



G whizz

What 5G means for your business

All for ONE

Peek inside the region's Tech Hub

Fact fin-ding

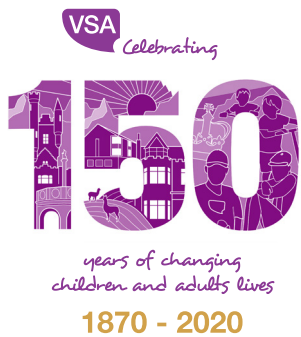
Under the skin of fintech

High 5G



*years of changing
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1870 - 2020



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Cover image
Technology

April's theme
Talent

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MARCH 2020
Focus on **Technology**



The one and only



One fin-e day



Feel the G-force

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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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Let's get digital

WHEN the sector diversification strategy for the region was conceived, it initially focused on four pillars: tourism, food and drink, life sciences and building on our oil and gas experience to become a global all-energy hub.

Alongside improved access to business growth funding and creating a more aspirational culture, digital was listed as a key enabler in our economic growth and realising the renaissance region vision. This referred to the need for world class digital infrastructure and connectivity and using technology and big data to power our businesses of the future.

It would have seemed to the casual observer that this definition of digital was about as far as it went for this region and that other cities around the UK had secured first mover advantage in this space. But as we delved further into the topic it became clear that a strong but fragmented and under-the-radar digital eco system already existed in the North-east. Many companies were delivering leading edge work, supporting clients in our main sectors, under various monikers including training, oil and gas consultancy, solutions, data, technology systems, you name it.

And so a fifth pillar, **digital & entrepreneurship**, was added and the challenge now being led by Opportunity North East is to harness this into a recognisable digital cluster with a real opportunity to build on existing strengths and create significant competitive advantages including establishing a USP around use of data and AI in the energy sector.

So what's the scale of ambition?

That our universities are recognised for their excellence in digital research and generate large numbers of graduates with related skills every year. Creating 50 new indigenous start-ups including spin-outs from those universities. Attracting five major global anchor businesses and 25 start-up companies to choose this region to grow their operations. And that ultimately this region is home to 15 to 20 £20m+ turnover, 'digital' companies. Why shouldn't the next Skyscanner be conceived and grow in Aberdeen rather than Edinburgh?

Returning to the point that this level of ambition has to be backed up by world-class infrastructure it is encouraging to see progress towards Aberdeen achieving Gigabit city status by 2021 supported by city region deal investment and delivered by CityFibre and Vodafone. But we are starting from a low base.

In the Centre for Cities 2020 Outlook report, Aberdeen was in 63rd (and last) place in the UK with only 23.3% of premises achieving ultrafast broadband speeds in excess of 100Mbps. And that's before we even start to consider the challenges facing businesses and communities in Aberdeenshire.

The Chamber has consistently called for this region to be prioritised as a full 5G pilot area to demonstrate the value of this aligned to our economic strategy. Both UK and Scottish Governments talk a good game about delivering on 21st century connectivity but we need real action and investment, not platitudes and meaningless statistics.

Currently 33% of internet requests and calls on trains fail, so, as we develop our campaign to finally deliver sub mile-a-minute rail travel between Aberdeen and the Central Belt, alongside this we will push to ensure that time spent on trains is productive time.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport aims to make Wi-Fi and 5G mobile broadband speeds of 1Gbps available on all UK mainline train routes by 2025 but this is not soon enough. We want to see progress now with the Project Swift proof of concept trial that could deliver consistent coverage regardless of tunnels and cuttings allowing passengers to 'download the entire Beatles back catalogue, in under two minutes'. We can't just Let it Be!



Russell Borthwick
chief executive



Ledingham Chalmers turnover and profit rise

FULL-SERVICE law firm Ledingham Chalmers has increased its turnover and profit for the last financial year.

Turnover for year ending March 2019 was just over £11.6m, compared with around £10.6m the year before and profits were up from £3.2m to £3.47m.

Ledingham Chalmers, which has offices in Aberdeen, Inverness, Stirling and Edinburgh, said the figures reflected strong performances from teams including private client, litigation, corporate and commercial property.

Group turnover, including subsidiary Golden Square Wealth Management (GSWM), was also up to £12.1m compared with £11.6m. Profits were slightly down – £3.5m compared with £3.6m. The firm says this reflects investment in the growing GSWM team over the period to support future, sustainable growth.

New investment for Arrow

ARROW, which specialises in telephony, data, IT and energy solutions for businesses, has completed a strategic investment from funds advised by MML Capital Partners LLP (MML).

This follows the highly successful partnership with Growth Capital Partners (GCP), a UK SME private equity firm. GCP's investment in Arrow enabled the business to complete eight acquisitions, nearly triple earnings and double the employee base while adding significant further scale and expertise in cloud telephony, energy and IT services in just three years.

MML is now investing in Arrow to support the next phase of growth and transformation.

Financial boost for Keenan's green energy plant

KEENAN Recycling has secured £540,000 from the Zero Waste Scotland's Circular Economy Investment Fund. The £18m fund provides investment for SMEs in support of projects which will deliver growth in the circular economy, thanks to the European Regional Development Fund.

Scotland's largest organic waste recycling company will use the funding to expand and improve its integrated approach to collecting and turning organic waste into green energy from its new site near Glasgow.

The waste plant will unpack and process the food waste, collected and delivered by Keenan Recycling's fleet of disposal trucks. The waste will be turned into liquidised fuel which will be shared with local anaerobic digester (AD) plants for conversion into green energy.

The Linwood plant and integrated service represent a £1.7million investment overall and follows the successful trial of a biofuel plant at Keenan's premises in New Deer, Aberdeenshire.



Patrick Machray of ONE

£21m SeedPod for food and drink announced

THE creation of a food and drink development hub in North-east Scotland has secured £10m of capital funding from the UK Government and Scottish Government, Opportunity North East (ONE) has announced.

The funding, secured through the Aberdeen City Region Deal, is the single largest public sector investment in the food and drink industry in Scotland.

Led by private sector catalyst ONE, SeedPod is due to open in 2022 and is an investment of £21m in the sector's growth, including £4.4m of funding from ONE.

SeedPod is the third major sector-specific innovation hub project being delivered via the Aberdeen City Region Deal. SeedPod will be a new-build facility, located on Scotland's Rural College's (SRUC) campus close to Aberdeen International Airport and the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route. It will be the centre of excellence for nurturing and growing food and drink businesses in North-east Scotland.

It will provide the tools, knowledge and training to help fledgling and established companies identify new markets, drive growth and adopt leading edge production technologies, rapidly increasing profitability and capitalising upon the region's assets and collaborative links. It will also create an innovative environment for the development of products that meet burgeoning consumer demand for novel food types, emerging trends and alternative proteins, driving the sustainability agenda.

Patrick Machray, chair of the ONE food, drink and agriculture sector board and Food Hub (NES) Limited, the new company formed to deliver the SeedPod project, said: "ONE's ambition with industry is to grow the sector in the region by 5% per annum, doubling outputs and exports by 2030. SeedPod will deliver this ambition by building upon ONE's existing food, drink and agriculture activity and driving further engagement, growth and innovation."

Awards for Norwood Hall and Pittodrie House

CITY-based Norwood Hall Hotel won Wedding Venue of the Year at the Top Tier Awards while Nicola Daniels of sister venue Pittodrie House at the Chapel of Garioch collected Wedding Co-ordinator of the Year on the same night.



The one and only

IT IS 135 years since Aberdeen businessman and philanthropist John Gray funded the creation of the School of Art and Science bearing his name in a magnificent pink Corrennie granite building in Schoolhill.

It remained as Gray's School of Art for around 80 years until it outgrew the premises which then became Robert Gordon University's administrative headquarters.

Now thanks to another Aberdeen businessman and philanthropist the building has undergone a £1.5m refurbishment and is playing a vital role in shaping the city's future economy as the ONE Tech Hub.

Opportunity North East (ONE) has led the development of the Hub with its single largest investment to date and with Robert Gordon University (RGU) and ONE CodeBase as key partners.

ONE is the private sector's response to the long-term economic challenges facing North-east Scotland. It was established with an investment of £62m over 10 years from the Wood Foundation and is chaired by Sir Ian Wood. Jared Owen, director - digital and



“ONE Tech Hub is the focal point for the wider digital tech ecosystem and is host to a range of activity and events with industry experts covering trending topics within the digital space and challenges within the industry.”

Jared Owen,
director - digital and entrepreneurship,
ONE

entrepreneurship at ONE, explained that the Hub is the physical platform for bringing together entrepreneurs, existing companies and investors to grow and anchor the digital entrepreneurship community in the North-east.

“There is a perception that Aberdeen doesn't have a digital sector and historically I can see why,” said Jared. “There are actually close to 200 companies in the digital technology space in Aberdeen which have predominantly been delivering to the oil and gas sector so are perceived to simply be part of the oil and gas chain.”

“One of our aims is to get those digital technology companies to step up and step out of being ‘simply part of the oil and gas supply chain’ and be recognised in the sector within their own right.”

“A lot of them are producing products, services or offerings which, with some support and pivoting, will be just as applicable to other parts of the energy sector. In reality we have a strong digital energy tech sector which has real potential for growth.”

“There are also many delivering products, services and offerings to the food, drink and agricultural



sector and life sciences and some are starting to engage with VisitAberdeenshire in the tourism sector.”

ONE Tech Hub is the focal point for the wider digital tech ecosystem and is host to a range of activity and events with industry experts covering trending topics within the digital space and challenges within the industry.

“We are focused on supporting the tenants within the One Tech Hub, where we currently have 15 companies co-working, hot desking or with their own dedicated offices, added Jared.

“Through ONE Codebase, our partnership with Codebase, the UK’s largest technology incubator, we have access to all their expertise and the wider network they have into other industries which will help these companies grow. It helps them think about potential investment, about mentoring and to partner with and learn from other companies which are going through similar challenges.”

ONE says the veteran entrepreneurs provide real life experience and expertise. They include Michael Boniface, director of the One Tech

Hub and head of the partnership with Codebase.

“Michael has gone through the process of establishing, growing and selling companies and can help those

“

“We have a fantastic amount of industry and domain experience from the oil and gas perspective and we have lots of very experienced workers around engineering, manufacturing and projects offshore. The opportunity is to augment this with digital skills and integrate and embed this across our businesses. We are working with both our local universities and with NESCOL to provide easy access to short term courses that will help with upskilling and reskilling.”

ONE

in the early stages of this journey understand the challenges they are going to face, the obstacles they are going to have to overcome and help guide them through that process,” added Jared.

The aim of ONE Tech Hub over the next few years is to be the catalyst for the growth of 10 to 20 digital companies recognised as leading in the digital space and with turnovers of over £20m. It has created an environment to support people and businesses to explore opportunities and give them access to the people and tools to do so, giving them the best possible chance of success.

“Aberdeen has two unique selling points,” said Jared. “We have here, on the back of the oil and gas industry, a significant amount of industrial data and there are lots of ways other industries can learn from that. The other key area is around energy technology. Dundee has 20 years of technology experience tied back to the gaming industry. Edinburgh is seen as leading the way in fintech. Aberdeen is leading the way in digital energy tech.

“We have a fantastic amount of industry and domain experience from the oil and gas perspective and we have lots of very experienced



workers around engineering, manufacturing and projects offshore. The opportunity is to augment this with digital skills and integrate and embed this across our businesses. We are working with both our local universities and with NESCOL to provide easy access to short term courses that will help with upskilling and reskilling.”

As well as providing inspiration for those who work within it, ONE Tech Hub provides an inspirational space for the wider digital tech community. It is home to the digital ecosystem and hosts a wide variety of business events, including networking, education and accelerator programmes and workshops. Its event spaces can accommodate up to 150 people and breakout or meeting spaces designed for eight to 80.

Recently it was successful in drawing together local partners to persuade a global oil and gas operator to travel from North America to look to North-east companies for digital technology expertise given the immense industry knowledge that resides here, rather than going to the automatic choice of California’s Silicon Valley.

THERE are a wide range of companies based in ONE Tech Hub which opened last summer.

At its heart is ONE Codebase, a partnership with technology incubator Codebase. ONE Codebase is an essential element of creating and growing the start-up community. Tenants include a digital accountancy firm; a non-profit organisation supporting cyber safety for children and young people; a company which carries out big data analysis for supply chain and international trade; one offering smart home solutions; a digital marketing agency; and a GDPR training and consultancy service.

The Hub is also home to RGU’s Entrepreneurship and Innovation activity and a range of other entrepreneurship and digital tech facilitators including the OGTC’s TechX, Barclay’s Eagle Lab, AB15, Scotland IS, CENSIS and Datalab.

Surging demand for data science will continue

by Roy Buchan,
senior vice president,
OPEX Group



IT'S FAIR to say that 2019 ended on a note of political and economic turmoil. But while the global oil and gas industry will face a number of uncertainties over the coming months, there is one trend I can predict with total confidence - the momentum-gaining groundswell in the adoption of data science and predictive technologies.

In recent years, data analysis has been widely used across a number of process industries to predict threats and optimise performance. Now the energy sector is beginning to recognise and utilise the valuable information that is embedded in their vast quantities of existing data: with a drive towards cutting costs, improving operational efficiency, increasing revenue and achieving environmental compliance.

We have spent the past four years working with operators in the oil and gas sector to help them operate more safely, efficiently, and cleanly. We firmly believe that we can help our customers to adopt a completely different operating model and more and more of our customers are doing just that.

Problem-solving is at the heart of our business. Data science has the ability to analyse mountains of data to resolve

problems more quickly and efficiently than was previously possible with a purely engineered solution. Driven by the emergence of proficient machine learning algorithms and a shift from descriptive to predictive analytics, predictive maintenance has been steadily gaining ground in the industry and shows no sign of slowing down. We have seen a surge in demand for our services in this field, but market research reveals that this is by no means limited to the UKCS - reports put CAGR in the global predictive maintenance market at anywhere between 22% - 39%.

As data science proves its worth, operators are exploiting its capabilities not only in predicting operational threats, but also in resolving specific challenges and improving the performance of their systems.

One such challenge involves controlling the levels of oil in produced water during oil and gas production. We recently worked with a customer to explore the role of data science in managing this, where conventional engineering methods had struggled to identify the root cause.

Our multi-disciplinary team of data scientists, data analysts and process engineers analysed two years' worth of data, as well as chemical samples. In fact, we analysed over 70m data

points using a range of algorithms to identify and understand the key factors contributing to the problem. These insights enabled us to define detailed operating conditions, which would control this issue.

Data science is not a replacement for engineering; it's an opportunity to supplement and augment engineering excellence, processing huge volumes of data so that teams can make informed decisions that will predict and prevent threats, resolve problems and improve performance of offshore assets.

2019 was also a pivotal year for the target net zero movement, as industry is required to reduce their emissions and shrink their carbon footprint. Going forward, data science will play an increasingly vital role in helping businesses to meet their targets in the battle against climate change: saving megawatts, diverting fuel gas to export, reducing diesel costs, and identifying opportunities to optimise the plant.

As artificial intelligence and machine learning become part of our everyday lives, we are shifting towards a business model where data analysis is no longer a 'nice to have', but a 'need to have'.

Office market shortage possible

ABERDEEN'S office market is now entering recovery mode after experiencing the strongest year of demand for offices since the energy sector downturn of 2014, according to Savills and CBRE

Dan Smith, head of Savills Aberdeen and director in the office agency team, said: "The tide is turning in Aberdeen and we've seen confidence return to the market following a recovery in the energy sector and rising oil prices. We've experienced one of the strongest years of office take-up in five years which is a positive sign for the Aberdeen market."

Key deals in the year have included Oceaneering committing to a sublease of 51,356sq ft from Aker Solutions at Aberdeen International Business Park in Dyce and TAQA committing to 76,620sq ft at Prime Four Business Park in Kingswells.

In the city centre, EY, KPMG and Chevron agreed lettings at Muse Developments and Aberdeen City Council's prime Marischal Square development.

"While Aberdeen does still suffer from an over-supply of office accommodation much of this space remains obsolete," said Dan. "The continued flight to quality has seen a reduction in grade A supply and with the current development pipeline lag, it is entirely feasible that we could start seeing a shortage of Grade A supply in the centre in the not too distant future."

Derren McRae, managing director of CBRE in Aberdeen, said: "Mirroring the improved economic sentiment in the North-east, 2019 has been a great year for the office market performance in Aberdeen. With the oil price rising to \$60 - \$75 per barrel over the year, the city has witnessed an encouraging level of take-up, focused mainly on the energy and professional services sectors."

Wilson James takes major step towards equality, diversity and inclusion

WILSON James has joined the Valuable 500, a business to business initiative launched at the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2019.

It calls on 500 global businesses to commit to placing disability inclusion on their business leadership agendas. Late last year Wilson James launched its public commitments as a business to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and listed its priorities as championing ability, LGBT inclusion and continued mental health awareness and support.

Joining the Valuable 500 is the first action on its 2020 agenda. It requires that a new, permanent agenda item is added to its operational boards around physical and hidden disabilities.

Gemma Quirke, managing director for security and aviation at Wilson James, and strategic lead for EDI, said: "The commitments it requires of its members ensure that, far from being paid lip service, inclusivity is a key strategic priority for organisations which recognise that diversity is a strength."



Murray Ross of Cortez Subsea

Cortez Subsea to lay pipeline in Malaysia

THE team at Cortez Subsea is mobilising the Grand Canyon II offshore vessel for its project to lay the first ever subsea pipeline using mechanical connectors offshore Malaysia.

The Global 1201 vessel will also be mobilised to install the pipeline system for the Tembikai Non-Associated Gas (TNAG) development by Vestigo Petroleum.

The work is being jointly executed with Alam Maritim Resources Berhad, under its consortium agreement with Cortez, which is delivering engineering, procurement and operational activities from its office in Kuala Lumpur.

Murray Ross, general manager and director of Cortez Subsea in Malaysia, said: "This project is championing many firsts, not just for the region, but for the industry as a whole. In a lower for longer industry, looking at new ways of working is essential and at Cortez we consider a careful technology mix for quicker, safer and cleaner pipelay which satisfies our client's challenges."

Cyrenians shares in £1.9m boost

FUNDING has been made available to causes of all sizes by the independent Bank of Scotland Foundation, with Aberdeen Cyrenians one of the biggest North-east beneficiaries.

It has received a £125,000 boost from the foundation's new Change Programme, which has provided a share of £1.2m to nine charities.

Another 53 charities receive a share of £605,919 from its Reach Programme, which is directed at groups that support people through various stages in their lives. The money will be used to expand the charity's direct access service, which offers anyone facing homelessness or hardship the chance to meet a support worker and get food, clothing and toiletries without need for an appointment.

Aberdeen Cyrenians chief executive Mike Burns said: "We recognise that a crisis can hit at any time and have ambitious plans to grow DAS in the coming year, moving away from the standard working week, and operating 365 days a year from February, including two evenings per week.

"The funding will allow us to support a need that is not being met in Aberdeen and we expect over 500 vulnerable people will benefit from our support this year because of this."

RUNNING A BUSINESS?

connect with us

Aberdeenshire gin producer, Raven Spirits has started exporting to key Asian markets thanks to strategic advice and help from Business Gateway.

Peter Sim, director of Raven Spirits, took full advantage of the breadth of specialist support available, engaging in regular one-to-one advice sessions with growth adviser, Bill Hogarty.

Business Gateway's bespoke action plan had a substantial impact on Raven Spirits' ambitions to export and has given Peter the confidence to target new markets in 2020 and beyond.



The impact of Business Gateway's support has been immense, it helped us to achieve our goal of exporting years earlier than if we had done it alone.

Peter Sim,
Raven Spirits



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One fin-e day

SCOTLAND will one day be as famous for fintech as it is for whisky, salmon and oil and gas expertise. That's the hope of Stephen Ingledew, chief executive of Fintech Scotland, the independent non-profit organisation which is working to ensure that the country capitalises on the massive opportunities which fintech offers.

It is making good progress. In only two years the number of fintech companies has grown from 26 to more than 120 and Scotland's fintech cluster has been formally recognised for its excellence by the European Secretariat for Cluster Analysis (ESCA) which benchmarks economic clusters across the Europe.

Scotland is the first fintech cluster in the UK to be recognised for the award and one of only three in Europe.

"Fintech is about reinventing the financial world to improve the way both consumers and businesses engage with money to make it better for them," said Stephen. "The opportunity is created by using new technology but the key is about

the outcome, what it's trying to do, which is improve the way everybody, not just those in the financial world, engage with money because it impacts on everyone's lives. It is not so much a sector, more of a movement and a big opportunity. However, it is important it is human-led for the best outcomes and not just using a new bit of tech like artificial intelligence.



"We often say 'fintech is far too important to leave it up to the financial services industry. It's about being creative and generating that cost cluster innovation from oil and gas or health or energy into the financial world which is driving the opportunities.'"

Stephen Ingledew,
chief executive,
Fintech Scotland

"Everyone has had bad financial experiences, whether borrowing, saving, investing or insurance, just as businesses have had in terms of managing cash flow, invoicing and auditing and all those sorts of things can be improved. Fintech is the movement of reinventing the financial world by innovative businesses which recognise there are ways things can be done better using new technology."

He said Scotland is ideally placed to capitalise on the movement.

"Scotland has a history of both the financial sector - banking, payments and insurance - and a heritage of innovation.

"Scotland invented banking and invented life assurance, although it is well known for innovation in so many other things, like oil and gas. That blend of an innovative culture plus financial heritage provides an environment to create the new future we are were looking to embrace."

He said the Scottish fintech community is growing through a combination of business start-ups, businesses coming into Scotland from other parts of the world and thirdly, and importantly, businesses

in other sectors like oil and gas and energy recognising that their technology can help play a part in reinventing the financial world.

"We often say 'fintech is far too important to leave it up to the financial services industry,'" said Stephen. "It's about being creative and generating that cost cluster innovation from oil and gas or health or energy into the financial world which is driving the opportunities.

"Aberdeen can definitely play a part, even though it doesn't have the same number of big financial institutions as Edinburgh or Glasgow. There are a few fintech's based in Aberdeen and there is an opportunity to make people realise that they are in an area of innovation which could be applied to the world of fintech.

"Aberdeen is transforming itself thanks to highly skilled individuals from other sectors and world class universities. Fintech and tech start-ups are developing rapidly, attracting attention and investments."

Stephen said that fintech could help small businesses with challenges like managing cash flow.

Fintech Scotland brings together

the big institutions like the banks, universities and government to work together to support small business growth.

"It can be very cumbersome but using new technologies can make that so much more straightforward

“

"Aberdeen can definitely play a part even though it doesn't have the same number of big financial institutions as Edinburgh or Glasgow. There are a few fintech's based in Aberdeen and there is an opportunity to make people realise that they are in an area of innovation which could be applied to the world of fintech."

Stephen Ingledeew,
chief executive,
Fintech Scotland

and intuitive in the way you might manage your own banking on an app on your phone. It is the same for invoicing. Small businesses sometimes have to wait 30, 60 or 90 days to be paid but they should be paid straight away. There is no reason for delays anymore with fintech's which are focused on instant payment without any additional cost or loss to the small enterprise.

"The way banks support and provide products to small businesses can be improved in loans for example. There are companies already using new data to ensure businesses get the right lending support at the right time without having to go through a long bureaucratic application process."

Pinsent Masons is a global strategic partner to Fintech Scotland. Partner and financial services technology specialist Yvonne Dunn said Scotland has a lot to offer fintech based on the large financial services institutions already established here, our general culture of entrepreneurship and the strength of our universities sending top-rated computer science graduates into the market.

"It is about disruption in the financial



services sector - traditionally you might have had banks as a one-stop shop but now technology businesses are coming in and nibbling away at that chain and trying to deliver services and solutions to customers which they might otherwise not have had."

She said the big financial services players are now collaborating with fintech companies because both have strengths to offer customers.

“

"It is about disruption in the financial services sector - traditionally you might have had banks as a one-stop shop but now technology businesses are coming in and nibbling away at that chain"

Yvonne Dunn,
services technology specialist,
Pinsent Masons

"The fintechs bring fresh ideas and are a bit more agile and nimble in developing things more quickly than can often be achieved in the environment of a bank. However, at the end of the day this is a regulated environment involving people's money so the brand and trust that banks represent to customers are also important.

"Although banking was the first wave of fintech disruption the insurance industry is also increasingly starting to see more disruption coming through with insurtech. Companies will now offer you insurance for an hour so you can borrow a car rather than the traditional insurance model where you're in for a year. It's a response to changes in our spending patterns (using not owning such as Airbnb, car clubs, Uber) and I think 2020 is likely to be a year of continued growth for fintech."

FINTECH will be the focus of the Chamber's April Business Breakfast where Stephen Ingledew will be sharing more insights to help North-east organisations understand the reinvention of the financial world and maximise the value it can bring to their business.

The event will include a look at the 'cluster model' emerging in Scotland, how all aspects of money and e-commerce are changing; and how this offers significant potential to SME's to unleash their productivity.

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, Taking the Fear Out of Fintech, will take place on April 29 at The Village Hotel. For more information, visit the Chamber website.

Which item of tech would you get rid of?



“As a technophile this is an incredibly difficult question to answer. I embrace all tech and have a house full of smart tech, including (like a lot of people) various ‘Alexa’ products, whom I find myself saying thank-you to every time ‘she’ turns on or off the lights etc.

“I do however try to limit the tech within the office and with technology moving and advancing so quickly, if I had to pick, I would get rid of some of my old laptops, devices and gadgets that I still have hanging around. I’m not likely to use them anymore and I would also make sure I recycled them so that I do my part in donating old technology in a way that’s safe for the environment, although I’m keeping my old Nokia 8850 for sentimental reasons.”

Derek Scott, *head of sales, Atexor*



“We develop technology for the well construction industry, saving rig time through more efficient operations and cutting wait on weather time... so we definitely won’t be getting rid of any of that. Technology is amazing and it has allowed us to do so much more than we’d have ever thought possible.

“It maybe wouldn’t be considered as technology in the modern sense, but I’d have to get rid of alarm clocks – analogue or digital. I’m not a morning person. You’ll find me burning the midnight oil before getting up at the crack of dawn – unless that alarm clock is my two young children. That’s the kind of alarm clock I can get behind.”

Tristam Horn, *managing director, Deltatek Global*



“As a production agency we use cutting-edge VR technology to create an engaging narrative content. Not only do we create one of a kind immersive experiences for viewers but expand the experiences into online graphic novels and VR video games and the tech item I would get rid of is the TV.

“We are becoming more and more mobile and the TV is just one purpose, not multi-purpose like a phone. If you have a mobile signal you can watch something on your phone anywhere when you go camping, when you are in the middle of a desert safari. My mobile phone is one terabyte so it is like a computer. More and more, especially in Asia where they are a little bit ahead in terms of mobile usage, none of the younger generation uses a TV anymore because they can watch anything from TV series to films to VR content on their phone.”

Kara Kandarakis, *chief executive officer and founder, Triforce Entertainment*

Record transactions for AAB

ANDERSON Anderson & Brown LLP, chartered accountants and business advisors, successfully completed a record 70 transactions during 2019, with a combined total deal value exceeding £500m.

AAB's deal activity during 2019 covered a range of sectors including energy, food and drink, construction, technology, healthcare and education and business services.

Some of AAB's key merger and acquisition highlights during 2019 included the management buy-out of Arjowiggins Creative Papers, DC Thomson Media's acquisition of PSP Media, the merger of Inspire Catering with CH&Co's Scottish operations, Waldorf's acquisition of Endeavour Energy's UK assets, the disposal of Apollo Offshore to Global Energy Group and the disposal of Motion Software to Jonas Software.

AAB has significantly increased its focus on deal activity in the central belt following its Edinburgh office launch in June 2018 and the central belt deals team, led by Lyn Calder, is rapidly growing following the completion of 20 deals across the central belt during 2019.



Jim Shiach, James Scullion and John Dick

Linton Investments buys CUL Holdings

ABERDEEN-based oil and gas service group CUL Holdings Limited has been acquired, for an undisclosed sum, by Linton Investments Limited, the investment vehicle established by the Ferguson family, following the sale of Ferguson Group.

Centrifuges Un-Limited was formed by local entrepreneur Jim Shiach in 2001 and he will continue to be involved with the company during the transition period. No redundancies are planned.

The Linton Investment portfolio includes a diverse spread of investments across different sectors including marine, farming, property and technology.

James Scullion, on behalf of Linton Investments, who will join the Centrifuges board, said: "This is our first investment back into the oil sector as we have been waiting for the right time in the cycle and the right opportunity with the right environmental credentials to come along. Centrifuges has an excellent heritage which we believe we can build upon and develop."

CSR award for Wilson James

WILSON James, a provider of security, logistics and aviation services, won the Corporate Social Responsibility Initiative of the Year award at the 2019 Security and Fire Excellence Awards.

The win recognised a pioneering partnership between Wilson James, The Shaw Trust and Google to provide work experience and career opportunities in the security industry to individuals with visible and hidden disabilities.

Gemma Quirke, managing director for security and aviation at Wilson James, said: "Our goal in developing this programme with our partners was to literally change the face of the security industry, which often suffers from stereotyped perceptions. In the 21st century security risks are more complex than they have ever been, requiring a wider set of skills and expertise to understand and manage.

"Diversity efforts are therefore not a PR exercise but a necessity in our field. We need new and more diverse talent and ambition more than ever and we need to be proactive about seeking and developing that talent. It is about doing the right thing for our clients, our industry and the people who chose to build their careers within it."

Early learning experts head to Germany

ABERDEEN city councillors have approved a proposal for 20 of Aberdeen's Early Learning and Childcare professionals to visit their counterparts in Germany to benchmark approaches to outdoors learning which can be applied in the city.

The visit is fully funded with a grant from the ERASMUS+ the European Union programme for education, training, youth and sport, and follows a successful five-day visit by the practitioners to Spain in October to study training designed specifically for the group by Professor Katia Hueso, the founder of the first outdoor nursery in Spain.

The visit is planned for April. The group will experience outdoor settings based in north Germany and receive high quality training from those responsible for initiating and developing these services.

PIM rings the changes for 2020 event

PLANT Integrity Management (PIM) is ringing the changes with its annual integrity management event this year with the addition of external speakers.

Louise Atkin, HM principal specialist inspector, from the HSE will join experts from PIM to consider sustainability, integrity management and the North Sea. The free event will take place on Thursday, March 26, at the Sandman Signature Aberdeen Hotel.

PIM was established in 2011 to provide consultancy and strategic management support for their clients - helping them manage the function and integrity of their critical plant and equipment.



Investment is on the up at RelyOn Nutec

Major North-east safety investment by RelyOn Nutec

SAFETY training provider RelyOn Nutec has made a five-figure investment at its Aberdeen facility to diversify into offshore wind safety training.

The company has updated its centres at Foinavon Close and Wellheads Road with a £60,000 refurbishment to accommodate new wind safety training courses.

It has recently achieved GWO (Global Wind Organisation) accreditation in Aberdeen which will allow its safety experts to transfer their offshore knowledge to deliver GWO basic and refresher training, enhanced first aid, and slinger signal courses. This follows demand from the wind industry for access to more training as developments are expected to increase in the next decade. It is estimated that up to 6,400 additional jobs will be required in Scotland's offshore wind industry by 2032 with more than 1,000 wind turbines being installed in coastal waters north of the border.

The global safety, skills and competency training organisation has been delivering GWO training at its Teesside centre for the past five years. The Aberdeen investment includes an extension to the platform in the pool area to mock-up realistic safety transfers from a vessel to a turbine, an updated fast rescue boat, new ancillary equipment for working at height and rescue, and extending the existing working at height platform at Wellheads.

James Dixon, product development manager, RelyOn Nutec UK, said: "There are a couple of large projects forthcoming in the Moray Firth, Firth of Forth and north of Edinburgh, so achieving GWO accreditation for our Aberdeen centre was essential to support our client requirements."

Scotland's charities share £1.9m boost

A FUNDING boost totalling a whopping £1.9m has been made available to causes of all sizes by the independent Bank of Scotland Foundation, with Aberdeen Cyrenians one of the biggest North-east beneficiaries.

It has received a £125,000 boost from the foundation's new Change Programme, which has provided a share of £1.2m to nine charities. Another 53 charities receive a share of £605,919 from its Reach Programme, which is directed at groups that support people through various stages in their lives.

Aberdeen Cyrenians chief executive Mike Burns said he was thrilled with the award. The money will be used to expand the charity's direct access service, which offers anyone facing homelessness or hardship the chance to meet a support worker and get food, clothing and toiletries without need for an appointment.

Mr Burns said: "We recognise that a crisis can hit at any time and have ambitious plans to grow DAS in the coming year, moving away from the standard working week, and operating 365 days a year from February, including two evenings per week.

"The funding will allow us to support a need that is not being met in Aberdeen and we expect over 500 vulnerable people will benefit from our support this year because of this."

NASA returns to Aberdeen

FOR the fourth consecutive year, Aberdeen Science Centre and Robert Gordon's College will once again host visitors from NASA to promote the exciting opportunities within robotics, artificial intelligence, science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), and inspiring our 21st century explorers in the space, oil, gas and energy sectors.

A week-long programme is organised jointly by the Society of Petroleum Engineers Aberdeen Section (SPE Aberdeen), the Energy Institute Aberdeen, Highlands and Islands branch, the Society for Underwater Technology (SUT), TechFest and Aberdeen Science Centre.

Colin Black, Carjon-NRG Ltd managing director and NASA in Aberdeen chairman, said: "Since we first began collaborating in 2015, NASA has continually provided a valuable resource to Aberdeen city and Aberdeenshire through the provision of numerous educational materials that can be used in schools as well as by TechFest and Aberdeen Science Centre.

"We are incredibly grateful to see the relationship continue with NASA in Aberdeen now enjoying its fourth year in the city with over 12,000 attending the events."

The 2020 programme will feature presentations from former NASA astronaut William McArthur and engineer Heather Paul. Heather was a member of the mission support team for the 14th NASA Extreme Environment Mission Operations (NEEMO 14) and is the lead engineer for the future spacesuit life support system design. Bill worked for NASA for almost three decades, logging 224 days and 22 hours in space over three space shuttle missions and at the International Space Station.

Infinity and Legasea form strategic alliance

LEGASEA Ltd and Infinity Oilfield Services Limited have announced they have formed a strategic alliance to pursue and execute offshore topsides and subsea projects.

The alliance will provide clients with a competitive, integrated service across a wide range of complex projects in the UK North Sea and internationally.

Leveraging the complementary capabilities and experience of both companies, the alliance will open up further opportunities by combining Infinity's extensive engineering capabilities and strong oilfield services experience, with Legasea's project execution services and world-class test and assembly facilities.

"The strategic value of this alliance benefits our clients, by uniting each company's strengths, to create a new group to manage projects in a market which is cost-conscious and competitive," said Lewis Sim, managing director for Legasea.

Infinity chief executive Andrew Mackay added: "With Infinity's global reach, particularly in developing oil and gas regions, working with Legasea's experienced team will bring greater depth of knowledge, experience, and energy to our service offering. We can also generate scalable cost reduction solutions for our combined customer base."

Bus services to have lower emissions

A TOTAL of 25% of bus journeys per operator in Aberdeen will have to be compliant with lower exhaust emissions in the city centre by the end of the year as part of a city council long-term strategy to drive down nitrogen dioxide figures.

The council's City Growth and Resources Committee unanimously agreed to the move along with holding public and stakeholder engagement on options for a city centre low emission zone (LEZ).

The report to committee said officers are working with partners to determine the form of a LEZ in Aberdeen to comply with the Scottish Government's commitment that Scotland's four principal cities should have a LEZ in place by the end of 2020.

Committee convener and council co-leader, Councillor Douglas Lumsden, said: "Further work into engagement work looking at options for a low emission zone in the city centre will also bring long-term benefits to our residents and visitors as Aberdeen continues to be an attractive place to live, work and spend leisure time in."

Some buses used by service companies will already have the lower exhaust emissions and the move will ensure all fleets will be brought up to 25% compliance.



Michelle Handforth with Nusrat Ghani MP and Alistair McKenzie

Maritime Minister endorses Aberdeen Harbour expansion

NUSRAT Ghani MP, the UK Government Maritime Minister, has welcomed the £350m investment by Aberdeen Harbour in a new facility that will open up new opportunities for renewables and decommissioning around the North Sea.

On visiting the port, Ms Ghani was given a tour of the existing North Harbour and briefed in detail on the South Harbour project which is currently being built.

She said: "I was delighted to visit Aberdeen today to see the progress being made on the transformational development of the South Harbour. The maritime industry is at the heart of the UK's economy and, as the principal port for the energy sector in Western Europe, Aberdeen Harbour is no exception. We are committed to supporting our world-class industry to continue to thrive."

Michelle Handforth, chief executive of Aberdeen Harbour Board, said: "It was an honour to host the minister today and we are grateful for her support on our South Harbour investment. The evolution of the UK's energy mix opens up a world of possibilities. We are poised to be a major catalyst in that, supporting the regional and national economy for decades to come."

Neptune uses digital to dive into data

NEPTUNE Energy has announced plans for a digital subsurface programme with the aim of discovering hydrocarbons 70% faster, reducing exploration costs and bringing discoveries into production up to three years earlier than current industry standards permit.

The company is making use of ground-breaking digital technologies including the latest cloud infrastructure to reduce the time from 'idea to discovery'.

Neptune is working with a range of partners and vendors to develop new tools to scan and interpret vast quantities of seismic data, significantly reducing the time spent by geoscientists on administrative work and preparation and providing them with data-informed insights they can use to identify hydrocarbons more efficiently and with more certainty, reducing the likelihood of drilling a dry well.

The company is also progressing a proof of concept project, testing new digital workstations provided by Cegal, a global provider of hybrid cloud solutions.



Early Bird Catering Ltd, based in Aberdeen since 1974 are Scotland's longest established supplier of Hot Drink vending, Snack Vending and Water Coolers. As of 1st March 2020 we will enter our 46th anniversary year as Early Bird Vending Ltd.

The "catering" name goes back to our origins when the first offshore oil workers would get their coffee and bacon roll from the Early Bird portacabin before collecting their survival suits from the Whirly Bird portacabin at the new heliport! Few will remember those early days however Early Bird has continued to adapt with the times and have evolved to serve all type of business. Large to small, office to industrial; there is a vending solution for everyone at Early Bird.

Early Bird Vending Ltd serve Aberdeen and the Shire, the North and the Northern Isles of Scotland. Employing local people and providing the people of the North East with a quality local vending service is something we are proud to continue to do. Our core values of independence, quality, service, professionalism and great value for money. We select the best suppliers, equipment and products offering a tailored vending solution and expert support locally.

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Quality Vending Locally Delivered



Fraud cases rise

THE value of major fraud cases going through the Scottish courts increased by £11m, according to the latest data from KPMG's Fraud Barometer, which analyses alleged fraud worth more than £100,000.

Cases, valued at more than £15.6m, were heard in courtrooms across the country in 2019, up from cases worth more than £4.5m in 2018.

The cases have included investment fraud, procurement fraud, embezzlement, VAT fraud, mortgage fraud and benefit fraud.

Annette Barker, KPMG's head of forensic regions, said: "There has been a significant increase in the value of fraud cases in the Scottish Courts this year, which correlates with the overall UK picture. What remains a concern is the number of fraud cases involving personal connections – from employees to advisors and family members. Large frauds are often allowed to occur because people accept what they are told at face value by people they trust."



activpayroll's founder and CEO Alison Sellar

Growth investment for activpayroll

ABERDEEN-HEADQUARTERED global payroll specialist, activpayroll has received significant growth investment by Tenzing Private Equity.

Founded in 2001 by chief executive officer Alison Sellar, activpayroll, provides integrated global and domestic payroll solutions, expatriate taxation services and online HR people management tools to more than 1,000 companies in more than 140 countries.

Tenzing Private Equity is an independent private equity firm, based in London, which targets investments in high growth businesses across the UK and Ireland. The firm has backed activpayroll's senior management team, led by founder CEO Alison Sellar and COO Euan Sellar.

Tenzing's investment, its team and its Entrepreneurs Panel will support the company with continued technical product development, investment in sales and developing its acquisition and international strategy, to ensure the business continues to expand and remains at the forefront of the global payroll market.

A word of advice



Cheryl Henderson,
head of business travel operations,
Munro's Travel Limited

Area of expertise:

The safety and security of our travellers is of paramount importance. Given the nature of our client's business, they often travel to high-risk areas and it's my responsibility to ensure that we have the best technology available to support them by partnering with global medical and travel security specialists.

What should people know:

It is increasingly important for travellers to be aware of the potential risks when travelling. In recent months there have been heightened security threats, civil unrest, geopolitical instabilities, and global health emergencies. Therefore, the role of a TMC can help provide thorough duty of care solutions, including traveller tracking and emergency support, which has never been more important.

What's the biggest mistake companies make?

Compromising traveller safety and security by not having a robust duty of care solution both pre-travel and throughout the entirety of the trip. Organisations have a moral and legal obligation for the duty of care of their employees. Companies may believe that booking travel outside of a managed travel programme will save money, however times of crisis is when your TMC is most effective.

What's your top tip?

To partner with an experienced TMC that can provide a robust duty of care for your travellers while integrating a travel policy, an emergency response plan and partnering with medical and security specialists such as ISOS. As a minimum, traveller tracking technology and an emergency response solution that is locally managed is a must. It will allow them to quickly understand and help resolve any issues.

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Major Well-Safe contract for AIS Training and Survivex

THE UK's largest energy sector training providers, AIS Training and Survivex, part of the 3T Energy Group, have secured a contract with well decommissioning specialist, Well-Safe Solutions, to manage and deliver all of its training requirements and provide an IT platform to support its competence management system.

Under the three-year contract AIS Training and Survivex will deliver hundreds of industry-accredited technical and safety critical courses, as well as providing award-winning online training management software and competency management software, known as 'Transform'.

The Transform system will allow Well-Safe to manage all its staff training and development via one interface, including course bookings and certificate renewals and access real-time financial reporting and forecasting.

ONE outlines ambition for Energy Transition Zone

OPPORTUNITY North East (ONE) has set out its ambition to help create a world leading Energy Transition Zone (ETZ).

The ETZ will accelerate the delivery of net zero solutions and secure a strong economic future built on offshore wind, hydrogen and carbon capture usage and storage (CCUS), alongside oil and gas.

ONE announced plans to work with regional and industry partners, including Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeen Harbour Board, to create a the ETZ to accelerate the region's ambition to be at the forefront of energy related research, manufacturing, technology, operations and support activities which will help deliver the UK and Scotland's net zero goals.

It says the region's combination of on and offshore infrastructure, energy companies, a global supply chain, track record of research and development and a highly skilled workforce mean Aberdeen can be at the forefront of making energy transition ambitions a reality.

Optimism rising in commercial property market

FG BURNETT enjoyed a strong 2019 recording 92 commercial property transactions across the office, retail, industrial and development sectors, representing a deal every three business days.

Despite challenging market conditions, the number of deals transacted in the office sector is approaching the levels prior to the oil price downturn in early 2015 and is indicative of growing optimism in the energy sector and, accordingly, the Aberdeen property market.

FG Burnett's involvement in the majority of these transactions has been representing the landlord or vendor but there has been an increase in tenant representation work, both for existing clients and new entrants into the oil and gas market.

Wood's Saudi Aramco extension

WOOD has secured a two-year extension to its in-kingdom and out-of-kingdom contracts with Saudi Aramco's subsidiary, Aramco Overseas Company BV, for its unconventional gas programme, extending awards originally secured in 2014.

Wood's project execution teams will continue to work closely with Saudi Aramco to develop innovative engineering design and implementation strategies to deliver the programme's primary objective to produce and deliver significant volumes of gas from shale and tight gas reservoirs.



Subsea UK chief executive Neil Gordon

Almost 9,000 recruits needed for subsea industry

THE UK's underwater engineering industry is set to recruit 8,928 people in the next three years, according to the findings of a new report.

According to Subsea UK's Business Activity Review for 2018/19 the total value of UK subsea output has increased to almost £7.8bn from £7.5bn in 2017.

This represents around 37% of a global market estimated to be worth around £21bn annually and confirms that the UK remains the market leader in underwater engineering, manufacturing, products and services.

While employment figures remain fairly static, rising from 45,033 in 2017 to 45,163, the forecasts for recruitment in the next 12 - 36 months are more promising. Almost 80% of companies anticipate ramping up recruitment, with forecasts suggesting employment in the industry could rise to over 54,000 by 2022.

The majority of these jobs will be in North-east Scotland, where 63% of the industry is based. However, the North-east of England, where the subsea industry is worth around £1.5bn and supports 15,000 jobs, will also see a considerable increase in recruitment.

Neil Gordon, chief executive of Subsea UK, said: "The last five years have taken their toll on those subsea companies predominantly operating in oil and gas. But the findings in this business activity review reveal that the UK subsea industry has weathered the storm. The decline has been arrested with a clear upturn in activity, largely due to an increase in output from subsea SMEs and more activity in renewables, particularly offshore wind."

Aberdeen and Houston Gateway

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 generates significant 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 a highlight of the visit will be the Scottish showcase lunch at Aberdeen's Norwood Hall Hotel, a session which regularly draws an audience in excess of 120.

Collaboration success could be good news for consumers

SCOTTISH landlords are now facing a 10-month legal headache to evict tenants who refuse to pay rent, new research has revealed.

Official figures uncovered by national letting experts Aberdeen Considine show that the average eviction now takes over 300 days following a legal shake-up by the Scottish Government.

Aberdeen Considine said the delays are putting 'unacceptable pressure' on landlords, many of whom are left thousands of pounds out of pocket as a consequence. The law firm has also warned that landlords are being driven away from the sector, which could lead to falling stock and rising rents for tenants in the future.

In 2017, the government moved to ease pressure on Scotland's courts by shifting all rent and repair issues in private sector housing to the new Housing and Property Chamber Tribunal. However, the tribunal has been hit with a high - and ever increasing - case load. More than 3,800 applications have been made in the past year alone.

Adrian Sangster, national lettings director at Aberdeen Considine, said delays were putting further pressure on an already strained sector: "The private rented sector still plays a vital and necessary part in Scotland's housing mix, due largely to the failure of successive governments to build enough social housing. By creating this increasingly hostile investment market for landlords, governments risk driving investors away, and by default cutting the availability of properties for let and driving up average rents."

H&R acquires APL Insurance

H&R Insurance Services has acquired APL Insurance Services, the insurance division of Aberdeen Property Leasing Ltd. The deal will involve the transfer of all APL Insurance Services' clients to H&R Insurance.

"The acquisition is a unique opportunity which unlocks growth potential for H&R Insurance," said partner Shona Robertson. "The two businesses have a lot in common and share the same core values."

\$19m investment by Neptune

NEPTUNE Energy is investing \$19m 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, located in the municipality of Geeste, will enhance both efficiency and productivity.



Aberdeen Harbour

Harbour's vital role in the economy

CONSTRUCTION and supply vessel traffic in the North Sea helped to increase vessel throughput at Aberdeen Harbour during 2019.

The expanding port had a 2.9% rise in vessel tonnage to 26,894,832 tonnes, with 9,489 vessels arriving throughout the year. Offshore construction vessel tonnage increased by 50% to 1,141,526 and offshore supply vessel tonnage by 6% to 15,574,108.

The port handled 393,346 tonnes of mixed freight on the Northern Isles service, including medical supplies, aquaculture industry supplies and 168,280 head of livestock. Passenger numbers also climbed in 2019 to 166,537, from 151,472 in 2018.

Michelle Handforth, chief executive of Aberdeen Harbour Board, said: "The results from 2019 demonstrate the vital role Aberdeen Harbour plays in supporting the prosperity of the region. This increase in activity stands us in excellent stead as we approach the phased completion of South Harbour in 2021.

"The energy landscape in Scotland is shifting and we will be working closely with Opportunity North East, Aberdeen City Council and our customers to develop Aberdeen into a world-leading energy transition zone. South Harbour will transform the port into one of the most sustainable and energy efficient facilities in the UK."

2020 Salary Guide published

DESPITE a weakening global economic outlook the North-east business environment is one of pragmatic optimism, according to Amanda McCulloch, managing director of Thorpe Molloy McCulloch Recruitment Ltd.

Speaking on the publication of the company's annual salary guide she said sustained recovery in the oil and gas sector, technology innovation and diversification activities are contributing to business growth and new employment opportunities.

However she warned: "An old business adversary began to make its presence felt in the latter half of 2019. Diminished for several years, competition for talent is re-emerging with skills shortages impacting effective recruitment. In the latest Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce Oil & Gas Survey, employment costs and recruitment challenges are cited as one of the top concerns for the next 10 years.

"Accustomed to engineering and technical vacancies being hard to fill, it will probably not surprise you that employers seek our help to recruit draughtspersons, design engineers, electrical, instrument, process and mechanical engineers; machinists, software developers, web developers, helpdesk and support engineers.

"However, competition is also intensifying for tax and payroll professionals, newly qualified accountants and lawyers, commercial contracts professionals, HR and training advisors, managerial staff and executive level leaders.

The salary guide provides information on rates of pay by role type; expert advice on employee benefits; engaging with your staff after the new IR35 rules come into force and the benefits of graduate recruitment. The full report is available from the Thorpe Molloy McCulloch Recruitment website.

Tea party to celebrate big anniversary

ABERDEEN'S oldest charity is to celebrate its 150th anniversary on March 10 with a vintage afternoon tea party.

Aberdeen Association of Social Services, more commonly known locally as VSA, was founded on the March 10, 1870 by two previous Lord Provosts - Provost Nicol and Provost Leslie. Over the past 150 years, VSA has helped change the lives of vulnerable children and adults across a range of residential and outreach community services.

The Lord Provost of Aberdeen will officially kick off a year of celebrations in recognition of the charity's life-changing work in the city by holding a civic afternoon tea party for 100 of VSA's volunteers, staff and people who use their services.

Jennifer Mitchell, director of external relations, said: "We very much hope that businesses and individuals will step forward to join us in our celebrations by holding their own tea party to help raise awareness of our vital work and hopefully raise some much-needed funds in aid of VSA."

Podcast service launched with charity offer

ABERDEEN company AVC Immedia has launched a custom-made podcast service and studio to satisfy the growing demand for podcast services across the city.

Keith Robertson, head of creative services, said: "At AVC we've been producing audio to support our video and animation services for many years now. We have worked with both local and international clients to create exciting, arresting, captivating content.

"Our new in-house podcast studio ensures clients will receive the most up to date and technically enhanced sound values helping to create unique stories."

AVC is offering to partner with a charity and produce a series of podcasts to launch the service and help that charity to tap into the growing podcast community.



Peter Sim and Callum Sim of Raven Spirits

A flying start to exports for Raven

AN ABERDEENSHIRE gin producer has started exporting to key Asian markets thanks to strategic advice and support from Business Gateway.

In 2019, Raven Spirits signed an export agreement to send consignments of its two award-winning gins to Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau.

Peter Sim, director of Raven Spirits, said: "Typical gin producers in Scotland tend to target the local market which, especially in the case of Aberdeenshire, is very saturated. Therefore, we made a concerted effort to target export markets in order to grow the business."

Export figures released by HMRC in August 2019 showed that gin exports from the UK were worth £730m, while domestic sales soared at £2.3bn, putting the total value of the industry at just over £3bn.

Business Gateway's bespoke action plan had a substantial impact on Raven Spirits' ambitions to export, giving the gin maker access to Scottish Enterprise, Scottish Development International and one-to-one sessions with a business adviser.

Peter Sim continued: "The business grant received from Scottish Enterprise, with the help of Business Gateway, allowed us to thoroughly research our chosen markets, visit them and finally seal our first export agreement."

Looking to the future – digital assets



by **Kirsten Anderson**,
senior associate, private client, Stronachs LLP

INCREASINGLY, the things that have value in our lives - whether that value is financial or simply sentimental - are digital. Unfortunately the law has not yet adapted fully to dealing with digital assets.

This can cause issues when people die or when they otherwise become unable to deal with their affairs. Passwords should be kept secret but, without them, how do our loved ones gain access to our digital photos, online accounts, social media, cryptocurrency? Are they legally entitled to have access?

Because this is a relatively new problem there is often not a simple solution. In an increasingly security-conscious world some companies will not allow access to anyone other than the account holder, even if they are no longer around. While most issues can usually eventually be resolved this can often take a long time - difficult, particularly for grieving family members.

There have been several high-profile cases in the media, many of which have sadly involved the deaths of young people. Grieving parents' pleas

to unlock their children's iPhones and Facebook accounts have, in some cases, led to court battles. Other cases have highlighted significant financial loss - it has recently been estimated that billions of pounds worth of cryptocurrencies have been lost following the deaths of those with sole access to accounts.

Companies - and the law - are adapting and will continue to do so. In the meantime, there are practical steps that can be taken now to protect against issues in the future:

- Check your will and power of attorney - do they give your executors and attorneys the power to have access to your digital assets, including the power to update, maintain or close accounts?
- Consider what you hold electronically. If something is important to you, you should consider what is to be done with it on death and how this will happen. In the case of your most important assets, approaching the company in order to ascertain what will be required on death or incapacity may be appropriate.

- Remember that digital assets with financial value will form part of your estate for inheritance tax. Your future planning should take this into account.

The importance of digital assets is only going to increase but these are often overlooked when people are considering their future planning. Since this is likely to affect most of us in years to come, getting the right advice now is essential to avoid issues in the future.

Stronachs

Feel the G-force



LATER this year 5G (fifth generation) mobile services will arrive in Aberdeen with the potential to have a major impact on almost every sector of the economy.

It will be truly transformational and not just for smartphones and mobile devices. It can provide ultra-fast connections to homes or small businesses as a possible replacement for traditional internet, eliminating the need for cable broadband connections.

Depending on who you speak to the speed of data transfer will be 10 or 20 times faster than 4G which will enable you to download a film in seconds rather than minutes. However, what will make things possible like remote surgery on a patient many miles away - which has been successfully demonstrated - or operating a crane from 100k, is its low latency, or the short lag time. With 4G, latency can be 70 milliseconds but with 5G it is reduced to one millisecond or virtually instant.

A 5G network will help make self-driving cars a reality and enable them to communicate with each other to help boost the safety and efficiency of our roads.



“It’s definitely been a slow burner but I’m certain that by the end of this year device costs are going to drop and coverage is already starting to increase. I think in the second part of 2020 it will take off.”

David Greetham,
mobile pre-sales product manager,
Arrow Business Communications Ltd

It can revolutionise telemedicine, which could be a major boost for those in remote areas by enabling patients to connect with GPs or other healthcare professionals.

It will help make energy networks more efficient by enabling a range of smart Internet of Things (IoT) sensors to deliver data which might more reliably predict demand, improve performance and identify potential faults before they occur.

5G will also make it possible for major

changes in education and training. As well as improved access to online resources employees will be able to use tools such as virtual reality to test their skills in simulated situations.

However, although it is due to arrive in Aberdeen this autumn, it is likely to take some time before the benefits are widely felt.

“This is not like the step up from 3G to 4G,” said David Greetham, mobile pre-sales product manager for Arrow Business Communications Ltd.

“5G is different and requires brand-new hardware, not just the network equipment but also the devices themselves - and it comes at a cost. There are already a handful of compatible mobiles about at the moment and we can be talking £1,000 plus for 5G devices.

“The cost is dropping but it’s also early days for the networks. When it comes to 5G being released in towns and cities, it’s not going to be the typical blanket coverage we have been used to in the past, with only the odd pocket of no signal. The networks have, however, targeted major zones like train stations, main commuting hubs, football stadiums and areas where you get dense populations, like



The O2 in London.

“The actual network throughput is currently minimal because there aren’t really that many devices being used in these pockets of 5G coverage. It is also quite difficult to justify a £1,000 device when you can maybe only use it for only five minutes a day at a train station. However, this will change quickly.

“It’s definitely been a slow burner but I’m certain that by the end of this year device costs are going to drop and coverage is already starting to increase. I think in the second part of 2020 it will take off.”

He said it could make a huge difference in business to business experiences with people able to operate as if they were in their office while on the road or commuting. They would be able to collaborate or use phones using cloud-based systems.

His colleague Wayne Mackay, Arrow’s sales director in Aberdeen, said: “It will create great opportunities for this area and anything which offers quicker, more reliable speeds can only be a good thing. It may also sometimes remove the requirement for fixed services. That could have significant benefits for rural areas because BT wouldn’t have to dig in

a cable to a farm in the middle of rural Aberdeenshire to provide fast broadband speeds.”

Openreach is set to start building a full fibre network capable of gigabit speeds to thousands of Aberdeen homes this summer.

Work is expected to get under way initially in the Ashgrove and West exchange areas within the next three months.

It’s one of the first cities in Scotland to be included in the national digital network business’s nationwide investment in new future-proof Fibre-to-the-Premises (FTTP) technology.

Full fibre broadband provides more reliable, resilient and future-proof connectivity; fewer faults; more predictable, consistent speeds; and can be easily upgraded to meet the demands of future technology.

Hundreds of service providers – including household names like Sky, BT and Talk Talk – use Openreach’s network to bring phone, internet and TV services to their customers. Households and businesses connecting to the new fibre network will be able to shop around to take advantage of those offering full fibre

services.

While the technology is capable of gigabit speeds – around 18.5 times faster than the current UK average – service providers offer full fibre packages at a range of speeds.

Robert Thorburn, Openreach partnership director, said: “We already have a significant ultrafast network in Aberdeen, with 18,500 homes and businesses now able to connect to our Gfast technology, on top of 97 per cent already having access to a superfast service.

“We’re excited about taking this next logical step forward in Scotland’s third biggest city. We’ve been carrying out detailed surveys and plan to start building the network quickly, efficiently and with minimal disruption.”

Bringing science fiction to Aberdeen's high street

by Allan McEwan,
city manager,
CityFibre



SMART Cities is a concept that has been around for some time now but is finally beginning to become a reality. The concept covers cities and towns that use information and communication technologies to increase operational efficiency, share information with the public and improve the quality of government services and citizen welfare. But what does that mean? Think of Aberdeen as an orchestra and, instead of different instruments, you have various sensors. From traffic lights and post boxes to sensors built into lampposts and bridges - each of them working in symphony.

Singapore is often cited as being the smartest city in the world. Although autonomous cars, seamless payments and environmental sensors are some of the most obvious concepts this approach gains attention for, it's when you examine the city in closer detail that the really intelligent work becomes clear.

In Singapore anonymised data has been obtained from commuters' fare cards and identifying commuter hotspots in order to manage bus fleets. This included studying the arrival times of buses, tracking

them with sensors installed in over 5,000 vehicles. Gathering this data generated numerous insights that helped the local authority to better anticipate and address the needs of commuters through improved policy planning. It resulted in a 92% reduction in the number of bus services with crowding issues while average waiting times shortened by up to seven minutes.

It's likely that in the future you could see smart technology become abundant in Aberdeen. In our homes, many of us have voice-activated devices, lightbulbs intelligent enough to detect if someone is still using the room, and almost all of us are tethered to our smartphone. With an increased amount of smart city technology on our streets, analysts believe it could reduce fatalities, either by accidents or through crime, by 8-10%.

However smart devices are not just about reacting to what the data is showing, it's about being predictive as well and putting in place measures that will have a range of benefits. For example, having more autonomous environmental systems within blocks of flats to regulate energy consumption and utilise dynamic electricity pricing could result in the reduction of emissions 10-15%.

For all of this to work data has to be shared effectively. If we are suddenly going to be increasing the amount of data cities are producing and capturing we need to make sure the infrastructure is in place to handle it.

This is where future proof full fibre networks come into play. These networks - like the one CityFibre is building across Aberdeen - are capable of dealing with vast amounts of data. At the moment, just 11% of the UK has access to full fibre. Instead, the country is reliant on legacy networks built on copper dating back decades.

It is here where the UK is falling behind as the rest of continental Europe, which is way ahead in establishing full fibre networks. But this is changing and most within the telecoms industry are working toward rolling out a full fibre network to the UK by 2025. When that happens, Britain will go from digital laggard to leader and Aberdeen will be able to further embrace smart city technology because it will have a network capable of handling the amount of data it needs to work.

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Collaboration success could be good news for consumers

A GROUP of researchers at Robert Gordon University (RGU) have partnered with Sustainable Urban Energy (SUE) to investigate the potential of a turbine system the size of a satellite dish which can reduce emissions – saving homeowners hundreds of pounds per year.

The turbine system was designed and developed by the founder and director of SUE, Neil Coulson, who believes the product has the potential to reduce the average household's dependency on grid supplied power by up to a third, reducing the demand on the National Grid and saving the consumer money while being environmentally friendly.

Mr Coulson said: "The company was incorporated in February 2019 but the project of creating a self-generation product started over 10 years prior while I was living a sustainable lifestyle on five acres of land north of Aberdeen. It has taken many years, watching how wind interacts with nature, researching existing products and understanding the requirement of a household.

With encouragement and assistance from Business Gateway, Scottish Enterprise and some local business the first prototype was 3D printed in August 2018. However, before SUE could progress with the innovative turbine design the company required to obtain a proof of concept. To do this, expertise and access to specialised facilities were required and that could only be found at a university.

The turbine system can be fitted to any type of structure including houses, tower blocks, bridges, hospitals and shopping centres, which means businesses can also benefit.

University fund to strengthen European links

THE University of Aberdeen has announced a new £100,000 fund to help maintain and strengthen its European research links.

Principal George Boyne announced the fund, bolstering its activities with partners through initiatives such as the AURORA network.

The university is a leading institution in pan-European research projects, with close to 1,500 joint research publications with European institutions over the last 10 years and over £47m in EU funding.

Among its current EU funded projects is the development of the next generation of MRI scanning technology – known as Fast Field Cycling MRI (FFC-MRI) – which builds on the University's pioneering development of the first whole-body MRI scanner built in 1980.

Supported through a €6.6m Euro Horizon 2020 grant, the IDentIFY project, led by Professor David Lurie, has already resulted in a prototype FFC-MRI scanner that has been successfully tested on patients and healthy volunteers.

Meanwhile, Professor James N'Dow is leading the PIONEER project, a €12.7m European Commission IMI funded project that aims to use big data to transform prostate cancer care.

New Broch office for Shepherd

SHEPHERD Chartered Surveyors has moved to new premises in Fraserburgh to give it a broader view of the local housing market.

As a result of confidence in the buoyancy of demand for housing in Fraserburgh, the firm has relocated to 54 Broad Street in the heart of the town.

The new office is headed up by Alan Kennedy who has worked from Shepherd's Fraserburgh base for three decades.



Walls wanted

ABERDEEN Inspired is on the hunt for suitable city centre walls to be transformed into street art masterpieces during the Nuart Festival which will be held from April 23-26.

Last year's event achieved worldwide recognition and a mural by Anders Gjenstad aka Strok, on Rosemount Viaduct, was selected by Street Art Today as one of the 19 most stunning murals of 2019.

As preparation for the festival and the search for new canvasses ramps up, Aberdeen Inspired has consulted key property agent representatives to highlight the many benefits to owners, occupiers, members of staff, clients and the public of offering their wall become part of Nuart Aberdeen. Aberdeen Inspired is also appealing to proprietors who would like to be involved to submit walls for consideration.

Adrian Watson, chief executive of Aberdeen Inspired, said: "The introduction of artworks in the city centre through Nuart Aberdeen has reactivated public spaces into vibrant, creative and welcoming places. It has also acted as a driver for increased visitor numbers and widening access to art for all, truly positioning Aberdeen as a must visit destination.

"A huge part of this is thanks to the willingness and enthusiasm of city centre property owners, who have gifted their walls to become a part of it. As we look to build on that legacy in 2020 we would urge interested property owners to get in touch and be a part of this transformative event."

To submit a wall please contact: callforwalls@aberdeeninspired.com with a photo of the wall/s, address and approximate dimensions.

Reach for the (clear) sky

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



A STRONG vision setting out the ongoing contribution of oil and gas is the right thing for our region but the efforts of other sectors to decarbonise will be similarly crucial for our economic ambitions.

The Chamber continues to campaign for improvements to our rail connectivity but strong air links will remain essential to the North-east's prosperity. With that in mind, it is absolutely critical that the aviation industry is ambitious with its own efforts to decarbonise.

Of course, the industry isn't resting on its laurels in this regard. The sector has pulled together its own clear roadmap for decarbonisation under the banner of the Sustainable Aviation group. In combination, the industry believes that a number of key measures will allow the UK to support 70% growth in passengers while bringing annual net emission levels from 30 million tonnes of CO₂ down to zero.

The measures outlined range from the structure of taxation to the deployment of new technology. As with the energy sector, aviation is keenly aware of the importance of carbon capture utilisation and storage - deemed a necessity, not an option, by the Committee on Climate Change - in reaching emissions targets.

Industry is asking government to commit to backing the delivery of two operational clusters within the next five years, an ask the North-east is well-placed to support.

In addition, new sustainable fuels and fleet upgrades will play a key role in realising low carbon air travel. The sector estimates that the introduction of new types of planes, such as hybrid and pure-electric aircraft, will reduce emissions by 24% in 2050. Government ambitions, such as the Scottish Government's plan for the Highlands and Islands to be the world's first net zero aviation region by 2040, will add further impetus to the drive to develop innovative new planes. Progress is being made, with Loganair recently securing £9m in UK Government funding to accelerate their plans for island-hopping electric flights across the Orkney Islands.

Furthermore, market-based measures such as evolved emissions trading schemes are seen as a crucial driver to change industry behaviour. One point which will be interesting to those familiar with the aviation tax challenges facing the North-east is the focus by industry on an international regime for carbon-pricing, to ensure a level-playing field for airlines. The recent issues faced by FlyBe led to the UK Government announcing that it will review Air Passenger Duty (APD), a

tax which disadvantages Aberdeen International Airport in particular with its current structure. Indeed the tax also fails to seriously support current ambitions linked to the environment.


Of course there are steps government can take now to support regional connectivity. In the short term, the APD review is an important opportunity to deliver a level-playing field for the North-east, a point the Chamber team made clearly to the Secretary of State for Scotland during our latest Westminster visit. We will continue to advocate strongly for a pragmatism and decisive action to support the delivery of stronger air links, as the industry rallies behind an ambitious vision for a path to net-zero.

April

207
courses
run by the Chamber



Covering

66 
different
subjects

Attended by

1,127
people in North-east
businesses



1 Wed
1 day

Time Management

Identify time wasting activities and manage time more effectively

1 Wed
1/2 day

Social Media for the Uninitiated

Gain a practical business understanding of Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn

1 Wed
1/2 day

Social Media Advanced - Using Mixed Media in Your Digital Communication

Understand how to integrate social media into a digital communication plan

1 Wed
1/2 day

HM Revenue and Customs END Use Awareness

Take advantage of Shipwork End Use (END) system and navigate the rules

2 Thu
1 day

Digital Transformation

Learn how to future proof your business

2 Thu
1 day

Train the Trainer

Feel confident whilst developing a delivering different types of training

2 Thu
1 day

Cash Flow Management

Maximise cash flow with effective cash collection techniques

21 Tue
1 day

Motivation and Delegation

Create a motivational environment and use effective delegation

22 Wed
1 day

Maximising Sponsorship Revenue

Maximise your sponsorship sales and obtain great results

22 Wed
1 day

Continuous Improvement

Essential tools to maximise workplace efficiency and achieve excellence

23 Thu
1 day

Essential Supervisory Skills

Bridge the gap between doing and supervising in order to motivate staff

May

1 Fri
1 day

Finance - The Basics

Develop a broad understanding of business finance

5 Tue
1 day

Report Writing

Learn to produce clear, concise and effective reports

**5 - 6
Tue - Wed**
1 day

Essential Management Skills

Become equipped with the knowledge and skills required of a manager

For more information

Susan Staniforth, training team leader

T 01224 343917 E training@agcc.co.uk

Community of the classroom



AS THE workplace moves ever forward into the contemporary, a renewed focus on upskilling and developing staff professionally and individually is often at conflict with the increasing need for more time in the day.

However, taking the time to attend training and engage with the community of the classroom can have huge advantages. In the courses we offer at the Chamber, a physical presence in the classroom aids the learning process, particularly in those that cover the softer skills for business. Delegates attending our courses can benefit from:

- Group led discussion
- Interactive workshops
- Opportunity to discuss topics with peers
- Less distraction
- Experiential group activities
- Practice with other delegates
- Use of real-world examples
- Trainers can address issues and help you find solutions

Delegates have the opportunity to discuss topics, both with the trainer and each other, revealing questions and concerns that may not otherwise have come up. This is aided by the variety of sectors represented in a course, resulting in a cross pollination of knowledge.

The community of the classroom provides an environment which lends itself easily to discussion and communication. Our trainers and courses facilitate this community by encouraging delegates to ask questions and get involved in the learning process.

We have many of these courses running throughout 2020. For more information please get in touch with us at training@agcc.co.uk



The Chamber launched the 2020 business breakfast series, held in partnership with the University of Aberdeen Business School, with a sell-out event at The Marcliffe on January 29.



Companies from across the construction sector came together on January 23 to talk about opportunities to create a resilient and circular industry in the region.





Suzanne Stewart,
VP technology, TendeKa

What does your company do that others don't?

We provide customised production optimisation and improved reservoir recovery solutions that combine hardware, software and fluid additives.

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

Overcoming the perception that new technology means higher costs when in reality, new technology enables higher return on investment for the operator.

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

Never become complacent with existing customers – there's always someone looking to take that work from you.

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

Always have a foundational expertise before going into a general management role.

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

Having the opportunity to mentor multiple employees and seeing them be successful.

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

Diversification of business sectors to be less dependent on oil and gas.



Quick fire round

What was your first job?

Assistant in corner shop.

When would you like to retire?

When I stop having fun.

What did you have for breakfast?

Bacon buttie.

Who, or what, inspires you?

Leaders such as Barack Obama who can make tough decisions but remain compassionate.

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

Benazir Bhutto – Daughter of Destiny.



The Welsh & Taylor Wealth team

Financial wellbeing at heart of new business

TWO Aberdeen-financial advisers have partnered to launch a new advisory firm to challenge traditional perceptions of financial planning.

Welsh & Taylor Wealth has been launched as representatives of FTSE 100 company St James's Place Wealth Management. The firm works with clients, empowering them to make positive decisions with a view to improving their financial wellbeing.

It is believed that financial wellbeing is a leading cause of stress to the UK population. With the effects this can have on our own mental health at the forefront, Welsh & Taylor Wealth offer a comprehensive wealth management service. The business has also created two new jobs with Emma Murison and Maddie Stephen joining the team as finance co-ordinator and practice co-ordinator.

Scottish investment almost doubles

VENTURE Capital investment in Scottish scale-ups almost doubled in 2019, hitting just under £198m pounds, according to new research from KPMG.

The Global Venture Pulse Survey by KPMG Private Enterprise reveals the amount of money invested in Scottish fast growth businesses in 2019 reached at least £197.7m. It was up from £100m in 2018, partly driven by a busy fourth quarter, which included a £66m investment in Aberdeen-based Well-Safe Solutions, to fund the next phase in its growth strategy as a well decommissioning company.

The latest data reflects a UK-wide surge in investments with more than £9bn pumped into growth-hungry companies. Later stage businesses, particularly in the financial services, biotech and healthcare sectors, drove the majority of the deals completed.

Amy Burnett, manager with KPMG Private Enterprise in Scotland, said: "It's been a fantastic year for Scotland's scale-up businesses. Despite the political uncertainties, entrepreneurs have attracted investment from all over the world, closing significant deals and drawing the attention of VC investors focused on later stage companies.

"While it's an overwhelmingly positive picture, there is some concern that early and seed stage deals aren't always getting the support they need to grow, which could slow innovation in the long-term and put Scotland at a competitive disadvantage. But, right now, we're in a healthy, confident position with strong investor appetite."



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AB51 0TH

Car buying is a piece of cake at Jim Reid

ON FEBRUARY 1 this year Jim Reid Vehicle Sales & Service celebrated 17 years in business but marking the special occasion wasn't the only reason for balloons and some celebratory cake.

The 1st also marked 17-year-old Fabio Greatbatch's first day as a trainee sales consultant after a successful period as a Saturday customer 'meet and greeter'; and full time sales consultant Greig O'Donnell's birthday, which is only one day before apprentice

technician Willie Wilkie's 18th birthday. Director Jim Reid said: "We just couldn't let this moment pass with a wee celebration to mark these special occasions for our business and our team."

Jim and his team marked the occasion with a 'Team Reid' photograph with a special cake made by fellow director and Jim's wife, Gail, along with an open invitation to social media followers and customers to pop round on the Saturday for a special 'Cars, Coffee and Cakes' day.

Jim and Gail opened their gates for the first time on the very apt date of 01/02/03, continuing to grow steadily over the years to become one of the best know independent motor dealerships in the North-east of Scotland, offering not only sales of new, nearly new cars, van and pick-ups but also unrivalled quality of servicing and repairs along with contract hire and leasing, as well as a valeting and ceramic coating service.

The experience is everything

New graduate apprentice opportunities

ROBERT Gordon University (RGU) has been awarded a new round of graduate apprenticeship opportunities by Skills Development Scotland (SDS).

The university will offer 175 fully funded places for entry in September 2020, across a range of disciplines including accountancy, construction, engineering, data science, IT management for business and business management.

Developed by SDS in partnership with industry and the further and higher education sectors, graduate apprenticeships are a new way for individuals to qualify up to Master's degree level while in paid employment. They are designed by employers and industry and offered in key sectors that need highly skilled employees.

RGU is already working in partnership with more than 150 businesses in a range of sectors through its GA offering, covering the length and breadth of Scotland.



Wellpro's Asia regional manager Martin Webster

Wellpro Group expands in Asia

GLOBAL well intervention company Wellpro Group has announced significant growth in Asia with plans for further expansion in the region.

The Aberdeen-headquartered thru tubing and well intervention provider, which established offices and a workshop in Malaysia towards the end of 2019, has enjoyed significant growth and has aggressive expansion plans for 2020 and beyond.

Wellpro Group in Asia is led by regional manager Martin Webster and it expects its workforce there to grow in the next 12 months as demand for its tools and services increases.

The company secured well intervention operations from major service providers in Asia from October to December and has a number of others planned for the year ahead.

Wellpro Group chief executive officer Jim Thomson said: "We have seen sustained growth for our business in Asia as part of our commitment to increase our global footprint and we are strengthening our presence in this market. Asia represents an attractive growth opportunity for us because of the increased demand in the region for well intervention, thru tubing and coiled tubing operations following the recent oil downturn. We have already demonstrated our commitment to Malaysia by establishing an operational office in Kuala Lumpur and workshop in Labuan for storing and servicing our suite of tools. However we are committed and working towards further expansion in the region."



BGF's Aberdeen team

A year of growth for BGF

BGF, the UK and Ireland's most active investor in growing businesses, experienced a year of growth across its Scottish portfolio in 2019, having invested more than £280m to date to support the region's most ambitious entrepreneurs.

BGF provides patient capital to small and medium-sized businesses in exchange for a minority, non-controlling equity stake, and to date has made 33 investments in Scotland since it was set up in 2011, committing almost £20m in 2019 alone to back local companies accelerating growth.

Mike Sibson, head of BGF's Aberdeen team, said: "This has been a solid year for BGF and a successful one for our portfolio companies. They represent an encouraging, diverse and dynamic group of businesses that, with funding and support, have been able to forge ahead and take advantage of opportunities in the market.

"We're continuing to grow our portfolio and meet more ambitious companies in the country that are ready to go for growth and accelerate. We're looking forward to 2020 and continuing to support businesses with the long-term capital and support they need to realise their potential."

Business confidence in Scotland falls

BUSINESS confidence in Scotland fell 15 points during January to -4%, according to the Business Barometer from Bank of Scotland Commercial Banking.

Companies in Scotland reported lower confidence in their business prospects at -2%. When taken alongside their views of the economy, this gives an overall confidence of -4%. Businesses' hiring intentions showed that a net balance of 3% of businesses in Scotland expected to reduce staffing levels during the next year, compared to 3% expecting to take on more staff last month.

Across the UK, overall confidence rose 13 points to 23% as firms' optimism in the economy soared 22 points to 24%, while confidence in their own prospects increased four points to 22%.

The Business Barometer questions 1,200 businesses monthly and provides early signals about UK economic trends both regionally and nationwide.

Fraser Sime, regional director for Scotland at Bank of Scotland, said: "It's evident that levels of uncertainty among Scottish businesses remain elevated. Despite this month's dip in confidence, it's encouraging to see opportunity on the horizon, including the COP26 United Nations climate change summit, which is being hosted in Glasgow later this year. That will shine a spotlight on sustainability in Scotland and the great businesses that are working to become greener."

Building relationships critical to continued eBlast success



By Neil McDonald,
chief executive officer and chairman, eGroup

HAVING celebrated 20 years in business during 2019, eBlast has evolved to become one of the largest specialist coatings and surface preparation businesses in the UK.

With clients in the energy and construction sectors, the start of the year has brought a raft of new orders across all eGroup business units, including eBlast, where we have benefited from increased demand for the protection and service of several large oil and gas assets.

Our highly-skilled team are leading experts in commercial and industrial coating, painting and surface preparation; all designed to withstand extreme environments, such as offshore.

We have secured new customers in addition to delivering a major project for an existing client which has led to some extremely positive feedback from that business.

Winning the work is only part of the process, however. We have been fortunate over the past few years to see the relationships we've built and developed with other companies

continuing to pay dividends.

In my view, this is largely due to the hard work and communication of our team as well as the effort made to strengthen relationships with key contacts across the industry.

This has involved working with customers, including many tier one and tier two contractors, to solve complex problems and support them achieve their delivery dates for large, manufactured structures to the highest possible standard.

We have built positive relationships with national and international suppliers – particularly around safety and quality measures – and, while the North-east remains our primary focus, we are increasingly exploring opportunities to extend our reach throughout other parts of the country.

The past year has seen significant changes across the business, including bringing different teams closer together through greater integration; ultimately, improving the levels of service and communication we provide to our customers.

This was demonstrated recently when

we hosted around 40 oil and gas clients and industry experts, on behalf of one of our key suppliers, for an open day and tour of our Kintore facility to mark the launch of a new hydrocarbon fire protection coating system.

eBlast was chosen by the supplier due to our modern facilities, including the new 1,000 sq. metre specialist coatings and powder coating area, large capacity and extensive experience of fire protection application.

It gave our team the opportunity to answer questions around our full suite of specialist coating services, including surface preparation, thermal spray aluminium, passive fire protection and topsides epoxy coating, whilst feedback received from everyone involved was extremely positive.

Events like this play an important role in building and developing relationships with key contacts as well as providing a forum for clients to discuss any challenges they may be facing, whilst learning about the latest technology and solutions that can save time and reduce costs.



Blast

is a surface preparation specialist and a part of the eGroup. Offering surface preparation and specialist coatings to service the oil & gas industry.

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- Passive Fire Protection (PFP)
- Specialist Coatings
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e Fab

e Blast

e Clad

e Test



Graham Macdonald

Reserve your spot for Ride the North

FRIENDS of Anchor is calling for cyclists to gear up for this year's Ride the North, as the charity partners up with the event for the very first time.

The cycling event takes place on August 28 and 29, with cyclists taking in 170 miles of beautiful North-east scenery. The general ballot entry for the event has closed, but those who wish to support Friends of Anchor will be guaranteed a spot.

All funds raised will directly support cancer and haematology patients in the North-east by being invested in the Anchor Unit at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary.

Graham Macdonald, Friends of Anchor committee member and clinical oncology consultant within the unit, is taking part for the charity. He said: "It's the first time Friends of Anchor has been officially involved in this event, so it's exciting to be part of the first wave of the red tribe to take part. I've done some running events for the charity before, and there's a huge camaraderie and community feel when you're fundraising for Friends of Anchor - there's a lot of support, and with online fundraising pages it's never been easier."

Beginning and ending at Grampian Transport Museum in Alford, the route encompasses 170 miles across the two days, and will start by riding from Cock Bridge to Tomintoul via the Lecht Ski Centre and come to Suie Hill before finishing with a lap of the Grampian Transport Museum race track. There are five different waves of riders depending on the average expected time taken to complete the course.

Contract follow successful trial

ABERDEEN-based provider of data science and predictive analysis services, OPEX Group, has secured a contract for digital services with Chrysaor, the UK's leading independent E&P company.

The contract announcement follows a successful field trial which OPEX Group started last year in which its predictive analysis service was applied to the gas compression systems on Chrysaor's Lomond EPM and Armada platforms.

On 27 occasions during the trial, OPEX helped Chrysaor to anticipate and take action to remedy conditions which may otherwise have led to gas compression system trips, minimising production loss and cutting maintenance costs.

Chrysaor has now extended the contract with OPEX Group throughout 2020 and is also working with the company to apply data science to other challenges within the business.

Fifth Ring ranks top in benchmarking report

FIFTH Ring, the Aberdeen-headquartered marketing communications specialist, has been ranked as the highest performing Scottish agency in the B2B Marketing UK Agencies Benchmarking Report 2020.

The agency, which has office locations in the Americas, Europe and Asia, offers a range of services including brand development, creative design, digital web design and development, marketing and public relations.

The results are based on the company's revenue and headcount, and after adding 10 people to its global offices and gaining £600,000 of new business in 2019, the successful year has been recognised in the latest report.

Ian Ord, Fifth Ring founder and chief executive, said: "We had a fantastic year in 2019 with business and headcount increasing in all of our office locations, which is reflected in our positioning in this benchmark report. As a founding member of BBN, our relationship with the network opens the door to international markets, allowing us to seamlessly operate and truly be a global agency.

"We are proud that our work continues to be recognised by our peers as some of the best in the industry."

Health and safety warning

HEALTH and safety expert Bruce Craig, of legal firm Pinsent Masons, has warned that while prosecutions for breaching health and safety laws are at record low levels, businesses have a duty to maintain the highest standards.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) prosecuted just under 400 cases in the UK in 2018/19, the lowest number for five years and a drop of 23% on the previous year. Recent statistics also show the number of cases taken to court dropped by over a third since 2014/15, when 600 health and safety cases were in court.

It was also revealed that HSE inspectors are taking longer to complete investigations, with 65% of fatal investigations completed within 12 months of the incident, compared to 81% the year before, while total fines issued for health and safety offences in the same period dropped from £71.6m to £54.5m.

Mr Craig, a partner in Pinsent Masons' Aberdeen office who specialises in health and safety, shipping and commercial disputes, said the fall in cases being brought to court could be down to the requirement for inspectors to be more thorough in their investigations than was the case some years ago.

He said: "While the figures are surprising, they may be indicative of an increased safety culture in UK business resulting in fewer accidents. It certainly would be wrong and short sighted for businesses to believe that fewer prosecutions mean that standards can slip with impunity."

Fisher companies' merger move

JAMES Fisher Offshore (JFO), has merged with sister company, James Fisher Subsea Excavation (JFSE), to strengthen its position as a global life of field support provider of specialist offshore engineering solutions.

The merger creates a dynamic single source of services across asset and project lifecycles, positioned to deliver time and cost savings to its customers. The combined portfolio enhances JFO's ability to support its clients across the oil and gas and offshore renewables markets globally and delivers on its internationalisation and growth strategy.

Decommissioning will continue to be a key focus and 2019 presented significant international opportunities for both companies which will continue throughout 2020 under the JFO banner. The amalgamation also presents significant growth opportunity in the UK offshore renewables market.

Securitas recognised as top employer

SECURITAS UK has been officially recognised as a top employer by the Top Employers Institute for its commitment to delivering exceptional people management and HR strategies.

Organisations certified as top employers dedicate themselves to providing the very best working environment for employees through their progressive 'people-first' HR practices.

In order to be certified, Securitas had to achieve the minimum standard as set out by the Top Employers Institute across 10 key topics: talent strategy, workforce planning, talent acquisition, onboarding, learning and development, performance management, leadership development, career and succession, management; and compensation and benefits and culture.

Securitas UK is the only security and protective services company to be accredited by the Top Employer Institute.

£130m contract extension for Wood

WOOD has secured a \$130m (£100m) three-year contract extension with Melbourne Water to continue to provide maintenance and capital works for clean and wastewater treatment works, pumping stations and sewage trunk systems until 2022.

Wood has more than 20 years' experience supporting the water and wastewater sector in Australia and is committed to maintaining and improving local infrastructure to meet the demands on a modern water network amid growing urbanisation.

This is the second renewal of the contract under which Wood delivers mechanical, electrical, instrumentation, process control and civil maintenance services, employing a local team of approximately 250 on several sites from the Thomson Reservoir in the east to the Western Treatment Plant near Melbourne.

SME Spotlight



Duncan Cameron,
technical director,
Tycom Limited

When was your business established?
1976

What does your business do?

Tycom is an IT Managed Service Provider (MSP). We differ from traditional reactive break fix IT support companies by becoming an extension of our client's business. Tycom has developed a unique managed service offering that helps SME's navigate the complexities of cyber security, cloud, IT support, business continuity, software development, disaster recovery, governance and compliance.

What sort of companies do you do business with?

Tycom has a diverse range of SME clients throughout Scotland and beyond. The main markets we operate in are oil and gas, engineering, legal and professional, manufacturing, construction and the charity sector.

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

Keeping pace with cyber security is a mammoth task. The UK Government recently reported in its Cyber Security Breaches Survey that around a third (32%) of businesses and two in 10 charities (22%) report having cyber security breaches or attacks in the last 12 months.

And the biggest opportunity?

It's no longer viruses and malware that keep SME business owners awake at night. It is unfortunately organised crime and state sponsored, ransomware, phishing scams and social engineering. SMEs are losing tens, and in some cases hundreds of thousands of pounds to these attacks. Scottish SMEs are increasingly realising the need to move away from traditional IT support to a modern IT managed service model.

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

Helping our customers become more successful through the adoption of technologies that align with their business goals. Actively seeking out technical risk throughout our customer base and translating that risk into clear understandable business impact, is what differentiates us and makes us unique in the market.

Sponsored by

A promotional banner for Goldstar cleaning services. It features the Goldstar logo, which is a stylized starburst with the word 'GOLDSTAR' in bold letters and 'cleaning services' in smaller text below it. To the right of the logo is a circular emblem celebrating 40 years (1979-2019) of Goldstar Cleaning. Below the logo, the slogan 'ALWAYS AT YOUR SERVICE' is written in bold. At the bottom, contact information is provided: email: sales@gold-star.co.uk, web: www.gold-star.co.uk, and tel: 01224 897 063.

Licenced to travel

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



EXCITING times at the Chamber as we recently became the first in more than 20 years to be awarded a licence to issue ATA Carnets and the first in Scotland to deliver the service digitally.

An international customs document which allows goods to travel duty and tax free across countries for up to one year, a Carnet provides businesses with an alternative to the time consuming task of completing customs documents for each country goods are passing through. It provides a guarantee to overseas officials that if temporarily admitted items are not re-exported, duties will be paid.

The Chamber helped North-east firms export goods worth in excess of \$873m (USD) to more than 115 countries around the world last year. With customs arrangements coming to the fore for many organisations in 2020, the Chamber took the decision to undertake the rigorous licence application to further increase its support services for local business.

Used for non-perishable goods, the

documentation eliminates the need for a customs declaration at border points and the deposit of a guarantee, bond, or cash deposit in the country of temporary importation. It can also be used for a trips covering more than one country and include numerous exits and re-entries in the country of origin during the period of validity of the document.

There are currently 76 countries which have signed the appropriate convention and are able to operate the scheme.

The North-east is a strong, internationally-focused region thanks in part to our energy and agriculture industries but also the growing digital, tourism and life sciences sectors and having the right customs documentation is vital to ensure goods get to where they are going with minimal fuss and cost.

In becoming the first Chamber in 23 years to be awarded the licence to issue them, we will be able to help reduce costs and red tape; and increase efficiency for the many, many

businesses across the North-east who are trading internationally.

The licence allows the Chamber to deliver the service online, adding additional benefits for local firms.




It was granted by London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the national guaranteeing organisation for ATA Carnets in the UK. It represents the UK at the World ATA Carnet Council and is ultimately responsible for all Carnets issued from the UK.



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March



Learn to translate thinking into action with the new 2020 Business Breakfast series

5 Thu

Business Breakfast: On the right road?

07:30 - 9:00
The Chester Hotel

Connectivity is key to business growth – are things moving fast enough for our city region? And which areas of transport infrastructure should be prioritised for the most urgent investment as we seek to deliver our regional economic strategy, sector diversification plans and realise our ambitions to be a global leader in energy transition?

Our speakers will include Lisa Childs, senior external affairs manager at Heathrow Airport; and Alison Irvine, director of transport strategy and analysis at Transport Scotland.

12 Mar

The Budget Breakfast: A new chapter for the UK economy?

07:30 - 9:00
The Marcliffe Hotel & Spa

In the first budget for the new Government, 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'. Will the Chancellor's announcement and proposed policy changes provide the impetus for our regional economy to grow?

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



How can the benefits and services we provide support your business?

20 Apr

Maximise Your Membership

08:30 - 09:45
AGCC

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 'maximise your membership' events to help enlighten members about key information and ensure that their organisation and its employees fully understand and use the benefits of Chamber membership.

This event is also open to non-Chamber members who want to find out more about what joining the Chamber can do for your business.

April

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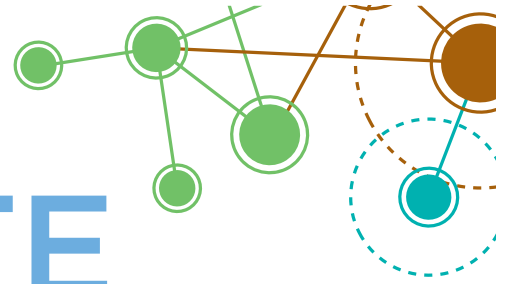
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June

THE ULTIMATE BUSINESS SHOW 2020



The Ultimate Business Show 2020

17 Wed | P&J Live

Bringing together organisations of all sizes and from every sector, The Ultimate Business Show will return on June 17, providing the perfect platform to source products and services here in the North-east of Scotland.

Now in its fifth year, we'll be in a new home this year as we move to P&J Live. A sell-out since its inception, 'TUBS' brings together more than 80 local exhibitors to showcase their services and products to more than 800 delegates, helping keep our regional economy buoyant.

Offering an excellent platform to raise your company profile, generate business to business sales leads, connect and build relationships with prospects and a programme of free seminars, this one-day show is the must-attend business to business event in the North-east calendar.

Visit agcc.co.uk for more information about exhibiting, attending or sponsorship opportunities.

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

Let us know at info@agcc.co.uk



Alan Gordon

Alan Gordon has been elected senior partner of DM Hall. Alan, formerly the firm's principal commercial partner, joined as an apprentice surveyor in Glasgow 33 years ago. He is widely recognised throughout Scotland and beyond as a leading expert in commercial property, particularly in the leisure and hospitality sectors.



George Laing and Elaine Lownds

Oldmeldrum-based Bethan Customs Consultancy has appointed former HMRC higher officer George Laing as customs consultant with plans underway for further recruitment in 2020. The company helps clients navigate the complexities of HMRC authorisations and customs regimes across a range of sectors from oil and gas to food and drink and retail. Over the last 12 months, 19 new clients have come on board. The team has also been restructured and customs consultant Elaine Lownds has been promoted to the newly created position of customs manager.



Alessandro Crocitto

Blue Water Shipping, which has been involved in providing logistical solutions to Italian clients for many years, has established an office in Milan to support and develop this business. Alessandro Crocitto, who has more than 30 years of logistics industry experience, has joined the Blue Water team to develop the Italian market.



Tanya Urquhart

Tanya Urquhart has joined Solab IT Services as its implementation consultant. Acting as a key focal point for clients, Tanya will support teams transitioning to its online tracking, operations and certification hub, Onboard Tracker. Tanya has an extensive background in expediting, project management and service delivery across the energy sector.



Siobhan Jaffray

Siobhan Jaffray has been appointed centre manager at Centrum Serviced Offices. Centrum is owned by the property group Stelmain and Siobhan's formal roles include reception manager and sales and events manager. Siobhan has 15 years' experience in the hospitality sector.



Paul Gowens

The lead paramedic consultant for the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) has accepted the position of visiting professor at Robert Gordon University (RGU) to collaborate on creating the best paramedic undergraduate-education experience in Scotland. Paul Gowens will support its BSC paramedic practice course at a strategic level, as well as providing masterclass opportunities for students.



Stacey Leak

Stacey Leak has joined Rose Recruitment as a senior consultant in its Aberdeen team. Stacey has considerable sales experience from her previous business development roles and will focus on driving Rose Recruitment's commercial and sales divisions in Scotland.

Other recent appointments

Six new non-executive board members have been appointed by Remarkable to steer strategic decision making and support. They are **Denise Kerins**, head of business response at Scottish Enterprise, entrepreneur and change agent **Simon Lidington**, business finance expert **Ron Robson**, **Gillian Frame** expert in leadership development and executive coach, board advisor and leadership and strategy expert **Russell Dalgleish**; and **David Hicks**, leadership expert and entrepreneur.

Osprey Housing has appointed two new board members, **Simpson Buglass** and **Raymond Edgar**. Long-term board member **Mike Scott** also steps up to take the role of non-executive chairman, while **Stuart Robertson** becomes vice chair.

Two new directors have joined OGUK's leadership team under the continued direction of chief executive officer Deirdre Michie. **Trevor Stapleton** is OGUK's new health, safety and environment director while **Katy Heidenreich** is operations director. The two new directors join a reshaped leadership team to support industry in its delivery of Roadmap 2035: a blueprint for net zero. **Matt Abraham** will take on a more focused brief as supply chain and exports director and **Mike Tholen** will become OGUK's sustainability director.

An academic whose work crosses over music, language, literature and performance is to join the University of Aberdeen as a new head of school. Professor **Chris Collins** will lead the School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture (LLMVC) from June. He joins from the University from Bangor where he has been since 2001.

Tidy Green Clean has appointed two regional directors to develop business in Aberdeen North and Falkirk and the Forth Valley. **Igors Krumins** is the new regional director for Aberdeen North and **Hugh McGarry** the regional director for Forth Valley.



Chris Martin

Wings Travel Management has appointed Chris Martin to the newly-created role of senior vice president – global business development. Martin joined the company in 2017 as vice president business development for the Americas. Since then he has played an integral, active and strategic role in the successful award of a number of appointments.



Mike Yule and Jamie MacBeath

Aberdeen-based Katoni Engineering's growing team has been joined by Mike Yule and Jamie MacBeath. Mike has come on board as lead structural engineer and a key member of the leadership team. Jamie has joined to support the electrical team on a wide range of projects which have been recently won.



Sheila Sansbury

Aberdeen Foyer has appointed Sheila Sansbury as the new chair of the board of directors. Her professional background is in community development, having worked in the academic sector in an action research project aimed at improving the outcomes for children, young people and their families in a regeneration area.



Gemma Perfect and Carly Stewart

Aberdeen Considine has strengthened its legal teams with the appointment of a new partner and senior associate. Gemma Perfect, who is based in Aberdeen, has been promoted from associate to partner in the commercial real estate team. Gemma joined Aberdeen Considine as a trainee solicitor in 2007 after completing her diploma in legal practice at the University of Aberdeen. Carly Stewart who joined Aberdeen Considine's dispute resolution team as an associate in 2019, has been promoted to senior associate. Carly, who is also based in Aberdeen, has more than 15 years' experience in commercial litigation.

Welcome to the Chamber

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