

Big opportunities

The life of an SME

Starting out

No place like home for new business

Growing Garioch

Spotlight on the Shire



Small but mighty

SMEs
THIS MONTH



MANAGED PRINT SERVICES

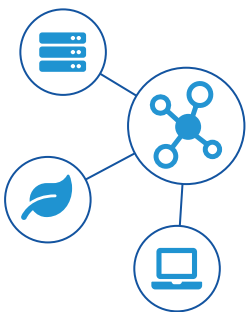
World-class printing, copying and scanning technology creating exceptional results while saving money. A local partner giving you unparalleled service and support. One dedicated account manager who's always seeking new benefits for your organisation.

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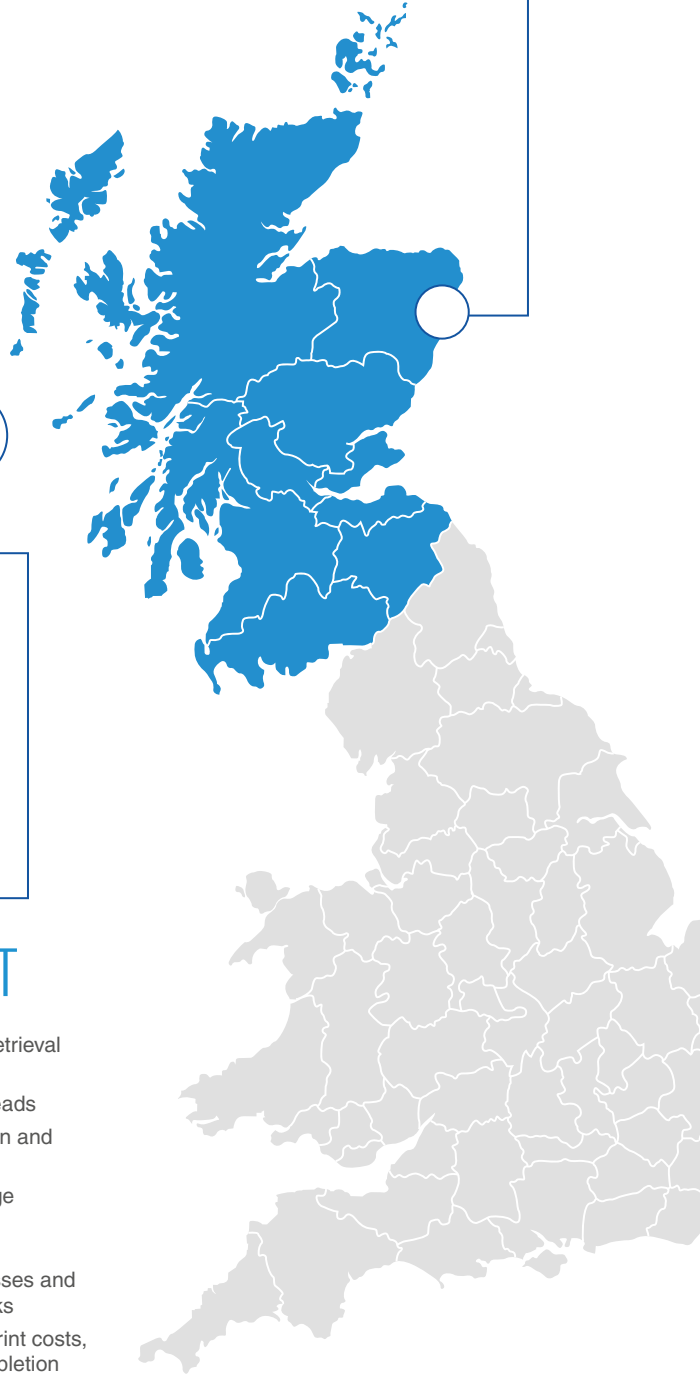
At Workflo, we have a comprehensive range of IT support options tailored to suit all requirements. Whether you want a turnkey solution which see us undertake full ownership of your network or wish us to provide support to your in-house IT team, we can offer a solution to fit.



ELECTRONIC DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT



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- Set role-based access control (RBAC) to manage document access and ensure data security & confidentiality
- Automate workflows to improve business processes and route documents with defined time limits for tasks
- Utilise electronic signature modules to reduce print costs, simplify processes and streamline contract completion
- Reduce paper usage, deliver carbon reductions & meet environmental goals



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Cover image
SME's

December's theme
People & partnerships

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NOVEMBER 2019
Focus on **SMEs**



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Our partners

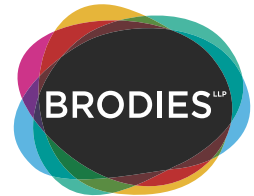
As well as helping our member businesses to be better through a range of activities, the Chamber is committed to investing a significant amount of energy in moving forward the economic growth agenda and lobbying for change on key issues to create the conditions for success. Our regional renaissance.

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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From the horse's mouth

TWO years ago I could never have imagined running my own business, never mind writing this article on how a brief conversation evolved into Drummond Finance.

Facing into a bank restructure and the prospect of a new role that did not particularly excite me, a terminal illness in the family made me stop, reassess priorities and have that 'life's too short' moment.

I did not intend to start up my own business. The idea was born out of a conversation about a lack of local banking resources for SMEs. Eighteen months on, I'm not only serving SMEs but running one myself.

Launching Drummond Finance was both scary and exciting. Job opportunities emerged for me that were tempting, attractive and much more secure. But none excited me as much as the prospect of setting up on my own.

Family support is vital. My wife had not considered me leaving the bank to set up my own business. She needed time to ask questions and raise concerns, then form her own conclusion. Thankfully that was that she had every confidence in me and my new venture.

We have a fantastic local business community who want to see local businesses succeed and are willing to offer whatever they can to do so. Whilst not a surprise, that has been an enormous support.

Networking is a fantastic source of business, opportunities, knowledge, experience and wise words. A bad day as a small business is a lonely day. An employee can unburden to colleagues over lunch or coffee but you can't do that if you are on your own. Being able to reach out to someone who has been there and done it and knows how it feels has been invaluable to me.

The work-life balance when running your own business is both an opportunity and a challenge. When self-employed you do not get paid for your time off. I have been around a lot more for my six year old than I ever was for my older kids. I do the school pick up and drop

offs, attend school sports day and enjoy an occasional long lunch with my wife. But that does mean longer hours in the evening and not switching off the phone. Out of office messages are not an option when running a new business. However, these are my choices, on my terms and at my discretion; and that is a huge part of running my own business.

After 18 months Drummond Finance already looks much different than it did on day one. With 100+ lenders on our panel, access to finance and the ability to source and secure lending are our key drivers. We now offer an easy online search for SME Finance, and recently launched DrummondFX to support local businesses' currency and international payment needs.

Setting up and running my own business has not been easy, but it has been hugely rewarding in so many ways, and it's a very exciting journey to be on.

Alex Drummond
*managing director,
Drummond Finance*



AWPR provides major boosts for mart

THE opening earlier this year of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route has transformed the travel times faced by the farming community in reaching the major North-east markets, according to Thainstone Mart.

Recent evidence suggests travel times faced by buyers and sellers have fallen since the new route opened in February this year, including significant livestock welfare benefits. Livestock hauliers are reporting greater efficiencies with time savings of up to 60 minutes for deliveries, allowing them to travel further in less time than before. Haulage before sales is also better planned and less stressful for livestock, helped by Thainstone's offer of free eve of sale lairage for all livestock.

Chief executive, Grant Rogerson, believes the reduced haulage time and lairage advantage is opening a massive new opportunity for the co-operative and for farmers who will now 'think Thainstone' for the first time.

SMEs use both online and branch banking

HALF of SMEs in the UK and Ireland (51%) visit a bank branch at least once every week but online business banking is still used more, according to Close Brothers Business Barometer research.

In total, 12% of businesses say that they use a physical bank daily and 39% use one every week. A further 31% visit a branch monthly. In comparison, three quarters (76%) use online banking for their firm at least once a week, with 41% saying they use it every day.

These results suggest that there is a significant overlap and while companies may opt to go online for some transactions, the two banking mediums are not used exclusively. In fact, just a tenth of SMEs (11%) say they visit a bank branch less than twice a year.

The results vary by industry. Three fifths of those working in food and drink (63%), wholesale and distribution (63%) and construction (60%) use a brick-and-mortar bank at least once a week. However, this figure reduces by up to a fifth in other sectors, such as engineering (41%), and print and packaging (43%).

Pinsent Masons inclusive approach to strategy

INTERNATIONAL professional services firm Pinsent Masons has added a new perspective to its strategic decision making with the launch of the Spark Board.

The aim of the Spark Board is to support an inclusive approach to strategic decision-making, ensuring the firm's main board benefits from perspectives from outside the elected partnership.

The composition of the Spark Board will ensure that viewpoints from different generations, geographies and job roles are represented when the board considers different propositions.



Fiona Buchanan

Transactions rise for Shepherd and Wedderburn

SHEPHERD and Wedderburn's banking and finance team has reported a strong year for deals, with the value of transactions rising by 10% (£13.4 bn) in the 2019 financial year to April 30.

The team completed 167 deals with a combined value of £145.4bn, up from 162 deals valued at £132bn in 2017/18.

Fiona Buchanan, head of banking and finance, said: "Our clients were particularly active in the renewables, healthcare, technology, real estate and financial sectors last year, which largely reflects the sectors that are performing well in both the Scottish and wider UK economies.

"Approximately 15% of work won last year was with new clients, notably corporates seeking our experienced banking and finance advisers to put debt funding in place, particularly as Brexit uncertainty continues to influence operating conditions. We also saw an increase in lender-side mandates, indicating the banks are getting on with business despite ongoing uncertainties."

Industry experts gather in Aberdeen

WITH the continued focus on sustainability within construction, the organisers of a North-east conference are bringing sector experts together to share knowledge, case studies and innovations on the topic.

This focus is in line with recently produced government frameworks to address carbon within the industry: the global 'Advancing Net Zero Campaign' has set targets for all buildings to be net zero carbon in operation by 2050. All new buildings have to meet this standard by 2030.

Build It 2019 takes place on November 29, at P&J Live in Aberdeen, and brings together 16 speakers from across the industry, with presentations ranging from 'Sustainability in the Planning System' to 'The Role of the Circular Economy in Ensuring a Sustainable Future for Construction'.

The conference will also welcome keynote speaker Sandy Halliday, principal of Gaia Research, an Edinburgh-based research consultancy developing sustainable solutions for the built environment.

First five occupiers for City South

FIVE new occupiers have been secured at Aberdeen's City South Business Park on behalf of owners Dandara Group by global property consultancy CBRE in partnership with joint agents FG Burnett.

Four of the new tenants have purchased their premises, with the fifth leasing its unit. All five units are part of the latest phase of development at City South Business Park, situated in a prime location just two minutes' drive away from the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route, within easy reach of the city centre. A total of 19 smaller business units, each comprising 1,250sq ft, have been speculatively built by Dandara Group at the site.

Lift systems specialist Otis has leased its unit while the businesses purchasing their units are: Clearwater Electrical; The Shand Practice, a long-established podiatry services business; HVAC, a heating, ventilation, air conditioning and refrigeration solutions company; and LHR Marine.

CBRE associate director Iain Landsman said: "These deals represent a growing confidence in the North Sea oil and gas industry and the North-east economy generally. This is further evidenced by the fact that we are also under offer on another six of the units, leaving only six remaining. On the back of the success of these smaller business units, Dandara is looking at potentially building out another phase to cater for the high demand."



Swire Oilfield Services in Mexican partnership

SWIRE Oilfield Services, a global provider of offshore containers and oilfield services, has announced a strategic partnership agreement with Whittaker Engineering for the supply of offshore containers and equipment to support the growing energy market across Mexico.

Whittaker Engineering, a privately-owned Scottish engineering company which has been operating in the Aberdeen market for over 36 years, has been established in Mexico for 10 years and offers services including fabrication, paint and blasting from its Ciudad del Carmen base in Campeche state.

The partnership will support the upcoming demand in the region and brings together two established oilfield services companies in an exciting market.

HVAC wins major Sakhalin contract

HVAC & Refrigeration Engineering Ltd (HVAC&R), part of Nucore Group, has been awarded a significant contract in Sakhalin worth over £1m.

The contract encompasses engineering, procurement, construction and surveying and equipment has been deployed and is now being commissioned on two rigs in Sakhalin.

Scott Ligertwood, operations manager, said: "HVAC&R has previous experience in Sakhalin, and this contract confirms the strategic positioning of Nucore Group on a global platform. HVAC&R continues to demonstrate processes to exploit natural resources with maximum respect for the environment and the reduction of the carbon footprint."

TEMS wins \$2m worth of work

ABERDEEN-BASED Turnkey Environmental Management Services International Ltd (TEMS International) has won \$2m of work since the beginning of this year in a range of significant locations, including the Gulf of Mexico and Trinidad.

It has also successfully completed its first three-month contract in Malaysia, a key emerging marketplace for the ambitious business which was founded in 2017.

As well as adding positively to the balance sheet, the busy year has already led to the creation of eight new jobs to fulfil the requirements of a growing customer base which features contracts ranging in duration from three months to up to five years.

TEMS International managing director Bill Walkingshaw said: "We are delighted at the levels of business achieved during the year to date, and that this has led to new jobs across the team. Our growth plans are ambitious in terms of scale and geography and this tranche of work positions us well to continue expanding our corporate horizons and growing our global footprint."

James Fisher has Middle East success

JAMES Fisher Offshore (JFO), a global provider of specialist offshore engineering solutions, has increased its oil and gas decommissioning activities in the Middle East with a new offshore platform jacket removal project in Saudi Arabia.

The work will utilise its pioneering cutting solution which is capable of delivering significant time-saving efficiencies.

Managing director Jack Davidson said: "As a key market for JFO, the appetite for our solutions in the Middle East region is very encouraging. There is a clear recognition of our experience, track record and innovation in delivering measurable efficiencies for some of the region's most notable decommissioning projects.

"We are looking forward to adding both breadth and depth to these burgeoning regional relationships and continuing to demonstrate our growing decommissioning capabilities."



Kevin Coll, *managing director, Solab*

Innovation puts company on track

AN ESTABLISHED North-east IT company is on track to achieve £3m turnover this year, thanks to an innovative approach in a competitive marketplace.

Solab is a leading local IT support company with 28 years of experience in supporting, training and developing businesses across Scotland and beyond, delivering expert IT services and solutions. The company has experienced a substantial growth in turnover of 24% in the last two years and the upward trend is continuing in 2019.

Key to recent growth has been the firm's Onboard Tracker™ software, which now manages crewing logistics, certification and competence data on people working on over 70% of the manned rigs in the UKCS and in over 50 countries. The company has secured significant, multi-year contract wins this year with a plethora of clients including Bilfinger Salamis UK, who recently implemented the software to support its North Sea training and competency operations.

Stephanie Broadley, competency advisor, said: "We implemented the certification module within Onboard Tracker in March 2019 and will shortly be implementing digital training matrices and the competency module across our business. The Bilfinger team enjoy working with Onboard Tracker and are enthusiastic when additional features are made available to them. Digitalisation is a key focus for our business and the introduction of Onboard Tracker provides an ideal solution to enhance our capability to track and report the training and competency of our people."

£500,000 investment in ASV

ABERDEEN Sports Village (ASV) has unveiled its refurbished gym following a half a million-pound investment.

As part of the substantial upgrade, the facility is the first in Scotland to introduce the latest fitness strength tracking system, Advagym, which allows members to monitor both cardio and strength workouts.

Savills predicts best year for inward investment in Scotland

SCOTLAND has attracted over half a billion pounds of international capital in the first half of 2019 and is on track to become the best recorded year of inward investment for commercial real estate in Scotland, according to Savills, the international real estate advisor.

Almost half (49%) of all investment (£575m) into Scotland in H1 2019 was made by international investors, representing the largest share of inward investment since 2016. Asian investors accounted for the largest proportion investing £240m into Scotland over the year, surpassing the £180m invested in the whole of 2018.

Nick Penny, head of Savills Scotland and director in the investment team, said: "2019 is shaping up to be a record year for inward investment into Scotland. Investors are attracted by the strong performance of the economy, record employment and more attractive yields on offer relative to other regional cities in the South east."



Ian Kirk and the team

Vulcan wins \$15m of work

AN INNOVATIVE and ambitious company which represents the next generation of creative solutions for the oil and gas completions market has secured work worth \$15m since the beginning of this year.

Westhill-based Vulcan Completion Products (VCP) has won the work in key global marketplaces, including a multi-million dollar contract with a supermajor in the Caspian region.

Closer to home, the upturn in business has been expedited by the creation of multiple distributor relationships which have been set up throughout Europe to ensure comprehensive coverage for the region, a strategy which recently led to successful entry to the North Sea for a major client.

Founder Ian Kirk said: "The success of the year to date stands us in good stead as we look to the future and prepare ourselves for the next phase of our ambitious global growth plans."

Pharis Energy contract for RDS

RDS, KCA Deutag's global provider of engineering and design solutions to the oil and gas, renewable and alternative energy sectors, has won a contract to carry out a conceptual study for Pharis Energy.

Pharis Energy aims to initiate the first major offshore steam flood project in the world and is currently exploring innovative ways to maximise oil recovery in the Pilot Field in the UK North Sea. RDS's scope of work on this project will include jack-up screening and selection and the well head platform design.

This work will be executed out of RDS's London and Aberdeen offices.



Fiona Campbell and Mark O'Neill

DM Hall and self-caterers in partner agreement

SCOTTISH chartered surveyors DM Hall has entered into a three-year partnering agreement with the Association of Scotland's Self-Caterers (ASSC) to be its preferred and promoted property services and advice provider.

Founded in 1978, the ASSC is the leading source of knowledge on short-term letting and holiday homes in Scotland. The ASSC is also the only trade body representing the interests of the traditional self-catering sector. It has more than 650 Members operating in excess of 7,000 self-catering properties throughout Scotland, from city centre apartments and rural cottages to lodges, chalets, and castles.

Mark O'Neill, head of energy at DM Hall, said: "Withdrawal of government guidance on energy assessment issues, specifically related to self-catering holiday accommodation, was the catalyst for initial conversations between ASSC and DM Hall.

"Further discussions, however, led ASSC chief executive Fiona Campbell to conclude that ASSC members could benefit significantly from accessing DM Hall's expert insight and knowledge across a wide range of property issues."

Chrysaor completes Conoco acquisition

CHRYSAOR has completed its acquisition of ConocoPhillips' UK oil and gas business for \$2.675bn.

The assets acquired produced approximately 72,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day (boepd) in the first six months of 2019. Combined with Chrysaor's existing portfolio first half 2019 production averaged 195,000 boepd.

The transaction adds two new operated hubs to Chrysaor's portfolio in the UK Central North Sea - Britannia and J-Block - in addition to an interest in the Clair Field area.

Phil Kirk, chief executive, Chrysaor, said: "The completion of this acquisition confirms Chrysaor's position as one of Europe's leading independent exploration and production companies. We are now one of the largest UK producers with a portfolio of high-quality, long-life assets complemented by a professional and expert staff. As we enter a new chapter for Chrysaor we look forward to welcoming our new colleagues and the safe integration of the two businesses. We have identified a number of exciting growth opportunities in our expanded portfolio and across the Central North Sea."

DYW calls for SME's to prepare next generation for work

SMALL to medium enterprises (SME's) operating in the Aberdeen city region's key growth sectors are being encouraged to play a bigger role in preparing the next generation for the world of work.

SME's account for 99% of all private sector enterprises across Scotland, providing an estimated 1.2 million jobs and making a big impact on the local economy. With them accounting for more than half of private sector employment and more than 40% of private sector turnover, there is a very good chance that today's young people will make their future career in a small business.

DYW North East is calling on small to medium businesses working in the energy, digital, food and drink, agriculture, life sciences, and tourism sectors to get more involved and help ensure the workforce of tomorrow are equipped with the skills the region needs.

"There is a misconception that engagement with schools is only for larger companies with significant resources at their disposal however the reality is that career inspiration activities can take many forms. This can be as simple as arranging a visit for a small number of students through to offering apprenticeship placements as Clark IT does. In our experience, all businesses really need is help understanding how to get involved," said DYW board member Margo Milne, commercial director of Clark Integrated Technologies.

"As an SME, I know first-hand how important it is for the needs of your business to come first but many business owners would be pleasantly surprised to discover just how easy and rewarding it can be to take that first step towards engaging with schools; and just how much support is out there for those that do."

Good things come in small packages

SMALL and medium enterprises (SMEs) are critically important for the economy. From local shops to small tech firms working out of services offices, the majority of companies in the UK are SMEs. Government figures recorded 5.7 million SME's in the UK last year, making up 99% of private sector businesses in the country. Within that, 5.4 million were micro businesses, employing nine or fewer employees, which accounts for 96% of all businesses in the UK.

Generally considered to be the backbone of any strong economy, SME's drive growth, provide employment and open new markets. Hand in hand with the opportunities however come many and varied challenges, ranging from attracting new customers and evolving with technology to recruiting and training skilled employees and keeping pace with sometimes costly political changes.

"There is no qualification for becoming the leader of a successful SME. Depending on the business, this can require everything from making the right contacts, raising your profile or developing the right skills to glean market intelligence, accessing

international markets and more," said Seona Shand, membership and events director at Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce.

"For small companies networking can be a real challenge. It is quite often a close team who know they need to go out and tell people about what they are doing. However, they have time constraints because they are trying to drive the sales they need to achieve the income to get their business up and running. While their time is precious, investing a little in attending

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"Events like the Chamber's business breakfasts combine learning about things like leadership, getting a product to market, strategising or digital technology with networking and growing contacts."

Seona Shand, membership and events director

the right events can pay dividends. "Start-up companies want to raise their profile and want people to know who they are and the services and products they offer. They also want to connect with people for conversations about their services or products. Social media is an excellent tool but there is nothing better than meeting someone face-to-face.

"Events like the Chamber's business breakfasts combine learning about things like leadership, getting a product to market, strategising or digital technology with networking and growing contacts.

"For SME's looking to internationalise, connecting with inward delegations or using the Chamber as your link to organisations like Scottish Development International can be really useful. We have speed networking and events around cultural competency. If smaller businesses are looking to go global, they need to understand the cultural differences if they are working in Ghana or Kuwait or Norway."

"There is a perception amongst some that we support mainly large businesses – and while we do support major organisations around 80% of our members have less than 250



staff. We are also an SME ourselves so we understand the type of support businesses need.

“Whether you are a B&B owner in rural Aberdeenshire, a fish processor in Peterhead who employs 50 people or a gasket company that is trading internationally and worth millions of dollars, we can help you get to where you want to be.”

Training is vital for the development of both new and established companies and Susan Staniforth, training team leader at the Chamber, believes that, for smaller companies, the time spent out of a business to undertake training must be considered as well as the cost.

“If you work for a big company it may have a finance team or an HR team but if you are much smaller people have to multitask and haven’t necessarily got all the skills required,” she said.

“The worst-case scenario might be that because someone is lacking in financial experience the company could go bust because they don’t have the required expertise in cash flow or understanding their supply chain.

“A lack of HR experience could land the company in court because it hasn’t gone through the due

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“Whether you are a B&B owner in rural Aberdeenshire, a fish processor in Peterhead who employs 50 people or a gasket company that is trading internationally and worth millions of dollars, we can help you get to where you want to be.”

Seona Shand, membership and events director

process of recruiting or performance management. Often small companies and entrepreneurs end up running them as if it were out of their handbag or wallet and don’t necessarily make business decisions based on proper business knowledge.

“Sometimes they are so involved in firefighting and dealing with the day-to-day problems and issues they don’t have time to plan for development or the next stage or phase.”

Susan said that the Chamber courses are tailored for everyone from the one-man band to those involved in global operations: “People from small companies can usually manage to find the time to attend a half-day course and on the open ones they are mixing with lots of other people. That provides an opportunity to network and also find out how other organisations are doing things. They are learning best practice not just from the trainer but from the other delegates and how they solved their problems. They may even be able to do some business.”



Turning national reach into local success

THE opening of its office in Aberdeen's bustling Western Harbour last month set the seal on what has been one of the busiest on record for West Lothian-headquartered Workflo Solutions.

Identifying a local demand for managed print services, a vital business management requirement that generally needed a local resurgence, Workflo Solutions' move to Aberdeen is a timely one.

Indeed, having comprehensively researched the market, there was no company addressing and resolving the day to day issues experienced by hundreds of small to medium enterprises across the city. Workflo Solutions saw too much reactivity and not enough proactivity in helping businesses manage local print, digital workflow, electronic document management, cloud computing and IT infrastructure.

Moreover, the move also bucks a trend when some felt the city's knack of attracting young, thriving businesses had seen better days.

"Nothing could be further from the truth," said Workflo Solutions

ambitious managing director Michael Field. "We were keen to extend our national reach by opening new offices in Aberdeen in response to a continuous surge in demand across the North-east of Scotland for our range of outsourced managed services technologies.

"However, what I think is of great importance for SMEs in Aberdeen is that Workflo Solutions will be locally managed and a vendor-free supplier. It enables us to specify leading-edge business technology products and solutions from a raft of solutions providers, designed to transform businesses by driving efficiencies and boosting performance."

Workflo Solutions is well-placed, complete with a solid financial base and infrastructure, to reaffirm its position as one of Scotland's fastest growing IT businesses and is further boosted by a local market which now looks to be turning a corner.

Michael also believes there has been a wake-up call that the potential for business success may have been slightly dormant, but it often takes companies from outside the region to recognise that the potential hasn't really gone away. It's a timely reminder that Aberdeen remains a key centre

where great business can be done here.

He continues: "We are very fortunate to have appointed one of the doyens of the managed print services industry, Jim McKay, to oversee the development of our Aberdeen business. Jim is an Aberdonian and has spent almost 30 years working across the managed print supply with the local businesses he helped transform being sold to industry giants Xerox and Hewlett Packard."



"Workflo Solutions is well-placed, complete with a solid financial base and infrastructure, to reaffirm its position as one of Scotland's fastest growing IT businesses and is further boosted by a local market which now looks to be turning a corner."

Michael Field, managing director,
Workflo Solutions

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“Workflo was founded in the early stages of the 2007/2008 recession,” he added. “The recession, as everyone will recall, affected the Scottish markets significantly and firms were focused on spend when perhaps they hadn’t been in the preceding years. This brought forth opportunity for a new supplier who offered best value and return on investment.”

Michael Field, managing director,
Workflo Solutions

“To bring in someone of his calibre and exceptional background is tremendously exciting for our future growth aspirations. We are already witnessing some great opportunities across Aberdeen and the North-east, generally. It remains a very dynamic region.”

Under Jim McKay’s guidance, Workflo Solutions will employ new staff in Aberdeen and will be keeping a keen eye on seeking out acquisition opportunities. The company recently purchased a business in the central belt of Scotland, Pyramid IT, which offers computer, server and associated technology support to businesses.

While Michael believes that the choice in managed service provision has declined sharply across the city in recent years, he anticipates that, from the soundings taken from within the local business community, Workflo Solutions is in robust shape to change that.

“Workflo was founded in the early stages of the 2007/2008 recession,” he added. “The recession, as everyone will recall, affected the Scottish markets significantly and firms were focused on spend when perhaps they hadn’t been in the preceding years. This brought forth opportunity for

a new supplier who offered best value and return on investment.

“I now see a similar opportunity in Aberdeen following the oil and gas downturn in 2014. The city is on the rise again and we are perfectly placed to support the local economy growth with solutions which form the foundation for growth. With a financial standing and infrastructure, we didn’t have in 2007, we are uniquely placed to provide a turnkey solution across managed print, IT services and document management.”

It is important that Scottish entrepreneurs stay focused on Scotland and I believe that local SMEs should work together strengthening the economy. I intend to fulfil this belief with continued investment and acquisition activity within the Central and North-east regions.”

Workflo Solutions also employs 20 staff at its Livingston, West Lothian HQ and is on target to reach £3m turnover for the current financial year.



— Glorious Garioch —

GARIOCH is home to more than 50,000, around 20% of Aberdeenshire's population, and is centred on the thriving market town of Inverurie which dates to the ninth century.

It stretches beyond Inch in the north, Newmachar to the east, Kemnay to the west and Westhill to the south. It is in Inverurie traditional craft butcher, Donald Russell, has been based for more than 40 years. From there, it supplies premium quality meat and more to Michelin starred restaurants around the world.

The company's commitment to quality has ensured it has been a supplier to the Royal households for 35 years and it delivers straight to the homes of thousands of online and mail order customers across the UK and into Europe.

So, is it a challenge running such an international operation from the heart of Garioch?

"Not at all," said Chris Dunridge, Donald Russell's head of Human Resources and development. "We have 230 employees, many of whom have been with us for over 20 years. We know that about 40% of our employees commute here from Aberdeen and the rest live in Inverurie and beyond, into Huntly, Turriff and even Fochabers. Travelling into

Aberdeen would be impractical for our more far-flung workers, so having a major employer based in the Garioch is a big advantage from their point of view.

"Being a butcher, it is also a huge inspiration being surrounded by farmland and seeing the exceptional quality of livestock reared here. It's easy to take for granted what you have on your doorstep but Aberdeen Angus beef is famous the world over with good reason.

"Transport links in the area are good and improving even further. The dualling of the rail network between Aberdeen and Huntly will help and the opening of the AWPR has made it much more efficient for us to get our goods down to transport hubs in the south - essential for our UK wide deliveries. It's also made us an attractive place of work for colleagues in Stonehaven and Laurencekirk, as the journey is now so much faster.

"Inverurie is such a vibrant town and as one of its largest employers, we want to be involved. We encourage our employees to be active within their communities and we support many local causes. We recently sponsored an award at the Inverurie Business Awards and are building links with schools and social enterprise organisations such as The Fly Cup, a great local café and meeting space. It's

hugely rewarding seeing how we can benefit our local community."

It was a visit by Jonathan Cheyne's dad to the local Co-op in Newmachar eight years ago which led to the establishment of MAC Architects in the village 10 miles to the north of Aberdeen.

"My dad knew we were looking for an office and spotted a suitable first floor unit across the road from the Co-op with a pend access. At the time I was living in Bucksburn and Blair Milne, my co-director, was living in Turriff so it was a very handy location for us both and, equally important, the rates in Aberdeen at that time were astronomical so we would never have been able to afford anywhere in the city.

"It enabled us to get the business off the ground and after about a year the vet moved out of the ground floor unit, which offered over 800sq ft, and it was the same landlord so we took on the lease. We invested pretty much our first year's turnover on the office fit out including new doors, windows, flooring and lighting and started from there to develop MAC Architects."

He said that being based in the Garioch had proved to have many benefits: "Positioned on the A947 in the centre of Newmachar we have thousands of people passing



our office going to and from work every day resulting in great visibility and most importantly free visibility advertising. Despite being located in Aberdeenshire our clients and businesses in the city are unconcerned about our location as we win as much work there as we do in the shire. It is also an accessible location for our clients with ample free parking and we have all the local amenities, including a post office, on our doorstep.

“Following the opening of the AWPR we are receiving more inquiries from the south of the city, in the Portlethen and Cove area for example. People previously assumed we wouldn’t be interested in spending at least 45 minutes travelling to the other side of the city but now is just a short journey.

“However, location has never been a problem for us as currently we are carrying out projects in Morayshire and the south of England including a new build house in Accra, Ghana. “We have doubled our staff to four but the Aberdeen market has been very tough for the past five years. Just when we launched MAC Architects the global financial crisis hit, although luckily Aberdeen was on a bit of a high then. However, the oil and gas downturn followed and that was tough but this year we are on track to achieve our highest turnover and if that continues, we will expand our team further.

“We get a wide variety of work within the residential market and recently we have expanded into the commercial sector carrying out office fit-outs, bars, cafes and nurseries.”

MAC Architects is one of only a few practices in the country to have 3D BIM (Building Information Modelling) at the core of its business and technology has helped them win a number of offshore contracts including cabin visualisations. They are also currently working on a dozen five-star holiday cabins on the Lecht which have been given approval by the Cairngorms National Park.

In her previous job Amanda Stuart’s view from her desk was an industrial estate. Now her view is of the loch at the heart of Lochter Activity Centre where the only distraction is fishermen casting their lines to catch brown trout. “This is a fantastic location to work,” said the events and marketing assistant who joined the company six months ago. “Like most of the staff I live close by and can even cycle to work. There are permanent core members of staff and at times that number can rise to above 50, depending on the activities and events underway.

“The centre is just a mile outside Oldmeldrum, 15 minutes from Aberdeen International Airport and 30 minutes from Aberdeen city

centre and people travel from all over Scotland to enjoy our activities.

“Lochter is a family run rural business in the shadow of Bennachie. It started with just the fishery 21 years ago but has now expanded to host weddings, corporate events and more than 20 different activities ranging from blindfold off-road driving and target golf to raft building and archery. We also have a restaurant which is open seven days a week and is popular for lunches and afternoon teas but also attracts bus tours.

“It can be very quiet and tranquil at Lochter but that changes, particularly when we have corporate days and stag and hen parties and the groom-to-be, or even the bride-to-be, ends up in the loch. There is also always great hilarity when sumo wrestling is underway or teams are taking part in the ‘tyred and exhausted’ challenge which involves a team getting from start to finish using only a certain number of tyres and without touching the ground.

“I really enjoy working in the family atmosphere at Lochter where no two days are the same. The Garioch community has lots to offer and we are lucky to be part of it.”

What is the biggest challenge facing SMEs today?



“We are part of a global group however each individual business unit retains a degree of autonomy to ensure a focused service is provided, so we can identify with some of the challenges which SMEs face. One of the main challenges is connecting to the right people in our target market especially within international oil and gas operators or service companies. It can be challenging to connect with the decision influencers and those who can support and guide us through the process.

“It is also a challenging time for our client base and we are adapting by focusing on how we can help them reduce their workload, their costs and their headaches. However, we sometimes find it hard to change the mindsets of some of our customers. They have done their business the same way for many years and when presented with a potentially different way of working using a new technology or a different philosophy they can be cautious so we provide additional support to help them understand the benefits it would bring.”

James Davies, *general manager*, EthosEnergy A&C, Aberdeen



“The collapse of Thomas Cook is a stark reminder that technology, particularly the internet, is the biggest disrupter to businesses in the medium to long term. In order to survive and remain competitive, all businesses, including SMEs, must respond to the same kind of problems that Thomas Cook faced but without the same access to investment capital. From an education perspective, technology is also transforming our service as we adapt to a fast-changing world where people are hungry for information and parents expect to receive more.

“Technology is undoubtedly improving our service and the world we live in but it is not creating many productivity efficiencies. To meet demand and exceed expectations, schools are having to increase teacher workloads and employ technicians which sees increases in costs. However, parents are used to seeing falling costs with the use of technology and are therefore less willing to pay higher costs for the services that result.”

Nicholas Little, *head of school*, International School Aberdeen



“Working for a charitable organisation and SME does come with challenges, like competition: We are in the ever-expanding rural town of Inverurie which is now home to a number of likeminded sports and leisure offerings. This continues to challenge us as we strive to continue to be the leading facility for service offering. Or sustainability, continuing to deliver fresh, new and exciting ideas and services to keep our users/members interested. As an independent not for profit charity it becomes increasingly difficult with how the world of social media continues to evolve and transform our industry.

“Identifying and recruiting enthusiastic team members who are passionate about the leisure industry becomes increasingly difficult. We’re also competing with the well-paid oil and gas industry which is predominant in the area so attracting and retaining talent is a challenge.”

Kevin Bonarius, *chief operating officer*, Garioch Sports Centre

Science Centre time capsule votes cast

MEMBERS of the public have been voting for items to be buried in a time capsule within the redeveloped Aberdeen Science Centre, choosing from a list compiled by school children in the city.

Pupils from three local schools were asked to pick items that reflect life in Aberdeen in 2019 as part of a competition organised by Aberdeen Science Centre and Bancon Construction, with all entries completed by St Peter's Primary School.

The centre is undergoing a multi-million-pound redevelopment and due to reopen in summer 2020, with Bancon Construction currently carrying out works at The Tramsheds on Constitution Street.

Technology, smartphones, currency and toys were some of the most popular suggestions, with pupils also penning letters about their lives in the city to be read by children of the future in years to come.

Liz Hodge, chief executive of Aberdeen Science Centre, said: "We want to bury a time capsule for the children of the future in Aberdeen created by the children of today, so we are very pleased to have the input of local pupils on this project."

The centre's redevelopment includes an extension and creation of a new mezzanine floor – almost doubling the exhibition space – and exposing the roof structure to allow natural light to flood into the building.

University supports major new social sciences project

THE University of Aberdeen will support a new £8m research centre to explore how digital technology will impact the future of work.

The Digital Futures at Work Research Centre (DigIT) will operate from the business schools of the universities of Sussex and Leeds and aim to provide a compelling empirical base for policy makers beyond current levels of speculation as to the impact of new technologies on jobs and workers.

It will be supported by Professor Claire Wallace from the University of Aberdeen who will provide expertise in digital working in rural areas of Scotland.

The research centre will launch at the start of 2020 and has secured £8m in Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funding over a five-year period. It is one of four recipients of £25m of ESRC funding around the UK.

Professor Wallace said: "The University of Aberdeen has a track record in digital communications in rural areas and we will be exploring new dimensions of digital work and the platform economy, using innovative ways of linking producers and consumers of services with artificial intelligence. We think that this has a particular relevance in rural areas with dispersed populations who do not live close to major service centres.

"At the moment these services are underdeveloped in rural areas but platforms offering care services, tourism, lift sharing, rural co-operatives, delivery options and so on represent a major opportunity to create a smarter and more connected countryside."

Flybe heads into new era

CONNECT Airways chief executive officer Mark Anderson was joined by over 200 Flybe leaders last month for the long-awaited unveiling of the airline's new name as it enters a new era as an independent company under the Virgin brand with the name, Virgin Connect.

This marks the beginning of Flybe's journey into the future as part of the extended Virgin family with an overall re-brand scheduled to be completed next year.

Virgin Connect will reflect the innovation and entrepreneurship of Virgin's wider holiday brands, putting its customers at the heart and driving better value. Providing a great customer experience will become its DNA and one of the many ways in which it will differentiate itself in the regional market.

Mark said: "At its heart, Virgin Connect will be passionately focused on becoming Europe's most loved and successful regional airline. It will offer travel that is simple and convenient with the personal touch. Our customers will naturally expect the same exceptional travel experience as they do with other Virgin-related brands. Whatever their reason for flying, we want our customers to feel loved and know we will always put their needs first in every decision we take."



The Involve HR team

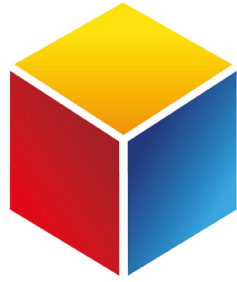
Community involvement

ABERDEEN-based HR consultancy, Involve HR, is celebrating a decade in business with the launch of a programme of community initiatives which will run throughout its anniversary year.

The business, which was founded in 2009 by Emma Barker and Gillian Tierney, provides HR support to organisations across the energy, higher education and third sectors. Its clients include some of the North-east's most well-known charities, including Aberdeen Cyrenians and Aberdeen Sports Village, whose work inspired many of the activities the Involve HR team have planned over the next 12 months.

Partner, Emma Barker said, "Our 10th anniversary is an important milestone for our business and one which we knew we wanted to celebrate. Our goal was to do something meaningful and we decided a calendar of fundraising initiatives would be a great way of making every month of our 10th year count."

A full calendar of activities has been developed including a book donation programme, clothing appeal, blood donations and volunteering with local charities.



SPACE

CREATING GREAT SPACE



SPACE to grow

LAST month's Business Bulletin highlighted the latest from the regional economic strategy and the continued progress in the North-east, with an increase in annual salaries and employment continuing to recover. As a business founded in Aberdeen over 21 years ago, we are encouraged by these results, alongside the billions planned for investment in the region over the next couple of years. It's encouraging and exciting and a reminder of the fantastic place we live.

As a company, we focus on creating great places for people to work and are aware of the pressures on businesses to create spaces that attract and inspire talent. When businesses invest in a property, it is to create an environment that allows their people to become more than the sum off their parts, to foster collaboration, communication and creativity; and to nurture innovation. One of the many challenges for businesses is getting their workplace right, not just in terms of quantity but in terms of quality; they both relate to vision and ambition. When designing space, building in the long and short-term flexibility from the start is essential.

Determining just how much space you need requires a crystal ball, or at least an understanding of the flexibility of space usage. Large organisations are becoming more aware of the fact that no-one space can perform just one function; the cost per square metre is typically too high for part of the workspace to sit empty for 70-80% of the time. Hence the workplace is changing, with an emphasis more on sharing resources (good for the balance sheet, good for collaboration and good for sustainability). Efficiency of space use is not about cramming people in, it is about the optimum utilisation of space over time. For start-ups, and smaller SMEs in particular, the requirement to carefully consider space and how it is used is even more critical. Small changes can have large effects and significant implications if you get it wrong.

Business identity sets them apart from the crowd, office space allows the freedom to express the brand and values through the design of the workplace. That's where the quality of the space becomes critical. It's all about achieving the most bang for your buck, punching above your weight in some key parts of the workplace but also being able to create the impression of being a bigger, a more established and a more confident outfit everywhere else.

Workplace design can be an illusion, useful in attracting new clients and



“If a business plan sets you on a sound financial footing then surely a workplace plan is equally as important. Businesses will gladly spend the time and investment to draw up the former; they also need to feel that they can call on experienced advisors to help plan their new working environment.”

Steve Judge, chairman,
Space solutions

also those key staff that will help propel growth. The design needs to be based on a combination of eager enthusiasm and technology-enabled professionalism, providing the right mix of spaces to support what can be a rapidly changing business landscape. An effective workplace is borne out of evidence and what is right for the client; it can be stylish and engaging without losing focus on what is important.

If a business plan sets you on a sound financial footing then surely a workplace plan is equally as important. Businesses will gladly spend the time and investment to draw up the former; they also need to feel that they can call on experienced advisors to help plan their new working environment.

SPACE was founded in Aberdeen in 1997, growing to become one of Scotland's leading workplace experts providing workplace consultancy, workplace design and fit-out services, facilities management consultancy; and move and change management consultancy. For more information contact Steve Judge on **01224 218 500**, email steve.judge@spacesolutions.co.uk or visit spacesolutions.co.uk.

Keeping up the pressure

By Gary Notman,
managing director, Pressure Test Solutions



THE Chamber's Absolutely initiative speaks volumes for the prosperous future local businesses see in the area. The fact that so many companies have weathered the downturn and are now looking to grow is testament to the impressive business acumen in the area, along with Aberdeen's longstanding determination to succeed and a desire to build on our world-leading reputation.

When faced with a decline in orders, businesses have had to cut back but also find new markets, new customers and, in many cases, change the way they work.

Superior customer service is key to maintaining your customers. It's about doing it better than your competitors. Your reputation is everything and Aberdeen is a small place. Customers need to know they can rely on you and they will tell their contacts if they can't. We pride ourselves on excellent relationships with our customers. We understand what they are trying to do and we respect their need for quality, their own timeframes and of course their cost control requirements.

Of course, keeping your customers and keeping a healthy sales book is one thing, but if you want to grow,

you need to move forward. When the oil and gas downturn affected our existing sales, we looked for new opportunities and quickly spotted the opportunity for a new hydraulics division.

Diversification contains risk but if you know the market, the products and the customers then it's a calculated risk. We also took on some exclusive distributorships which made us unique in the marketplace. Holding a greater stock range means faster delivery, package prices and more traceable products.

Understanding what your customers do, and what they might need are key to growth. We saw that clients buying lights for hazardous areas would also need specialist radios – just one example of identifying new revenue streams.

Growing usually means investment, taken at the right time. Aware of the increasing market need for reliable products and testing services, PTS built a third test bay this year. If you know what your customers need, the risk is minimal but the reward is great.

Pricing has been hard hit over the last few years, and new ways of pricing are needed. Large buying departments have disappeared, with those left

under increasing pressure. That's where package prices come in – fewer invoices and fewer small payments help our customers.

But mostly, being able to provide the right products and superior customer service is reliant upon your team. Experienced, reliable, knowledgeable staff are central to any business. It's important to keep everyone informed – sharing the good and the not so good news. Small acts of gratitude and an understanding of the daily pressures go a long way to making sure your team continues to deliver.

Over the past few years, many local companies have turned to overseas in search of new markets, and that is of course a huge opportunity. However, the opportunities in Aberdeen are immense. We continue to lead in many areas and our local knowledge and expertise is envied across the world. If we keep the pressure on, the future looks pretty good.



Kirstie MacLennan

Social mobility ranking for Brodies

BRODIES LLP, has achieved a top 30 ranking in the latest Social Mobility Employer Index.

Moving up 25 places to 28 from 53 last year, Brodies is the only independent Scottish law firm to be included in this year's Index, which recognises UK employers which have taken the most action to improve social mobility in the workplace.

The Index is the creation of the Social Mobility Foundation. It assesses employers on everything from the work they do with young people and apprenticeships through to their recruitment and selection processes. It also looks at how colleagues from less advantaged backgrounds progress within their organisations.

Brodies was recognised for its outreach work with schools and leading the way as it moves to start targeting cold spots across Scotland - where young people wouldn't ordinarily have access to quality work experience opportunities.

Kirstie MacLennan, director of human resources at Brodies said: "We understand and appreciate the value that a diverse workforce can deliver for our clients and our firm. There is much more to do, and we recognise that we, and the wider legal profession, have a responsibility to improve access to the jobs we create."

OPITO approval for COSL

COSL Drilling Europe AS has become the 30th company to achieve OPITO Competence Management System (CMS) approval. The Norwegian contractor, which demonstrated and implemented a best practice CMS covering operations on one of its North Sea assets, achieved the accreditation in under four months.



Shepard and Wedderburn team

Shepherd and Wedderburn named star performer

SHEPHERD and Wedderburn was named Diversity Star Performer in the 250-1,000 employees category at The Herald & GenAnalytics Diversity Awards 2019.

Now in their fourth year, the awards recognise companies, organisations and individuals, that demonstrate a strong commitment and track record of achievement in ensuring that everyone in society has the opportunity to fulfil their ambitions, aspirations and potential.

The firm's diversity and inclusion projects are led by its five focus groups which comprise colleagues from across the business.

Yvonne Brady, Shepherd and Wedderburn's hgead of diversity, development and inclusion, said: "This award is testament to the hard work of all our colleagues towards achieving a fully inclusive working environment. However, we know there is much more to do and are enthusiastic about meeting that challenge."

Inspire seeks firewalkers

LOCAL charity Inspire is seeking daring individuals and teams to sign up and walk across burning embers to help raise funds for people with learning disabilities and additional support needs in the North-east of Scotland.

Inspire, based on Aberdeen's Beach Boulevard, will host its' annual fundraising firewalk event at the Queen's Links on Tuesday, November 5, as part of the city council's fireworks display.

Andrew Reid, development manager at Inspire, said: "We've already got almost 40 people registered to take part this year. It's an exciting challenge and all sponsorship raised goes towards our innovative range of services which make a real difference to the lives of the people we support in local communities."

As part of the firewalk, participants will take part in a pre-event training session before tackling the fire lane and will then be able to watch the fireworks from the terrace of nearby Cafe Ahoy as well as enjoying a post event BBQ.

FraserDeen programme launches

AN EXTENSION of Aberdeenshire Council's pioneering PeterDeen project has been launched in Fraserburgh, as FraserDeen, with support from NESCol, AFC's Community Trust (AFCCT) and Score Group.

Score Group has doubled its funding for the scholarship programme which aims to transform the lives of young people through an innovative, alternative curriculum, now totalling £4,000.

The young people taking part in FraserDeen will be able to enjoy the benefit of NESCol facilities, the use of the James Ramsay Pavilion in the town, tailored inputs from the council's Work With Young People Team, a number of core classes at Fraserburgh Academy and expert coaching and training delivered by AFCCT.

The innovative partnership format was launched last year in Peterhead and has already seen recognition at a national level winning the SPFL (Scottish Professional Football League) Trust's Community Project of the Year Award.

Conrad Ritchie, managing director of Score International Limited, said: "We are delighted to continue our support of Peterdeen and welcome the inclusion of Fraserburgh Academy to this award-winning programme. It is important that we identify those that require a different approach within mainstream education. Everyone deserves the chance to maximise their potential and FraserDeen will allow this to happen."

All systems go at Pentagon



Pentagon delivers apprentices

A GLOBAL freight forwarding company based in Aberdeen is delivering a special apprenticeship scheme aimed at redressing the industry's skills shortages.

Pentagon Freight Services is taking three young recruits on a journey which will set them on a career path.

Chief executive Ashley Taylor said: "It is important that our business continues to attract and retain talent and this new initiative delivers our ongoing commitment to encourage and develop prospective talent for the future."

The new recruits - Cerys Farmer, 18, Jay Morrison, 18, and Liam Ritchie, 19 - will each undergo 15 weeks of training within the operations team.

Based in the Dyce office, they will deal with everything from providing job quotations to meeting clients, as well as arranging shipments and custom clearance.

Scottish SMEs thrive after securing over £2m worth of funding

PROVIDING loans from £25,000 to £100,000, Business Loans Scotland give businesses access to an invaluable new source of funding. Fully funded through the Scottish Growth Scheme and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Business Loans Scotland has currently invested in 31 Scottish SMEs, with this figure expected to rise to over 100 by the end of 2021.

Issuing loans totaling £2,077,175 to date, chair of Business Loans Scotland and leader of East Renfrewshire Council, Councillor Tony Buchanan said: "Access to finance is vital for

businesses in today's current and challenging economic climate. The funding available through Business Loans Scotland, from the Scottish Growth Scheme, is fundamental in helping SMEs across Scotland achieve their growth ambitions."

Securing a loan of £37,000 to support the development of a brand new purpose-built studio in Alford, Aberdeenshire, Leanne MacKay, owner of Leanne MacVeigh Dance Academy said: "I have been running Leanne MacVeigh Dance Academy for six years and the business was getting to a stage where it was unable to grow due to the limitations of hiring various halls.

"Business Loans Scotland granted me a loan of £37,000 and that matched with my personal savings has meant I have been able to turn two industrial units into an amazing dance studio complete with waiting room, cloakroom, toilets and small kitchenette.

"I found the process from beginning to end with Business Loans Scotland very simple and would encourage any business looking to fund their next project to apply."

For more information or to start the application process, visit www.bls.scot

Business Loans Scotland



Business loans from £25,000 - £100,000
for new and growing Scottish SMEs



Apply Online - www.bls.scot





AAB's latest intake

AAB welcomes record number of new starts

ANDERSON Anderson & Brown (AAB), chartered accountants and business advisors, has announced the arrival of 31 new starts across its various training programmes.

Over the next 12 months, the trainees will take up positions across its apprenticeship, student placement, payroll academy and graduate programmes. AAB will also welcome 17 school work experience students, as well as college and university interns, bringing the total to the firm's highest ever annual intake of 48.

Karen Stewart, chief human resources officer at AAB, said: "This is always an exciting time of year for the firm with so many new people beginning their careers with us. This year is particularly important with our highest trainee intake to date joining AAB in what is a challenging period of change, opportunity and growth."

In addition to its training programmes, AAB engages with schools and universities to inform students about the many different career paths the firm offers.

Legasea set to double headcount

A START-UP company based in Aberdeenshire is now in the process of recruiting for a range of roles in order to support further growth. The business started with a team of three in April and this has since increased to six. Following a series of contract awards, the intention is now to double the number of personnel again, resulting in a workforce of 12 in early 2020.

Legasea reduces the environmental impact of the oil and gas industry by offering a new sustainable solution for the refurbishment and reuse of decommissioned subsea equipment and component parts.

Instead of the traditional recycling process, Legasea takes the subsea production equipment from decommissioned fields and reuses as many parts as possible following a refurbishment process at its base near Westhill.

Operations director Ray Milne said: "Our team has experienced a fantastic first six months. The considerable efforts of every individual have contributed towards our success so far and we look forward to a period of significant growth for Legasea and the offshore industry alike."

Working together to deliver a good food nation

THE National Farmers Union of Scotland (NFU Scotland) and Food and Drink Federation Scotland (FDF Scotland) highlighted their joint vision for a Good Food Nation in Scotland at a fringe event at the SNP Autumn Conference in Aberdeen.

The fringe was addressed by SNP MSP Mairi Gougeon who is the Scottish Government's Minister for Rural Affairs and Natural Environment, as well as President of NFU Scotland Andrew McCornick and chief executive officer of FDF Scotland David Thomson.

The Scottish Government has committed to legislate on a Good Food Nation in this parliamentary term – committing the government for the first time in its history to create a food policy, and giving the agri-food sector a key opportunity to influence longer-term change.



The Aberdeen Cooling Solutions team

Business heating up for Cooling Solutions

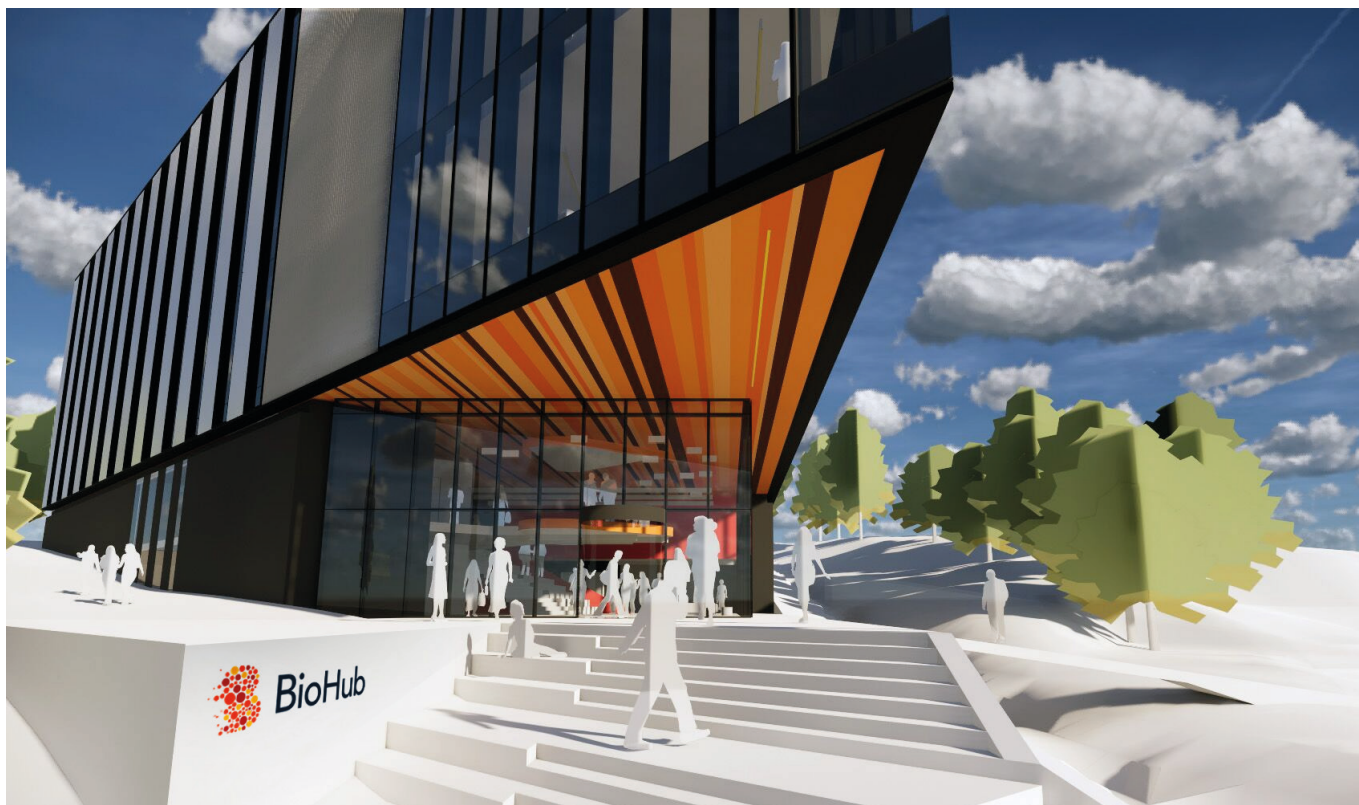
AN AIR conditioning and refrigeration contractor which launched earlier this year has moved to larger premises as a result of growth.

Aberdeen Cooling Solutions, which provides repair, installation and maintenance services, has moved to dedicated office, workshop and storage space in Dyce. The new premises will provide a long-term home for the growing team as well as offering easy access to the city and surrounding areas via the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route.

Managing director Ryan Pirie has been joined by his father, Stephen, who has taken on the role of office manager. With a background in the utilities sector spanning 40 years with Scottish Water, Stephen brings strong operations skills and will oversee the day-to-day running of the business; freeing Ryan up to concentrate on business development and customer care.

Aberdeen Cooling Solutions previously hired an air conditioning and refrigeration engineer and apprentice but has now added another air conditioning engineer, George Morrison – taking the size of its team to five.

The business, which has invested in new vans, signage and marketing materials, intends to employ another two engineers, including a refrigeration specialist, by the end of this year.



Best in class

ABERDEEN was ranked as the best city in the UK to start a business last year, according to Payment Sense's UK Startup Survival Rankings. More than half of the start-ups in the city survive for at least five years, an achievement none of the other contenders can match.

According to the card payment company's research 53.5% survive for five years compared to 44.2% in Edinburgh which was in fifth place and the only other Scottish city in the top 15.

Payment Sense said: "With roots in the fishing, textiles and shipbuilding industries, Aberdeen has reinvented itself to become one of Scotland's leading centres for business. It now is a leading place for technology, with a focus on electronics design and development businesses."

In an area rich with entrepreneurial spirit and a thriving SME sector, is this sense of opportunity and optimism reflected by business owners at the sharp end?

"People just knuckle down and get on with it," said Hayley Yule who launched her own, now very successful business

HY Marketing, after being made redundant two years ago. "Aberdeen really is an amazing place to start a business," she said. "There is so much support here like Elevator and Business Gateway which gave me an account manager and provided valuable market research. I knew I had to get my name out there so I joined the Chamber which has genuinely proved very helpful.

"I thought it might be particularly tough for me because I didn't move here until 2011, I'm not a local and I'm not a Scot - but that really doesn't matter in Aberdeen because everyone is so friendly and helpful."

Hayley has almost a quarter of a century of marketing experience and moved to Aberdeen from London, where her work was linked to the oil and gas sector, to be near family.

"I had been talking about setting up my own company for a while and when I was made redundant decided it was time to have a go. Within two weeks I had three clients on board so I thought I must have the model right and it has gone from strength to strength."

Launching her business in the middle of a downturn was clearly the biggest

initial challenge Hayley faced but she used that downturn to her advantage.

"The staff who companies were laying off included a lot of marketers, but I realised that they still had a requirement for marketing even though many were no longer investing in it. I thought that if I could step in and help small businesses with cost effective marketing then they could still do some without having to finance a department.

"Much of my business has come from people I have known, worked with or been connected with through other people and I now have clients from London, Staffordshire and Liverpool as well as Aberdeen. I think we will look back and say: 'You know what, Aberdeen, the downturn really got us back in gear.' I think it was a wakeup call.

"We have to innovate to stay ahead and we have to think differently and do things differently and take risks and Aberdeen is really good at taking risks. The biggest challenge I am now facing is taking the next step. I physically can't do any more than I am doing so I am in discussions with the Business Gateway and the Chamber for advice on how I go from just me to having staff or contractors working for me."



“

“I thought it might be particularly tough for me because I didn’t move here until 2011, I’m not a local and I’m not a Scot – but that really doesn’t matter in Aberdeen because everyone is so friendly and helpful.”

Hayley Yule, owner, HY Marketing

For Jacqueline van den Akker the biggest challenge in running her family business is “managing the family and everything else around it”.

“My husband has his own job and I have a nine year old son so I have to balance the time between being able to work and spending time with the family and making the most of the time we do have,” she said.

Before launching Grampian Escapes and Tours in 2017 Jacqueline managed a recruitment company so has a

business understanding and a business background.

“During my time in that job I took a few Chamber courses,” she said. “These included a finance one to enable me to understand budgets and interpret accounts and also a marketing one and they have certainly helped me. I also went to an Elevator workshop which provided an introduction to setting up your own business and that was also valuable.

“Running the business is really about being flexible so taking the time when you have it to do things you need to do like additional administration, updating your accounts, planning new trips and also being flexible within the family.

“The family knows that at the weekend I will more than likely be working and be away and I appreciate their support in giving me the time to do it. The bulk of my work is at the weekend and at the moment I run tours from Wednesday through to Sunday so Monday and Tuesday are usually my days off - but even then if a job comes up you do it.

“I would say that 90% of my work is in the North-east and the remainder is in the west and central Scotland.

The majority I do on my own but I work closely with a colleague who has his own business and is also a guide and we are very complementary. 90% of his work is in the rest of Scotland and 10% in the North-east and we can help each other out. For corporate conferences when I have large numbers in a group and I require multiple guides he or one of his team will work with me.

“The scope of all the things to do in the area is vast and trying to marry what visitors want to see with everything that is on offer can be a challenge and I have to try to narrow it down to what’s feasible and what can fit within the pricing structure. The visitors come from all over the world and many are from North America, Canada, Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

“When the cruise ships start coming to the new harbour I am hoping that will prove fruitful because most of my tours are planned in such a way that I could fit them within the docking schedules of the ships and I am sure that some of the passengers will want to organise their own trips.”



Small is beautiful

SOCIETY and business are currently being challenged across a range of issues. We know that we need to rethink our attitude to waste and resources and radically reduce carbon emissions to preserve the planet for future generations. This requires changes in thinking and attitude by us both as individuals and businesses. We need to challenge ourselves to find alternative ways to do things which is not always an easy option.

Typically we might look to government and big business for solutions but in many cases small businesses are paving the way in identifying new and innovative approaches often driven by individuals passion to create a better world.

Donna Wood from XS Resources is a good example. As a chemist she is acutely aware of our reliance on the elements that make up the earth.

“Not many people are probably aware but this year is the international year of the periodic table and the United Nations is using it to highlight the precarious state of many of the

elements that we rely on daily,” she said. “Many of the elements at risk are contained in electronic equipment which typically contains in the region of 40 different elements.”

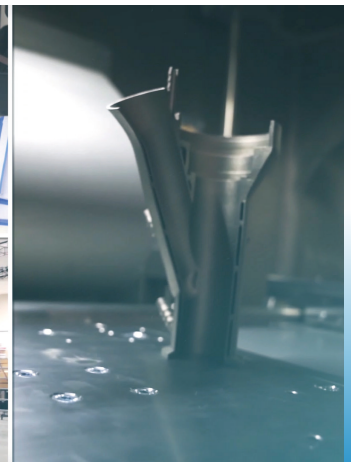
In the UK, the average lifespan of a smartphone is just under two years and almost every home and business has unwanted, yet still functioning phones, laptops or PCs, somewhere in drawers or cupboards. E-waste is now the world’s fastest growing waste stream.

To ensure we preserve these essential resources we need to ensure that we extend the life of electronic products and ensure they are recycled at end of life. Donna, in partnership with Brian Menzies, established XS Resources in partnership with CFINE and Re-Tek with the aim of helping Aberdeen businesses achieve this.

CFINE, a community food social enterprise, provide a free collection service for unwanted but still functioning technology and in return benefit from a share of the sale of the equipment. Re-Tek, an ICT reseller, securely wipe and refurbish the equipment for onward sale.

Re-tek are a good example of a small business that is obtaining value from what another organisation deems to be waste. The firm repairs and refurbishes functional, used IT products and sells them on to new owners, sharing the revenue with the previous owner. This includes laptops, PCs, flat screen monitors and hand held electronics. They aim to re-market as much of the material received as possible. Approximately 80% of all equipment received is refurbished and re-marketed. Only equipment which is non-functional or has no market value goes to conventional IT recycling partners. Of the recycling output, the average resulting landfill is just 1%. Their incentivised business model creates a demand for donation centres, diverting perfectly useable items from landfill or recycling centres and providing income for the organisation

Another example of significant wastage can be seen in the subsea engineering sector where a large amount of equipment is stored as back up or only used a small number of times before it becomes surplus to requirements and is disposed of. Much of this near new equipment is simply



scrapped. However to the trained eye many of the components have value, such as electrical and hydraulic connections systems and there are opportunities to reuse them.

This is why Lewis Sim established Legasea to bring this equipment back to life. His subsea specialists can realise the value of these systems by dismantling them and taking out the component parts which can be reused, remanufactured and sold. In many cases, these component parts are no longer available, and can be used to replace out of service equipment in older fields. Partnering with other circular economy organisations, such as Angus 3D printing, they are also able to replace damaged components, to give them another lease of life.

Legasea is hoping to divert significant amounts of equipment from being simply scrapped thereby also helping the oil and gas industry significantly reduce its carbon emissions.

Nicola Fraser from KR Steel Services was also frustrated by the wastage in the construction industry. She and her husband operate a family run business

offering a full design, fabrication and erection service for a wide range of sectors and project sizes. The business also specialises in the design and installation of steel cladding, and the refurbishment of steel clad buildings. Refurbishment works can lead to large amounts of insulated steel cladding being removed from buildings which is currently sent to landfill.

Panels produced before 2004 cannot be reused as they are likely to contain ozone depleting substances and are subject to particular regulatory requirements for their dismantling and disposal. However, panels produced after 2004 are not deemed to be hazardous and there is no reason why they cannot be readily reused or recycled.

The company has already reduced to a minimise waste from installs through smart ordering and cutting processes. The next challenge has been to find ways to reuse the old cladding.

As a consequence KR Steel has now established a facility at its site in Newburgh dedicated to the storage and management of post 2004 panels. Some of these panels are kept

intact and sold for small recladding projects where the cladding can be cut to size. The remaining panels are deconstructed for repurposing. The metal exteriors are recycled and the internal panels can be reused for insulation. KR Steel is at the early stages of developing this closed loop system but believes there are a wider range of uses for the internal insulation panels. This system will divert old insulation panels from landfill and make significant carbon savings by avoiding construction of new insulation.



Murray Burnett

Munro's Travel keeps ahead of the curve

MUNRO'S Travel has secured 19 new business accounts since the start of this year worth around £5m and representing a 22% increase in turnover year on year.

Operators, service companies and drilling contractors make up the new accounts, with Munro's providing end to end travel management solutions for them, with employee figures ranging from 30 - 800.

The 75% increase in contract wins follows Munro's recent move to streamline operations providing cost-savings to customers, as well as their internal visa/passport support service which clients have been able to access for more than 10 years.

Murray Burnett, managing director, said: "We pride ourselves on being able to adapt to the changing markets while still providing the same service and attention to detail needed for each business. Being ahead of the curve when it comes to imminent issues such as Brexit is important, therefore we are in constant and direct communication with all major UK trade organisations to ensure we are well placed to react appropriately. This is hopefully an attractive aspect of our operations for businesses looking to outsource their travel management and provides an additional level of confidence."

Aberdeen recycling on the rise

ABERDEEN has had an increase in its recycling rate despite the overall recycling rate for Scotland having fallen slightly.

The official figures from SEPA show that in Aberdeen in 2018 there was 85,540 tonnes of household waste, 40,483 tonnes of which was recycled or composted. In 2018, the city recycled 47.3% of household waste, compared to 43.9% in 2017.

Nationally, Scotland's overall household waste recycling rate was 44.7%, a decrease of 0.9% from the 45.5% rate achieved in 2017.

Olympian inspires future entrepreneurs

OLYMPIC swimmer Hannah Miley shared her inspirational stories on the importance of determination as part of Robert Gordon University's Innovation Masterclass series designed to inspire students to become the entrepreneurs of tomorrow.

The Innovation Masterclasses are an opportunity to hear from inspiring guest speakers who will share their stories and experiences from the world of entrepreneurship.

Hannah represented Great Britain at the Olympic Games on three occasions and won more than fifty medals from competitions all over the world, including gold at the 2010 and 2014 Commonwealth Games. From learning to swim in Aviemore to being Scottish Sports Person of the Year in 2010, Hannah talked about motivation, passion and pushing yourself forward to achieve success during the event."



Opportunity for Norwegian technology

HUNTING Energy Services' UK centre of excellence is on the hunt for innovative individuals and companies to form partnerships across Norway and bring oil and gas technologies to market.

Based in Aberdeen, Hunting's TEK-HUB has opened the initiative up in a bid to support innovators in Europe and beyond. The first screening session took place in Stavanger on October 24, offering 15-minute pitch sessions to the TEK-HUB's technology manager.

Bruce Ferguson, managing director at Hunting, said: "TEK-HUB acts as a test-bed for the development and deployment of new technology. Each product entering the TEK-HUB passes through a four-stage, fast-track process implemented for the evaluation of new technologies and maximises opportunities for the organisation.

"To date there have been more than 19 technologies submitted to the TEK-HUB project 'deck' with six being chosen to progress forward to commercialisation which is a great start for the TEK-HUB initiative. If you have an innovative idea, concept or design relating to oil and gas - particularly in enhanced oil recovery - we would be delighted to hear from you."

Can your business survive a relationship breakdown?

by Ross Gardner,
partner, Stronachs LLP



PRENUPTIAL agreements are becoming increasingly popular, especially amongst millennials looking to commit to a long-term future together. Many others prefer not to spend too much time at the outset of the relationship thinking about what would happen in the event of a relationship breakdown.

The same can be said for the owners of start-up businesses who are busy planning the future of their business relationship, but as with a messy divorce a relationship breakdown can have serious consequences and not just for the parties involved.

Putting in place a Shareholders Agreement from the outset is akin to a business pre-nup. Without one, it will be more difficult and expensive to try and unwind the relationship and agree who is to be the leaver and who will be the remainder. This is all the more important in continuing turbulent times of economic uncertainty with many SMEs in the North-east facing increasing cashflow pressures due to slow paying customers.

This can place stress on the business relationship of the owners. If there isn't a mechanism in place where the

parties have already agreed how they might resolve certain situations, the business will suffer and its underlying value will quickly start to erode.

Having a Shareholders Agreement in place won't future proof your business against the relationship breakdown happening but it will help avoid a messy divorce and provide a quicker and less costly way of dealing with eventualities such as someone leaving or moving in with a competitor.

In addition to regulating the breakup itself, your business pre-nup can also deal with the issue of ownership of assets brought into the relationship by the parties. It might be a case of taking out at the end of the relationship what you took in at the outset. However, for start-ups where technology is likely to be a key asset, there could be critical consequences for the business if it's not clear that ownership in intellectual property belongs to the company itself.

It's all too common for owner managed businesses to assume that the intellectual property in their key products or software belongs to the company but problems can arise where the technology development started at an earlier stage, where the

owners don't take a salary in the early stages or where the development is outsourced to others.

It is vital that the company protects its key assets by having contractual certainty around ownership of intellectual property. If you leave this too late and have to transfer ownership at a later stage in the life cycle of the business, you could be faced with major obstacles in getting the true owner to sign over their rights or significant tax costs in transferring ownership at a point where the technology has already been commercialised.

Whether you're just starting out together, in the honeymoon period or already a few years into your relationship, it's never too late to plan ahead and get the right advice to protect your business.

Stronachs

RelyOn Nutec appoints new managing director

Global safety, skills and competency training organisation, RelyOn Nutec, has appointed Bob Donnelly as new managing director for their UK business to lead the expansion of the UK and join RelyOn Nutec's global management team.

Mr Donnelly brings with him two decades of experience in the oil and gas training, safety and competency sector. He previously spent five years in business development with Petrofac and has further enhanced his experience in the past decade as a director with Return To Scene (R2S), which delivers digital solutions in the industry. He was latterly managing director for R2S before being appointed to his position with RelyOn Nutec.

He replaces Duncan Bonner, who has moved within the group to managing director of RelyOn Nutec's Middle East region.

Mr Donnelly said: "The industry is changing faster than it ever has, not least in the digital arena, so it is vital to integrate these changes into the training, safety and competency market.

"My focus will be on expansion and modernisation to ensure that RelyOn Nutec is delivering the right training for the current roles in the industry and that we remain the 'go to' leading provider for the right training and the right competency management for maximum survivability in any emergency situation."

Torben Haring, group CEO of RelyOn Nutec added: "I'm very pleased we have been able to attract Bob Donnelly. He brings broad management experience, deep knowledge of the changing customer demands and a good portion of chance readiness, which is instrumental as we steer the business to the next level to continually drive safety within the industry."

Training of gritter drivers

GRITTERS have been spotted out and about on the city's roads in recent weeks as new drivers go through their training and new routes are tested.

Aberdeen City Council's early morning and standby gritting operations start on November 11, however people require to be trained before then.

The testing is part of the council's winter maintenance programme which involves a stockpile of 12,000 tonnes of salt, almost 180 staff and almost half of the city's roads treated before 7.30am.

Weather forecasts are closely monitored throughout the day and night; and gritters and ploughs can be out 24/7. For the first time, residents will also be able to track road gritters as they drive around the city. Early morning and standby gritting operations start will run through to March 15 and operations will be extended depending on road conditions and if forecasts are showing wintry weather.



Nicola Johnston

Aiming for a 24-hour city

THE Granite City has created the Aberdeen City Centre Night-Time Commission for night-time economy management.

The panel group, which has been set up by Aberdeen Inspired, will act as a lobbying body on behalf of the night-time economy at a local and national level. It is made up of representatives from the cultural and hospitality sector, beauty, leisure, and retail, and economic development and planning.

Nicola Johnston, Aberdeen Inspired evening and night-time economy manager, said: "A vibrant and diverse night-time economy can boost tourism, attract people to live, work and invest in the area and drive forward regeneration.

"The commission will act as an advisory panel, established to ensure the continuous development of the night-time economy in Aberdeen city centre. This is a big step forward for the sector and provides both a platform and supportive network.

"Our vision is inclusive of the traditional night-time economy bars, nightclubs, restaurants and also extends beyond to include culture and leisure venues, retailers, beauty and wellbeing. A part of this will be focussing on merging traditional day and night economy to expand our offering in a step towards a 24-hour city."

Key objectives of the commission include recognising future trends, being a voice for current and emerging industry challenges and exploring opportunities to enhance the night-time economy, as well as increasing footfall, dwell time and spend of patrons.

Seagull contract for Valaris

NEPTUNE Energy and its joint venture partners BP and JAPEX have awarded Valaris plc a contract to provide a heavy-duty jack-up drilling rig for the Seagull development oil project in the UK North Sea.

Valaris will provide the Rowan Gorilla VI (VALARIS JU-248) to drill four firm wells for the development, which is in the Central North Sea.

Unleash the potential

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



IT'S CLEAR that small and medium-sized firms play an absolutely critical role in the Scottish economy. Looking at the numbers, businesses with under 250 employees account for 55% of employment in Scotland and around 40% of total turnover. These firms also make up the vast majority of the business base in Scotland, with fewer than 1% of firms operating in Scotland with over 250 employees, according to Scottish Government data.

Alongside their critical role in the Scottish economy we also know that the current environment of heightened uncertainty is bringing even more difficulty to the already herculean task of trying to build a successful small business.

Chamber data shows that SMEs are facing some real challenges across the business environment. As just one example, our recent UK-wide Brexit survey, of which 94% of respondents were SMEs, illustrates that a number of businesses are weighing some really difficult decisions right now. In the event of a no-deal exit, over a fifth of firms are poised to reduce investment or recruitment plans, with around 18% considering moving parts of their business overseas to mitigate the disruption which would follow a no-deal exit. This was also reflected in the most recent Quarterly Economic Survey from the Scottish Chambers

of Commerce, which has showcased that business are 'treading water' and restraining investment as they wait for the outcome of the Brexit process.

As a voice for the SME community, our role as Chambers in this uncertain environment is two-fold. Firstly, to relentlessly push for clarity around events such as Brexit, whether that's nationally through our No Deal Dashboard, highlighting areas of concern to Government, or in the North-east through our regular roundtable events with Ministers, providing members with the opportunities to directly raise their concerns.

Secondly, and perhaps much more critically, is the key task of keeping our respective Governments focused on the challenges of business regardless of the political environment we find ourselves in. Our overarching focus at the Chamber is how we make the business environment work for our members of all sizes. Whether it's our continuing engagement with the Scottish Government to reduce the business rates burden and free up vital cash for our firms to invest, or fighting for stronger connectivity for the North-east so that firms have access to new customers and vital markets.

This focus on issues at home will be of utmost importance in the coming months. In early November, we expect to see the Chancellor unveil the UK

Government's budget, and we hope to see detailed proposals to reduce the cost of business to encourage SMEs to bring forward their investment plans. The British Chambers of Commerce network scored a major victory in last year's budget, with the then Chancellor taking forward our ask to raise the annual investment allowance to £1m, a welcome step to encourage investment. Regardless of how the Brexit process ends, we'd call on Government to take forward these principles to this year's Budget. In such uncertain times, it's even more important for government to focus on issues at home and drive forward business investment.

Let's hope we see that this November so we can push past the uncertainty and unleash the potential of our fantastic small businesses.



Sheryl collecting her trophy

An Appetite for success

AN INSPIRATIONAL North-east businesswoman has been recognised with a national award for her role in an Aberdeen company's continued success.

Sheryl Newman, managing director of technology consultancy Appetite for Business, received the Business of the Year honour at the Corn Exchange, Edinburgh as part of the Association of Scottish Businesswomen (ASB) National Business Awards.

Organised by the Association of Scottish Businesswomen (ASB), the awards are open to business and professional women throughout Scotland and celebrate the achievements of women working across all sectors.



The Charlie House team in action

Local charity will go to the ball

NORTH-EAST based charity Charlie House, which supports babies, children and young people with complex disabilities and life-limiting conditions and their families, has secured a generous title sponsorship of £4,000 for their Big Build Ball from local engineering solutions experts Brimmond Group.

The annual Big Build Ball, currently in its fifth year, will take place on the 6th of December 2019 at P&J Live, The Event Complex Aberdeen (TECA) with tickets costing £100 per person. It is set to be an entertainment-filled evening, also including a drinks reception, three-course dinner and a chance to win fantastic prizes donated by local businesses.

Speaking of their support Tom Murdoch, engineering director at Brimmond Group, says, "Supporting Charlie House Big Build Ball is a privilege for Brimmond Group and Rigrun Europe. The support Charlie House provides to families in the North-east is already tremendous but having their new building will enable them to offer so much more."



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Pipe band eyes competition success

DEESIDE Caledonia Pipe Band has introduced a new tuition programme for its members to help fine tune their skills. The 10 monthly tuition sessions have been made possible thanks to a £1,000 donation from the CALA Homes community bursary.

The band regularly participates in competitions across the world and also performs at public engagements. Robert Grant, pipe major of Deeside Caledonia Pipe Band, said: "We already provide free tuition for our members but this funding from CALA has enabled us to really refine our performances.

"The extra tuition programme has been put in place to help us achieve our goal of being promoted to even higher grades at the competitions we compete at."

Increasing call for back-deck services



Motive Offshore announces win

MOTIVE Offshore Group, specialist in marine equipment fabrication and rental, continues to consolidate its position as the leading provider of back-deck services, announcing a major contract win.

Awarded by TechnipFMC, a global leader in subsea, onshore/offshore, and surface projects, the contract represents the largest win to date for the Motive's Spooling and Inspection division. With a workscope comprising global offshore inspection and wire rope services, the initial three-year contract includes the option for two, one-year extensions.

Division managing director Ally Forbes explains the strategic importance of this latest award: "Since launching in late 2016, Motive Spooling and Inspection has consistently grown in reputation and activity. This contract reflects not only our expert inspection and wire rope services, but also our fundamental aim to continually internationalise our business."

Motive Offshore Group chief operating officer, James Gregg continues: "Our track record and continuous investment in capabilities via personnel and facilities has inspired industry confidence on a global basis."

Tourism boost for the North-east's 'hidden gems'

A NEW £100,000 project will highlight the region's hidden cultural gems and encourage visitors to travel off the beaten track when they come to the North-east.

Visit Scotland and the University of Aberdeen's Elphinstone Institute have teamed up for an initiative to collect and collate folklore which will then be used to create films, podcasts or other media, opening up the stories which have long been known in local communities to the wider world. Research by Visit Scotland has shown that 'Culture and Heritage' is one of the main draws for people visiting Scotland with 33% of those interviewed for the most recent Visit Scotland Visitor Survey citing it as the main reason for their stay, rising to 52% among long-haul visitors and 51% among European visitors.

The University of Aberdeen's Elphinstone Institute is the only research centre specialising in the vibrant vernacular culture of the North-East and North of Scotland and will spearhead the project with its outputs informing tourism campaigns tied to the Year of Scotland's Coasts and Waters 2020 and the Year of Scotland's Stories 2022.



The cast

Raise a glass to 'No Ladies Please'

A SHORT film, which tells the story of a sex-discrimination protest in the 1970s at one of Aberdeen's most famous pubs, has won an award of merit from the US Best Short Film Festival in Los Angeles.

"No Ladies Please" is a 12-minute production, featuring local actors, which depicts the incident in the Grill on Union Street in April 1973.

The idea for the film was developed by Dr Fiona-Jane Brown, project co-ordinator at the University of Aberdeen's Elphinstone Institute, who learned of the story when she was researching the history of the Grill in 2016.

"I started researching the Grill in 2016 and decided that the story of the protest should be shared with a wider audience," she said. "After a successful funding bid to Aberdeen City Council's creative funding team and a crowdfunding campaign, the film was made under the auspices of the Bon Accord Civic Heritage Association, a non-profit group I set up to promote lesser-known elements of local history, and produced by local community film group, Crow House Projects.


"I hope that the experience of filmmaking can feed into my new project and inspire the making of more documentary-style films on North-east history and culture through Elphinstone Institute."

November

151
courses
run by the Chamber



Covering

55 
different
subjects

Attended by

951
people in North-east
businesses



18 -19
Mon-Tue
2 day

Advanced Management Skills

Grow as a manager and improve the performance of your team

20 Wed
1 day

Sales and Account Management

Develop a structured approach to selling

20 Wed
1 day

Customer Service Excellence

Discover the techniques to excel at customer service

21 Thu
1 day

Time Management

Identify time wasting activities and manage time more effectively

21 Thu
1 day

Boost your Sales Success

Maximise your sales success to attract new business and open new doors

26 Tue
1/2 day

Resilience Survive and Thrive

Explore the benefits of managing stress

26 Tue
1/2 day

Taking Notes and Minutes

Record meetings effectively and accurately

27 Wed
1 day

Report Writing

Learn to produce clear, concise and effective reports

27 Wed
1 day

Finance - The Basics

Develop a broad understanding of business finance

28 Thu
1 day

Stakeholder Engagement and Relationship Management

Identify and engage with stakeholders to build effective and lasting relationships

28 Thu
1 day

Improve your Professional Confidence

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

December

3 - 4
Tue-Wed
2 day

Finance for Non-Finance Managers

Gain an understanding of many aspects of finance and how it impacts business

3 - 4
Tue-Wed
2 day

Essentials Management Skills

Become equipped with the knowledge and skills required of a manager

5 Thu
1/2 day

Inward and Outward Processing

Understand the methods of claiming relief from customs duties

5 Thu
1 day

Essential Supervisory Skills

Bridge the gap between doing and supervising and become competent in the role

For more information

Susan Staniforth, training team leader

T 01224 343917 E training@agcc.co.uk



Alongside our usual offering we have some brand new courses available for 2019/20.

November

- 11 Mon**
1/2 day
IR35 – How to navigate the changes
Learn the new legislation changes and assess potential risks
- 22 Fri**
1 day
Practical Contract Management
Learn the skills needed to ensure contracts add value to your business, and understand pitfalls
- 28 Thu**
1 day
Digital Transformation
Learn how to future proof your business, understand Sprint and problem framing

December

- 2 Mon**
1 day
Making Meetings Work
Establish how to plan, facilitate and deliver effective meetings
- 6 Fri**
1 day
Change Management
Learn the tools to drive change, capitalise on positives whilst minimising negatives, supporting morale in challenging situations
- 10 Tue**
1 day
The Effective Director
Learn how to become an effective director and understand responsibilities

January

- 15 Wed**
1/2 day
Cash Flow Management
Maximise cash flow with effective cash collection technique

For more information please visit www.agcc.co.uk/courses



The Chamber launched the fourth edition of its annual Investment Tracker, in partnership with EY, in October. Around 30 senior business leaders from across the North-east gathered at Marischal Square to hear about the £10bn+ investment happening around the region.

The stars aligned on September 26 when the 2019 Northern Star Business Awards were announced. Visit agcc.co.uk to view the full gallery of pictures from the night.



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Iain Fullerton,
business development consultant

What does your company do that others don't?

I offer business development services on a flexible time basis which reduces a client's costs and is focused on an agreed scope of work.

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

The lack of access to training for new entrants, providing attractive career routes to all the different skills we need not only for oil and gas, energy etc but also anticipating the 'new things' in the future.

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

Regretfully, and this is not meant to depress, that you can be loyal to a company but never expect the company to be loyal to you.

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

Two bits, equally as important: Sometimes the hardest thing to do is nothing! Take time to evaluate what is happening and don't overreact. Secondly, that 'perseverance is the hard work you do after you get tired of the hard work you already did'.

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

While working for a leading marine systems provider, I initiated and achieved a sales, equipment rental and technical operation support contract which involved a major oil operator, two offshore drilling contractors and several leading independent rental companies. Proud, because this meant effectively communicating with the people in the various participants, all with different technical and commercial requirements and being able to deliver an excellent result for the clients, suppliers and importantly, my own work colleagues.

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

Establish a technical training centre of excellence that accepted people on attitude as much as educational qualification. Covering brick laying to space technology and ensure that the staff had loads of practical experience, patience and a sense of humour.



Quick fire round

What was your first job?

As a student, working as a labourer for Doric, a building company.

When would you like to retire?

Well I am supposed to be but I enjoy the work I do very much, so I have no clear date in mind.

What did you have for breakfast?

Cereal and a cup of tea.

Who, or what, inspires you?

My father's example as a person and his approach to people and work. Greatest pleasure is being part of a work team that achieves and supports each other through good and not so good.

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

Ghengis Khan, Life, Death and Resurrection by John Man.
The Old Man and The Gun by Robert Redford.

Giving SMEs a lift

By Andrew Burnett,
director of operations, Elevator



THE Scottish Government stated that as of March 2018 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operating in Scotland accounted for 99.3% of all private sector businesses, accounting for 54.9% of private sector employment and 41.5% of private sector turnover.

Following this, Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work Derek Mackay confirmed that the government's support for small business has seen Scotland recognised as the fifth most supportive business environment in the world - ahead of all other parts of the UK.

It is clear that Scotland as an economy has a valued level of support for high potential business opportunities. However, starting and growing a business is never a straight A-to-B route.

So, who do prosperous SMEs turn to for support?

From technology to tourism, food and drink to financial services, Elevator works to help Scottish businesses of all sizes to start, innovate and grow.

Delivering Business Gateway services across two Scottish regions - Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire and Tayside - Elevator provides support to around 20% of Scotland's Business Gateway start-up companies.

Between April 2014 and March 2019, we supported more than 5,600 business start-ups across the Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire area.

These statistics bode well for the broader economy with a likely knock-on effect for job creation, investment and growth. Essentially, the more that can be done to support and boost SME activity, the greater the benefits for Scotland's economy.

However, at the start of 2018, the SME Growth Tracker - a report by Capital Economics commissioned by Amazon UK and Enterprise Nation - stated Scottish SMEs were the least confident in the UK when it came to the economic outlook.

Yet, while Scotland's small business owners faced criticism about being particularly pessimistic, we continued to see high numbers of new businesses starting up and bringing forward new innovations while creating jobs. With these numbers exceeding target forecast expectations.

Examples include:

- **EBar Initiatives:** Co-founded by Sam Pettipher, EBar® is a modular, self-service beverage dispenser which allows customers to complete a transaction for two drinks in just 30 seconds. To date, it has secured £228,000 from private investors and

successfully raised over £276,000 through Seeders crowdfunding.

- **DeltaTek:** Tristram Horn, DeltaTek CEO, spotted a gap in the market to enhance drilling operations in the oil and gas industry, whilst providing better wells for the operator. Since Elevator's support, the company has grown at an exceptional rate securing its first North Sea contract and the successful deployment of its SeaCure technology with major operators.

- **Timeless White Weddings:** Through the support provided by Business Gateway's Business Boost Programme, owner and entrepreneur Emma Matthews grew her business by taking on her first full-time employee.

Anyone looking to start or grow their business will undoubtedly face challenging times or uncertainty and finding the right support at the right time can be both crucial and invaluable. Already some 3,500 businesses reach out to access fully funded support via Elevator and Business Gateway services locally.

Our aim is to build an ecosystem that supports innovative new business growth. By engaging and collaborating with partners across all sectors we will collectively make Scotland an exciting place to do business.



The new partners

4_ttude and Design Sprint link for digital transformation

NORTH-EAST digital consultancy 4_ttude is to enter into partnership with Design Sprint Academy Global to form Design Sprint Academy Scotland.

The new strategic relationship allows 4_ttude to develop its work with enterprises across a broad range of sectors on digital transformation and innovation.

Kate McKay, founder of 4_ttude and DSA Scotland's managing director, said: "We are incredibly proud to be one of the first organisations to become a DSA Global strategic partner. We have worked closely with Design Sprint Academy over the last six months in preparation to launch Design Sprints as a proven methodology for Scottish SMEs to adopt, driving change and transformation within their business."

Using ONE Tech Hub in Aberdeen as its base, DSA Scotland will be part of the North-east digital network and deliver regular Design Sprints meetups across Scotland.

John Vetan, Design Sprint strategist and co-founder at Design Sprint Academy, said: "We are excited to be entering into partnership with 4_ttude to develop and build Design Sprint Academy Scotland. Following our continued work with major international clients and 4_ttude's strong reputation within Scotland's digital cluster, the partnership is seen as a key strategic move for both companies."

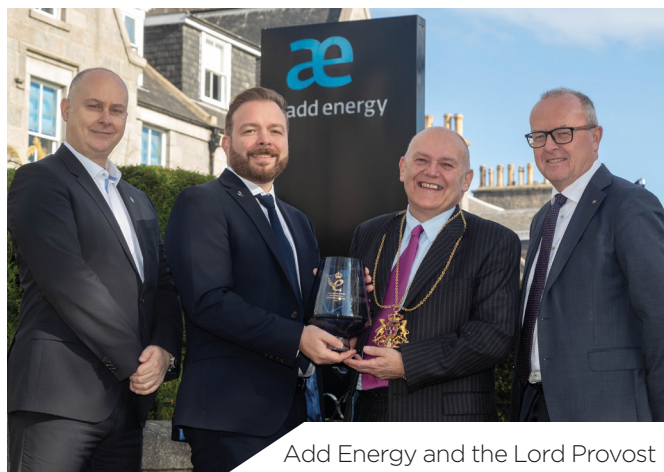
BBC Sports Personality sells out

TICKETS for BBC Sports Personality of the Year 2019 in Aberdeen sold out in just five minutes - the quickest sell-out ever since the show went on the road in 2006.

The prestigious event will take place in Aberdeen for the first time this year and will be held at the new P&J Live arena.

Presenters Gary Lineker, Clare Balding and Gabby Logan will take to the stage to celebrate a huge year of sport in front of an audience of 10,000 with millions more watching live on BBC One.

BBC Sports Personality of the Year executive editor, Carl Doran said: "We are thrilled that tickets for Sports Personality of the Year 2019 in Aberdeen have sold out so quickly. Within five minutes is just incredible and a testament to the warm welcome we have received from our host city Aberdeen."



Add Energy and the Lord Provost

Add Energy collects award for business excellence

ADD Energy's Asset and Integrity Management (AIM) division has collected a prestigious business award during a ceremony with the Lord Provost of Aberdeen.

The Aberdeen-based company was one of just eight Scottish organisations recognised in the International Trade and Innovation categories of the Queen's Award for Enterprise when the finalists were announced earlier this year.

Speaking during a presentation ceremony with Add Energy's Aberdeen team, the Lord Provost of Aberdeen Barney Crockett said: "I was delighted, on behalf of Her Majesty the Queen, to present Add Energy's AIM with the Queen's Award for Enterprise. Add Energy AIM is an Aberdeen-based organisation that is a huge asset locally and on an international level with offices in Houston and Muscat. It was a real pleasure to meet Add Energy's Aberdeen team and to congratulate them on receiving this esteemed award and to take the opportunity to wish them continued success in the future."

Peter Adam, executive vice president of Add Energy AIM, also represented the company at a reception at Buckingham Palace for all 201 award winners, this summer.

Year of growth for active schools

THE latest data published by sportscotland shows that the national Active Schools programme continues to have a positive impact on children's physical activity levels with 7.3m visits made to activities across Scotland in 2018/19, an increase of 0.4% on the previous year.

The national Active Schools programme, which is delivered in Aberdeen by registered charity Sport Aberdeen, seeks to create more opportunities for young people to take part in sport and physical activity across the country.

A whopping 281,742 visits to sessions were recorded across the city during the last academic year - 1.3% more than the previous year (2017/18). During this time a total of 9,044 children and young people took part in Active Schools sessions in Aberdeen, where they were given access to an extensive range of activities.

The number of people delivering sessions across the country has also increased by 3.3% over the past year. In the Aberdeen area, 91% of the 980 deliverers were volunteers.

Culter pupils team up with care home resident

CREATIVE pupils at Culter School have teamed up with an artistic resident at Eastleigh Care Home to create a giant wall of art as part of a national award scheme.

The P6 pupils have been working with artist David Donaghey over the last year to create a colourful mural at the care home as part of the Junior Award Scheme Scotland (JASS) which is an accredited award supporting children in the transition between primary and secondary education by developing skills and working with the wider local community.

Each pupil created their own designs and then had the opportunity to help David put their designs on the wall. A plaque commemorating the artistic achievement was bought by the care home and has now taken pride of place on the care home mural.

Councillor John Wheeler, Aberdeen City Council's educational operational delivery convener, said: "I'd like to congratulate both the pupils at Culter School and staff and management at Eastleigh Care Home not only on their wonderful artistic achievement but also on a great piece of partnership working."



ISA's festival celebrations

ISA celebrates cultural diversity in annual festival

FOR the 25th consecutive year International School Aberdeen (ISA) has hosted its International Festival to celebrate 50 countries represented by pupils aged from three to 18.

For a month before the festival, classes were encouraged to hone their global thinking and were assigned a country to study from a variety of perspectives such as culture, geography and history.

From pre-schoolers sharing their learning about Russia to Flamenco and Chinese lantern dance, activities also included a member of staff giving classes in Polish and children making internal announcements in their native language.

Celebrations culminated with a colourful, Olympic-style evening parade, led by a piper and featuring children dressed in national outfits and carrying flags of their home nations.

Top Tweets

A month in social media



Jim Savege
@jimsavege

Running out of fingers & toes to take stock of the investment made & planned across #Aberdeenshire - ably summarised by @mattylockers at the launch of @chambertalk @EY_UKI latest annual investment tracker.



Scottish Financial
@ScotsFinancial

Investment tracker reveals investment in the North-east of Scotland is on the rise | @chambertalk @EYnews @EY_Scotland



Quirk Solutions
@Quirk_Solutions

Great to see such an interactive audience at this event, challenging Chris but also each other. Better questions = better answers. Great table discussions and reflections. Thank you @chambertalk

Join the conversation

@chambertalk

What about Colombia?

by Neil McIntosh,
managing director, Aberdeen International
Associates



AS COMPANIES based in our region continue to broaden their horizons by investigating new geographies and sectors it is an ideal time to consider Colombia as a market worthy of more serious attention.

The Chamber already has an MOU in place with its counterpart in Barranquilla to support the development of the Energy Industry in Colombia whilst the two cities are also connected as members of the World Energy Cities Partnership – with our Lord Provost recently assuming the Presidency of this organisation, Aberdeen is well placed as a natural partner to help Barranquilla (and Colombia) realise their huge potential in both oil and gas, and renewables.

There has been an active upstream onshore oil and gas industry in Colombia since the early twentieth century. Unconventional plays are also an emerging factor, although the main opportunity for the international supply chain lies in the rapidly accelerating offshore sector where there is a lack of local expertise at present.

Areas of immediate opportunity include anchoring, drilling, environmental and helicopter services and equipment, HVAC, training and education, underwater vehicles and technology, engineering, HSEQ consultancy and IRM services, to name a few.

Proven reserves in Colombia amount to 1.7 Bboe and 100bcm gas. A resurgence in production levels in recent years has resulted in new exploration projects becoming a priority – Ecopetrol (predominantly government owned) estimates potential Colombian reserves to be in the region of 47 Bboe of which 12 Bboe lies offshore in the Caribbean Sea.

Twenty offshore blocks have been awarded to Ecopetrol and other majors including Anadarko, Exxon Mobil, Noble, Petrobras, Repsol and Shell, many of which have already yielded discoveries, and drilling continues apace. Recent announcements all point towards the reactivation of the oil and gas industry in Colombia, particularly in the offshore Caribbean.

Barranquilla is already well positioned as the energy capital of Colombia, situated near the mouth of the Magdalena River that connects the Caribbean to the interior. The city is undergoing a period of significant investment in infrastructure to reflect that – new roads, pipelines, upgraded port facilities, supply bases and a deepwater port are all being developed along with new industrial parks.

Underpinning the investments are an array of business support organisations that are working closely

with the mayor's office to develop the offshore industry and forge the international partnerships and alliances that they recognise will be pivotal to achieving their ambitions. Both national and regional governments have also been working to attract foreign companies to the market and there are now incentives such as tax exemptions in exchange for employing locals and/or contributing to educational funds, whilst there are additional benefits to be garnered via 'free trade zones'.

There are significant opportunities in renewable energy too, predominantly in solar and wind with the current administration actively seeking international support to investigate options in offshore wind.

It is certainly apparent that the energy industry in Colombia is starting to experience significant levels of investment and the organisations there are open to collaboration with experienced International partners such as Aberdeen.

Aberdeen International Associates has been supporting Colombia since 2015 and continue to work closely with key stakeholders in-market – we will be leading an energy sector Trade Mission from the UK to Barranquilla in the first half of 2020 and interested parties are welcome to request more details at neil@aiascot.co.uk

November

THE ANNUAL EMPLOYMENT LAW CONFERENCE 19



Find out everything you need to know about the latest HR issues

7 Thu

5:30m-8:00pm
ONE CodeBase

Vanguard: The Next Step

Whether you are looking for a future in the digital, science, energy, food, drink or tourism sectors, the Aberdeen city region has exciting prospects for you. Come along to hear about the North-east and how it is a region filled with vibrancy and passion, with a bright future ahead of it. This event is targeted towards pending and recent graduates.

14Thu

8:00am-4:00pm
The Marcliffe Hotel & Spa

Annual Employment Law Conference 2019

Make sure you're up to speed with the latest issues facing employment law and personnel management professionals. With a dynamic programme of presentations, industry updates and guest speakers, the high profile Annual Employment Law Conference equips delegates with the essential information, know-how and skills to deal with the demands of 21st century employment law and personnel management in the company of fellow professionals.

19 Tue

9:30am-11:30am
Raemoir House

Shire Connections: Lead with Collaboration

Join us to discover the benefits of creating high trust working environments and how this can maximise opportunities and enable greater efficiency for you, your organisation and the rural economy at large.

7 Thu

7:00am-9:00am
The Marcliffe Hotel & Spa

Budget Business Breakfast - The Morning After

EY and Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce invite you to hear expert analysis of this year's figures at the post-Budget business breakfast. Our speakers will discuss the impact and repercussions of the Chancellor's fiscal plan and what impact this will have on the North-east's economy.

28 Thu

5:00pm-6:30pm
AGCC

Circular North-east Ambassador Networking Event

This event will provide all those who have already expressed a willingness to be a circular economy ambassador and anyone who is interested in finding out more, to meet for an informal networking session.

29 Fri

8:30am-10:00am
AGCC

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December

12 Thu

Wellbeing in the Workplace

11:45am-2:00pm

AGCC

This interactive facilitated session aims to encourage attendees to challenge their wellbeing agendas, highlight disparities and develop implementable actions.



Focus on wellbeing at this interactive event

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Time: 8am - 4.30pm
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Scott Fowlie

GFI Enterprises Limited has added Scott Fowlie to its sales and operations team. Scott brings mechanical engineering qualifications and experience in cable manufacturing making to the role. Previously a professional footballer who represented Scotland at youth level, his winning mentality will help GFI as it looks to continue its global expansion.



Rory Anderson (pictured above), **Viktor Szecsi** (pictured above), **Lee Scott, Blair Yule and Conor Gillan**

Aberdeen-based multi-discipline service provider Katoni Engineering has been recruiting new talent as part of its plans for future growth. The team has recruited new team members including Rory Anderson, Viktor Szecsi, Lee Scott, Blair Yule and Conor Gillan. As part of the company's recruitment a number of the team are taking part in further education including graduate apprenticeships at Robert Gordon University.



George Stevenson

George Stevenson has joined Shepherd and Wedderburn as a consultant, bringing more than 40 years' expertise across the spectrum of personal legal and tax matters to the firm and its clients. George specialises in all aspects of estate and inheritance tax planning, including wills, trusts, guardianships, executories and powers of attorney.



Scot Livingstone

Marketing agency Moment has appointed Scot Livingstone as an account manager, bringing the office to a permanent staff of three and complementing the company's existing network of partners and specialists. Scot's background spans over 10 years. Her role will focus on expanding the agency's content, social media, broadcast advertising and sponsorship capabilities.



Tony Dawson

Tony Dawson has been appointed chairman of the board of award-winning charity Sport Aberdeen following two years as vice chairman. He replaces Colin Taylor who will remain on the board as a trustee director. He is a former holder of the Scottish and British University Badminton titles, won various Tennis titles and represented Scotland in both fields.



Katharine Hardie

A leading property lawyer has been appointed head of law firm Pinsent Masons' Scottish and Northern Irish operations. Katharine Hardie took over the role of chair of Scotland and Northern Ireland from Richard Masters, 29 years to the day since she joined the firm as a trainee lawyer.



Andrew Stannard

AGR has appointed Aberdeen-based Andrew Stannard as chief operating officer of its UK and Africa business units. Andrew has more than 30 years' experience in the global energy industry and assumes the position after serving as a contracts manager with the company. He will be responsible for driving AGR's growth and development strategy.

thorpe molloy Recruitment

Recruitment Challenges Solved

RECRUITMENT EXECUTIVE SELECTION



Jan Maclean and Marika Majewska

The Chamber has appointed Jan Maclean to its recently expanded export documentation team as an executive following more than a decade working for a chemical manufacturer. She has extensive experience in exporting and logistics. She is joined by export documentation assistant Marika Majewska who graduated from the University of Aberdeen with a MA (Hons) in Economics and has over six years of customer service experience having worked in hospitality sector and three years in supervisory positions contributing to local businesses' success. Prior to joining the Team, Marika was a member of the Chamber's research group responsible for collecting qualitative and quantitative data.



Yomi Solanke and Susan Roberts

Leading business advisory firm Grant Thornton has bolstered its team serving high-growth businesses in the North-east of Scotland with two new hires. Yomi Solanke has been appointed as an assistant manager in the audit team. Hired from big four firm EY, Yomi has worked alongside senior directors and partners to garner considerable expertise in managing the audit process. She is joined by oil and gas sector expert Susan Roberts who has been appointed as a senior manager in corporate tax, joining from The Kanoo Group, based in UAE and Oman. Her extensive career within international tax has seen her collaborate with a wide range of businesses across Europe and the Middle East.



Vanessa Wilhelm

Vanessa joins the Chamber's policy and research team having graduated from the University of Aberdeen in 2018 with an MA (Hons) in Politics and International Relations.

She has over three years' experience working in local councils in her native Germany, where she held different roles in administration and communication.



Cameron Stirton

Cameron has joined Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce as a digital marketing foundation apprentice. In sixth year studying, history, English modern studies and administration and with a keen interest in digital marketing, Cameron is supporting the communications and marketing team in running the website and helping members raise their profile.



Jack Nicol

Jack Nicol has joined Insiso from another Aberdeen based software development firm. The Masters in Software Engineering graduate is one of two new members of staff appointed following a 30% growth in business over the past 12 months. Fellow software developer Carl Caffrey joined directly from the University of Aberdeen where he studied computing.



Neil Cowie

The regional board of North East Scotland College has announced the appointment of Neil Cowie as its next principal and chief executive. Neil will commence the role in late December when he will take over from current Principal Liz McIntyre, who announced her retirement earlier this year.

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