN from a small base in Wellington Street and now service operators and service companies in over 15 countries. This year, our turnover at £120,000 is more than double that of 2018 and we continue to see growth."

Ardyne strengthens relationship with Equinor

UK PLUG, abandonment and casing recovery specialist Ardyne has enhanced its relationship with Equinor through a frame agreement for fishing services covering all of the operator's assets on the Norwegian Continental Shelf.

The agreement, the latest between the two companies, is for an initial three years with five further options to extend over two-year periods.

As part of the agreement, Ardyne will provide a range of services – including fishing operations – for wells linked to the Statfjord A platform in the Norwegian North Sea. Ardyne's relationship with Equinor spans several years. The company acquired Norwegian oil service company Wellbore AS in 2016, which had a long history of supporting the Norwegian operator.

Decommissioning growing in competitiveness

THE UK's decommissioning sector's growing competitiveness is revealed in the latest Decommissioning Insight report launched by OGUK.

The report, now in its tenth year of publication, forecasts the UK's decommissioning activity and expenditure over the next decade and while activity on the UK Continental Shelf (UKCS) is expected to increase, expenditure will remain consistent at around £1.5bn per annum, demonstrating the sector's improving efficiency performance.

The report findings show decommissioning now represents just under 10% of the oil and gas industry's overall expenditure; the pace of decommissioning expenditure remains steady at around £1.5bn per year; and that over the next decade, forecast expenditure for UKCS decommissioning remains constant at £15.2bn.

Charity support boosts workforce morale

THE UK's SMEs are clear about the benefits charity support has on employee morale and the positive messages it sends about a company's culture; however, many feel their workers are suffering from 'donation fatigue', most notably in London, according to the latest independent research from Close Brothers Asset Finance.

Over half of SMEs polled said they supported a charity – rising to 82% in London – noting that it both creates a bond in the team and gives employees 'something positive to focus on'. While 47% of SMEs don't formally support charities, of those 11% feel they aren't 'big enough'.

Munro's Travel partnership with EIC

NORTH-EAST travel management company Munro's Travel has secured a business travel partnership with the Energy Industries Council (EIC).

Munro's Travel will be EIC's preferred travel partner, offering its service to over 600 members.

Peterson to open terminal in Brazil

ITAOCA Terminal Marítimo S.A and Peterson Offshore Group have announced a partnership and consulting agreement for the development of the Itaoaca project. The Itaoaca Offshore project will be a private terminal in Itapemirim, in the Espírito Santo state in southeast Brazil, designed to provide logistical support to the supply chain for the exploration and production of offshore oil and gas.

The development includes 10 mooring berths and a service pier of 300m; and a continental storage area with more than 600,000m². It is situated in a strategic location for operators who have acquired or expanded their assets in the ES basins and in the northern portion of the Campos basin.

Construction is expected to start this year.

Council leads the way on graduate apprenticeships

ABERDEEN City Council is leading the way in developing staff through graduate apprenticeships – a way to study for an undergraduate degree while working for the local authority.

Nine employees started courses at Robert Gordon University this academic year, the highest number enrolled by any single employer.

The programme is a way to both attract new talent to the organisation and retain skilled employees by providing opportunities for career progression.

Isla Newcombe, the council's chief officer for organisational development, said: "Our graduate apprentices are empowered to apply what they are learning at university to their work and add value to the workplace by bringing new and fresh ideas to the council. "They are supported in their studies by attending on campus days and are assigned a workplace mentor. This demonstrates our ongoing commitment to nurturing our internal talent."

Savills signs the Race at Work Charter

SAVILLS, the international real estate advisor, has announced its commitment to racial equality by signing the Race at Work Charter, a government initiative in partnership with Business in the Community, designed to improve outcomes for black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) employees in the UK.

The charter builds on the work of the 2017 McGregor-Smith Review, 'Race in the workplace', a wake-up call for UK employers, which found that people from BAME backgrounds were still underemployed, underpromoted and under-represented at senior levels.

Richard Rees, managing director at Savills, said: "Increasing the awareness around the issues faced by BAME employees is crucial to creating a workspace that is inclusive, diverse and fair. The Race at Work Charter is an excellent initiative and I'm delighted that Savills has added its name to the signatories list."



Chief executive officer Neil Davies

Diversity is beneficial but not easy to achieve

THE UK'S SMEs strongly believe that having a diverse workforce is both beneficial to their bottom line and makes it easier to attract candidates, according to the latest independent research from Close Brothers Asset Finance.

Over 70% of respondents agreed that diversity is good for their financial performance and only 18% did not agree with 11% 'unsure'.

The benefits of having a diverse workforce is also well understood, with 64% of the opinion it makes their business more attractive to candidates; however, while this may be recognised by employers, many are having difficulties increasing diversity with 33% finding it difficult to fill existing vacancies while a further 25% don't get enough interest from 'minority' candidates.

"It's encouraging that firms are taking active steps to increase diversity in their businesses - we know from our own experience that a diverse workforce is more dynamic," said chief executive officer Neil Davies. "It appears that the first steps towards more diversity can be the most difficult, but over time it does become easier to attract talent from diverse backgrounds."

A high flying first

CONAL Ferguson, UAV operator and managing director of Stornoway-based HebDrone, has become the first person to successfully complete the UK's only training standard for industrial drone operators.

Approved by the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB), the Industrial Drone Operations Training Course was developed by Aberdeen-based Texo Compliance to ensure that the next generation of drone operators attain and develop the skills and knowledge they need to operate safely in heavy industrial environments that have specific operational hazards and constraints.



Carbon neutral for the long haul

Aberdeen-based haulage firm Colin Lawson Transport is delighted to announce that the company has achieved carbon neutral status, a first in the transport sector in the north-east of Scotland.

Working in conjunction with independent auditors Carbon Zero UK, a detailed site assessment of Colin Lawson Transport's operational activities was recently carried out to calculate the company's carbon footprint. As a result of the audit we are proud to support carbon offsetting initiatives around the globe.

This is just the beginning of a number of projects which will see Colin Lawson Transport playing its part in safeguarding the environment. As industry moves towards energy transition, the avoidance of unnecessary pollution to the environment is an essential part of our operations – and for all responsible organisations globally – and we know that our clients will be reassured that we are working hard to mitigate negative impacts on the planet.

Colin Lawson Transport leads the way in providing a first-class service and developing long-lasting business relationships with clients and is the preferred supplier to many large and small energy companies.

We are in it for the long haul.





COLIN LAWSON

Transport

Specialising in transportation of goods for the energy sector in and around the UK. The first carbon neutral transport company in North-East Scotland.

- » Specialists in the safe and efficient transportation of goods for the UKCS energy sector
- » Modern fleet with 70 vehicles and 110 trailers
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The award-winning team

Top award for Huntly whisky firm

HUNTLY-based Duncan Taylor Scotch Whisky clinched the Grain Independent Bottler of the Year award at Whisky Magazine's Independent Bottlers Challenge.

The Independent Bottlers Challenge, which has been running for 14 years, aims to reward the world's finest whiskies and is known as the 'Oscars' of the whisky industry.

The firm also won Silver Awards for its Octave Range Bunnahabhain 2014, Invergordon 2007 and a Port Dundas 1973 from their Premium Octave collection, one of a series of eight whiskies which were only launched in October.

Chairman Euan Shand said: "We are incredibly proud to see the quality of our grain whiskies recognised in such a big arena and against such fierce competition."

Wood creates new \$2.8bn global business

WOOD has created a new Technical Consulting Solutions (TCS) business unit, combining its diverse, multi-sector and technology-enabled specialist advisory and consulting capabilities into one global business.

TCS immediately becomes a leader in the technical consulting space with an annual revenue of \$2.8bn and a connected global network of more than 15,000 experts and innovators. The new business unit will be led by Joe Sczurko who assumes the role of TCS CEO.

The new business unit has been created to bring together the expertise and provide the agility to respond to the changes and trends shaping the world and Wood's customers: global energy security and transition, accelerating digital technology, and the growing demand for sustainable infrastructure and environmental resiliency.

Osprey in double award win

OSPREY Housing Group, a progressive, tenant-focussed North-east provider of social and affordable rented homes, has been recognised for best practice at the Tenant Participation Advisory Service in Scotland National Good Practice Awards.

Osprey Housing and Osprey Housing Moray are individually registered housing associations within the Osprey Housing Group and provide services to tenants across the city, Aberdeenshire and Moray. Osprey won the award for best practice in involving tenants in determining rents and another for digital involvement, allowing tenants to access services such as maintenance and repairs online.

Clinical trial gives hope for families with Huntington's disease

ONE of the first people in Scotland to take part in a new clinical trial for Huntington's Disease says the programme gives him hope for the future.

Sandy Patience, 57, originally from Avoch on the Black Isle and now living in Inverness, is among only nine people in Scotland and 801 globally to be taking part in the Roche Generation-HD1 study, being led in Aberdeen by Professor Zosia Miedzybrodzka of the University of Aberdeen.

Neptune Energy to invest \$19m in Bramberge field

NEPTUNE Energy has announced a \$19m investment at one of its largest operated developments in Western Germany.

Significant upgrades to the surface facilities at the main operating site at the Bramberge oil field will enhance both efficiency and productivity.

Neptune processes the oil produced from the field via several process plants in the area which measures approximately 39,000 sqm. Operations began in the late 1950s and the newly announced program of investment will support continued production.

Neptune Energy's managing director for Germany, Andreas Scheck, said: "This investment further strengthens our position in the area and follows our acquisition in September last year of shares in oil and gas fields in western Lower Saxony from Wintershall Dea, including in the Bramberge field. The site enhancements will optimise our processing technology and increase the productivity of the field."

Refurbishment of the existing processing plant is expected to be carried out across two phases and will involve dismantling storage tanks for reservoir water and crude oil, installation of new foundations and construction of new storage tanks. Further installation work of supporting infrastructure will then be carried out.

The installation of two new separators will improve processing efficiency, while the modernised facilities and technologies will also be more compact, resulting in a reduction of the overall footprint of the operating plant. Work is scheduled to be completed by early 2023.

Charlie House:

Showcasing mutual gains of charity links

Corporate support for good causes is about more than raising funds – it's about creating partnerships that realise multiple benefits for both parties.

And one of the most ambitious charity fund-raising campaigns in Aberdeen City and Shire is demonstrating the positive power of these relationships in action.

The Charlie House Big Build Appeal aims to raise £8million to create a specialist centre in the grounds of Woodend Hospital to support babies, children and young people with complex disabilities and life-limiting conditions.

Charlie House enjoys support from businesses who engage with the appeal in a variety of ways – and the charity wants others to join the cause. The tangible impact of corporate fundraising partnerships is already evident in the campaign. Staff at energy operator TAQA, for example, selected Charlie House as their 2018/19 charity partner.

Of the £70,000-plus they raised through a variety of fund-raising efforts, £50,000 is to be used to create the new centre's Reflection Courtyard, which will provide a quiet space for families using the facilities, away from the hustle and bustle of the centre and the main garden grounds. The remainder will go towards the overall appeal.

The partnership has also shown the wider potential benefits for good causes, beyond financial support: TAQA has used other elements of its CSR agenda – including its sponsorship of Aberdeen Art Fair – to give a platform to the work of Charlie House.

"We regularly cite our links with TAQA as a great example of the two-way partnership model at work," says Charlie House Fundraising Co-ordinator Kirsty Walker.

"Our approach is to engage fully with our corporate supporters, helping them with guidance and ideas so they can make the most of their fund-raising programme. We want to ensure it's a fun, positive and rewarding experience.

"We make a point of learning about businesses we work alongside – understanding their values and what they want to achieve, so that the partnership works well for them while of course delivering a hugely welcome contribution to our appeal."



*Kirsty Walker, Fundraising
Co-ordinator at Charlie House*

Kirsty says this distinctive approach helps companies address their CSR strategies while presenting valuable opportunities for in-house engagement and team building.

"CSR policies commonly focus on the promotion of community links, and the fact that the Big Build Appeal is a local project for local people certainly supports that principle," she adds.

TAQA people annually choose good causes to benefit from staff-led fundraising programmes and their efforts have realised a total of over £250,000 in the past five years.

To find out more about supporting the Big Build Appeal, email:

bigbuild@charliehouse.org.uk



Aberdeen firm named Agency of the Year

ABERDEEN based Design and Code was named Agency of the Year at the Scottish Tech Startup Awards.

The Agency of the Year category acknowledges creative and technical excellence in areas such as impactful design, user experience and effective communication campaigns. It also takes into account the ability to attract and retain top-tier clients.

Founded in 2012 by Colin Leonard, Design and Code is home to a talented and diverse team of designers, developers and animators. They pair creative thinking with technical expertise to deliver effective campaigns across brand, print, motion and digital.

The award recognises their long-term partnerships with global companies alongside their work with startups and social enterprises in a variety of sectors. Their personal project 'Glisk', a digital experience created for the 2019 Look Again Festival, was also considered by the judging panel.

Scottish rocks prove 'boring billion' wasn't so boring after all

SCOTTISH rocks have provided evidence of a previously unknown ice age that has shed new light on the evolution of the planet. Scientists from the University of Aberdeen have analysed rocks in the Torridon area of the North-west Highlands and uncovered evidence of debris dropped from melting icebergs in lakes.

The rocks date from the period known as the 'boring billion' which took place from 1800 to 800m years ago. The term is used by geologists to describe what was thought to be a relatively calm period in Earth's evolution.

However, this latest discovery suggests the era may have included another ice age.

Professor Adrian Hartley led the study – published in the Scottish Journal of Geology – along with colleagues from the University of Aberdeen's School of Geosciences. Prof Hartley said: "In Earth's middle ages it is thought that not very much happened on the planet. Throughout this so-called 'boring billion' the global climate was temperate and unchanged. Life was limited to algae in the ocean, the land was completely barren and oxygen was 10 % of what it is now.

"Until now, no evidence for climate change had been discovered but our study has shown there was ice at Earth's surface during this period.

"We made the discovery by analysing silty lake sediments that are a billion years old, allowing us to identify locations where pebbles had fallen from melting icebergs and had formed impact features on the lake floor, deforming even older layers of sediment.

"Similar studies have allowed us to reconstruct the recent glacial history of the Earth but this takes us much further back in time to when Scotland was located at 35°S - the same latitude as South Africa.

"It's the first evidence globally for glaciation at this time in Earth's history – proving it wasn't such a boring billion after all."



Jim Milne

Balmoral Group takes a stake in Blaze

THE Balmoral Group, has invested a six-figure sum in Blaze Manufacturing Solutions Ltd, taking a 70% stake in the Aberdeenshire-based company.

Balmoral also recently significantly raised its shareholding in another Aberdeenshire company, ACE Winches, in November.

In 2017, Blaze was named as one of the top '1,000 UK Companies to Inspire' by the London Stock Exchange Group and picked up two gongs at the 2019 Offshore Achievement Awards.

Jim Milne, chairman and managing director of Balmoral Group, said: "This is another exciting move for us as we see Blaze as a company with great ambition. Our 40 years' of engineering design and manufacturing experience will be of great benefit to Blaze, I'm sure, as well as our network of contacts in the oil and gas and offshore renewables markets."

Aberdeen set for new creative industries

FORTYTWO Studio, a specialist brand and digital agency based in Aberdeen is expanding its team and capabilities and will be opening new co-working premises in 2020 thanks to funding support from Barclays.

Mark Kemp, who has over 20 years' experience in the industry, established FortyTwo Studio at the end of 2015, with the commitment to delivering brand, web, digital and print design.

He said: "FortyTwo Studio is starting 2020 by committing to the region's future creative potential as we look to move to larger premises, expanding our team and capabilities. As well as being our own studio, our new space will become a co-working hub for the creative industries and like-minded leaders in the design field.

"We're hoping to welcome those with industry experience, start-up businesses and students of design, architecture and related disciplines along to our hub where they can build and nurture their business and careers."

Get on board in 2020

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



2020 is going to be an absolutely critical year for transport in the North-east. At the end of January, the Scottish Government is set to publish the long-awaited second National Transport Strategy (NTS2). Following this, our own regional transport partnership, Nestrans, will be seeking to finalise a regional transport strategy outlining the vision for the North-east.

The challenges that this strategy must address are unprecedented. Given the drive to net-zero, there exists the challenging task of realising rapid reductions in transport emissions, while simultaneously enhancing connectivity across the region and the country. When you consider transport is responsible for the largest proportion of Scotland's emissions, this is going to need the full and combined focus of policymakers, business, and wider communities.

So what would we like to see from the strategy? Our discussions with members suggested a range of priorities, of which I've outlined a few below:

Moving forward with much-needed investment to cut rail journey times between Aberdeen and the Central Belt was a common theme. There's been some real positive movement to improve commuter services around

the region but a credible plan to bring the speed of rail travel closer to the 'mile a minute' seen in parts of the central belt is paramount to get our intercity connectivity closer to modern standards. The Scottish Government has major ambitions to decarbonise rail travel, aiming to phase out diesel services by 2035. This means that alongside significant infrastructure improvements to speed up journey times, concurrent investment in innovative solutions such as hydrogen trains will be necessary to meet our climate obligations.

We also recommended that the NTS2 should kick off the process of creating a Scotland-specific Aviation Strategy. The Scottish Government's u-turn on promises to cut Air Passenger Duty was a gut-punch for many in the North-east, given that Aberdeen Airport continues to be disadvantaged by the current structure. With this in mind, there needs to be a focused exercise undertaken to determine how the aviation industry is supported not just to grow Scotland's domestic and international connections but also to lead in investment in low-carbon technologies and the future of the sector.

In addition, we recommended that the strategy puts proper emphasis on the vital role of bus services in supporting connectivity throughout our city region. Given the relatively focused rail network in the North-east,

bus services are the public transport mode of choice for many across the city and Aberdeenshire. The strategy needs to further support pioneering low emission investments, such as the Aberdeen hydrogen bus project, while ensuring that the funding arrangements are right to keep services sustainable. Linked to this, targeted investments in road links will still often be the right choice in many parts of the North-east. We are all familiar with the A96 dualling project but the A90 continues to be raised by members as desperately in need of upgrades.

We raised a range of other issues but the core theme is balance. The level of investment, and the vision behind it, must be unprecedented and innovative. The likely outcome, a complicated balance of connectivity improvements alongside significant reductions in our carbon emissions, will be difficult to achieve. Alongside a plethora of other reasons our growing expertise in hydrogen positions the region well to act as a testbed for the technologies that can drive this transition forward.

There's little doubt that the publication of NTS2 will mark a transformative shift in national transport priorities. As the voice of business in the region, the Chamber will continue to ensure that the views of North-east firms are at the forefront of the transport debate in 2020.

Preparing for the switch off

by Tom Sime,
chief executive officer,
Exchange Communications



IT WAS a game-changer when first introduced but the curtain is about to come down on 3G, with 5G ready to step up as the defacto network of choice for the majority of people. And businesses and individuals need to be aware and prepared.

The third generation of wireless mobile telecommunications technology first appeared in the UK way back in 2003, so it's had a good inning. Technology and customer demand marches on though, so when Vodafone was the first to acknowledge its plans to switch off 3G at some point in the next two to three years, nobody could have been shocked.

Ironically, its predecessor looks set to outlast it. 2G still has a place for multiple reasons, such as still being needed in some rural areas, its use as a low-power back-up, in Smart meters and in other Internet of Things (IoT) and machine-to-machine (M2M) services.

For 3G though, we're entering the endgame and even though the amount of purely 3G users is comparatively negligible these days, there will still be customers out there who will be forced to switch up to the 4G service.

And as that march of technology continues, 5G is about to become the new norm.

Make no mistake, this is going to be every bit as revolutionary as its predecessor was before it. It's easy to forget just how much of an impact 4G made on so much of our daily lives, but you just need to look at the rise of smart buildings, remote working and services like Netflix, Uber and the various social media platforms to be reminded of how it has transformed business and home life. These seismic shifts were a result of maximising the potential of what 4G could offer and the companies that saw the way the wind was blowing first were able to get the most out of it.

That's why there's so much potential to be mined from 5G, as it will be the next driver of change, not just in technology, but in our very culture and ways of life.

Our energy consumption could be made more efficient with the adoption of smart grids, manufacturing could be overhauled by smart factories using artificial intelligence, augmented reality and the Internet of Things.

Retail analysts are predicting a boom in virtual reality dressing rooms in stores and augmented

reality experiences in the home, with development spending expected to be pushing £46bn by the start of 2021.

Even the daily commute or school run could be completely overhauled with cars all connected to traffic lights, roadworks, bus stops and more as smart towns and cities emerge.

There is yet another brave new world on the horizon and while it is not without its concerns, the opportunities are there for the taking for businesses who have the vision to anticipate them.



2020: the vision becomes reality

By councillors Douglas Lumsden and Jenny Laing,
co-leaders, Aberdeen City Council

NEARLY 900 years ago, Aberdeen received its Royal Burgh status, opening the door to trade. Fishing, shipbuilding, paper making, textile production, quarrying, oil and gas extraction: the drive to succeed has never stopped.

Last year was by any measure an historic one, witnessing unprecedented investment in infrastructure and the continuing diversification of our economy. Entering the new decade, the vision of Aberdeen as a place where everyone can prosper is indeed becoming the reality.

As a local authority we recognise our role in creating conditions that allow communities to flourish and the importance of partnership working.

From the creation of the Economic Regional Strategy and the signing of the Aberdeen city region Deal in 2016, the City Region is delivering on truly transformational projects across food and drink, biotherapeutics, transport, tourism and the energy sector.

Collaboration between the public, private and third sectors is making this possible.

Notwithstanding funding challenges and increasing service demands, Aberdeen City Council has invested in digital infrastructure, roads, schools and homes as we focus on inclusive economic growth.

We are committed to once-in-a-generation plans to provide an additional 2,000 new council homes, with many already delivered or under construction.

The Event Complex Aberdeen – representing more than £330m of investment by the council – is establishing itself as a premier international venue and in the redeveloped Aberdeen Art Gallery we have another world-class facility.

Provost Skene's House is to re-open as a new visitor attraction in autumn and the transformation of Union Terrace Gardens is under way.

Infrastructure is of course about more than bricks and mortar. The fabric of communities and their connections is what really matters.

Work will start this year on the redevelopment of Queen Street, which aims to deliver more than 300 new homes alongside a civic hub.

The project represents a radical approach to placemaking by the council and its partners that will help meet the goals of the city's refreshed Local Outcome Improvement Plan.

The focus on inclusive growth is ensuring that our communities have access to training, jobs and educational opportunities. Developing the Young Workforce has seen us forge links with a range of

business organisations.

More than 1,000 people, the majority from the city's regeneration areas, took part in council-funded or operated employability programmes, and 349 secured jobs.

Our community benefits work saw more than 60 work experience placements provided to school pupils and adults through our major contracts, which also saw some young people secure apprenticeships.

A few months back, a report by the independent Aberdeen Economic Policy Panel forecast continuing growth.

It was suggested that Aberdeen take a national lead in focusing policy on improving wellbeing across the economy as well as leading the transition to net zero emissions across key sectors.


The council is close to completing the delivery of a new Strategic Infrastructure Plan that will include action steps.

With the support of the community and the business sector, we are driving our plans forward with the same determination that first established Aberdeen as an economic powerhouse all those centuries ago.

February

151
courses
run by the Chamber



Covering
55 
different
subjects

Attended by
951
people in North-east
businesses



25 Tue

1 day

Making Meetings Work

Establish how to plan and deliver effective meetings

25 Tue

1 day

Maximising Sponsorship Revenue - NEW

Maximise your sponsorship sales and obtain great results for your clients

26 Wed

1/2 day

Reviews and Appraisals

Assess performance constructively and increase motivation

26 Wed

1 day

Export Documentation Explained

Understand what is involved to save time and money

27 Thu

1 day

Finance - The Basics

Gain a broad understanding of business finance

28 Fri

1 day

Business Development Accelerator

Develop a powerful strategy to drive sales

March

3 Tue

1 day

Investigations in the Workplace

Plan and manage investigations effectively

3 Tue

1 day

Inward and Outward Processing

Understand the methods of claiming relief from customs duties

4 Wed

1 day

The Effective Director

Learn how to become an effective director and address responsibilities

4 Wed

1 day

Change Management

Develop tools to drive change and avoid challenging situations

5 Thu

1 day

Improve your Professional Confidence

Promote a positive and confident self-image in a professional manner

5 Thu

1 day

Train the Trainer Advanced

Improve training delivery techniques

10 Tue

1 day

Bias: is it having an impact?

Understand why bias creates risks to your business

**10 - 11
Tue- Wed**

2 day

Advanced Management Skills

Grow as a manager and improve the performance of your team

11 Wed

1 day

Customs Declaration Training

Understand the new process to follow and forms to complete

For more information

Susan Staniforth, training team leader

T 01224 343917 E training@agcc.co.uk

Get ready for Brexit



THE European Union will remain a vitally important market for Scottish businesses after Brexit. With increasing demand for Scottish goods across the world, ensuring your organisation is ready to capitalise on these opportunities with the right people with the right skills in place ahead of our departure from the EU is vital.

Brexit Support Grant

In order to help businesses the Scottish Government is offering funding through its Brexit Support Grant.

The grant provides between a minimum of £2,000 and a maximum of £4,000, available to small and medium-sized enterprises across Scotland. Its intention is to help businesses to manage a wide range of Brexit impacts throughout the UK's withdrawal process.

These projects can cover a wide variety of activities, such as impact scenario planning, the use of professional services in relation to Brexit, and human resource issues. To help your company, the grant can be used to cover costs incurred for:

- professional fees, both legal and financial (not on payroll)
- consultancy on Brexit related topics (not on payroll)
- graduate placements (on payroll)
- interns (on payroll)
- travel and accommodation incurred during international market visits
- temporary storage facilities

Training

The grant may also be used to help upskill up to two employees in several topics pertaining to international trade.

Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce offers many training courses in a wide variety of international trading subjects, such as 'Export Documents Explained' or 'Import Rules Fundamentals'. Courses such as these are eligible for the grant and have huge benefits in ensuring you are ready for the changes our exit from the EU will bring.

Who can apply?

The grant is available to all small to medium-sized enterprises that are based in Scotland if they are VAT registered or have a VAT exemption and meet the SME criteria.

There can only be one grant application per organisation.

How to apply?

To find out more or to learn which Chamber training courses are eligible, please email training@agcc.co.uk.



Tendeka hosted a technology showcase for clients at its Vanguard House headquarters in Westhill.



Circular North-east ambassadors met for the first time in November. Made up of industry professionals, the group helps to raise awareness of the circular economy and direct companies with innovative ideas or a desire to investigate the circular economy further to the Circular North-east programme.





Arrash Nekonom,
managing director, Insiso

What does your company do that others don't?

Insiso offers a transparent software development service that ensures the client is very much part of the design and development process. This is reflected in our slogan 'let's build software together'.

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

The major challenge in our industry is that technology is rapidly changing all the time and we need to keep up in order to remain competitive. To do so I regularly review materials produced by key players in the industry and our team take part in research and development exercises evaluating new technologies and platforms to determine how we can best utilise them for our solutions.

Data security is also a challenge where there is a constant threat to expose vulnerabilities in software systems. We need to be vigilant ensuring the solutions that are developed take into account such vulnerabilities and combat them accordingly. At Insiso we develop our solutions adhering to the latest security standards and have ensured that our business and processes are Cyber Security Essentials and IASME accredited.

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

Management of scope and scope creep has been a major issue for us in the past where we embark on a project that starts to grow arms and legs and multiple heads. Experience over time has taught us how to manage scopes and expectation effectively to minimise this risk.

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

A business should never be about you (the business owner) but about the team.

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

Growing Insiso from the ground up over the last 10 years. When I launched Insiso it was just me and now we are a 20 strong software development team.

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

Introduce software programming academies and clubs for children and young people as part of an effective extra-curricular program working in collaboration with local schools and councils etc. There are so many opportunities in this industry for the next generation. We need to engage and excite them about this.



Quick fire round

What was your first job?

Junior software developer.

When would you like to retire?

I don't think I will ever retire. I will work until my last day, in a different capacity hopefully.

What did you have for breakfast?

Protein granola cereal with raspberries, blueberries and pomegranate.

Who, or what, inspires you?

Creative people who innovate and change the world and society for the better, there is no single individual but a category of people in this regard.

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

I don't get the chance to read many books but Star Wars Episode IX: The Rise of Skywalker was the last film I saw.



The “big little” airline, now serving you on more routes than ever before.

Loganair have increased their presence at Aberdeen Airport over the past year, with 11 routes currently being flown, meaning they are now the airport's largest operator both by number of flights and destinations served. With a mixture of routes for business and leisure from Bristol to Newcastle and Newquay to Shetland, Loganair are growing their network to help you grow yours.

When travelling for business Loganair have got you covered, with their range of flexible fares. Their Fly Flex fare includes a changeable ticket (fare difference may apply) and get home early benefits, so if your meeting finishes earlier than expected there is no need to wait around for your flight, swap to an earlier flight on your day of travel.

The fully flexible fare Fly Flex+ is great for people who have a busy and ever-changing schedule. The most inclusive fare not only gives you full flexibility to change your flight when you want without any additional cost, it also gives you missed flight protection. With executive lounge access and fast track security also included in this fare, you can breeze straight

through security where you can put your feet up and enjoy coffee, cakes and wi-fi!

The airline also has a standout frequent flyer programme - Clan Loganair. It's simple, the more you fly the more you are rewarded and the quicker it is to redeem a Clan Loganair Reward flight, where you only pay taxes.

Collect Clan Points on your commute from Aberdeen and use your Clan Reward Flight to explore one of our other destinations. How about a relaxing weekend in Orkney? Or an outdoor adventure in Norway? What's even better is that you only need to take 16 flights in Fly, 10 in Fly Flex and 5 in Fly Flex+ to redeem your Clan Reward flight!

Fly to Bristol, Brussels, East Midlands & Haugesund (from 24 February 2020), Esbjerg, Kirkwall, London Southend, Newcastle, Newquay (From 1st April 2020), Norwich and Sumburgh from Aberdeen Airport.

Book Today at Loganair.co.uk or via your Travel Agent



Professor John Speakman

Highest Chinese honour for Aberdeen academic

A UNIVERSITY of Aberdeen academic has received the highest honour that can be bestowed upon a scientist by China.

Professor John Speakman has been elected a foreign academician in the Chinese National Academy of Sciences – the first ever from a Scottish university.

Election to the Chinese Academy of Sciences happens every two years and to be elected, scientists need five existing Chinese Fellows supporting them. A secret ballot of all the academicians is then held to determine if 66% of the membership approve the election.

There are currently only 108 foreign fellows, only seven of them from the United Kingdom.

Professor Speakman, who is chair in zoology, said: “I am incredibly honoured to have been elected as an academician of the Chinese National Academy.”

£1m expansion for Enerquip

AN ABERDEEN-based company which specialises in torque machines has announced £1m expansion to cope with growing demand for products and services.

Enerquip, which manufacture torque machines at its facilities in Aberdeen and Caithness, has expanded into additional premises close to its global headquarters in a move which has led to the creation of four jobs, with more expected to follow.

The new rented workshop and yard space is on Blackness Road will facilitate increased fabrication throughput for the growing company which employs about 60 staff in Aberdeen, Caithness, Houston and Abu Dhabi. The company is also looking to secure an additional workshop unit in Aberdeen which may create a further six jobs.



Visitors are booming at the Art Gallery

The economic and social importance of culture

ABERDEEN City Council has released new figures highlighting the economic and social impact of libraries, museums and cultural events across the city.

The Investment in Culture 2018/19 Impacts report highlights that Aberdeen City Council's funding of arts organisations, groups and artists brought over £30m to the economy through tourism in 2018/19.

Councillor Marie Boulton, Aberdeen City Council's culture spokeswoman, said: “This report highlights the impact that council funding can have on the city's economy and wellbeing, at a time when local authorities are rightly having to account for every penny spent.

“It shows the value that even relatively modest levels of funding can bring and we're proud that this investment has such a positive effect on the city, not just through our own libraries and museums but our partner organisations and projects.”

UK's top cycle race heads to North-east

ABERDEEN City and Aberdeenshire Councils have agreed a deal to host the final stage of the Tour of Britain cycle race in 2020 and the Grand Depart in 2021.

The Tour of Britain will build on the success of the Tour Series cycle races which has taken place in Aberdeen city over the past three years, attracting tens of thousands of spectators and bringing economic benefits to the region.

The councils worked in partnership with EventScotland, part of VisitScotland, to secure the event, with the organisation set to continue its long-term support of the Tour in 2020 and 2021.

The Tour is the UK's biggest and most prestigious cycle race attracting the world's top cyclists, including Olympic and World Champions, and Tour de France winners, to compete over eight days each September.

Details of the 2020 route in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire have not been confirmed but is likely to be around 200kms, taking in large parts of Aberdeenshire before finishing in the city centre.



Hugh Little and Colette Backwell
with the CLAN lighthouse

Light the North for CLAN

CLAN Cancer Support is offering businesses the opportunity to be part a unique art and charity event taking place in the North-east in 2020.

Following on from the success of the wild dolphin trail and, most recently, the Oor Wullie Trail, CLAN will bring over 30 lighthouse sculptures designed and created by some of the area's most talented artists to help 'Light the North'.

The lighthouse trail will take people on a cultural tour of the North-east, Moray, Orkney and Shetland.

CLAN's chief executive, Dr Colette Backwell, said: "We're delighted to be partnered with Wild in Art to bring this event to life for the individuals and families across the area to get involved with. CLAN has been supporting people for 36 years and, as many of our clients have told us, we are a shining light in the dark for anyone affected by cancer. The lighthouse is a symbol that reflects what we do and is synonymous with the areas we support."

For details visit clanhouse.org

AMS acquires Sano Safety

ABERDEEN headquartered business AMS Global Group has acquired Sano Safety Ltd to form a new specialised safety division.

AMS Global Group is made up of divisions specialising in marine bulk cargo surveying, marine cargo surveying, marine technical, marine warranty and now safety equipment and training. Former Sano Safety managing director Euan McIntosh has been appointed as a director and general manager of AMS.

AMS Global Group now has the ability to provide the sale, service, repair and rental of safety critical equipment. The Group's capability to offer training services has also increased.

SME Spotlight

Every month, we will take a quick look at a dynamic, exciting business that's making a name for itself in the North-east.



Martin Welsh and Kieran Taylor,
co-founders,
Welsh & Taylor

When was your business established?

Officially launched on January 2, 2020.

What does your business do?

We believe in good financial wellbeing, our aim is to help simplify wealth management so you feel in control of your own finances. That means a lot of different things to different people but we take the time to understand what this involves for our individual clients and we work holistically to assist them in achieving their goals.

What sort of companies do you do business with?

Predominantly we deal with individuals however we also deal with SME's. We have assisted directors and senior management of oil and gas firms, retailers and service companies by providing proactive tax planning and long-term strategies for succession development.

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

There has been volatility in financial markets over the past few years. We have done a lot of work with our clients to coach them through this period of uncertainty and we've achieved great results. Our message to our clients remains consistent; 'remember why you invested in the first place'.

And the biggest opportunity?

Although volatility has been a challenge we would also say it has been our greatest opportunity. Even with all the unpredictability surrounding global stock markets last year was a positive for the majority of investors. We want to guide our clients through times of uncertainty and assist in creating the best outcomes for them.

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

Our relationship with our clients. We're not a transactional business, we only deal in long term relationships and ongoing advice.

Trade assurance visits

by **Stuart Wood**,
customs consultant,
Bethan Customs Consultancy



WHEN HMRC call to arrange a visit to your business, it can be a daunting prospect. When however, as with most things, once you have done your homework and de-mystified the process, you are more than half-way there.

So why do HMRC want to pay your business a visit? To check that company records and systems concerned with the import and/or export of goods are sufficient to provide the information required by EU regulations. They will also want to verify that the value of goods declared for import duty and VAT purposes is in line with EU regulations and that the amounts of import duty and VAT declared are correct.

An initial call outlining the reasons for the visit will be followed up with written confirmation, containing: an opening letter with the name of the visiting officer (and whether they will be accompanied), the proposed date, time and location of the visit. HMRC will also provide a schedule of information and documents needed to carry out the relevant checks, as well as a list of entries to be tested for verification. These entries will be targeted and, depending on the business activities, will include import and exports. Finally, a compliance check information document will also be included.

Companies will be expected to reply in writing accepting the visit, although you are entitled to request a rearranged date, time or location of visit, provided you have a sound reason.

To prepare for the assurance visit, you will be expected to have all relevant documentation that relates to your customs activities readily available. This will include copies of incorporation documents, authorisations and any licences the business may hold in relation to their customs activities.

From the entries selected by HMRC, the visiting officer will want to see all documents for the order selected, from placement of order, to receiving the goods into the company warehouse and records, to the goods being stored and subsequently removed from the warehouse.

The actual visit will, in essence, be split into three different sections: a tour of the premises, paying particular attention to the storage of products; a review of the documentation and testing of these documents for the entries selected, and the completion of a detailed questionnaire that will check and confirm the operation, performance and suitability of the business.

At the conclusion of the visit, a close-out meeting will be held with all

relevant stakeholders in the customs activities of the business. During this meeting, the visiting officer will advise if they require any documentation to be sent to them to allow them to complete their report.

Once the visiting officer has completed their report, HMRC will send out a closure letter, which gives an overview of the event if there have been no errors, or a letter advising of any relevant penalty actions. There will be a right-to-be-heard period, should you wish to appeal, and also details of how to make payments, should you wish to accept the charges unchallenged.

February



Find out how not to just join but join in by meeting other members and hearing from the Chamber team



Learn to translate thinking into action at the 2020 business breakfast series

12 Wed

11:45 -13:00

The Royal Bank of Scotland

Property Network

Join the North-east's property sector movers and shakers to hear Richard Sweetnam, chief officer for city growth at Aberdeen City Council; and George Hood, business development at Balfour Beatty, provide updates on Aberdeen Art Gallery and the Union Terrace Gardens in the first network meeting of the year.

21 Fri

11:45 -13:00

AGCC

Maximise Your Membership

It can be a little overwhelming knowing where to start when it comes to taking advantage of being a Chamber member. We've developed our free 'maximise your membership' events to help enlighten new, existing and potential members about key information and ensure that their organisation and its employees are fully briefed on the benefits of Chamber membership.

25 Tue

08:00 - 09:30

The Gordon Highlanders Museum

Speed Networking

A fantastic way to grow your network and bring you new business opportunities within a short period of time, we'll match you with a potential new contact every four minutes during this fast-paced and fun networking event. To get the most out of the session we recommend you come prepared with business cards and your elevator pitch.

March

5 Thu

07:30 - 9:00

The Chester Hotel

Business Breakfast: Moving Forward with Investment in Connectivity

The first in the 2020 series of flagship breakfast events, brought to you in partnership with the University of Aberdeen Business School, will focus on transport, one of the key priorities for businesses across the region. A panel of speakers will provide insight and prompt debate as we ask whether our physical and digital infrastructure is helping or hindering successful economic growth in our region.

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March



The Budget Breakfast: Starting a new chapter for the UK economy?

12 Thu | 07:30 - 09:00

In the first budget of new Government, the Chancellor Sajid Javid will unveil his ambitious plans to 'unleash Britain's potential, level up across the UK, and usher in a decade of renewal'. In a statement confirming his announcement will be held on March 11, the Chancellor also stated his Budget will prioritise the environment, boost spending on public services and tackle the cost of living.

Will the Chancellor's announcement and proposed policy changes run deep enough for our local economy to grow? Does it serve the North-east of Scotland economy in terms of our energy transition and wider economic growth aspirations? Will he provide a welcome boost to confidence to encourage more investment in key infrastructure projects which support regional connectivity and workforce mobility.

How will the Chancellor's announcement impact you, your business and our region?

Join us, our speakers Derek Leith and Bob Cardno, EY, and our panellists for a post budget analysis and debrief.

07:30 registration and networking breakfast
08:00 welcome
08:05 presentations
08:35 panel session and questions
08:55 closing remarks

Do you want to receive details of
our upcoming events direct to
your inbox?

Let us know at info@agcc.co.uk



Paramedic collaborates on undergraduate-education in Scotland

THE lead paramedic consultant for the Scottish Ambulance Service has accepted the position of visiting professor at Robert Gordon University (RGU) to collaborate on creating the best paramedic undergraduate-education experience in Scotland.

RGU successfully bid to bring paramedic undergraduate education to the Highlands and Islands and Grampian in October of 2019, boosting the capacity for training new paramedics in Scotland and enhancing patient care.

The university's new visiting professor, Paul Gowens, will support its BSc Paramedic Practice course at a strategic level, as well as providing masterclass opportunities for students.

Professor Ian Murray, head of the school of nursing and midwifery at RGU, said: "To have Scotland's leading paramedic as part of our team is one of many steps we are taking to provide a curriculum that's fit for purpose and the future. Paul's contribution will help us take strides toward becoming the leading university in Scotland for paramedic practice."

Transatlantic business event set to unite global energy hubs

TWO of the world's leading energy industry locations will collaborate on a unique event which will take place in Aberdeen for the eighth consecutive year in March.

Hosted by Granite PR, the annual Aberdeen-Houston Gateway has become a much-anticipated fixture on the business calendar, annually generating interest from both sides of the Atlantic. In 2020, the event will be held in association with the Greater Houston Partnership and G-Tech Innovation Centre.

As two of the founder members of the World Energy Cities Partnership, Aberdeen and Houston have a long and deep relationship which will be explored and one highlight of the visit will be the March 31 flagship Scottish showcase lunch at Aberdeen's Norwood Hall Hotel, a session which regularly draws an audience in excess of 120.



Emma Allen

Aberdeenshire Council has appointed its first virtual head teacher. Emma Allen, former acting head in Laurencekirk, has 400 pupils to nurture and staff to support. Her pupils are care experienced young people and the role has been specifically created to develop the council's corporate parenting plan and improve outcomes for the children.



Martin Meyer

A leading academic whose research into technology and innovation is globally recognised has been appointed as the new head of the University of Aberdeen Business School. Martin Meyer arrives from the University of Kent where he was dean of the business school. Over his career he participated in more than 30 projects valued in excess of £3m.



Jamie Clark

Jamie Clark has joined the growing team at KR Group as group operation support. Jamie has experience in management and operation roles. He will be based in the Newburgh office.



Paul Robertson

Paul Robertson has joined Lloyds Banking Group as associate director for asset finance. Paul will be supporting corporate and commercial Bank of Scotland customers and will also be looking to expand the bank's presence in the asset finance market.



David Spence

Lockton, the world's largest privately held independent insurance broker, has appointed David Spence as an account executive at its Aberdeen office as it looks to grow its customer base across the North-east. David has 16 years' experience in the corporate insurance broking environment to the role and is an Associate of the Chartered Insurance Institute.



Sarah Gray

Sarah Gray has joined award-winning registered charity Sport Aberdeen in the newly created head of marketing and commercial development role. Sarah is responsible for leading and managing all aspects of marketing and communications activity and increasing inward investment to the company. Sarah previously worked predominantly in the oil and gas sector.



Professor John Watson

An engineering professor from the University of Aberdeen has been named as a Fellow of the IEEE, the world's largest technical professional organisation for the advancement of technology. Professor John Watson received the accolade in recognition of his work contributing to the development of submersible holography to record high-resolution 3D images of marine particles.



Greg Houston

A North-east accountant has been appointed to a key local role in an organisation which promotes professional development and networking within the profession. Greg Houston, of award-winning Aberdeen accountancy practice Infinity Partnership, has been named chair of the ACCA Aberdeen and North of Scotland Network.



Lynne Stewart and David Geddie

Fast-growing global well intervention company Wellpro Group has announced two significant appointments as it eyes further expansion in the Eastern hemisphere. Mark Fraser has taken up the role of regional manager in the Middle East, while Martin Webster has been appointed regional manager in Asia.



Jon Oakey

Aberdeen Harbour Board has appointed Jon Oakey as finance and business services director. Jon joins the board after three years with Stagecoach Group as finance director, Scotland, including a period as managing director of the East Scotland bus operation. His extensive career spans the oil and gas and transport industries.



Joe Wightman and Darran Falconer

With a projected increase in well management work in the coming 12 months, Zenith Energy has increased its engineering team with two appointments. Drilling engineers Joe Wightman and Darran Falconer have joined the team at Zenith, which specialises in well engineering and project management, bringing staff numbers to 20 across its offices in Aberdeen and Australia. Joe will be based initially in the Aberdeen HQ planning a 2020 drilling campaign. Darran is currently based on a Zenith onshore drilling project for SDX Energy in Morocco.



Rab Dickson

Nestrans, the North-east of Scotland transport partnership, has appointed Rab Dickson as director, following the retirement of Derick Murray. Rab has worked as Nestrans' transport strategy manager since the partnership's inception in 2006, following a 10-year period as head of transportation at Aberdeen City Council.

Other recent appointments

MHA Henderson Loggie has strengthened its audit team in Edinburgh with the appointment of **Diana Penny** as partner. Diana's focus is to drive growth in the firm's audit business. She has more than 25 years' experience, the majority of it with Grant Thornton where latterly she was a director in the Edinburgh office.

Mackinnons Solicitors LLP has promoted **Angus Easton** and **Kirstin Ejsmont**, marine/commercial and Kim Harkness and Jane Merson property/private client to senior associate and of **Fiona Copp** marine/commercial as senior solicitor.

FPSO integrity management and repair specialist Marine Technical Limits has added three new recruits to its multi-disciplinary team. Following a considerable number of contract wins during 2019 and an busy autumn, the Kintore-based organisation has appointed **Ruairidh Hardy** and **Santiago Zuniga** as naval architects and **Liam Dey**, a CAD designer.

Following significant growth over the last 12 months, Anderson Anderson & Brown LLP, chartered accountants and business advisors, has promoted 58 members of staff at its Aberdeen and Edinburgh offices, with promotions to the senior management team accounting for nine of the moves: **Matthew Allan** (audit), **Hilary Dyson** (cloud accounting), **Nicola Rollings** (restructuring and recovery), **Vikki Venerus** (wealth management), **Stephen Lawie** (software and systems), **Lisa Smith** (business advisory), **Katy Thomson** (corporate tax), **Fiona Sewell** (audit) and **Richard Petrie** (corporate benefits).

Johnston Carmichael, Scotland's largest independent accountancy and business advisory firm, has expanded its leadership team with a promotion in its Inverurie office. **Emma Waterman**, who joined Johnston Carmichael in 2016, has been promoted to partner. She joins three other colleagues being promoted in the firm's leadership team across Scotland. **Stewart Pennington** and **Suzanne Brownie** who both work in the Edinburgh office have been made partner and director respectively. **Ewan Bolt**, who was also promoted to director, is based in the Inverness office.

Ledingham Chalmers has announced its fourth partner appointment this year. All 12 Simpson & Marwick Aberdeen staff made the move, including property partner **David Geddie**, who takes up a consultancy role at Ledingham Chalmers Estate Agency.

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