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February's theme
Workforce

Contents

DECEMBER 2020

Focus on **Property**



Thinking out of the box



Changing rooms



Walk this way

Regulars

	PAGE
A WORD OF ADVICE Top tips from a local expert	19
POLICY UPDATE Dan Smith, Savills	31
TRAINING CALENDAR Upcoming courses	34
BUSINESS LESSONS I'VE LEARNED Lucy Hames, Kepplestone Manor	41
SME SPOTLIGHT A quick look at a dynamic North-east business	42
EVENTS CALENDAR Dates for your diary	44
ON THE MOVE Who is going places in the region?	46



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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Time to re-build

AS 2020 draws to a close and a new year dawns, for most people and businesses the last few months is a period that will forever be consigned into the 'wish that had been a nightmare but woke up to find it was for real' category.

We really are at the most significant crossroads of our lifetime. Decisions taken now and in the following months by policy makers will determine whether or not we recover quickly from the shock of CV19 or whether we end up swapping this for years of different physical and mental health, social and economic challenges that will dwarf those seen so far.

We can rebuild, but what will it take? Firstly, red tape has to be cut and real pace introduced.

The Advisory Group for Economic Recovery highlighted a fundamental disjoint and lack of trust between business and government and this has been exacerbated by the handling of the crisis. Bridges need to be built and enterprise agencies, Chambers of Commerce and other similar organisations are ideally placed to help do this. Only partnership in its truest sense will enable our economy to recover and realise its potential.

Investment must be prioritised where there will be a demonstrable return, not frittered on propping up economic blackspots. Specifically the new UK Shared Prosperity Fund cannot simply allocate funding on the same principles as its ERDF predecessor.

And neither should Holyrood be the termination point of devolved powers from UK Government. Meaningful fiscal levers must be given to regions in order to drive a place-based recovery. The North-east of Scotland has proved time and time again that it will deliver a strong return on investment made here, as evidenced by the outstanding progress made with the city region deal projects.

Alongside our own regional journey to net zero, Aberdeen can become a net exporter to the world of net zero technologies. We need our governments to give their backing to confirm this as the country's key energy transition hub and for them to underpin the intent with the necessary investment. We already have the £62m

commitment from Scottish Government and this needs to be echoed from Westminster in the long-awaited North Sea sector deal. This will be a game-changer.

We must protect and enhance the transport services which are vital to our economic prospects and have been put severely at risk by the events of 2020. So it's important our voice is heard by the DfT's Regional Air Connectivity Review and that we stop talking and start delivering on sub two hour rail connections from Edinburgh and Glasgow to Aberdeen and then onto the decarbonisation of our railways by 2035.

On the subject of connectivity, despite pockets of positive progress, for large swathes of our regional population and business community access to ultrafast broadband remains a pipe dream, not helped by the legal wrangling over the R100 rural broadband programme. We need to see a clear and urgent timeline for playing catch up.

And there needs to be a real focus on ensuring our next generation have the inspiration, opportunity and skills to play their part in our new economy. The Developing the Young Workforce initiative hosted by the Chamber is being significantly expanded as part of Scottish Government plans for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee enabling greater levels of engagement with regional businesses to provide enhanced outcomes for our young people.

To end, a resolution for 2021. As in any challenging period, businesses and places that come out the other end most strongly are those that adapt and innovate while not losing sight of their core strengths and strategy. Let's all do our bit to make sure this is true of the Aberdeen city region.



Russell Borthwick
chief executive





ARCHIE Foundation jumps for joy

SINCE coronavirus hit the UK the charity sector has been impacted significantly with services being postponed and fundraising efforts scaled back dramatically, something the ARCHIE Foundation is unfortunately all too familiar with.

When the opportunity to support the charity arose, activpayroll was quick to offer up its payroll expertise and support. By removing the payroll services costs that the ARCHIE Foundation was previously having to fund, the charity can now use the money they've saved towards helping the near 200,000 patients it supports every year.

David Downie, director of business services at ARCHIE said: "We are delighted that activpayroll has kindly offered to partner up with us to provide complimentary payroll services. There are many hidden costs to running a charity and having services provided to the charity as Gift in Kind, means more of the money we work hard to fundraise can be put to better use."

Alison Sellar, chief executive of activpayroll, said: "activpayroll is a big fan of supporting charities and we already provide complimentary services and support to a variety of local charities. It is hoped that by taking on the ARCHIE Foundation's payroll, it will save the charity some costs, with funding already impacted due to coronavirus."

Top two accolade for McHardy Financial

MCHARDY Financial has been ranked second Scottish company in the FTAdviser Top 100 Financial Advisers 2020 and within the top 40 overall.

The Top 100 list is based on a number of key metrics including how advisers are managing clients' investments, chartered status, growth rate and how well qualified individual advisers are.

Andy Kerr, managing director at McHardy Financial, said: "In a challenging year, having our advisers recognised for helping customers through the tough times as well as the good, means a great deal to the whole team here at McHardy Financial who work hard to deliver the best possible services to our clients."

Eight start ups with net zero in target

EIGHT start-ups from across Scotland are the first to benefit from an innovative accelerator to help lead the charge for sustainable mobility and low carbon energy.

They have been selected for the programme launched earlier this year by the Michelin Scotland Innovation Parc (MSIP) - a joint venture between Dundee City Council, Michelin and Scottish Enterprise. MSIP appointed Elevator to deliver the programme to support Scotland's net zero carbon ambitions.

The MSIP Sustainable Mobility and Low Carbon Innovation Accelerator will coach the cohort of companies and individuals who have developed products, prototypes or investor ready solutions focused on sustainable mobility, clean transport and low carbon energy.

As part of the programme, each founder will work closely with specialist sector delivery partners Ricardo and Productiv to gain industry insight and hands-on experience to break into production and to market. In addition, companies can apply for a grant of a maximum of £10,000 through a funding support package managed by Scottish Enterprise.

Wilson James acquires The Security Group

WILSON James has announced the acquisition of The Security Group (TSG) as part of a long-term strategy to provide clients with holistic solutions to their security and guarding needs.

The acquisition will allow Wilson James to meet increasing demand from customers for information-led solutions they require to address security challenges across a range of sectors. Customers will now benefit from advanced security technology through a new Technology Services business unit at Wilson James.

Around 200 TSG employees will be welcomed into the larger Wilson James family. TSG's client base is primarily centred in the south east of England, includes both public and private sector organisations, and fits well with Wilson James' existing customers.

Wood wins Equinor contract

WOOD, the global engineering and consulting company, has strengthened its relationship with Equinor by securing a new contract to support the international energy company's operations at the Mariner field on the UK Continental Shelf.

Wood has entered into a three-year agreement to deliver operations, maintenance, modifications and offshore services on the Mariner A platform and Mariner B floating storage unit. The agreement, valued at around \$75m, will run for three years from January through to Q4 2023 with options to extend.

Subsea Expo postponed

THE world's largest underwater engineering event - Subsea Expo - which was shaping up to be the sector's first post-pandemic large scale physical event, has been postponed due to the current coronavirus-imposed restrictions.

Organisers Subsea UK announced that the three-day conference and exhibition, along with the annual Subsea Awards dinner, will now take place on May 25-28, 2021.

Neil Gordon, chief executive of Subsea UK, said: "Unfortunately we have been forced to take the decision to postpone Subsea Expo. We appreciate this will be disappointing for our exhibitors and sponsors but by working closely with P&J Live and the industry we've been able to move the event to May 2021 when we can deliver it safely and secure maximum attendance from the UK and overseas."

The deadline for submitting abstracts to present at Subsea Expo and entries for the Subsea UK Awards is now February 14.

App to help travel round Aberdeen

A NEW smartphone app has been launched which will help people better plan and price their journeys around Aberdeen and encourage more walking or cycling.

The journey planner app is called GoAbz and is available to download for free from the Apple App Store and GooglePlay.

The app has been developed by Aberdeen City Council with full funding as part of the European Union Civitas Portis project. It includes information on journey times and costs by vehicle, and offers alternative suggestions by cycling, walking, or by bus or train.

Civitas Portis aims to make a positive impact on five European port cities - Aberdeen, Trieste, Antwerp in Belgium, Constance in Romania and Klaipeda in Lithuania.

The project also examined transport solutions with a connection with port operations, supporting sustainable urban mobility through changes in behaviour and the attitudes of citizens, planners, politicians and industries. It was also aimed at helping to address social inclusion and provide opportunities for economic growth.

The partners for the Aberdeen project include Aberdeenshire Council, Nestrans, The Robert Gordon University, the University of Aberdeen, and Aberdeen Harbour Board.



Abby Murrison, Layah Campbell, Ashleigh Milton, Maeghan Elrick and Emma Frederick

Azets wins accolade and launches recruitment drive

THE FD Excellence Survey, a poll of finance directors and chief finance officers working in the SME sector, has rated Azets as the best accountancy firm in the UK market.

The survey, which is in its 20th year, undertakes a detailed analysis of FDs satisfaction levels with accountancy firms.


The top rating by SME FD's was unveiled at the same time as the firm announced a recruitment drive in the North-east and ambitious expansion plans.

The Aberdeen office of Azets is growing rapidly and has announced that it will maintain its policy of investing in the next generation of accountancy talent with the recruitment of two graduates, three third year student placements and at least five further graduates and four student placements during 2021.

The firm's commitment to support emerging talent also includes close working relationships with the city's two universities and the sponsorship of various prizes for high performing students.



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Thinking out of the box



THROUGHOUT the current pandemic plans are continuing apace with developments which will attract people to Aberdeen city and Aberdeenshire and provide new and improved premises for many of those already working here.

One of the most exciting is by Staxx Aberdeen which will transform around 30 repurposed shipping containers into the North-east's first creative social market to showcase a range of independent businesses including street food, fashion, crafts, drinks and art.

Managing director and young entrepreneur Michael Robertson, a recent property graduate of Robert Gordon University, also envisages the three level Shiprow development ultimately including an adjacent hotel. Once up and running he and co-founder David Griffiths, the operations director, hope to build on its success with pop up developments elsewhere in the North-east and eventually similar developments in other Scottish cities.

Such is the enthusiasm for the scheme that more than 150 businesses have registered an interest in taking part.

"We are really grateful to our university friend and recent architecture graduate Ife Okwuosa

who helped bring my vision to life by creating the visuals which show the concept and have done so much to boost the project," said Michael.

"The fact the Aberdeen Market is being demolished was one of the key drivers for the idea. I used to go there regularly because the food was absolutely brilliant and it will be sorely missed but another key driver is the success of similar facilities in other cities.

"It will be based on markets like Pop Brixton and Boxpark in London which

“

“We are really grateful to our university friend and recent architecture graduate Ife Okwuosa who helped bring my vision to life by creating the visuals which show the concept and have done so much to boost the project”

Michael Robertson,
Managing director,
Staxx

are modern street food markets. They have been very successful in places like Newcastle proving really popular with all age groups - young, old, families - but not only that, there is nowhere for these small businesses to be housed in Aberdeen.

"We have had a tremendous response with help from organisations including Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce, Aberdeen City Council and Elevator."

The entrepreneurs have also been given support by Chamber members Tinto Architecture, the Texo Group and CBRE.

"There needs to be a home for these start-up businesses, an epicentre of creativity in the city centre," said Michael. "People will come from places like the Highlands for a weekend to go to the market and also the rooftop bar which will be open seven days a week.

"It will only be for small independent businesses and those are the ones in the forefront of everyone's minds at the moment. No one wants to see any small businesses disappear and given the choice people will buy local.

"We are hopeful that the development will be up and running late next year."

Another transformational development for the area is Seedpod



which will help to grow the size and value of food and drink production and exports. SeedPod will combine specialist facilities and support programmes to drive business growth and sustainability through technology adoption, product and market development, and global consumer-focus.

The £21m investment will help new and established producers, manufacturers and processors to achieve industry's growth ambitions. It will support long-term economic recovery, company growth and the creation of new jobs in the sector, which already employs more than 22,000 people in the North-east.

SeedPod will accelerate the adoption of advanced manufacturing and Industry 4.0 tech and processes (smart manufacturing). It will also use global market insights to inspire businesses to capitalise on emerging and on-trend 'foods of the future' opportunities. Product innovation and market development will increase premium margins for the region's high-quality produce.

The site for the 32,000 square foot new-build SeedPod facility is in Scotland's Rural College's campus at Craibstone close to Aberdeen International Airport and the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route.

The project includes £10m of

capital funding provided jointly by the UK Government and Scottish Government via the Aberdeen City Region Deal (ACRD) - a partnership between both governments, Opportunity North East (ONE), Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council - and £4.4m from ONE.

SeedPod will be a unique growth resource for the industry. It will provide customised support programmes and specialist facilities, including incubator commercial-grade manufacturing units, development kitchens, full-service managed production and storage space, presentation areas; and co-working and collaboration space. It will also create opportunities to pilot advanced manufacturing processes and technology, scale-up production and inspire new product development with global insights.

ONE is the lead ACRD partner for SeedPod and has set up a new company, Food Hub (NES) Limited, to deliver the project with an industry board under the chairmanship of Patrick Machray.

SeedPod's concept design stage is complete and detailed design development is ongoing. The Food Hub (NES) board has approved the start of the procurement process for the main contractor.

Patrick, who is vice-chair of ONE, said: "North-east Scotland's £2.2bn annual turnover food and drink industry includes outstanding primary produce, innovative and resilient businesses, and world-renowned brands. There are significant opportunities to develop new products and markets.

"SeedPod will bring new and established sector-specific support programmes together with purpose-built facilities under one roof to accelerate business growth. This approach will help businesses in the region to grow and the sector to innovate, generate value and create jobs. The area already accounts for more than 20% of Scotland's food and drink output, so future growth is nationally significant. Food and drink innovation is also now an inward investment priority for the Scottish Government.

"Some of our region's most enterprising businesses are already at the forefront of technology adoption, product innovation and market development in food and drink. SeedPod will help more businesses to achieve their goals, be more productive and profitable, and be at the cutting edge of foods of the future market and consumer trends.

"Looking ahead, SeedPod is more important than ever. It is a driver of green economic recovery and will



The SeedPod concept

build on our regional strengths to achieve a more diversified economy,” said Patrick.

Many companies in the North-east have their eye on the future and are looking to move offices, driven by lease events, according to Derren McRae, managing director of CBRE’s Aberdeen office.

He said activity during the third quarter of this year was more encouraging than previous quarters, but stressed things were still challenging – and uncertain.

“Organisations with break options in their leases are looking at the options and, as you would expect, the majority are looking at downsizing,” he said. “Prior to CV19 many people were looking at ways of reducing the size of their offices and moving towards being more agile and it’s really just a continuation of that – but accelerated.

“As we are seeing across various markets, the climate continues to be challenging, however we have seen a significant increase in activity in the third quarter of the year with some key transactions taking place.

“Most of the movement involves existing companies in Aberdeen which have lease events or they have acquired other companies and

are looking to perhaps consolidate offices.

“Aberdeen is very much driven by the fluctuations in the energy sector and, because it is quite politically driven around the globe, it is very hard to predict what will happen. Different people have opposing views.

“However, commercial terms for the majority of the Q3 transactions were agreed prior to CV19 so it is a positive reflection of the market that these deals did indeed follow through to completion, albeit in some

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“Most of the movement involves existing companies in Aberdeen which have lease events or they have acquired other companies and are looking to perhaps consolidate offices.”

Derren McRae,
managing director,
CBRE’s Aberdeen office

cases occupiers looked to either slightly reduce their office footprint or negotiate additional flexibility on lease term.”

He said many companies were taking advantage of the opportunity to move into better locations while also reducing their costs.

“There are some fantastic properties across Aberdeen and potentially great deals. In other parts of the UK there is a bit of an uptick in demand for out-of-town locations, just given the covid situation and people being able to drive to the office. However, Aberdeen has always been quite dominated by the out-of-town market so that’s not happening and there are some really great quality city centre buildings which are attracting attention.”

Which is your favourite building in the region?



“Having worked in local construction for over 25 years, it’s hard to travel any distance without coming across a structure that we have been involved in building in one way or another... a commentary that drives my family mad. There are many great buildings in Aberdeen and I am particularly fond of Marischal College in the city centre - more so since the granite has been cleaned up to restore former glory. We were involved in the build at Marischal Square, across the road. As controversial as that project was, the contrast between the old and new makes a striking impression.

“It is always exciting to be involved in brand new projects but also deeply satisfying to be part of restoration works, breathing new life into older structures. At KR Group, we are fortunate enough to work on a wide range of builds and proud to help develop a blend of old and new structures.”

Kenny Robertson, *managing director*, KR Group (Scotland) Ltd



“I have been a photographer for over 40 years and property photography is a specialist area for me. For my work, I photograph residential and commercial buildings from the ultra-modern to ancient castles. When we could travel, I have taken photographs of many iconic buildings all over the world. Choosing between stunning glass and steel modern buildings in New York or Dubai, or the incredible architecture of Florence is not easy as I like both. However, for a favourite, it has to be from Aberdeen.

“I have picked a beautiful property that I photographed recently - Tullich Lodge in Ballater. An impressive Category B Listed 19th century house built from granite in the Scots Baronial style and designed in 1897 by architect A Marshall Mackenzie RSA, the property was originally a hunting lodge and is now a grand private residence. An imposing crenellated tower and conservatory provide fantastic south facing views across open countryside towards The Coyles of Glen Muick and Lochnagar just beyond.”

Neil Gordon, *director*, aberdeenphoto.com



“One of my favourite buildings would have to be the Aberdeen Science Centre. It may be considered a strange choice because it’s hardly overflowing with outstanding architectural features but it’s more what’s inside that counts. It’s a special place because it excites young people about technology and opens their eyes to a world of possibilities. It’s these young people - the next generation of tech enthusiasts - that we need for Mintra in the future.

“As a leading digital learning and HR software specialist we’re lucky enough to attract some of the brightest, most talented people in the industry. They make our training courses engaging - ensuring our learners are equipped for the safety critical industries they operate in. I feel proud of the solutions our team provides - I wonder how many of them were inspired to follow their career path because of places like the Science Centre?”

Gareth Gilbert, *chief executive officer*, Mintra



40 years at your service

TURN back the clock to 1980... Remember when the Dons won the Scottish Premier Division? You could celebrate in Aberdeen's watering holes with a pint which would set you back about 50p. It was the era of big shoulder pads and even bigger hair. The new Mini Metro hit our streets for the first time and the Rubik's Cube was about to become a worldwide craze.

That same year – four decades ago – one of Aberdeen's longest-running family businesses, Goldstar Cleaning Services, was born.

Through the highs and lows of the last 40 years, Goldstar has been there. They've worked on many of the milestone buildings and projects that have shaped our region, and they take immense pride in the part they continue to play in helping to make Aberdeen City and Shire shine.

Goldstar was founded by Andy Willox, who later went on to be awarded an OBE for his services to the small businesses in the North-east. Larger-than-life Andy – a keen weight lifter who played bass guitar in popular local 60s bands Royal Teens and Bragg – worked as a housing welfare officer in Gordon Barracks when he spotted a business opportunity, which was later to develop into Goldstar.

With unrivalled experience in property cleaning and maintenance, the business has built a solid, trusted

reputation in both the commercial and domestic sectors. Today's Goldstar works closely with more than 600 regular clients across the domestic, commercial, industrial, construction, retail, leisure, hospitality, healthcare and education sectors.

Managing around 500 jobs a day, the business employs a team of 150-plus and has a fleet of 30 satellite-tracked vehicles serving a loyal and growing customer base across Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, Inverness, Moray and Tayside.

Andy has increasingly taken a back seat in the business in recent years, handing over the reins to his son, Scott Willox, in 2006. Scott has been with Goldstar for 28 years, having jumped from his career as an apprentice engineer to join the business, aged 19. After spending more than 15 years 'on the vans' for Goldstar, Scott moved in to management roles, before taking over the running of the business from his Dad. Andy remains a silent partner and Scott's wife, Rachel, is a managing partner.

Every day in a family business throws up challenges but Goldstar's resilience and sustainability is very much built on developing and nurturing client relationships.

One of the earliest clients, Scott recalls, was none other than Her Majesty the Queen.

"We had the contract to clean Balmoral every day in the run-up to the Queen's summer visit and again after her departure. We did this for 16 years. It was a thorough, top-to-bottom clean to make sure the castle was sparkling for the Royal stay. I remember in the final days before the Queen arrived, it was all hands on deck and my Mum would be part of the team.

"Members of the Royal party would begin arriving a few days before the Queen and I will always remember, on the day of the Queen's arrival, all the contractors would be lined up outside – all gleaming in their uniforms – to welcome her to her Royal Deeside home."

Scott also remembers arriving at the 12-bedroomed Candacraig House in Strathdon to take on a new window cleaning contract and noticing a distinctive yellow Land Rover in the driveway. "I thought it looked exactly like the car Billy Connolly had driven on a tour of Scotland that I'd seen on the telly.

"It was only when I went in to the mansion that I realised that Pamela Stephenson was in the kitchen and it was actually Billy Connolly's windows that I was cleaning!"

Under the leadership of Scott and Rachel, Goldstar has grown and widened its client base; diversified into new markets; and invested in in-house workforce training.

Fighting fit for the future

2020 has been a year of extreme contrasts for Scott, Rachel and the team. The covid crisis is undoubtedly the biggest challenge faced by Goldstar in its 40-year history.

Early in the lockdown, faced with the sudden and harsh realisation of the potential economic impact, Scott and Rachel were faced with tough decisions.

The company's staff are an extension of the family. The care, loyalty and dedication demonstrated by every member of the team to clients is what sets Goldstar apart from its competitors.

Scott and Rachel diligently began the furlough process, at all times communicating with staff and clients and re-assessing the financial implications at every step.

They continued to fulfil jobs, retaining as many of their staff as possible. Their professionalism, compassion and experience in handling social care contracts - in many cases involving the vulnerable, sick and elderly - was increasingly called upon.

They continued to invest in the materials and technologies that would be required to further enhance the business's stringent compliance in handling health, safety and cleanliness.

At all times, Scott, Rachel and the Goldstar team put their clients first, even launching a free grocery service for some of their more vulnerable customers. They rightly positioned themselves as a key player in aiding the region's economic recovery across healthcare, office, residential and construction sectors. Their specialist staff undertook the necessary training to offer the top level of covid response to commercial and domestic clients.

By mid July, almost 70% of staff were back and by September 100%. Extra staff were recruited as Goldstar continued to develop the business and secure new opportunities.

This 40-year-old family business has set its sights firmly on the future.



Scott and Rachel firmly believe that great people are at the heart of a great business and they are passionate about developing staff to allow them to reach their potential. This approach encourages Goldstar staff to progress and has resulted in a high degree of staff retention and loyalty. Most of Goldstar's staff have been with them for at least five years. All managers have progressed through the ranks.

They work with most of the major construction firms in the North-east and never lose sight of the fact that they have an impressive 90+% return rate across their client base. Equally, they appreciate how important cleaning and maintenance can be.

Scott says: "We've all been around our homes a bit more than normal recently, which means that everything is under the microscope just now. We understand that keeping on top of cleaning can be an extra challenge that you could really do without, so that's where we come in."

Scott and Rachel are passionate about keeping trade local and have been working hard towards achieving a 100% local supply chain, in support of fellow local businesses, a campaign which has gained significant support across social media.

"Everything we have achieved as a team over 40 years has been through hard work, absolute customer focus and a true passion for what we do,"

says Scott. "Our teams take pride in responding to client needs and, equally, are pro-active in monitoring contracts to stay on top of every issue. Clients - large or small - always benefit from the personal touch when dealing with Goldstar."

Keeping their heads above water throughout the unprecedented lockdown restrictions earlier this year took time, effort, sweat and tears. However, Goldstar continued to fulfil contracts, worked hard to win new business and steadily began to build its business out of the covid turmoil.

Recognition means the world to the Goldstar team and the icing on the cake for their 40th anniversary year was being named a Finalist in the Business of the Year category in this year's Northern Star Business Awards, run by Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce. This follows success in winning Best Business in the Trades Awards 2018.

"2020 has been a remarkable year in so many ways," said Scott. "From everyone at Goldstar, we'd like to say a huge thank you to all our clients for their custom and support, not just for this year, but for the 40 years we've been in business. We'd be nothing without you."

"We wish you all a very Happy Christmas and good health and happiness for 2021. Here's to the next 40 years!"



Digital knitting wins funding award

RGU graduate Lucy Fisher who created Knit It – an innovative platform which offers digital knitting patterns, tools, tutorials and more – has won £10,000 of funding from Scottish EDGE.

Knit It, which was also part of the RGU Startup Accelerator programme, has been announced as the Creative Edge and Young Edge winner at the Scottish EDGE Awards, a competition aimed at identifying and supporting Scotland's up-and-coming, innovative, high-growth entrepreneurial talent. This is the third year in a row an RGU startup has won Young Edge.

Lucy hopes to create a global community of knitters by revolutionising the knitting industry through Knit It and said being recognised at a national level was a real confidence boost.

Keenan's UK expansion

KEENAN Recycling is investing £835,000 in new depots in south west England.

The food waste recycling business is expanding its network across the UK with depots in Gloucester and Salisbury, potentially creating almost 20 new jobs in the next 12 months.

The opening of these depots in Gloucester and Salisbury is part of the company's wider investment into growth in England, which includes the recent £4.5m investment in adding 39 new trucks to its fleet. From day one, these depots will create seven new jobs with the expectation of almost trebling these numbers as demand increases.

Trust's financial boost for The Foyer

ABERDEEN Foyer has secured a donation of around £140,000 from The Julia and Hans Rausing Trust.

The donation is a much-needed boost, supporting the Foyer's immediate funding requirements and ongoing financial sustainability during what is an exceptionally difficult time for all third sector organisations.

Chief executive Leona McDermid said: "We're in a similar predicament to many charities right now in that we're facing extremely tough times trying to balance meeting the significant needs of people facing poverty, unemployment and homelessness with a reduction in available funding. This generous donation from The Julia and Hans Rausing Trust comes at a critical time and we are unbelievably grateful for their support."

Since lockdown The Foyer has helped over 400 people with a variety of support services including keeping people safe and connected in their homes, helping to tackle poverty and supporting people with their mental and physical health.

North Sea expertise leads top China contract

ARDYNE, the Aberdeen-based fishing, milling and casing recovery provider, is to introduce its technology and expertise to the Bohia Bay basin in China after securing a contract with a major Chinese oil company.

As part of the agreement the company will use UK engineering expertise as well as leverage the UK supply chain to build tools and equipment to support the work. Aberdeen-based project managers will provide onshore support for the duration of the project under which Ardyne will deploy its TITAN system, allowing the client to improve efficiency with casing recovery and re-drill existing wells, with a recent TITAN operation reducing rig time by 94.5 hours.

With the Bohai Bay basin being a mature, brownfield location – similar to the North Sea – the client turned to the UK region for the expertise around maximising recovery over some of the larger, more well established service companies already operating in the China region.

Ardyne's proven results with TITAN, which has been run successfully more than 1,200 times around the world, secured the contract, with support from Scottish Development International.



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Sign up to support the NHS in the North-east

NHS Grampian is asking North-east businesses to help it treat more patients at the region's hospitals as part of a new project.

The health board has launched the Pick Me Up Project which is aimed at improving patient flow in its hospitals.

Interim deputy chief officer acute services Cameron Matthew said: "One issue facing the health board is getting those ready for discharge home. Currently we see a peak in discharges at around 6pm as patients, well enough to go home, are collected by friends and loved-ones following their work – whereas discharges should ideally be completed by noon.

"These delays impact NHS Grampian's ability to admit acutely ill patients to the hospital, leading to waits and delays in its emergency department and in some instances delays for ambulances at the front door, getting patients into the emergency department."

Acute director for nursing and midwifery Jenny McNicol added: "Through the Pick Me Up Project we are asking businesses and organisations to help us to get

patients who are ready for discharge home from hospital more quickly, by allowing their employees to collect relatives or friends during the day.

This will free-up bed space to help us treat more acutely ill patients, more quickly. Joe Bloggs collecting his mother at 10am rather than 6pm might well free-up space at the emergency department and an ambulance to potentially be available to support another lifesaving emergency later that day."

NHS Grampian said it was asking businesses to support it to treat more acutely ill patients by 'being as flexible as possible – knowing that many are already'.

Cameron added: "We are asking businesses that sign-up to the project to allow their employees to collect relatives or friends, when they are ready to go home, during the day when possible.

"If businesses are able to be flexible to allow employees to take their lunch hour at a different time, take a hour lieu, or simply give an employee an hour off, to bring relatives or friends home, it would be of immense benefit to NHS Grampian, its frontline workers and, ultimately, its patients.

"The cumulative impact on our NHS locally of businesses signing-up would be great and ultimately have the potential to save lives and let us treat more acutely ill patients more quickly."

Jenny said: "We recognise that not all businesses will be able to accommodate all requests all of the time. Instead, businesses willing to sign-up to support the Pick Me Up Project are simply asked to do so wherever possible, to promote their support for the initiative to staff and encourage line managers to accommodate what will hopefully be a limited number of such requests from their teams.

"Any business or organisation large or small can pledge its support. It doesn't matter if you have 5,000, 500 or five staff, signing-up and being flexible where you can be will help us save lives."

For more information or to sign-up get in touch with gram.communications@nhs.scot using the subject line 'Pick Me Up Project'.

Changing rooms



CGI image of Union Terrace Gardens as proposed

ONE of the key aspirations of the Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan is to attract 3,000 new people to live in the heart of the city in the next 20 years and while it may not be at breakneck pace, there are signs of 'green shoots'.

In 2017, following the release of the Masterplan, Aberdeen City Council engaged Savills to carry out a 'City Living Strategy' to inform the progress of the plan. One of the key issues identified was the quality of accommodation. 45% of respondents to a survey thought that the accommodation in the city centre was 'poor', or 'very poor', and that was impacting their decision to live in the city.

Claire Crawford, associate director at Savills said: "This is the result of a lack of development in recent years and a preference from housebuilders and developers to build on the edge of the city where development is less risky and more cost effective. City centre projects largely involve some element of conversion meaning unknown technical factors make it hard to estimate costs. There is also a very limited track record of sales of new build homes in the city centre, so there is a nervousness of delivering at scale."

Amongst other interventions to

encourage development in the city centre, Savills recommended a two-year moratorium on affordable housing obligations within its boundary and this was implemented in 2018 and recently extended for a further two years.

Claire said: "In the two years to June 2018, when our report was presented, applications for 10 flats were approved on Union Street and in the two years since the report was presented there were approximately 70 flats either approved or pending approval. Planning consent does not always follow through to delivery but the waiver has made these projects more appealing and developers and property owners have been enticed to look at the city centre as an opportunity for development.

"However, the majority of these projects are of smaller scale. More needs to be done to encourage flagship residential developments and entice developers to commit to projects in Aberdeen. A great example of this would be Denburn House, a prime development opportunity on Union Terrace which we launched to the market in the summer. This traditional Grade B listed building overlooking Union Terrace Gardens which are undergoing a £20m transformation, has the potential to be an incredible residential or hotel development.

"Developer support like that made available at Marischal Square would provide developers and investors with the confidence to consider large vacant buildings like this more favourably.

"Another factor to consider is the lifestyle changes we have seen being fast-tracked by CV19. Increasingly people want the flexibility and option to work from home and they don't want to do that from the kitchen table or bedroom. They also have a better appreciation of the environment and want to be able to walk or cycle to nearby coffee shops, restaurants and outdoor spaces, avoiding unnecessary car journeys. This developing concept of what is called 'the 15 minute city' is being seen across Europe and has come to the fore during the pandemic as people have had more time to consider what factors are most important to them in a home.

"Aberdeen is an exciting emerging market and the small scale developments which are being brought forward. We hope these developments will prove it is a great place to live, and with Union Terrace Gardens nearing completion, the pedestrianisation of Union Street and the ongoing masterplan projects, Aberdeen could offer everything residents are looking for.



Claire Crawford

“

“This is the result of a lack of development in recent years and a preference from housebuilders and developers to build on the edge of the city where development is less risky and more cost effective. City centre projects largely involve some element of conversion meaning unknown technical factors make it hard to estimate costs.”

Claire Crawford,
associate director,
Savills

“Now, more than ever, a proactive bold approach by the council is required to help transform our city centre.”

One company which has very successfully taken the plunge is Gowans Property Investment which specialises in the acquisition, development and management of residential and commercial property throughout Scotland.

In spite of potential problems brothers Dean and Darren were drawn to the building at 139 Union Street because of its solid granite construction, high ceilings and great proportions with plenty of light in a ‘fantastic location’. They converted the iconic building, occupied by Boot’s Pharmacy in the 1930’s, into six luxury one and two-bedroom homes.

Dean said: “This is our second build in the area after developing 148 Union Street a few years ago and we were excited by the potential to create bright and spacious homes within these historic buildings.

“This property has beautiful original features like 3.6 metre high ceilings and floor to ceiling windows in some parts, which are a developer’s dream.”

Darren says the brothers are actively seeking similar sites for development, adding: “City centre living – giving people entertainment, leisure and

work on their doorstep – is a growing trend in most UK cities. The character and charm of Union Street buildings is now being enhanced by major investment in projects like Union Terrace Gardens and the Art Gallery, so Aberdeen has as much to offer in this space as anyone else.”

However, it is not just in the city that the face to residential and commercial property is changing.

Inverurie-based architect Willie Lippe said that they had worked on a number of houses which had been converted into offices over the last half century and were being returned to residential. Other businesses were making structural changes to try to reduce their overheads, simply to survive.

“We had an inquiry this week from a company which wanted to demolish half of their office so they could reduce the rates bill because they weren’t using that space anymore,” he said.

“I think we have now established, whether we like it or not, that as a result of covid we need less office space so we can do more work from home. However, I think that will only be in the short term, because I have a feeling people miss that office environment and miss team working and that social interaction.

“I know from our own architectural experience we need to work as a team. People within the office have different knowledge, different experience and we work much better as a team rather than individuals sitting at home. I would like to get the whole team back into the office again but that is going to take a while and at the moment we only have half of our 12 staff in the office.”

He said that more and more people were looking for homes which could accommodate space for them to work but that this was a trend which had started pre-covid.



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Aberdeen city recycling is highest in Scotland

RECYCLING by Aberdeen residents has increased and is above the Scottish average according to statistics from the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA).

It rose 2.6% in 2019 rise making an increase of 10.9% since 2016 which is the biggest percentage improvement of any Scottish local authority in that time period.

In 2019, 49.9% of household waste in Aberdeen was recycled, compared with 47.3 % in 2018 and 39% in 2016.

The figures show that Aberdeen recycled more than the Scottish average (44.9% in 2019) for the second year running and it continues to be the highest performing city compared to Edinburgh with 38.6%, Glasgow with 24.7% and Dundee with 38.4%. Aberdeen also produced 1% less total household waste compared to 2018.



Maersk invests \$1m

MAERSK Training has announced a \$1m investment into its UK business, headquartered in Aberdeen.

The funding will support the investment in its people, growing the headcount and upgrading facilities, courses and innovation in Aberdeen, which is the organisation's hub for all training activity in the UKCS for oil and gas and renewables globally.

It will bring a significant upgrade to its fire and helideck training ground in Portlethen as well as increasing Maersk Training's offering in OPITO mandatory courses to complement its existing offering within oil and gas and renewables in Aberdeen and its five other UK sites.

Bucking the trend amidst the pandemic, this year alone the company has introduced an upgrade to its Training Management Service (TMS), to improve processes for companies dealing with fewer staff and re-introduced its modular training units offering an effective and safer solution for delegate training.

Maersk Training UK head of commercial Scott Taylor said: "This investment will help showcase the Aberdeen facilities within the UK training sector. It is a direct illustration of Maersk's dedication to the longevity of the oil and gas market, not only in Aberdeen but throughout the UK."

A word of advice



Stephen Booth,
Managing director,
Realm Fire & Security

What's your area of expertise?:

Since 2002 we have specialised in fire and security services for businesses operating in Aberdeen and the surrounding area. At the heart of our business is a shared belief in quality, great customer care and service. Over time these values have gained Realm a reputation for reliability, honesty and integrity.

What should people know?:

We work with customers to make their commercial properties safer and their businesses compliant with the latest fire and other regulations. Business properties are home to our resources and are also where our people spend a huge amount of their time. A safe, secure environment makes everyone's business more productive and profitable and who doesn't want that?

What's the biggest mistake companies make?:

Sometimes people assume they can tick all the boxes looking after their commercial property themselves. They forget that there are huge advantages to working with a specialist company who looks at their property and working environment in a completely different way. Protecting your property is basic commercial and common sense but too many companies just see it as a hassle, rather than as something they should build into their working culture.

What's your top tip?

Look for people who share your values, who put quality and professionalism first. It's also important that you work with a company who has all the appropriate qualifications and accreditations so that you know you're receiving the correct advice, valuable training and the most suitable products and services that are specific to your circumstances.



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'Retention' in construction contracts: A snagging problem?

by **Robert McDiarmid**,
partner - head of dispute, Stronachs LLP



IN AUGUST I raised the prospect of the CV19 crisis being used by parties in the construction industry as a means of triggering contract re-negotiations wholesale and putting significant pressure upon the construction supply chain. Whilst it has taken place, thankfully we haven't reached the all-out litigation armageddon which was potentially on the horizon.

Nevertheless, one aspect of construction projects that has continued to become an ever-present feature of dispute between parties is the use of contractual 'retention' as a means to create leverage and to protect cash flow.

The concept of 'retention' in construction contracts is pretty straightforward. The employer is entitled to retain some percentage of the value of the work being carried out pending the conclusion of a rectification or snagging period. Once that period is finished, the retention payment is issued to the contractor subject to any appropriate deductions.

The rationale is simple: it incentivises the contractor to complete the works to the appropriate standard required and avoids the scenario of the contractor leaving site fully paid without the job being complete. Inherent here is the recognition that pursuing the contractor will incur unrecoverable costs and time and so retention is a means to avoid the employer having

to 'invest' in forcing completion of the work.

The withholding of the retention has long been used by employers not only to obtain completion of snagging works but also as a means to obtain leverage against the contractor in respect of other matters in dispute which are not strictly about snagging e.g. disputes over variations, delay, extension of time, price, other breaches of contract.

A consultation published in February 2020 by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) demonstrated how retention is actually being used - the feedback did not surprise those involved in the industry:

- Retention fails to provide contractor protection against employer insolvency
- Frequency of 'unjustified' late, partial or non-payment
- Significant negative impact on cash flow and cumulative impact on small firms
- A culture of mistrust with firms higher up the supply chain using retention as a lever in wider payment negotiations
- Use of retention along with 'pay when paid' provisions

Retention is frequently, and often erroneously, used as a mechanism for achieving commercial leverage. But it's not necessarily a safe way of doing so.

Contractors can bite back with the relatively quick and inexpensive process of 'adjudication' which has long been an integral feature of construction law in the UK.

Also, if retention, under the cloak of a dispute over snagging, is being used as a means to protect cash flow or create commercial leverage, a well-advised contractor may take the opportunity to investigate the financial affairs of the employer and find reason (along with non-payment of the retention) to go to court and obtain protective orders against the property and assets of the employer. A particularly bad prospect for employers involved in property development.

The 'pay when paid' provision highlighted in the consultation is curious given that the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 made such provisions (even if consciously agreed by both parties) ineffective. An employer attempting to use such a clause should beware.

Parties need to protect their own positions and present their arguments but should also be aware that provoking litigation (or adjudication) can be a very risky one. Retention is supposed to be a sensible and measured protection for the employer. Parties would be well advised not to go too far in using it for purposes for which it was not intended.

Stronachs



Lucky horseshoe spreads some optimism

GARY Walker Wealth Management is looking to spread positivity throughout the Aberdeen city region.

A giant floral horseshoe has been installed outside the front of its office on Queens Road in the hope it raises a few smiles. Entwined with sunflowers, the horseshoe symbolises luck and has been positioned pointing downwards in the tradition that those below it will be showered with luck.

General manager Kelly Murray said: “We literally just wanted to boost positivity and give people something to smile about. There are lots of negative predictions being made regarding 2021 and beyond and we want to play a part in bravely challenging that narrative with optimism towards a brighter outcome for the city.

“We are living through a pandemic and know how serious this is. We also understand that while we must keep one another safe, in order to get through this and prevail, we must find ways to carry on, support our staff, families and clients, our community and the local economy.

“This little project itself has supported four local companies and hopefully creates some community engagement. The team is encouraging all to get involved by taking a picture underneath the horseshoe and sharing positive messages to inspire others.”

Legasea wins environmental award

ABERDEENSHIRE start-up company Legasea has won the award for Best Energy Industry Environmental Service Provider 2020, the second award since the company was established 18 months ago.

The Scottish Enterprise Awards recognise small sized businesses whose efforts have produced excellent products and services over the course of the year. The Environmental Service Provider Award is given to a company which shows great commitment and dedication to providing the best environmental service possible.

Since its incorporation in December 2018 Legasea has grown from a concept into a fast-growing business which is leading the oil and gas sector in how it manages waste.

A new way of working in Aberdeen

A NEW way of working is to be introduced to Aberdeen when Neospace opens its flagship flexible business centre on Riverside Drive.

This innovative office environment offers clients the ability to work, rest and play under one roof. The multi-million-pound refurbishment will provide residents with an inspiring working space and a range of amenities including gym, sauna and steam rooms, golf simulator, barista and juice bars and business lounges.

It will be home to some of the largest meeting rooms available in Aberdeen city centre and feature eight state-of-the-art spaces complete with high-end furnishings and 4k integrated displays. Superfast internet connectivity is available throughout the building via two private gigabit circuits.

Record growth year for AAB

ANDERSON Anderson & Brown (AAB) has reported one of its biggest growth years on record for its audit services.

Over the last year, new business wins total £800,000 from around 30 new clients, with 30% of these have being secured in the last six months when the entire team at AAB were working from home.

The firm said that before lockdown, there was a clear shift in the market where businesses of all sizes, operating both domestically and internationally were looking for alternatives to global audit firms to ensure their service expectations were met. The coronavirus outbreak does not appear to have had an impact on this mindset.

The new clients operate in a variety of sectors from across Scotland and many having overseas subsidiaries or parent companies.



Entrepreneur wins £25,000

ABERDEEN entrepreneur Beena Sharma of Orbis Energy Innovations is one of 40 individuals to be selected onto Unlocking Ambition, an entrepreneurial development programme run by Scottish Enterprise in partnership with Scotland CAN DO.

Orbis Energy Innovations went through a rigorous application process, along with another 261 applicants. Beena, who lives in Aberdeen, will now receive business mentoring and strategy support for six-months. Her start-up company will receive a £25,000 development grant, as part of the prize.

Orbis Energy Innovations has developed a ground-breaking internal wall insulation system (Orbis IWI), which has been scientifically proven to reduce heat loss by up to 93% in the treated wall elements of granite and sandstone homes. It offers a low-cost solution which will help to reduce emissions across Scotland over the next decade. Designed by North-east engineer, David McGrath, the system was developed with the support of Dr Amar Bennadji and his team at The Scott Sutherland School of Architecture at RGU.

Pandemic response award for RGU

ROBERT Gordon University won the Imaginative Educator Awards' team category for planning and delivering multiple programmes during the pandemic which prepare students for the future needs of industry and the economy by developing their entrepreneurial skills, knowledge and mindsets.

The awards recognise exceptional responses from educators to the challenges rising from the CV19 pandemic. The winners were announced at the Scottish Institute for Enterprise 'Shaping the Future' online conference.

Petersen lands logistics contract with OneSubsea

INTERNATIONAL energy logistics provider Peterson has agreed a project logistics services contract with OneSubsea to support its work on the Matapal project in Trinidad and Tobago.

Peterson will deliver turnkey logistics support to OneSubsea for the project, including undertaking the heavy moving and lifting, materials management, loading and discharging and associated services for three of the subsea structures which will support the Matapal project. Mobilisation will occur from the ChagTerms base in Chaguaramas.

Worrying signs in offshore employment

THE number of workers on offshore oil and gas installations decreased by around 4,000 as the UK went into lockdown in March this year, official figures published by industry body OGUK confirm.

Average weekly personnel on board decreased from around 11,000 on the March 8 to just over 7,000 a month later, with drilling and engineering construction trades hardest hit.

OGUK's Workforce Insight report 2020 confirms the uptake of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme by companies, particularly in the supply chain, as many positioned themselves to endure the triple whammy of low oil and gas prices and the operational impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

The representative body for the sector noted that while official figures on both on and offshore employment would not be available until next year, tentative signs are worrying and underline the need for governments, industry and regulators to work together to protect the jobs and skills that will be needed to meet UK energy needs now and as the country moves to a lower carbon future.

Bancon Construction



BASED in Aberdeenshire, Bancon Construction is a dynamic company that embraces the modern philosophy of construction excellence offering our clients a service tailored to their individual building requirements, providing reliable, sustainable and value for money solutions. Despite the uncertainties and challenges of 2020 the company has been successful in securing new contracts in Aberdeen city, Aberdeenshire as well as Inverness, Dundee and Montrose.

Continued investment into Aberdeen has given us the opportunity of working with Titan Investments Ltd, a £4m contract creating a new industrial development in the Altens area of the city. Works commenced in September and includes the design and construction of a new office together with the refurbishment of an existing warehouse and its external areas



Industrial development, Altens, Aberdeen



New learning plaza Banchory Academy

We have recently enjoyed repeat business with our client, The Oil & Gas Technology Centre in re-developing premises to provide additional office facilities in Aberdeen. Work is also well underway at Prime Four Business Park to provide bespoke office accommodation over three floors including fit-out, M&E and decoration works for Equinor (UK) Ltd.

Expansion and enhancement of educational facilities for Aberdeenshire Council has formed a substantial part of our delivery programme in 2019/20 with the recent handover of Fraserburgh Academy incorporating various refurbishments and the creation of a new drama studio, a new learning plaza at Banchory Academy and we are currently constructing an extension at Hillside Primary School in Portlethen to provide additional classroom accommodation.

In August 2020 we completed the creation of a national decommissioning centre in Newburgh for The University of Aberdeen.

The skills, abilities and diversity of our people help us achieve our business vision and objectives. Sustainable growth and geographical expansion remains at the forefront of the future success of our business and we remain committed to excellent delivery and service to all our clients.



49 new homes, Inverness



Aberdeen Science Centre officially opened the doors to their new facility on November 4, 2020. A really exciting and important project for the City of Aberdeen, a project Bancon Construction was honoured to be part of.

Construction works on the old granite tramsheds, formerly known as Satosphere, started last year to transform the building into a state-of-the-art Science Centre delivering the centre's vision and mission of inspiring a lifelong interest in science.

The re-development included the construction of an extension and creation of a new mezzanine floor – almost doubling the amount of exhibition space and exposing the roof structure to allow natural light to flood into the building prior to specialist fit out to create brand new, interactive exhibits and displays.

We wish Aberdeen Science Centre every success with their new facility and hope visitors enjoy the new experience as much as we have enjoyed creating the transformation.

Don't let GDPR hold your business back

Susan Mackie,
founder and managing director,
Care App Solutions Ltd



IN MY experience, the perception of GDPR compliance can often be negative. However I believe that given the right practical support, compliance should positively impact on a business and should not block innovation.

CV19 and GDPR are probably two of the most unpopular phrases in business right now and, whilst the topics are different, both have had a profound impact on how businesses operate.

Just when businesses have become a little more comfortable with and knowledgeable about data protection, CV19 and its associated challenges have further pushed change, transforming the type of personal information businesses are now processing. Never in a million years did any of us think that whether someone was allowed in your building might be dependent on a body temperature check and where they have been on their holidays but here we are.

The most important thing to remember is that GDPR does not and should not drive your business - you drive your business. GDPR should be aligned with your business process. Just like health and safety, it's about careful assessment of impact, risk and mitigation measures.

To get started, you need to make sure you know what your business process is and document it or map it. Almost a third of data breaches are due to human behaviours but these are often overlooked when assessing risk.

Due to the ongoing pandemic, businesses may have had to change how they record data. Many will be collecting additional personal information and some will be gathering it for the first time. A Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) should be used to record these changes and manage the risks identified.

One business I recently supported had become so tied up in their own rules on the back of their understanding of GDPR, they created unnecessary restrictions for communicating with their existing client base to the extent that they were struggling to speak to or invite them to an event.

Consent is not the only lawful basis that might be appropriate in GDPR - legitimate business interests and contractual obligations are so often overlooked when deciding which to use. Suppressions lists are an effective way to manage the process of ensuring the wishes of those who do not want to become potential customers.

Practical GDPR support can also really help with your business's sales pipeline. We regularly help businesses looking to sell innovative services or software that may process personal information in their service offering. A DPIA can be incorporated into the sales toolkit to help potential buyers make decisions and meet their own legal obligations.

GDPR may feel as if it's dominated many aspects of your business in recent times and it might still seem like you're climbing the mountain, but the challenges are not insurmountable when addressed in the right way.

Walk this way



NEVER has the challenge of attracting customers into your shop or shopping centre and persuading them to browse been greater than at the moment.

In recent years the bricks and mortar retail sector has been tussling with competition from internet shopping and CV19 has brought additional obstacles.

Mike Kemp, partner and operations manager of John Lewis & Partners, Aberdeen, explained how they go about drawing customers into the department store and then subtly persuading them to move from department to department.

He said that in Aberdeen they use a 'grid' floor plan which makes it easy for shoppers to navigate but also makes it easy to organise from a retail point of view providing the opportunity to display plenty to catch the eye.

"This layout is quite common and predictable and makes it easier to find out where you need to go. The aiseways move in very straight lines which is in contrast to how they may lay out the shop in a high-end fashion retailer. They want you to walk in one door and explore and find things."

That's exactly what John Lewis does on just one of their four floors, the first, featuring women's fashions, with the grid plan dominating the other three.

"In women's fashions we go into our free-flow floorplan where it's less defined and allows us to maximise the flexibility of the fixtures we have in that area and really be a bit more creative about how we bring the products to life," said Mike.

"It allows customers to explore and find new things and that's what many fashion shoppers prefer. They want to discover things they may never have seen before whereas if you are coming in to buy a kettle, toaster, stationery or some haberdashery you just want to see where you need to go to get there quickly.

“

"In women's fashions we go into our free-flow floorplan where it's less defined and allows us to maximise the flexibility of the fixtures we have in that area and really be a bit more creative about how we bring the products to life"

Mike Kemp,
partner and operations manager,
John Lewis & Partners, Aberdeen

"The only other area you'll see screens is furniture. People want to see these items in a room set so they can be inspired and really understand what they can look like in their house.

"On our floors we have wide, straight walkways which allow us to accommodate a high footfall because people want to feel they have their own personal space when they are shopping. They don't like to be crowded or be jostled and from the covid viewpoint that helps us because it makes it easy for people to find that space.

The grid system also helps us establish some good practices for merchandising by allowing us to lay out promo spots. For example, if you walked into our ground floor the vast majority is below your eye level, so not lots of panels in the way. You can see the majority of the floor and similarly if you walk into the second floor via the link bridge there are no barriers so you can see lighting and then you can see linens and when you walk on you see electrical so that encourages people to go from one area to the next.

"When you come off the escalators you will see 'landing points' with more space to move around and really inspirational displays with assortments which hopefully make you want to shop."

He explained how the frequency with which customers shop for certain



items helps dictate where they are located.

“The assortments we put at our entrances are those where the frequency of visits by customers would be high. So, for example we make stationery and beauty easy to find so it’s a quick experience which is what they want. For things like electrical and audio and TV which are typically a more considered purchase you will invest more time to walk slightly further into our shop.

We also try join areas together based on the customer mission so for an expectant parent or a grandparent we make sure things like nursery and children’s wear and haberdashery and toys are all in the same area.”

Ryan Manson, general manager of Union Square, says his mission is to deliver a destination where people and brands want to be and his success was evident recently with the arrival of Decathlon, the sports retailer. The store opened just a few days before Union Square’s 11th birthday and since then there have been regular queues for entry.

“Even in these difficult times it is important to remind ourselves that there are still positives to focus on and we have been able to attract a great retailer to Aberdeen and Union Square,” he said.

He explained that the criteria for attracting people to the centre was

similar now to before the arrival of CV19.

“First and foremost, people need to feel safe and comfortable in order to come and spend time in a destination. You will see a lot of common themes if you visit other shopping centres like one-way systems, sanitising at entrances and lots of signage to support these measures.

We are part of a larger portfolio from which we can benefit. We’ve always been able to track footfall which is an important reporting tool for an industry such as ours and businesses are keen to review footfall on a daily,



“Even in these difficult times it is important to remind ourselves that there are still positives to focus on and we have been able to attract a great retailer to Aberdeen and Union Square”

Ryan Manson,
general manager,
Union Square

weekly, monthly and annual basis and review trends. The technology also exists to help us understand occupancy levels. We now have a system called Crowd Checker which means you can go to our website and see just how popular the centre is in near real-time information.

“This is a fabulous tool which has long term benefits and will be valuable long after the current pandemic. It can help an elderly person who wants to come at a quiet time or someone autistic who also wants to avoid crowds.

“Harnessing technology is going to play an important part in delivering a safe environment and great customer experiences which are going to encourage people to come back.

“For example travel screens in a destination such as ours provides information about train or bus times meaning you can be a bit more comfortable in the restaurant or shop you’re visiting because you have those details to hand.”

He said attracting great brands to a destination was key to its success.

“Great brands are crucial in attracting customers and have played a part in Union Square’s success story of the last 11 years.

“We are working tirelessly in Aberdeen, and elsewhere in the business, talking to retailers and have



been able to attract great brands to Aberdeen which help secure other popular brands and in turn draw customers to our destination.

“That said you must be creating an environment where the customers want to be. When people walk up to a destination like Union Square, they have expectations and we must ensure we meet these.”

For independent shoe shop Andrew Begg, which has been trading for more than a century and a half, the challenges are different. Owner Andrew said the biggest current hurdle was to encourage people back into the town centre by making them feel safe.

“With the measures which have been put in place on the city centre roads at the moment customers are having difficulty finding a convenient place either to be dropped off or to park and that is having a detrimental effect, he said.

“This year we had to batten the hatches to try to cope with holding onto a spring stock and the cost of advertising is inhibitive so my mobile shop window is Facebook and that is really my only way of attracting people to travel to the shop.

“We obviously try to catch the eye of passers-by with our windows so we put seasonal stuff at the front so they can see it and they are hopefully encouraged to come in.

“With Christmas coming up that might be slippers and dress shoes for ladies and for men Goretex shoes or dress shoes.

“We only have 600 ft² on the ground floor and a little less than that upstairs which is dance wear and dance shoes so we are limited in what we can do in terms of attracting people in.

“

“Our environment is very much service orientated and aimed at making customers feel comfortable and safe at any time but even more so now. We stick rigidly to all the Scottish Government guidelines and I don’t think anyone who has come in has felt uncomfortable with their experience because we are controlling numbers so strictly.”

Andrew Begg,
owner,
Andrew Begg

“Our environment is very much service orientated and aimed at making customers feel comfortable and safe at any time but even more so now. We stick rigidly to all the Scottish Government guidelines and I don’t think anyone who has come in has felt uncomfortable with their experience because we are controlling numbers so strictly.

“Our dance wear obviously attracts customers but it is quite seasonal and over the summer it just falls off a cliff. You normally get to the first week of August and everyone needs their stuff for going back to school or college but this year it didn’t happen. Our trade in August was down 73% down but only 5% up in September which did not replace the major loss.”

Robert Gordon's College offers the very best start in education

The core values of Community, Curiosity, Leadership, Innovation and Resilience underpin all that pupils experience at Robert Gordon's College. This is the DNA of the Gordon's community and provides pupils with the skills and tools they need to navigate an increasingly complex world. From the moment pupils arrive they are encouraged to find out what they are good at and supported to do it to the best of their ability.

Reading and writing is at the heart of the Primary 1 curriculum and all Junior School pupils thrive with the support of a dedicated classroom teacher. The curriculum is enriched by weekly specialist teaching in Art, Drama, French, Music, PE and Science from Primary 1 onwards. This offers fantastic cross curricular learning and the opportunity to educate the whole child.

From Choir to Karate and Mandarin to Mini Scripture Union, Junior School children can participate in over 50 clubs, sparking their curiosity and allowing them to find what they enjoy and what they are good at.

With dedicated school bus routes and its location in the heart of the city, families have a number of options for travelling to and from the school. Further support is available via the Out of Hours Care service which provides child care support before and after the school day, from 7.00 am - 5.30 pm, along with holiday clubs which are on offer too.

At the College, innovation and forward thinking sit comfortably alongside over 250 years of tradition, as seen in the bright, modern and open Junior School classrooms. The pupils also have access to a dedicated Science classroom, library and on-site swimming pool.

Robin Macpherson, Head of Robert Gordon's College shares: "Choosing the right school for your child is one of the most important decisions of your life. As Head of College, I'm very proud of our school. Our motto translates as "Be all you can be" - and it's something that we use time and time again in conversations with pupils as they progress through school."

Contact the Admissions team to discover more about the opportunities that await your family at:
admissions@rgc.aberdeen.sch.uk
or telephone +(0)1224 646346.

Virtual Open Event
Friday, 4 December 2020
Register at www.rgc.aberdeen.sch.uk



Eva joined Robert Gordon's in Nursery and describes school as fun, fantastic and exciting! "I look forward to saying 'hello' to the teachers when they meet us at the school entrance in the morning."





Seafood processing offers major growth opportunity

THE seafood processing sector across Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire presents a significant growth opportunity for the region's economy, according to a new study, with its development anchoring quality jobs and value-adding activity in coastal communities for the long term.

The findings of the study demonstrate the scale and value of the £700m industry and support the case for transformational investment to deliver business growth, new jobs and increase processing activity, particularly in Fraserburgh, Peterhead and Aberdeen.

Aberdeenshire Council commissioned the 'Future Proofing the Seafood Industry' study on behalf of funders North East of Scotland Fisheries Local Action Group (NESFLAG), Seafood Scotland and Opportunity North East (ONE). The North East Scotland Fisheries Development Partnership carried out the initial scoping work.

The region's seafood sector expects the volume of fish landed to increase after Brexit. There is widespread support from businesses, industry organisations and stakeholders for investment in processing capacity to capture a larger share of fish landed and maximise value-adding activity in the region.

There is a strong case for investment in this significant part of Scotland's food manufacturing industry. However, it does face challenges, including the economic impact of coronavirus, raw material supply and skills.

Staycations to help hotel recovery

THE impact of the CV19 pandemic on the hotel sector in Scotland's three largest cities has been revealed in PwC's UK Hotels Forecast 2020-2021, which shows precipitous declines in all metrics across Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen this year.

However, the three cities should begin to recover in 2021 due to increased demand for staycations across the UK, outside of London, with Scotland's largest cities hugely popular with local tourists. The prediction forms part of PwC's analysis into market conditions for hotels over the next 12 months.

The cancellation of the Edinburgh International Festival Fringe was a contributing factor in the 63% decline in revenue per available room (RevPAR), the sharpest fall in any of the 24 UK cities measured. RevPAR – a key metric for the hotel industry – in Edinburgh dropped from £77.37 in July 2019 to £28.32 in July 2020 largely as a result of occupancy halving to 40.3% from 79.8% the previous year. In Glasgow, RevPAR fell by 54.2% to £24.29 as occupancy dropped to 24.25%. The Average Daily Rate (ADR) for a stay in Glasgow fell 17% to £58.57.

The picture was similar in Aberdeen, where occupancy was 24.25%, down from 55.57% the previous year. Aberdeen, which had been recovering from a regional economic downturn following the 2014 oil price crash, saw RevPAR fall by 33.4% as occupancy dipped to 44.1%. However, this shows that the dip in Aberdeen is not as severe as across the central belt, with the Average Daily Rate (ADR) only declining slightly, by 1%, to £54.99.

Covid prompts surge in milk doorstep deliveries

CONCERNS over the availability of milk and other dairy products in shops during CV19 restrictions saw a surge in demand for doorstep deliveries.

A study by research firm Kantar suggests the number of customers signing up to the traditional service leapt from 527,000 to 716,000, with some sites closing their doors to new customers as demand outstripped supply.

While the research also found the easing of restrictions saw a fall in the number of customers, sales remained higher compared to the beginning of the year.

The experience of Kerr's Family Dairy has supported the research. Director Kelvin Kerr Jr said the firm was attracting around 300 new delivery customers a week at the height of the pandemic and while new subscribers were not at the same rate, customer sign-ups remain higher than pre-covid levels.

The firm, which has a workforce of 40, has 11,000 doorstep customers, with 6,000 of those in Aberdeen where the dairy opened a new delivery depot in May. As well as milk, the firm saw an increase in demand for other delivered products including eggs, butter, yoghurt and cheese.

The renewable energy sector is future-proofing Aberdeen's economy

Dan Smith,
head of Aberdeen office and director in the business space office agency team, Savills



ABERDEEN has been considered as the oil capital of Europe since the mid-20th century and the number of jobs created by the energy industry in and around Aberdeen has been estimated at half a million.

However with increased pressure on corporations and individuals to make sustainable decisions, along with government policies such as Net Zero and the Paris Agreement, the demand for oil and gas is on a gradual decline with the movement towards renewable energy alternatives.

This fall in demand was accelerated this year by the CV19 pandemic which saw oil prices fall to record lows. Aberdeen's combination of on and offshore infrastructure, energy companies, a global supply chain, track record of research and development and a highly-skilled workforce means that Aberdeen is at the forefront of making energy transition ambitions a reality.

Earlier this year the Scottish Government set up a £62m Energy Transition Fund to help the energy sector recover from the dual economic impacts of CV19 and the oil and gas price crash. This fund will support businesses in the oil, gas and energy sector over the next five years as they grow and diversify and will attract private sector investment to the

region, with its main focus being for the North-east.

The investment underpins the regions ambition to become a world leader in the transition to net zero and major projects which will be considered for funding include a Global Underwater Hub, Net Zero Solution Centre projects, a Hydrogen Hub, the Acorn Project and an Energy Transition Zone.

The proposed Energy Transition Zone in Aberdeen aims to create a physical place for research and development, test and demonstration and manufacturing activities in an exemplar net zero environment. It will become the focal point for the development of the new energy transition industry cluster in the region.

The ambition is to accelerate the delivery of net zero solutions focusing on offshore wind (fixed and floating), hydrogen and carbon capture, usage and storage, catalysing the transition of Aberdeen from a global oil and gas capital to a globally integrated energy cluster. This will help anchor a broad energy supply chain, create and secure high value jobs, drive export growth and deliver net zero.

In Aberdeen the electricity, gas, steam and air sector is forecast to see an employment reduction of 9.4% over the next 10 years, which will create a significant availability of highly skilled

workers in Aberdeen. This highly skilled workforce and Aberdeen's strong reputation in the energy sector is acting as a significant pull factor for occupiers within the renewable sector.

Savills expects that the renewable sector will become a significant driver of office take-up in Aberdeen, as occupiers take advantage of government policies, the availability of talent in the area and good quality offices at competitive rents, as well as cluster with similar occupiers within all areas of the energy sector.

Presuming too much or too little?



Pippa Robertson,
director,
Aurora Planning Limited

IN 2014, a presumption in favour of development that contributes to sustainable development was introduced into Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) along with a number of underpinning policy principles - effectively defining what constitutes such development - to be applied when determining planning applications.

The Scottish Government though has recently consulted on a proposal to remove that presumption, although the policy principles would be retained. But what does this mean for developers or for anyone with an interest in development?

Many welcomed the introduction of the presumption on the basis that it would facilitate development, particularly in cases where a local development plan was out of date (more than five years old). However, it has increasingly become a source of tension and conflict with regards to what constitutes sustainable development, and when and how it should be applied.

That has now come to a head with the courts finding that any development that would address a shortfall in the five year housing land supply for a development plan area would almost inevitably trigger the presumption

and planning permission should then be refused only if the proposed development would have adverse impacts which 'significantly and demonstrably' outweigh its benefit. In other words, there is a 'tilted balance' in favour of planning permission being granted, with the proposed removal of the presumption effectively seeking to tilt this balance back again.

Opponents to the proposal have raised concerns that removal of the presumption would restrict the delivery of much needed development, in particular housing. In our opinion, there is no reason why that should be the case.

The economic impact of the fall in oil price and the current pandemic have demonstrated the importance of the planning system being able to be flexible and respond to rapidly changing social and economic circumstances, as reflected in, for example, a decline in demand for employment land and office space.

In our experience however, developments which seek to respond to these changes with proposals to re-purpose underused sites currently struggle to receive consent in the face of development plan policies which look for the existing use to be retained. And the presumption has been of

little help in these situations if the development plan is ostensibly up to date in all other respects.

Even without the presumption the planning system still allows for departures from the development plan where there are material planning reasons for doing so. Importantly, the SPP policy principles include giving due weight to net economic benefit, responding to economic issues and making efficient use of existing capacities of land, and we believe that the proper application of these principles provides a more balanced basis for such decisions than applying a blanket presumption.

That should also see brownfield land prioritised for development - in line with other national and local policy requirements - thus also making a more effective contribution to sustainable development than the presumption does. As such, there is good reason to support the proposed removal of the presumption, without that impacting on development.

MAC

architects

North-east firm brings digital dynamics to architectural design

2020 has been a transformative year and being thrust into remote working overnight was a shock to the system for many businesses. But for MAC Architects, it made very little difference to their normal mode of operations.

Since its inception, the RIAS chartered practice, has been at the forefront of technological developments in its field. Their adoption of Building Information Modelling (BIM), a 3D tool which sits at the heart of digital architecture, has created new opportunities for collaboration and design. And, importantly for the team, it meant they could continue delivering the high-quality service they are renowned for without the need to even step over the threshold.

The 3D BIM platform isn't just a step change in presenting architectural drawings but a complete overhaul of the design process. It increases accuracy, reduces uncertainty and maximises efficiency. The data embedded within the model allows every phase of the project to be visualised and delivered on a higher level.

This collaborative tool means that architects, clients, structural engineers and construction teams can all access the data they require virtually from 3D graphical representations stored in a central BIM cloud database.

And through the use of the BIMx application, the game-like navigation tool helps users to explore 3D building models on their mobile device or desktop from any location, be it from home or on-site.

More realistic rendering of designs through computer-generated imagery and mixed, augmented and virtual reality allows clients to experience their building before it is built. Fundamentally, it improves customer experience and drives down costs.

At a time when business would traditionally tail off towards the year end, MAC Architects business is burgeoning. In order to keep pace with the busy residential new build and extension market, they recently recruited Aiden Stewart, who graduated with a 1st class honours degree in Architectural Technology from Robert Gordon University.

MAC Architects offers a diverse range of architectural services to commercial and residential sectors.

To find out more about how MAC Architects can help you to realise your new build or extension ambitions visit www.mac-architects.co.uk



January



From January 1 the rules will change. If you are involved in importing or exporting, this course is for you.



This highly interactive course uses exercises, discussion groups and case studies to help you cope with confidence.

05 Tue

1 day

Customs Declaration Training

Post EU Exit, learn how to complete customs requirements accurately and efficiently

13 Wed

1 day

Train the Trainer

Feel confident whilst developing and presenting different types of training

14 Thu

½ day

Cash Flow Management

Maximise cash flow with effective cash collection techniques

14 Thu

1 day

Customs Procedures and Documentation

Understand how to navigate the various customs systems, procedures and documentation

19 Tue

1 day

Beginner's Practical Guide to Exporting

Gain a high-level overview of the exporting process

19 Tue

1 day

Time Management

Identify time wasting activities and manage time more effectively

20 Wed

1 day

Budgeting and Planning - An introduction

Learn how to establish and maintain budgets

21 Thu

1 day

Emotional Intelligence for Business

Develop situational awareness and manage emotion in self and others

26 Tue

1 day

Dealing with Difficult Situations

Understand the variety of personalities and determine how to alter your approach

26 Tue

½ day

INCOTerms© 2020

Understand benefits of International Commercial Terms for buyers and sellers

27 Wed

1 day

Motivation and Delegation

Learn to create a motivational environment and use effective delegation

28 Thu

1 day

Essential Supervisory Skills

Bridge the gap between doing and supervising and become confident in delegating tasks

28 Thu

1 day

Import Procedures, Inward & Outward Processing

Avoid pitfalls when importing, understand methods of claiming relief

February



Better understand your personal working style and how it impacts on others.

03 Wed

1 day

Supervisors Next Steps

Improve techniques and add new areas of awareness and understanding

04 Thu

1 day

Communication and Interpersonal Skills

Develop effective communication techniques

09 Tue

1 day

Customs Declaration Training

Post EU Exit, learn how to complete customs requirements accurately and efficiently

09 Tue

1 day

Personal Effectiveness

Improve your self-management by changing the way you work

10 Wed

1 day

Negotiating and Influencing Skills

Learn tactics and skills of persuasion that lead to success

10 Wed

½ day

Renewable Energy and the UK

Gain an understanding of the basics of the UK renewable energy industry

11 Thu

1 day

Presentation Skills

Deliver a dynamic and motivational presentation confidently

16 Tue

1 day

Finance - The Basics

Develop a broad understanding of business finance

Getting the most from grant funding

THERE are a multitude of grants available to support business at the moment from coronavirus support to getting your organisation ready for the UK's departure from the EU.

The minefield of online paperwork can be daunting and potentially even off-putting but in many cases it is 'free' money so absolutely worth making the effort – there really is nothing to lose.

To make sure you get the most from any funding you do apply for, here's some top tips to bear in mind.

Firstly, make sure you set aside enough time to craft your application. This is not something to attempt whilst spinning other plates and it can be a lengthy process compiling all the necessary data.

Read all the questions carefully and make sure you are providing complete and accurate information. Proof may be required in the form of company registration numbers, VAT number, bank details and potentially company accounts.

The devil is in the detail as the body allocating the money will be carrying out thorough checks to ensure only those eligible to apply can benefit.

Secondly, once you have your application complete, be sure to check, double check – and check again. Once the application has been submitted it is extremely difficult to edit and in these challenging times almost impossible to phone up and talk to someone about any queries.

Ask a colleague to proof read with a fresh pair of eyes, when you are immersed in something it is all too easy to miss your own mistakes or any lack of clarity.

Thirdly, understand the timeframes. For example, the Custom Grant scheme for EU Exit takes a couple of weeks to be approved, you have to pay for your goods/services and when you make your claim, prove you have paid.

Make sure to retain a copy of what you have sent, record any registration numbers or details, take note of the date submitted and any contact details. It will make it easier if you get a query from the awarding body or have questions to follow up with them yourself.

Finally – don't be put off. The old adage that 'if you don't ask, you don't get' has never been more true.



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- ✓ Energy efficient, keeping those energy bills low
- ✓ A garden, space to relax and unwind

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2 - 3 bedroom homes from £219,950

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2 - 5 bedroom homes from £194,950

Silver Birches, Alford

3 - 4 bedroom homes from £209,995

Leathan Green, Portlethen

3 - 4 bedroom homes - Coming Soon!

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Banchory gin launched in Canada

AWARD-WINNING Scottish gin maker, Raven Spirits Limited, has launched its HRAFN GIN brand in Canada.

The company's first shipment of pallets to British Columbia is part of its ongoing efforts to increase the brand's international reach. This is Raven Spirits' second export market entry, having already successfully launched its range of HRAFN GINs in the Far East in 2019.

Co-founders Callum and Peter Sim are the brothers behind the creation of the brand which is distilled and bottled in Banchory.

Callum said "I'm both delighted and proud to see this first shipment of HRAFN GIN heading to Canada. In truth, it's a couple of years ahead of our original development plan but over the past 12 months we've just embraced the opportunities, while meeting 2020's challenges, to enter Canada earlier."

Brazil contract for LOC Group

LOC Brazil, a subsidiary of LOC Group, the international marine and engineering consulting firm, has been awarded a contract by TechnipFMC in Brazil to provide marine warranty survey (MWS) services.

Under the terms of the agreement, LOC will provide MWS services for the offshore transportation and installation of infrastructure relating to the subsea systems and production facility for the MERO 1 offshore oil field project.

KCA Deutag wins \$150m Oman contracts

GLOBAL drilling, engineering and technology provider KCA Deutag has been awarded contracts worth more than \$150m in Oman from one of the country's leading exploration and production companies.

The first award covers the provision of expert manpower for customer-owned rigs, hoists and workshops. In total, KCAD will provide approximately 420 people to deliver the contract. This is a five-year extension to a contract originally awarded in 2015. One-year contract extensions have also been awarded for eight KCAD rigs working in Oman.

Aberdeen Art Galley triumph

ABERDEEN Art Gallery is a winner of Art Fund Museum of the Year 2020, the most prestigious museum prize in the world.

In a unique edition of the prize and in recognition of the unprecedented challenges that all museums face this year, five winning museums have been named. They will equally share the £200,000 award, a 40% rise over previous years.

The winning museums are Aberdeen Art Gallery, Gairloch Museum, Science Museum (London), South London Gallery and Towner Eastbourne. They are awarded based on their achievements in 2019-20.

Councillor Marie Boulton, Aberdeen City Council's culture spokesperson, said: "CV19 abruptly halted the fantastic momentum that had built since Aberdeen Art Gallery re-opened in November 2019 following the redevelopment. We welcomed more than 100,000 visitors in under 100 days and then, suddenly, we were closed again. Being a Museum of the Year winner is the best 'welcome back' present imaginable."

Trades Awards winners

SCOTTISH construction company KR Group Scotland had a double win at Trades Awards 2020 virtual awards ceremony

The company was awarded the Best Small Trades Business and Sustainability in Construction awards. This was KR Group's first win at the Trades Awards but last year it took home the Best Family Business award at the Chamber's Northern Star Business Awards.

Nicol of Skene meanwhile was named winner of the Excellence in Health and Safety award at the ceremony.

The company has grown from CEO Derek Nicol operating a single excavator in 1980 to becoming a leading civil engineering contractor which now employs more than 90 staff and operates an extensive and varied plant and transport fleet.

Johnston Carmichael Wealth in top 25 accolade

CHARTERED Financial Planners Johnston Carmichael Wealth has been listed in the Top 25 of FTAdviser's Top 100 Financial Advisers 2020.

Released annually, the FTAdviser Top 100 list showcases financial advisers standing out in the market for the quality and professionalism of their experts and their commitment to putting clients' best interests at the forefront of their advice.

Placed at 25 on the list, the wealth team has 65 staff including financial planners, technical specialists and client liaison advisers, with 13 offices across the UK as part of Johnston Carmichael, Scotland's largest independent chartered accountancy and business advisory firm.

Vår Energi contract for AGR

AGR has secured a frame agreement with Vår Energi AS to supply temporary contract workers across its extensive operations on the Norwegian Continental Shelf.

The agreement covers supply of offshore, subsurface, drilling and wells, IT and other technical, HSEQ and administrative consultant personnel.

The services will be delivered by AGR's consultancy business-unit in Norway which is currently providing specialist manpower to many operators on the Norwegian Continental Shelf.

Charlie House Venture challenge

CHARLIE House, a local children's charity which support babies, children and young people with complex disabilities and life-limiting conditions in the North-east, has launched its second Venture charity challenge.

Local businesses are invited to sign up to the charity fundraising campaign which begins in February. For the Apprentice-style challenge, teams start with £100 and are given eight weeks to invest it and generate as much income as possible. All funds raised will go directly to Charlie House's 'Big Build Appeal' and to support their plans to build a specialist support centre on the grounds of Woodend Hospital in Aberdeen.

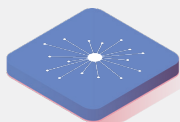
Susan Crighton, director of fundraising for Charlie House, said: "Our inaugural Venture challenge saw all of the teams come with incredible ideas and make exceptional efforts. Ideas ranged from selling a mindfulness colouring book to braving staff fears with a visit from a giant python, a talk from a Channel 4 reality TV star and a one-off piece of artwork incorporating hand-drawn images from the families we support. We are so excited to see what the Venture 2021 teams bring."

Venture 2021 will run for eight weeks between February 1 and March 28. Team entries must be received by January 22 and each team should have no less than two members and no more than six. To receive a free information and/or sign-up pack, email fundraise@charliehouse.org.uk

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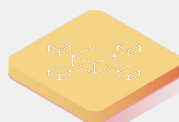
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Making a bigger impact

Jan Nieuwerf,
EOR sales and marketing manager,
SNF (UK) Ltd



RECENTLY I talked to visionaries and people who work on the energy transition. It struck me that most of them are planning to be carbon neutral by the middle of the century. Of course, 2050 is a nice date to make your plans for but, it nags me. What about now, right now?

If one makes a graph of greenhouse gas reduction over the coming 30 years, is this curve straight or asymptotic? Do we need a quick start with a huge impact to shake the establishment or do we ease into it slowly?

I have a schoolfriend who sets an extreme example. She does not own a car, (re)cycles everywhere and everything; and shares the courgettes from her garden with the neighbourhood. She lives in harmony with nature in a way I could never do. I travel by plane or car, eat meat and take my electricity from the grid. So here is the dilemma: do we need to start living like my friend to meet the 2050 carbon-neutral targets or can we do something else now to make an impact?

At SNF we started to look at our operations and the operations of our clients in terms of CO2 footprint. We simulated the greenhouse gas emissions for oilfield developments

using water-flood and polymer-flood and compared the difference. The logic is simple. If you develop an oilfield using a polymer flood you produce the oil faster.

From our client's data, we saw that one can save up to 50% of the production time for the same volume of oil. This means 10 years instead of 20 for a mid-sized oil field. This reduction is primarily achieved through a more efficient sweep of oil within the reservoir, resulting in water cut reduction and, ultimately, a decrease in required pumping energy at the producers and less taxing on fluid separation equipment and processes.

With the acceleration of the recovery of oil, several years of water and energy consumption are avoided for surface facility operations, including all operational factors (e.g., fuel, travel, utilities, supply, etc.). We then calculated the impact of having the operations for a shorter time. We added the additional CO2 footprint of the polymer generation, transportation and injection. We found that we can reduce the greenhouse gasses per barrel to up to six times.

Currently 60% of global brownfield production is from water injection. Polymer flooding is a proven technology with more than 300 projects worldwide. This Enhanced

Oil Recovery technique has been economically and technically successful in full-field projects, such as India (Mangala), Canada (Pelican Lake, Suffield, Medicine Hat) and Argentina (Diadema, Grimbeek). If we can shorten the production time of all the fields on water-flooding, this will make a huge impact.

Does reducing the greenhouse gasses start with yourself? Sure, take the bike, install solar panels and reduce meat intake. But if you have the opportunity to make an even larger impact, it feels great. I am proud to contribute to this and this gives my work a real focus. This is why I get out of bed every morning and come to work humming a (French) tune.

Business rates during a pandemic

Richard Foster,
director and head of rating,
FG Burnett



RARELY does a day go by without business rates appearing in the national press and its impacts are under even greater scrutiny following CV19. What is the government's response and what can ratepayers do to alleviate the rating burden during this challenging time?

There is some positive news for all, a 1.6% universal reduction in all rates liability for this financial year. However, this only reverses the increase to the national rates poundage used to calculate rates bills. Many businesses not eligible for covid relief schemes have not seen any real reduction in their liability.

There are also cases where rates relief may be available but has not been applied automatically. The advice is to scrutinise bills for accuracy as there are many instances where there are errors or that relief has not been applied (most schemes are by application only).

Regardless of whether you currently qualify for rates relief, the most effective mechanism to reduce rates liability is to challenge the rating assessment through the appeal process. The CV19 outbreak is arguably the clearest material change of circumstances in the history of rating, and every landlord, tenant or

occupier has the right to appeal on these grounds.

If you have not considered an appeal following CV19 then I strongly recommend doing so as soon as possible. This applies to all sectors including those in receipt of full relief this year as once the relief is removed then the normal liability will resume.

Ratepayers should also stay alert to adjustments in their rateable value brought about following development works on existing subjects, such as extensions or renovations. Any change in rateable value can be challenged through the appeal process and it is always worthwhile having a rating valuation audited to ensure it is accurate (time restrictions apply). There is also potential to claim rates relief following an increase to rateable value, but this must be applied for.

New legislation also came into force on April 1 2020 which should not be overlooked. The Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Act 2020 has paved the way for significant changes to the rating system. Of particular note, significant penalties are to be introduced by the end of 2020 through secondary legislation for non-compliance with Assessor Information Requests (e.g. rental or cost-based information), which are regularly issued.

These will be severe for continued breaches and the fines are cumulative, potentially equating to 71% of the rateable value of the property. There will be an opportunity to appeal against any fine to the local Valuation Appeal Committee, but proactive action to prevent financial penalty is clearly prudent.

Looking ahead, the new 2020 Act introduces more regular revaluations on a three rather than five-yearly cycle. This will commence from the next revaluation which was recently postponed by one year to April 1 2023. This postponement is itself unwelcome news for North-east businesses who now face a further year of rates payment on disproportionately high rateable values in comparison to current and much lower market values.



Lucy Hames,
general manager, Kepplestone Manor

What does your company do that others don't?

We offer a luxury level of accommodation and service. We strive to have a one to one relationship with every guest, making it the ultimate home from home experience for anyone wishing to stay in Aberdeen.

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

We, like many others are feeling the effects of this global pandemic. Indirectly, fewer people are traveling meaning fewer people are looking for accommodation. However we are fortunate that all of our apartments are self-contained and have everything required so we can intervene as little as possible. This safeguards not only our staff but our guests, allowing peace of mind that they in a sanitary environment as soon as they enter Kepplestone Manor.

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

The hardest lesson I have learnt during my career is that business is always there to be made, you just have to work hard to find it.

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

The most valuable piece of business advice I've ever been given is 'communication is everything', without communication a business is not a business.

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

My proudest career achievement would be securing a deal with a global company to allow them to use our accommodation to bring their workforce over to the UK. This gave us great stability in figures and great projections for the company.

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

I would make the pandemic disappear and allow all businesses to operate at a 'normal' pace. That would be amazing to see.



Quick fire round

What was your first job?

Waitress

When would you like to retire?

When the time comes, but I am a bit of a workaholic

What did you have for breakfast?

Earl grey tea and a warm croissant

Who, or what, inspires you?

Women who are successful in their field

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

Once upon a time in Hollywood



Sir Ian Wood stands down as chancellor

SIR Ian Wood is to stand down from his role as the chancellor of Robert Gordon University in July after 16 years as the titular head of the institution.

Sir Ian took over the role from Sir Bob Reid in 2004 and since then has played a crucial ambassadorial role for the university, helping to raise RGU's profile regionally, nationally and internationally.

As chancellor he has presided over hundreds of graduation ceremonies and conferred degrees on tens of thousands of new graduates during his tenure. He leaves the university in a strong standing, having just been named as the Scottish University of the Year 2021 by the Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide.

The university will now begin the process for the appointment of a new chancellor who will be appointed by the board of governors after an initial process of nominations by staff and governors.

Sir Ian said: "I can't believe I've done this role for 16 years. Time has flown and I have greatly enjoyed my participation as chancellor in one of Scotland's finest new universities.

"I have worked with five principals and seen the Garthdee University Campus emerge as one of the finest in Scotland. I have also capped something like 20,000 students and have always greatly enjoyed the graduations and the chance to talk to our students.

"The university has grown and flourished under far sighted and enterprising governing boards and also thrived on top quality, loyal academic management and teaching staff. I look forward to the last nine months of my tenure and hope my last graduations in July next year will be able to revert to the normal format with the graduates in person."

SME Spotlight



Laura Mearns,
Managing director,
Northwood Lettings and Estate Agency

When was your business established?

Northwood was established in June 2008 and we opened our doors in Rosemount Place in January 2009.

What does your business do?

We specialise in providing our clients with our unique guaranteed rent service as well as offering traditional property management services. In what is currently a tenant driven rental market our guaranteed rent service ensures our landlords have a fixed income for a minimum period of 12 months even when the property is empty or there is a reduction in rent or tenant rent arrears. Guaranteed rent helps our clients minimise their risk and hassle in what is a very challenging rental market. We were also delighted to launch our estate agency service earlier this year to the local market. We have been successful in selling properties over the last three years for our landlords and new the time was right to launch our offering to the wider market.

What sort of companies do you do business with?

We work with a variety of landlords including accidental landlords and buy to let investors. We also work with a number of contractors across the city providing our landlords with a professional and reliable maintenance service ensuring their investments are maintained to a high standard.

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

One of our biggest challenges in a tenant driven market is ensuring our rental properties are continuously occupied. We have been very proactive however and worked exceptionally hard to find new tenants to occupy our vacant properties. Managing rent arrears on behalf of our clients has also been one of our biggest challenges. Northwood has become a mediator advising both landlords and tenants and ensuring appropriate agreements are in place to support both parties.

And the biggest opportunity?

Living through a pandemic has driven many individuals and families to review their home arrangements and make changes to suit their current situation. The sales market has been very buoyant since its re-opening in June 2020 and we continue to advise our clients accordingly. With a high buyer demand at present and house values likely to fall over the next 12 months now is a good time to place your property on the market for sale to achieve a favourable outcome.

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Developing a marketing strategy for a changing world

Michael Madden,
marketing manager,
Fifth Ring



AT SOME point in your career, you'll have likely been asked to deliver big results in a short timeframe. We see it all too often in marketing and this is accelerated when there's disruption and uncertainty in the economy – and there's no doubt 2020 has delivered its fair share of uncertainty.

Business models, processes and entire industries are changing overnight. The pressure for return on investment (ROI) is greater than ever. On top of all this, marketing budgets are often the first to be slashed. This is the new normal, at least for the foreseeable future, and in order to thrive and survive it is crucial to create new strategies that prioritise short-term impact.

The marketing landscape has evolved and moved into a state of constant change meaning that planning is more difficult than ever before. You need to move quickly to produce a strategy that is both flexible and measurable in order to protect ROI and generate real business results.

Despite time being something that always seems to be against us, in order to develop your strategy you need to ensure you make time to research the market.

According to a recent McKinsey & Company survey, B2B buying and selling behaviours appear to be permanently altered. Half of B2B companies have reduced their budgets and moved their activity online. Sales teams have moved to remote selling, something that has been reflected in sales figures with the market seeing digital sales double traditional.

A good marketing strategy moving forward will incorporate these trends, while also accounting for the many unknowns.

At Fifth Ring we have worked with a number of our global clients to make the shift from traditional to digital selling. CV19 has resulted in the cancellation and/or postponement of a number of major tradeshow events. The impact this has on businesses can be huge as many marketing initiatives are reliant on tradeshow to generate business leads, launch new products or build brand awareness.

Thankfully, with a bit of planning, these activities can be pivoted and moved online. This year has seen digital engagement rise to an all time high and webinars and Zoom calls have now become part of the norm. In order to embrace and integrate technology as part of a strategy you

need to consider the messaging and the channels you use to communicate. Ask yourself three questions:

- What are the most valuable and accurate things you can say to your audience?
- Who are the decision makers?
- How do you reach them?

This will start to form the structure of your new framework. Remember this is a new strategy for your teams, and your customer's buyer decisions are a moving target evolving with the times. We'd always recommend integrating a customer relationship management system to help capture your customer data, build insight and measure the impact of your marketing activity.

Who knows what 2021 has in store for us all – but by developing a strategy that is agile and flexible now, you will be ensuring your business is prepared for the changing environment.



Tammy Kefford

Change management and learning specialist Electra Learning has welcomed Tammy Kefford to the team. Tammy's background is in IT solution delivery in the oil and gas, pharma and public sector with key skills in project and change management, plus process development and design.



Suzanne Ross

Suzanne Ross has joined the QHSE Aberdeen team as a QHSE advisor. Suzanne has many years QHSE experience specialising in the creation and maintenance of management systems, auditing and QHSE statistical reporting and analysis. Her experience is across the oil and gas, marine, drilling services and construction sectors.



Phyllis Robertson

The Chamber has boosted its ChamberCustoms team with the appointment of Phyllis Robertson as customs declaration executive. In her role Phyllis will be dealing with import/export documentation facilitating international trade. She previously worked for TDG Ltd and then BT for 23 where she worked in customer service, management and broadband planning.



David McCracken

WORKR Compliance has appointed David McCracken as head of sales as it expands its services into Scotland. David has more than 25 years of recruitment experience and has been involved in infrastructure, commercial, rail and civil projects in the North-east and has extensive experience and knowledge in the Aberdeen and Inverness areas.



Shaun Eardley

Ffolkes Offshore has appointed Shaun Eardley to its board as it continues to experience significant growth. Shaun has 40 years' experience in the shipping industry, primarily in ships agency and port and offshore logistics. He will be responsible for helping develop the company as a whole, while guiding the business through an expected period of continued rapid expansion.



Geraldine Shand

Geraldine Shand has also joined the Chamber as a customs declaration executive. Initially a customs officer at Aberdeen International Airport where she was involved in physical checks of passengers and freight as well as documentation controls, she comes from the oil and gas industry where she worked in logistics, customs, shipping, supply chain and compliance.



Nick Southwell

activpayroll, the global payroll and tax compliance specialist headquartered in Aberdeen, has appointed Nick Southwell as chief financial officer. Nick has worked for large international businesses, mentored start-up companies in the technology sector, consulted with various FTSE 100 companies and government, as well as a number of PE backed businesses.



Vicky Watt

Vicky completes the trio of new appointments to Chamber's growing ChamberCustoms team. Prior to this she held a variety of roles within the oil and gas industry with Baker Hughes before moving into customer service at BT. In her new role as a customs declaration executive, Vicky too is responsible for import/export documentation facilitating international trade in the region.



Wendy Gray and Richard Slater

An Aberdeen-based architect is celebrating 40 project wins this year, totalling more than £750,000, and has strengthened its team with five new recruits. Tinto Architecture has secured projects in Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, as well as having a growing presence in the south east of England across both commercial and residential. During the past seven months, the company has redesigned its senior team, welcoming Wendy Gray as business lead and Richard Slater as design and delivery lead, added a senior architectural technician, architectural assistant, architectural technologist and a sales and marketing assistant to the team to service this growth and enhance its diversity of skills and experience.



Richard Booth

AVC Immedia has appointed Richard Booth to the new position of commercial development manager within its Aberdeen team. The role will be focused on new commercial development of its audio-visual, video and animation services while also focusing on existing client relationships across the business. Richard will work alongside the existing business development team to build the client portfolio.



Richard Allison

Richard Allison has joined the McHardy Group as a non executive director. Richard has over 35 years' experience in financial services with particular expertise in the investment management industry and building relationships with professional connections such as financial planning advisers, accountants and lawyers. He was previously regional business development director at Brooks Macdonald.

Other recent appointments

Longitude, the engineering and design branch of LOC Group, has appointed **James Sugden** as head of the Marine Systems Engineering team. His appointment expands the company's expertise in the design and engineering of marine systems on ships, boats and offshore assets, which James will oversee. James is a registered chartered marine engineer, with 12 years' experience in the design of conventional marine and FPSO specific piping, mechanical and electrical systems. He has worked with several leading companies across the maritime, defence and offshore oil and gas sectors.

CityFibre, the UK's third national digital infrastructure platform, has appointed **Nick Dunn** as its new chief financial officer. In January he will join CityFibre from Gatwick Airport where he served the last 10 years as CFO. Prior to that, he worked with Anglo American plc and with Centrica plc for six years in a number of senior finance roles. He also has 10 years' experience in investment banking.

KPMG UK has made a raft of promotions in Aberdeen as the firm relocates to a new base in the city and eyes further growth. Following its move to Aberdeen's Marischal Square development, the business has promoted 11 people in audit, two in tax and four in deal advisory. New associate partner **Geoff Jacobs** will play a key role supporting a range of businesses and sectors across Scotland, including oil and gas, as it navigates through a challenging period. Elsewhere in the team, Olena Farr becomes senior manager in audit, and **Adam Brand, Gideon Commey** and **Iretiayo Adenaike** are elevated to the role of audit manager. There are also manager promotions for **Emily Cheyne, Marc Fryer** and **Nicola Graham** in deal advisory and **Darbie Onugha** in tax, with eight assistant manager promotions.

Want to raise your profile?

If you have new appointments or promotions in your business, we want to hear about them. Send the details, along with a high resolution image, to bulletin@agcc.co.uk and your business could be in a future issue.

December



The final event in the series, find out how to navigate your way to success post-EU.

1 Dec

10:00 – 11:00
Webinar

EU Exit – 30 Days to Go

Don't miss the final instalment of this event series designed to count down to the end of the EU transition period.

With just 30 days remaining in the transition period, this session will provide practical information and advice on what businesses need to do now in order to be prepared for the changes on January 1, 2021. The session will also guide businesses through the jargon and complexities of customs processes to ensure they understand what change is required.

In partnership with:



Hosted by customs expert Liam Smyth, this highly relevant and engaging webinar will guide businesses through the complexity of change in our import and export processes, systems and controls from January 1, 2021.

Dec 3

09:30 – 11:00

Pensions, Protection and Planning for Business Owners

The team from Mattioli Woods will present on a range of topics relevant to those who own and run small businesses.

Taking a holistic view of the business and its requirements, they will provide valuable insight into the impact of the untimely death or illness of a business owner, and methods to mitigate the effect this might have on the business itself, as well as the family's finances.

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Maximise Your Membership

Book your free place at www.agcc.co.uk

Find out how to get the most from your engagement with the Chamber at this info-packed free event.

11 Dec

08:30 – 09:45

Maximise Your Membership

Don't just join. Join in. It can be a little overwhelming knowing where to start when it comes to taking advantage of being a Chamber member. We've developed our 'maximise your membership' events to help enlighten members about key information and ensure that their organisation and its employees are fully briefed on the benefits of Chamber membership.

Similarly, if you aren't a Chamber member but want to find out what's on offer, this free event is a relaxed and informal opportunity gain a fuller understanding as well as the chance to network with others, even in the virtual world!

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Aberdeen's energy partnership with Macaé

ABERDEEN City Council has signed a three-year memorandum of understanding with the Brazilian municipality of Macaé which will see both cities benefit from a key strategic partnership in the energy sector.

The MoU was signed on behalf by councillor John Reynolds, the authority's economic development spokesman, in a ceremony in the Town House and simultaneously, in a similar ceremony in Brazil with the Mayor Aluizio dos Santos Junior signing on behalf of Macaé. The document recognises the importance of expanding cooperation and enhancing economic growth in the energy sector.

Macaé is the centre of the offshore oil industry in Brazil and, like its Scottish counterpart, is considered an oil capital being referred to as 'Cidade do Petróleo', or City of Petroleum.

Under the MoU the two cities enter into a formal relationship, agreeing to promote and collaborate as key strategic partners in developing each city's energy sectors including the transition to renewables.

The cities will review the impact of the MoU at the end of 2023.

700 enjoy Mintra's free training courses

MORE than 700 free online training courses have been undertaken as part of a scheme set up to support energy sector workers who were furloughed or made redundant as a result of the CV19 pandemic.

Almost 440 hours of eLearning have been accessed through the Skilled Worker Portal (SWP) launched by digital learning and crew management software solutions specialist Mintra, with users in job roles ranging from senior executive to offshore steward.

Mintra set up the portal, which provided free access to 15 of the company's most popular online courses, to help affected energy workers plug gaps in their training and find a starting point to getting back into work. It opened in June and closed on October 31 - originally the final day of the UK Government's furlough scheme.

Chief operating officer Gareth Gilbert said: "Low oil and gas prices and CV19 have combined to create one of the most challenging and unsettling periods in the history of these industries. The financial cost has been significant, but the level of job losses over the past seven months - which industry body OGUK recently put at around 4,000 for offshore installations alone - demonstrates the scale of the human cost.

"As a company we have been able to go from strength to strength because of a loyal and growing customer base that we have built up in these key sectors. Our solutions are designed to respond to the challenges that our customers and their people - everyone from office personnel to offshore workers - encounter on a day-to-day basis. We saw the SWP as an extension of that response."

Quantum Digital forms two partnerships

QUANTUM Digital - Scotland, has announced two new partnerships and the appointment of a non-executive director to the Quantum Digital - Scotland Board.

The media agency which specialises in the creation of digital content including 3D animation and video/filming production for business has partnered with two North-east media companies to provide services to clients.

Urbane Media, owned and run by Kevin Stride, has signed to partner and provide animation services to ensure clients have access to a broad set of skills.

OGV (Oil & Gas Vision) Energy has also partnered with Quantum Digital - Scotland.

Quantum Digital has also strengthened its board by securing the services of Barry Booth, owner and founder of Intellicore and SEALL ECDIS.

University of Aberdeen makes global top 100

LIFE sciences and law at the University of Aberdeen have been ranked in the global top 100 in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings by Subject 2021.

Life sciences was placed in 78th while law was ranked 81st in the league table, which uses the same performance indicators as the overall 'THE World University Rankings' but recalibrates the weightings to suit the individual field.

Within the full 'THE World University Rankings' the university maintained its position within the top 200.

Tour of Britain to come to Aberdeen

ABERDEEN City Council has agreed a new contract which will mean next year's final stage of the Tour of Britain cycling event taking place in the city.

Prior to the CV19 global pandemic, Aberdeen was to play host to the final stage of the prestigious event this year as well as the Grand Depart for the subsequent 2021 race. Following detailed consultations with sponsors, partners, British Cycling and the UK local authorities holding stages of the race, the organisers took the decision to postpone the 2020 Tour of Britain until September 2021. However, that meant that the 2022 Grand Depart from Aberdeen fell outside the period of the existing contract.

The council's city growth and resources committee has instructed the council's head of procurement to vary the contract, subject to similar agreement being made by Aberdeenshire Council and funding being secured by SweetSpot from EventScotland, to allow the 2021 and 2022 events to go ahead.



NORTHERN STAR2021 BUSINESS AWARDS



COMPANIES across the region are gearing up to celebrate the Northern Star Business Awards 2021, Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce's celebration of business success.

We wouldn't be able to mark the achievements of local businesses if it wasn't for the support of these tremendous organisations – a big thank you to our 2021 sponsors:



Principal sponsor

Nucore Group

Nucore Group is a portfolio of specialist engineering companies which provide products and services, from fire safety and security to climate control engineering. Supporting offshore oil and gas, marine, renewable energy and onshore petrochemical industries, as well as large private and public sector clients.



Driving Sustainability Award

– sponsored by Circular North-east

Society faces growing challenges to reduce pressure on finite resources and find better ways to deal with waste. Circular North-east works with businesses in the North-east of Scotland to understand how these challenges relate to them and to identify new approaches helping businesses realise the benefits the circular economy presents such as new opportunities, lower costs, better value and new markets.



Family Business Award

– sponsored by Aberdeenshire Council

Aberdeenshire has a rich cultural history and has developed its economic base from traditional industries like agriculture and fishing, yet it has positioned itself to take full advantage of the opportunities presented by the modern world; energy, tourism and food and drink. Our communities are diverse; bustling market towns, castle and whisky trails, world-class golf courses and an outdoor lifestyle that is the envy of the world.



Going Global Award

– sponsored by Aberdeen International Airport

Aberdeen International Airport offers flights to more than 30 UK and overseas destinations, serving over three million passengers a year. Arriving, connecting or departing, you'll find everything you need to enjoy a pleasant journey.



Inspiring Futures Award

– sponsored by DYW North East

Developing the Young Workforce North East bridges the gap between education and employers to help all young people find fulfilling careers. We achieve this by facilitating meaningful engagement relationships between employers and school to help employers generate a sustainable pipeline of talent and skills and develop young people with the relevant skills and experience for the world of work.



Making the Difference Award

- sponsored by Balmoral Group

Balmoral has been striving to exceed customer expectations since 1980. Since establishment the Group has grown into a global business spanning many sectors. From providing subsea product solutions for the deepest waters of the world to providing water and wastewater tanks around the world, we have built a reputation as an inspirational market leader across our scope of operations.



Rising Star Award

- sponsored by The University of Aberdeen Business School

We are home to a thriving community of diverse students, staff members and industry experts. Together, this community provides students with a chance to be part of something special; a micro business world full of opportunities. From meeting industry experts and working on live projects, to making international contacts that last a lifetime, we provide students with the perfect environment to nurture their skills and sharpen their business acumen.



Staff Matter Award

- sponsored by Spirit Energy

Spirit Energy is among Europe's top independent oil and gas operators, with operations in three countries and a team of more than 1,000 people. Our focus is on maximising the potential of existing assets and working with our partners to bring exciting new developments on stream, while maintaining an absolute commitment to safety in everything we do.



Student Placement Award

- sponsored by Robert Gordon University

Robert Gordon University is professionally-focussed, delivering demand-led teaching and research. Through partnership with industry, we ensure that our curriculum provides learners with the knowledge and skills they require to thrive throughout their careers. As a result, RGU produces graduates that are highly sought after by employers, consistently celebrating one of the best records of any UK university for graduate employment.

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VSA Christmas Appeal

Now more than ever, vulnerable children and adults living in Aberdeen need your help.

Christmas should be a time of joy and happiness, but for many families and people in their later years in life, it can be a time of stress, sorrow, and increased loneliness and isolation.

COVID-19 is having a profound impact on us all; however, this Christmas, thousands of more families will find themselves living in poverty struggling to heat their homes, feed their children, buy presents, or provide warm clothing for the winter.

You can help bring a smile this Christmas and help change a life by supporting VSA's Christmas Appeal.

To find out more and make a donation please visit: giving.vsa.org.uk/profile

Or send a cheque to:
VSA Christmas Appeal, Fundraising Department,
VSA, 38 Castle Street, Aberdeen, AB11 5YU



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