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December's theme
Property

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NOVEMBER 2020

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Time for change



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Our partners

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

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

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

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Sustaining places for our people?

DECISIONS being taken now could see our town and city centres, places that should be the beating heart of our communities, become urban deserts of the future.

UK high streets and town centres were already being hit hard by the perfect storm of out-of-town retailing, the rise in online shopping and changes in consumer behaviour.

The High Streets and Town Centres in 2030 report by Sir John Timpson in 2018 concluded: Unless urgent action is taken, we fear that further deterioration, loss of visitors and dereliction may lead to some high streets and town centres disappearing altogether.

Some forecasts at the time warned that we would lose a further 30% of bricks and mortar retail in the next 10 years. And this was all before CV19 and the response by our governments to it. Some experts are now suggesting that timeline could be accelerated fivefold.

The current approach to 'non-essential' office return, restrictions on hospitality and the continued ban on live events could spell the death knell for the business eco systems in place to support these workers and our wider communities.

We cannot continually keep kicking the can down the road. 'We'll start back in January' has become a commonly heard phrase. Why January? What will have changed by then? Grand and unjustified statements like 'we might never return to the office' run the risk of becoming self-fulfilling prophecies if repeated often enough.

And if employers are content to end office leases and opt for a business model of the future where their 'teams' sit at dining room tables on laptops, this will have the domino effect of rendering our current non-domestic rates system largely null and void. How will services and local government be paid for then?

Successful strategies to reinvent our cities were based on creating exciting, cool, attractive multifunctional places that people choose to live, spend leisure time and work. So what are the challenges and opportunities?

Firstly, messaging and actions from all levels of government must be clear that our towns and cities are open for business. And while restrictions remain in place, attempts should be made to make the environment as attractive, welcoming and accessible as possible. Why was the Spaces for People art installations project in Aberdeen cancelled after the tender process was completed?

On more positive note, many of the initial city centre masterplan projects have come to fruition with others underway. Focus now must be turned to attracting investment for the next phase and making it as easy as possible for developers to choose here, ensuring the momentum is not lost.

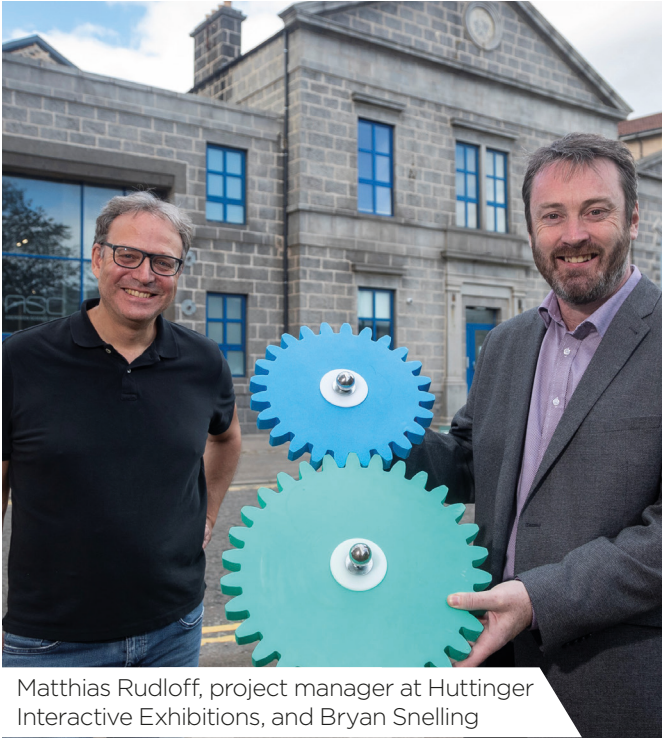
After years of being told that the spaces above Union Street shop fronts could not cost-effectively be converted into living accommodation, we are seeing forward thinking developers create a number of highly attractive schemes in the city. This has to be just the start.

And the Chamber's Vanguard group is playing its part too with parklets now a feature of the city centre and other projects such as the cable car feasibility study, Large Letters installation and bringing Castlegate back into public use are among the initiatives currently being developed.



Russell Borthwick
chief executive





Matthias Rudloff, project manager at Huttinger Interactive Exhibitions, and Bryan Snelling

Exciting interactive exhibits for Science Centre

ABERDEEN Science Centre (ASC) has appointed global exhibition specialist Huttinger to create exciting and interactive exhibits for its newly transformed centre which will open to the public this autumn.

The centre, at the Tramsheds on Constitution Street, which has been totally redeveloped over the past 18 months, will house more than 60 new interactive exhibits. They have been designed and manufactured by Huttinger Interactive Exhibitions, one of the leading experts in the field.

Based in Nuremberg, Germany, Huttinger has produced exhibits for museums, science centres, visitor centres and themed attractions across the world. It specialises in developing exhibition environments which promote exploration and understanding through multi-sensory experiences.

The ASC exhibits, which are designed to appeal to visitors of all ages, are themed into six new zones: energy, space, life sciences, make it, test it as well as a special area for the under sixes. They support ASC's commitment to inspire a lifelong interest in science, by creating engaging experiences which are fun, informative and educational.

"Huttinger is renowned for the creativity and innovation of its exhibits, and its work features in some of the world's top museums and science centres," said ASC's chief executive officer Bryan Snelling.

"We are delighted they are working with us to help create a top visitor attraction not just for Aberdeen but across North-east Scotland and beyond. The redevelopment of the centre has been transformational and we were determined that what awaits visitors when they step through the doors will match that."

Success for KITE at the European wide Agri-EPI competition

KITE, the global provider of digital remote worker collaboration and assistance solutions, has been announced as runners-up in the Agri-EPI Centre competition.

The competition was launched to address the impact lockdown restrictions and social distancing has had across Europe and to help mobilise the agricultural sector's workforce and its support services via the identification of innovative digital tech solutions.

Building on its remote expert solution, KITE demonstrated how live video streaming could be combined with data to assist vets in remote diagnosis.

Pat McKay, founding director of KITE, said: "We are delighted to receive this recognition, particularly against such strong competition. There's never been a greater need than now for businesses to look at how to best use technology to address the challenges they face with CV19 restrictions."

University's North Sea 'game-changer'

SCIENTISTS from the University of Aberdeen are developing new technology they claim will be a 'game-changer' in enhancing production from North Sea gas fields.

Nanotechnology is more commonly associated with medical sciences, with limited application in the oil and gas sector. But now, academics are pioneering a new method which harnesses nanotechnology to enhance the production efficiency of cyclic gas wells.

The project is being led by Dr Roozbeh Rafati and Dr Amin Sharifi from the university's School of Engineering. It is supported by the Oil and Gas Technology Centre (OGTC) and three industrial partners - Chrysaor Production UK Limited, Schlumberger and ChampionX.

The work is based on the development of so-called 'smart fluids' using nanoparticles which significantly improve existing techniques that promote well production.

Dr Sharifi said: "There are challenges associated with the gas production from mature reservoirs where reservoir pressure is low and gas production may become uneconomic using the current technologies. "We have been discussing these issues with oil and gas companies since 2018 and, based on fundamental research carried out here at the School of Engineering, we are using nanotechnology to develop smart fluids that have the potential to overcome these challenges.

"Over the next 15 months we aim to prove that this technology will work and, if successful, we will then move to a North Sea field trial in 2021."



Donna McWilliams of Electra Learning with Susan Mackie

Helping businesses understand GDPR

AN INNOVATIVE Aberdeen-based IT solutions entrepreneur has teamed up with a leading training company to help businesses step up their understanding of GDPR.

Susan Mackie at Care App Solutions Ltd has developed the 'IMPACT' training framework which will be delivered by Electra Learning in a digestible, accessible format which uniquely works towards delegates leaving with a gap analysis which they can use to move their business forward.

Susan's wealth of data protection experience has been gathered during more than 25 years in a range of roles including health and social care, local authority and the oil sector. She has now poured this into a solution-led package which will turn misconceptions on their heads by empowering people who handle data to do so in a confident and informed way.

"In general, understanding of GDPR compliance can be very negative but correct compliance should impact positively on a business and should not block innovation," she said.

"Due to the pandemic, some businesses will have had to change how they record data, many will be collecting more information than ever and some will be gathering data for the first time, so it's even more crucial that it is understood and managed correctly."

RGU climbs the rankings

ROBERT Gordon University (RGU) is celebrating its performance in the 2021 Guardian University Guide, where it has significantly climbed the UK rankings and achieved strong positions in student satisfaction and teaching quality.

Overall the university has moved up 33 places, rising to 43rd in the UK, while retaining its place as the top modern university in Scotland. RGU is ranked fourth in the UK and second in Scotland for course satisfaction and 12th in the UK for teaching satisfaction.

A number of its courses have been ranked in the top 10 in the UK. RGU's health professions courses ranked top in the UK, with its fashion and textiles and pharmacy and pharmacology both rising to 10th in the UK subject tables. The university has also made it into the top 20 in the UK for a number of courses including architecture, journalism and sports science.

Aberdeen Cyber Security acquires to expand

AN ABERDEEN-BASED firm has completed the purchase of a local IT business ResQ IT. The acquisition allows Aberdeen Cyber Security to expand further with an increase in expertise, market reach and headcount. The acquisition process took nine months and the deal was signed September 2020.

Dale Sutherland, director of Aberdeen Cyber Security, said: "This is an incredibly exciting stage in our business. This time last year it was just myself working in the business. In February of this year, we took our first engineer and we are now a team of four. It's outstanding and I'm grateful for everyone who has made this possible."

ResQ IT is an IT support company with a history of supporting clients in the demanding offshore industry. The value of the transaction has not been announced however it has been fully funded by Aberdeen Cyber Security.

ResQ IT staff are being retained and moved across to Aberdeen Cyber Security which now takes the headcount to four with added expertise in cyber security, cloud infrastructure, systems and networking. Furthermore, the acquisition has allowed Aberdeen Cyber Security to gain a London-based shipbroking firm as a highly valued client.

OGUK calls for open discussion on transition

OGUK has embraced a UK government review into future licensing rounds as an opportunity to shine a light on how the sector is changing to support the country's climate ambitions while still ensuring it contributes to the UK's ongoing security of energy supply.

The organisation has called for a constructive and open discussion about how the UK will continue to meet its energy needs while delivering consumer affordability and jobs, optimising indigenous energy sources in a way that ensures the UK doesn't offshore its emissions to other countries.

The industry is currently working with the UK Government on a North Sea transition deal which will look to harness the full potential of the sector in developing cleaner energy solutions including carbon capture usage and storage and hydrogen.

The announcement comes as the UK oil and gas industry marks a year since it published its response to climate commitments, Roadmap 2035, which identified more than 60 actions required to support a fair and managed transition to a lower carbon future.

OGUK chief executive Deirdre Michie said: "This review is an opportunity to shine a light on how our industry is changing. With commitments to halve emissions in the next decade and committed investment in exciting low carbon solutions, the changing UK oil and gas industry is stepping up to the climate change challenge."

Turning green into gold

ABERDEEN has a long history of supporting sustainable business. It is 16 years since we became the first city in Scotland to achieve Fairtrade status, helping support farmers and workers in developing countries.

Now, as we look to emerge from the biggest social and economic disaster of a generation, sustainability will be vital for local businesses as they seek to rebuild.

But what exactly does 'sustainability' mean for businesses? Can every business be more sustainable? Is it worth the effort? Is it expensive?

Professor Elizabeth Gammie, head of RGU's Aberdeen Business School, believes that sustainability is now so high up the agenda of consumers that companies will have no choice but to become more sustainable to compete in the marketplace.

"In a nutshell, I think being sustainable for a business means impacting positively on the environment and society," she said. "In more concrete terms it involves cutting carbon emissions, lowering water use, increasing use of renewable energy, decarbonising our supply chain, using green technologies and, probably more importantly, integrating sustainability programmes as part of

a company's business strategy and operations.

"Becoming sustainable for business is emerging as a global demand by activists, politicians and business leaders to respond to the climate emergency. Businesses already doing so are going to be better prepared to sustain and compete in the long term compared to businesses which are ignoring it.

"Awareness of sustainability amongst consumers has become significant over the last decade and I think by being sustainable you can foster better consumer support and loyalty. Secondly, sustainability initiatives can really help boost productivity and improve financial performance."

She admitted it can be costly but said: "I think the cost of not taking action now will be considerably higher and I think there are lots of measures businesses can take without breaking the bank and even at some basic levels.

"For example, implementing paperless working not only saves paper but also reduces the use of other items to manage printed documents. Encouraging things like car-pooling, public transport for employees and interestingly, as a result of recent events, promoting homeworking."

She said the sudden necessity for homeworking had resulted in carbon emissions and pollution levels in cities falling.

"I think there are lots of things that can be done for no-cost or very low-cost wins but I think even those which are costly will, in the longer term, ultimately save money.

"We also need to rethink how we design our products using more sustainable material and how we change our production processes to allow for making optimal use of materials while reducing waste. These ideas are linked to the concept of the circular economy which have been starting to take centre stage among governments and businesses in the last decade."

She said in Aberdeen energy transition is an area which is hugely important in the sustainability context. A recent report from the Oil & Gas Technology Centre quantified the investment which might be necessary to really deliver a tech-enabled integrated net zero energy future as £430bn, but it would generate more than £2.5tn for the UK economy.

"You have to invest to reap benefits later and these are issues across the whole spectrum. Everyone from the smallest micro businesses up



to the global multinationals should be taking this agenda on board and addressing it. Collectively we all have a responsibility and obviously individuals also have a responsibility towards this.”

She suggested that included things like business related travel and cited herself as an example. Typically, she would have been travelling for international recruitment, to meet other business school deans and to attend board and other meetings.

“I normally do a fair bit of traveling but I have done virtually none since March and yet I’ve still been able to engage with lots of things virtually. Has it been any less effective? I’m not sure it has.

“After 9-11 a lot of business travel stopped and people tried to do things remotely but at that point in time the technology didn’t support it sufficiently. Once there was less fear of flying people returned to similar behaviour and air travel built back up to levels seen before 9-11. Now, the technology has improved so much in relation to us being able to connect with each other remotely, why would I get a plane and travel for 15 hours for a couple of work days in an international location when I can actually do this as effectively and more efficiently in front of my laptop?”

At the University of Aberdeen sustainability is one of the key themes in of its ‘Aberdeen 2040’ strategy.

“It highlights our desire to nurture our natural environment, take care of our people, enhance the student experience and look after our resources,” said Jane Boyle, the university’s energy manager.

“Successfully addressing the triple bottom line of sustainability will generate resources for investment in education and research year on year, so that we can continue to develop the people, ideas and actions that help us to fulfil our purpose.

“We will seek new income sources, growing our postgraduate and online teaching, and attracting research funding from a wider range of sources. Our research will benefit our world, addressing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the climate emergency, and energy transition to a net zero carbon economy. We will also contribute to the prosperity of our region and the civic life of Aberdeen, working for the good of the area which we were founded to serve. We are continually developing relationships with key stakeholders and the local community, as we believe that collaboration is the only way we will achieve our ambitious net zero carbon goals.”

She said the university will show leadership in working for the sustainable future of our planet and set an example to its sector and society.

“This will entail evaluating our actions for their impact on the environment and meeting stretching standards, key performance indicators and targets. Through our Net Zero Carbon 2040 commitment, we are implementing an ambitious strategy for reducing our emissions for our direct and indirect emissions via a prevent and reduce approach.

“The university is pursuing an ambitious 1.5°C aligned science-based target for its direct and indirect emissions for all campuses. Any remaining hard-to-decarbonise emissions can be compensated, as a last resort, using certified greenhouse gas removal and offsetting.

“Our sustainable commitments include encouraging everyone within our community and key stakeholders to work and live sustainably, recognising the importance of our time, energy and resilience. We will educate all our students and staff to be leaders in protecting the environment and excel in research that addresses the climate emergency, enables energy transition and the preservation of biodiversity.”

How important is it that businesses are sustainable?



“It is vitally important that businesses are sustainable. Climate change and damage to the environment are hot topics across all industry sectors. Training, exercising and responding to pollution events emphasises just how much effort is put into looking after the environment by our clients.

“There has also been a huge focus on ‘supporting local’ during the pandemic which as a business is something we have always tried to do. It’s good for the local economy but it’s also great for the environment, minimising our carbon footprint. CV19 actually forced us to ‘go green’ by providing our courses virtually and emailing our training material electronically, which means no travel or printing - an unforeseen benefit of the pandemic.”

Claire Forbes, *director*, Response Consultants UK Ltd



“Now, more than ever, striving for better environmental credentials and sustainability needs to be part of any strategy focused on accountability. We work in areas which involve sensitive data, collaboration and innovation with other businesses. Recent changes in the Data Protection Act introduced the accountability principle which was key in moving data protection from the IT department to the board room and this reinforces that decision making can’t be driven by price alone. Environmental factors are, rightly, increasingly high on the agenda as part of this shift.

“Relying on business driven only by price is no longer the primary method by which businesses select us to work with, or us with them. Accountability is key, and this extends to understanding the ecological, social and economic impact of our customers and suppliers as well as our own so that we can all constantly review and refine our offerings.”

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



“Sustainability has always been important to us at The Chester Hotel and will be increasingly so moving forward towards a medium and long term recovery for the whole hospitality sector. We’re always evaluating the impact we have on the environment and society. It’s not just about sustaining our business but those of our supply chain using as many local food and drink producers as possible as well as local tradespeople wherever possible.

“In recent years our owners have, through events at The Chester Hotel, raised more than £250k for local charities too. It’s also important to us that we have a diverse team which supports young talent. We all believe that doing good as a business impacts on our ability to do well and that’s certainly been even more at the forefront of our operations throughout 2020.”

Stephen Gow, *general manager*, The Chester Hotel, Aberdeen



New rig for Well-Safe

WELL-SAFE Solutions has acquired the West Epsilon jack-up rig from Seadrill, sparking another job boost for the company.

Built in 1993, the asset is a heavy-duty, harsh environment jack-up with an extensive operational history in the North Sea.

The company acquired the Well-Safe Guardian in April 2019 and the new rig adds to its growing portfolio of bespoke decommissioning assets.

Well-Safe will start work immediately on the newly renamed 'Well-Safe Protector' to undertake an upgrade and modification programme, ready to deploy the unit specifically for enhanced plug and abandonment projects in early 2021.

Chief executive officer Phil Milton said: "The acquisition of this asset allows us to continue to deliver our vision and the business model that we set out to deliver to the industry, giving us the ability to cover both subsea wells and multiple platform projects.

"This further investment into the business not only strengthens our offering but will drive further recruitment with the creation of around 100 new jobs, which, during these times of great uncertainty within the industry, is welcome news."

Alumni step in to help new students

NEW University of Aberdeen students who are facing severe financial hardship due to the ongoing global pandemic have been thrown a lifeline thanks to the generosity of alumni from around the world.

175 successful applicants each received a one-off payment of £525 to help with the initial cost of attending the university when they join in September.

Alumni were quick to respond to an appeal, launched by the university's Development Trust at the end of April, donating much needed funds to help students.

The CV19 525 Bursary Fund had an initial target of £150,000 but, thanks to the alumni response and a generous legacy donation, the fund currently stands at just over £180,000. The target has recently been increased to £200,000 to allow more students to benefit.

Turnover growth for Shepherd and Wedderburn

SHEPHERD and Wedderburn reported 2% turnover growth to £56.9m in the year to April 30, 2020, with profits before partner distributions down 1.7% to £22.4m.

The company's market-leading Clean Energy Group reported record revenues during the period in review, up 54% on the previous year. The group continues to advise on landmark and pathfinder clean energy projects across the UK, working with clients to help accelerate a green recovery.

The firm's corporate finance team advised on deals with an aggregate value of more than £6bn in the year to December 2019, and its banking and finance team advised on 276 deals with a cumulative value of £64.6bn in the year to April 30th, 2020 an increase of 65% in the total number of deals on the previous year.

The commercial disputes and regulation, real estate, pensions, employment and private client teams also posted strong performances.

Walking and cycling the choice of the future

LOCAL surveys have shown that most people in the North-east expect to keep up their increased walking and cycling journeys in future.

New travel surveys carried out on behalf of Nestrans look to measure changes in the way people are travelling as we move through the CV19 period. So far, two surveys have been carried out with figures being gathered each month to support local travel planning activities. Eight more are planned.

Data from the second survey shows most people expect to keep walking and cycling for leisure and exercise purposes (83% walking and 74% cycling). As more people feel the benefits of active travel, the survey also shows that many want to use these to replace journeys that could otherwise have been made another way.

This information will help Nestrans and its partners to better understand attitudes in using public transport, a willingness to walk or cycle; and other behavioural changes such as the increasing numbers of people choosing to work from home. The travel studies are being carried out using funding secured through Transport Scotland's Smarter Choices, Smarter Places fund, administered by Paths for All.

Chair of Nestrans, councillor Sandra Macdonald said: "Understanding travel behaviour through the course of the pandemic is an important part of our travel planning work to support people to make healthier and more sustainable journeys. Working alongside Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire councils, as well as other travel partners, the results will inform our work through the CV19 recovery period and beyond."

The reports from the first two surveys showing the full results are available on the Nestrans website.

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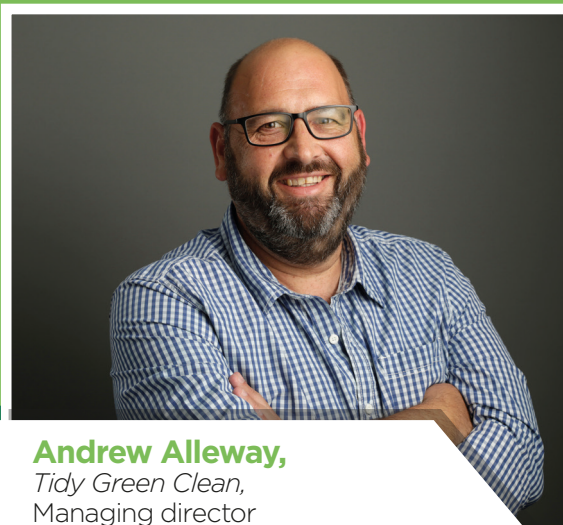
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A word of advice



Andrew Alleway,
Tidy Green Clean,
Managing director

What's your area of expertise?:

Tidy Green Clean is the leading environmentally focused national franchise cleaning operation for blue chip organisations across Scotland and North England. We achieved ISO 9001; 14001; and 45001 in under three years and a place in the top UK franchises, the EF100 for 2020. Our culture and business model is rooted in green practices and technologies.

What should people know?:

Becoming a business with green credentials isn't a tick box exercise, it should be something that permeates the entire culture of your business. Achieving ISO 14001 is only the beginning of that. Our business model is built on ensuring everything we do has minimum impact on the environment in which we work and enhances the lives of our people and our clients.

What's the biggest mistake companies make?

People confuse price with value and expect high standards while cutting suppliers' resources to the bone. The only way we will see true change in environmental practices across all businesses is by a change of mindset and business decision makers recognising that you really do get what you pay for. The cheapest service is often a poor substitute for what can be delivered in your business if you're prepared to invest that little bit more.

What's your top tip?

Environmental change comes from the top. If you just delegate it as a project, neither staff nor clients will engage. If it's not happening at owner or board level, then it's never really going to become embedded in your business practices and consequently you won't see the financial and partnership rewards that the changes will bring.



James Gregg and global business development director, Eddie Moore

Success for Motive leads to recruitment

MOTIVE Offshore Group, specialist in the manufacture, rental and servicing of subsea assets, has reported a successful first half of the year despite the effects of the global pandemic.

In addition to completion of pre-CV19 project awards, the company has won a number of contracts during the past five months which will result in it ending the year on budget.

Recent awards reflect a focus upon the renewable energy sector, particularly for the company's fabrication division which previously reported a 155% increase in turnover during 2018/19. Operating on a 24/7 basis since May, the division has completed a total of 46 vessel mobilisations/demobilisations in the last 12 months, worth a total of £665,000. It has also undertaken a number of largescale work scopes.

As a result of upcoming activity, Motive has launched a recruitment drive across several areas of the business, including two technical positions within its Norwegian entity, Pumptech, as well as a business-wide technology lead and a graduate position within its successful Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) with the University of Aberdeen. In addition, previous UAE regional director, Eddie Moore, has been appointed as group business development director, a new role for the company.

James Gregg, Motive's chief operating officer said: "We continue to invest in our people and see this time as an opportunity to focus on and invest in strategic global business development. This includes the creation of a group business development director role, and the introduction of new technology which will provide client equipment performance data."



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Neil Cowie

Apprentices inspired to find low carbon solutions

NORTH East Scotland College has joined forces with national partners to launch a new project designed to inspire apprentices across Scotland to develop innovative low carbon solutions to issues faced by industry.

The Fuel Change initiative invites apprentices to tackle carbon challenges set by representatives from a range of industries. Alexander Dennis Limited, BAM Nuttall, Scottish Power Energy Networks, National Manufacturing Institute Scotland (NMIS) and Spirit Aerosystems are the first five companies to sign-up.

The aim is to create practical solutions which can not only be implemented by the partner companies but potentially be implemented across the world in the effort to combat climate change. Challenges will be focused around barriers to a low carbon economy or opportunities to create a product or service which could develop a low carbon market offering.

Neil Cowie, principal of NESCol, said: "Energy transition and the drive for a low carbon future are both central to North East Scotland College's ambitions. As the region's college we have an important role in providing the education, training and reskilling that will support the North-east in developing the green economy."

AFC awards £6m catering contract

ABERDEEN Football Club has awarded its exclusive stadium catering contract for Pittodrie to BaxterStorey. The UK's largest independent food service provider will provide the catering for all matchday hospitality and kiosks at the stadium, as well as non-matchday conferences and events.

The contract, worth over £6m, was previously held by Sodexo for 26 years. BaxterStorey secured the catering for AFC's new training facility at Cormack Park in October 2019, following a competitive tender.

The Barn becomes more accessible

THE Barn in Banchory is one of six theatres to receive a grant through the Accessible Theatres Scheme to make their buildings more inclusive.

Theatres Trust, the national advisory public body for theatres, works to ensure theatres meet the needs of their communities and improving the accessibility of theatres is a vital part of its remit.

Funding of £4,800 will allow the Barn in Banchory to move its' technical control centre making it accessible to all its staff and volunteers. The control is currently housed in a booth within a confined space raised above ground floor level, but it will be relocated to ground floor level, making it more accessible and enabling the organisation to train more volunteers in technical theatre skills.

Theatres Trust director Jon Morgan said: "Responding to the pandemic has been at the forefront of everyone's minds this year but it is important that theatres continue on the journey to being truly inclusive spaces and that accessibility does not fall by the wayside."

Neurodivergent talent can bridge tech skills gap

SCOTLAND'S technology industry, along with schools, colleges and universities, are being asked to do more to help neurodivergent people into jobs to plug the widening skills gap in the fast-growing digital economy.

A new report by Skills Development Scotland states that tech employers in particular are missing out on a massive talent pool, with proven skills which can improve productivity, creativity and innovation in the workplace.

'Neurodiversity in Digital Technology' states that at least one in 10 of Scotland's population are neurodivergent, but the true number could be far higher as many people are undiagnosed or don't report themselves.

Although no figures yet exist which cover the entire neurodivergent population in work, statistics relating to autism showed that only 16% were in full-time employment while 75% wanted to work more hours but couldn't find suitable opportunities.

The SDS report recommends tech employers take action to benefit from increased neurodiversity in their teams, including changing job ads to be more inclusive and easier to read, introduce more flexible recruitment processes which aren't just focused on form filling and offer more practical task-based interviews.

The report also made it clear more needs to be done in schools and further education to encourage neurodivergent people to study digital technology skills.



Professor Steve Olivier

RGU is Scotland's University of the Year

ROBERT Gordon University (RGU) has been named Scottish University of the Year in the Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2021.

The university was awarded the accolade after performing extremely well in teaching quality, student satisfaction, graduate employability and industry engagement.

RGU placed 8th in the UK for student experience and rose significantly from 72nd to 12th in the UK for teaching quality. The university also climbed 17 places to 66th in the overall UK rankings.

Professor Steve Olivier, principal and vice chancellor at RGU, said: "We are absolutely thrilled to have awarded the Times and Sunday Times Scottish University of the Year 2021. This prestigious award could not have been gained without the incredible hard work of staff from across the university, who have been working tirelessly to ensure that RGU is the best university it can be.

"We have a long and proven track record of working collaboratively with partners in industry and business and this brings a host of benefits not only to our students but to the communities we operate within on a regional, national and international scale."



Warm welcome for the new arrival

World's first hydrogen bus rolls into Aberdeen

THE world's first hydrogen-powered double-decker bus has arrived in Aberdeen to showcase the city as a trailblazer in hydrogen technologies.

The arrival of the first of the zero emission buses underlines the city's role as the energy capital of Europe and shows its commitment to the transition of green energy from oil and gas as part of the Net Zero Vision.

The hydrogen double-deckers are being used around the city during a period of final testing, along with training for drivers, and are expected to be in service this month.

The buses are as efficient as electric equivalents, with refuelling taking less than 10 minutes and offering a greater range. Water is the only emission from the vehicles and the new buses will contribute to the city's commitment to tackling air pollution.

The UK's first hydrogen production and bus refuelling station was opened in Aberdeen in 2015, as part of a £19m green transport demonstration project. The Aberdeen City Council-led project tested the economic and environmental benefits of hydrogen transport technologies and aims to drive the development of hydrogen technologies.

Aberdeen City Council co-leader councillor Jenny Laing said: "The roll out of the new double-decker buses will help to cement Aberdeen's position as an entrepreneurial and technological leader as the new buses come with even more advanced technology which pushes established hydrogen boundaries and greatly assists us in tackling air pollution in the city."



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Time for change

WE are now approaching the end of the first year of the United Nations' 'Decade of Action' – a campaign to accelerate sustainable solutions for all the world's biggest challenges ranging from poverty and gender to climate change, inequality and closing the finance gap.

The aim is to achieve a series of sustainable goals by 2030 and the UN Secretary-General called for global, local and individual action 'to generate an unstoppable movement pushing for the required transformation actions'.

However, according to Alison Stuart, director of Aberdeen Climate Action, businesses need to be doing "much, much more and can't afford to wait for governments to lead the way." Alison said businesses should be looking internally at how they are working.

"Have they got an active travel plan? What about their use of energy, can they reduce it? Are they using renewable energy? What about their waste reduction and reuse? Have they got a circular economy concept going within their organisation? Are they trying to encourage behavioural change by their staff and creating green champions?" she said.

"They should also be looking at their supply chain and encouraging change within that, ensuring that the materials they are using are sustainable and reduce carbon emissions.

"They should be considering circular economy opportunities and whether their products can be created in a better way for longevity and reparability.

"And every business should have its own green net zero plan and be thinking in a holistic fashion about the internal workings of their business operation, how they connect with the wider world and how they communicate that plan."

She praised BrewDog as an inspirational example. The company is aiming to be a catalyst for change and earlier this year launched BrewDog Tomorrow, a mission to make BrewDog the most sustainable drinks brand on the planet.

She urged businesses to be proactive and lobby their industry organisations and governments to help them make the changes necessary.

"The whisky industry is a very good example of one which has taken this on board in a big way but there some really small businesses which have also done so. Every business,

big, small or medium-sized should have a net zero plan because it's economically sound.

"People want sustainable products, they want to know more about the products they buy and they want to buy more local products. In these times of CV19, people have recognised the need to buy local goods and use local supply chains."

She praised the Chamber's current North East Now campaign to boost the regional economy by assisting people to buy locally.

"That's very much a fundamental, not just of climate change and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions but also of community wealth building which is very positive. For every pound you spend on the local economy you get four back."

She said that CV19 had accelerated peoples' awareness of the need for sustainability but that the North-east faces a huge challenge because of our dependence on a carbon industry.

"We need to think not just about a transition of oil and gas companies but about the transition of the whole of our economy and communities. Dependency on the oil and gas industry permeates every single sector within the North-east, from our



hospitality and tourism to education sectors, so we are really vulnerable. It is great to see Aberdeen City Council thinking about net zero but we need to have a more holistic regional view.

“Above all we must reflect on the fact that at the end of the day we are all human beings and climate change will severely impact all the people and things we love. We need to be mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, wildlife enthusiast and bring that into our jobs - not just continue doing destructive things in businesses that we know to be destructive. We need to bring our humanity into our work and business because if we do that then we might be able to really achieve change.”

SEM Energy was launched in 2016, when founders Grant Leslie and John Jones joined forces to create a business to harness leading-edge technology to “change the world, or at least to make a start.”

They were joined by chief technology officer Sandy Beveridge in 2018 to help drive the company’s vision of a waste-free, circular economy, securing the planet’s health and wealth for generations to come.

They pride themselves in doing things differently to help both businesses, and the environments they inhabit,

to flourish. With a team of scientists, engineers and technological disruptors, they are pioneering waste and water management solutions.

Although they started off working more on industrial waste streams linked to the oil and gas sector, SEM quickly began to find more opportunities with greater potential in organic waste.

SEM believes that the solution to managing ‘waste’ doesn’t have a one-

“

“People want sustainable products, they want to know more about the products they buy and they want to buy more local products. In these times of CV19, people have recognised the need to buy local goods and use local supply chains.”

Alison Stuart,
director,
Aberdeen Climate Action

size-fits-all answer. By evolving new technologies, it looks at the bigger picture by taking a holistic approach to encapsulate the entire process on-site, from remediating water and removing solids, to manufacturing new, valuable and saleable by-products. They take this methodology and apply it to a range of different sectors including agriculture, biogas, distillery, energy and ports and harbour markets.

“Our goal is to reduce the amount of transport on the roads associated with transporting water – so the likes of slurries, digestates, fats, oil and greases,” said Grant.

“You see multiple trucks on the road transporting high volumes of waste that actually contain no more than 8% solids. The rest of the volume is comprised of water. Our main mission is to de-water these waste streams as near to the source as possible, capture the nutrients in their solids and return clean water. The solids can then be used to create by-products and the treated water can be either reused onsite or discharged to a watercourse. This leads the reduction of carbon emissions in addition to both operational and cost efficiencies which is part of our company ethos.”

One project the company is working on at the moment is fish waste, which



is typically macerated and trucked off-site for further remediation - a costly operation.

“We are now looking to remediate fish waste on-site and create a fertiliser from the solids recovered. The water is clean enough to be discharged into the sea and the oil we are extracting can be converted into biodiesel which can be utilised by clients in their transportation. This results in major cost savings and a reduction in carbon emissions of 97% in comparison to the existing process.

“It’s a win-win but our projects involve new technologies and solutions which can be seen as a risk, so there is considerable assessment and validation involved.

“We have 14 technologies, all designed for specific industries, which are engineered solutions to challenges that arise in different marketplaces. Some of our technologies have reached the point of commercialisation while we are continuously working hard to finalise others that are in the production pipeline. We will be looking to reinvest the profits from our projects which have gained commercial interest back into pushing the other technologies a step closer to the marketplace.”

And technology is a key factor across many sectors, including energy.

Managing director of Cortez Subsea Alasdair Cowie said: “We champion new and proven technology and methods for pipelay and inspection which is quicker, safer and cleaner.

“We work with NOV-Tuboscope to pioneer Zap-Lok mechanical connectors into new markets. Rather than using traditional welding methods, mechanical connectors are formed on carbon steel pipes which are pushed together to make joints stronger than the steel itself.

“We couple this with our own designed and patented modular pipelay system which allows a pipelay operation to be performed from a range of lower cost offshore support vessels. The International Maritime Organisation has adopted regulations and mandatory energy-efficiency measures to address the emission of air pollutants from ships. Among many other efficiencies, Zap-Lok and MPS reduce vessel time to shrink our carbon footprint.

“Our group is also working on an evolution of technologies towards a transformational programme to fully support remote digitisation, automation and machine learning as well as the efficient data management, data gathering and evaluation of inspection asset integrity programmes.

“During the CV19 pandemic we launched a remote inspection system to deliver entire offshore inspection campaigns remotely. The system utilises sophisticated data compression and transfer as well as 3D imagery to move all work completed from an offshore vessel inspection container onshore. This allowed clients to overcome travel restrictions and work to be completed anywhere, including at home, with live video feeds and clear voice communication.

“We are proving that this system can work just as efficiently, if not more so, than a traditional offshore team. Once again, these efficiencies are creating working practices which are better for the environment.

“Conventional thinking is natural, it’s the norm. But the need to reduce cost, improve safety and protect the environment requires change. In an industry continuing to adjust to new norms, it’s vital we work together to drive the adoption of ingenious technology to make our processes smarter.”



Rebecca Brown and AAB consulting partner Mark Bell

AAB's additional support for young entrepreneurs

ONE of the UK's leading business consultancy firms is bolstering its team to offer young business owners' further expertise and support.

Anderson Anderson & Brown Consulting Limited, the dedicated consulting arm of Anderson Anderson & Brown LLP (AAB), is building on the support it provides to young entrepreneurs facing a particularly challenging time, by engaging with independent business coach Rebecca Brown of Simplify Performance.

AAB Consulting offers dedicated support programmes for young entrepreneurs in the early stages of their business careers, providing them with the tools and confidence for creating jobs, increasing turnover and ultimately building strong, sustainable businesses. Rebecca Brown will enhance this offering, utilising her specialist expertise in planning and performance for new, small, developing businesses.

Based in Aberdeen, Edinburgh and across Scotland, Simplify Performance offers simple, strategic techniques for business success. With more than 20 years' experience in corporate finance, planning and performance, Rebecca works hand in hand with businesses to help them understand and improve their performance to take business growth to the next level.

Norwegian Wood

WOOD has secured a new \$42m contract from international energy company Equinor, on behalf of operator Gassco, to provide EPCI (engineering, procurement, construction and installation) services at the Kollsnes gas processing plant in Norway.

The contract will allow Wood to strengthen its onshore execution capabilities in Norway with the delivery of the Kollsnes MEG Upgrade (KMU) project, which includes an extension of the fourth MEG train at the plant, following the successful completion of the associated FEED study in 2019.

Swire's Norwegian acquisition

ABERDEEN-HEADQUARTERED Swire Oilfield Services has acquired Norwegian business Helifuel AS, strengthening its international refuelling and aviation offering.

The deal comes as Swire Oilfield Services continues to expand its services globally having also acquired specialist aviation firm Gordon Engineering Services Aberdeen Ltd (GES) in 2018.

Jonathan Hughes, Swire Oilfield Services group general manager aviation services, will head up the global service line and lead further expansion plans. Former owner and founder of Helifuel AS, Oddvar Ostensvik, will remain with the business, along with its current management team, led by managing director Jorunn Håvardsholm.

Established in 1996, Helifuel AS specialises in refuelling systems and services, including design, manufacture, inspection, maintenance, training and rental of systems for the offshore oil and gas, marine and wind industries.

Together the two companies will offer a fully integrated refuelling and aviation services business, drawing on the experience gained by both businesses in their respective markets.

Nestrans improvements to The Deeside Way

NESTRANS has been successful in applying for funding which is allowing substantial improvements to be made to one of the region's favourite walking and cycling routes.

£250,000 of support from Sustrans Scotland is funding work to increase the width of the path along The Deeside Way, supporting safe physical distancing for those using the route. The shared-use path, which is part of National Cycle Network Route 195, connects several communities along its 41-mile length and serves as a popular active travel route for locals and visitors alike.

The improvements involve clearing overgrown vegetation, fixing long-standing drainage problems, resurfacing and removing obstacles and barriers. The work is being carried out by Aberdeenshire Council from Crathes to Banchory and from Dinnet to Ballater.

New Fellow

DR R V AHILAN, group chief executive LOC Group, has been elected a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering.

Ahilan is one of 53 new Fellows elected in recognition of their outstanding and continuing contributions to the profession. Ahilan will join a Fellowship of approximately 1,600 eminent engineers from both industry and academia. The new Fellows join an Academy with a mission to use the power of engineering to build a sustainable society and create an inclusive economy that works for everyone.



Grant and Claire Keenan

Keenan invests £4.5m in vehicles

KEENAN Recycling, Scotland's largest food and garden recycling business, has invested almost £4.5m into its vehicle fleet to grow market share in England.

The Aberdeen-headquartered company, which reduces the amount of waste going into landfill by collecting and recycling organic material, has acquired 39 new vehicles, worth around £115,000 each. The new trucks will be rolled out across operations in Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool, Newcastle and Hull, as well as additional collections services in South-west England.

The Macpac food waste collection vehicles will play a key role in the expansion of the company throughout England, where Keenan is forecasting to double its workforce in the next five years.

The new fleet of trucks boast a bespoke configuration including, individual bin weighing, slave bin for caddy and bag uplifts and RFID technology which allows customers to track when their bin has been uplifted. With a top of the range, expanded fleet, Keenan believes it can accelerate its growth ambitions across the UK.

Collections director Claire Keenan said: "Scotland has already introduced legislation requiring all businesses that produce over 5kg of food waste per week to recycle it but this is still to come in England. However, with an increasing focus on green sustainability, forward-thinking businesses in England are already making better choices with their food waste management."

Arrow acquires Click Networks

ARROW Business Communications Limited has strengthened its IT capability with the acquisition of Click Networks Limited.

Based in Glasgow, Click Networks is a leader in the supply of IT managed and cloud services. It was established in 2005 and its services include IT consultancy, security analysis, hosted telephony and connectivity.

Click Networks supports more than 150 businesses with IT Solutions and, as a leading Microsoft Gold Partner, it has migrated over 30,000 assets to the cloud. The in-house helpdesk and field engineer teams will expand Arrow's existing IT team and enable it to provide broader consultancy, support and services across Scotland and England.

Arrow chief executive officer Richard Burke said: "It's great to complete our second IT related acquisition in recent months and bolster our capability and Microsoft offering in particular. Click Networks is an ideal addition to our group as the company prides itself on its ability to provide flexible and bespoke IT support solutions, just like Arrow".

Football to help health in CV19 hit areas

A NEW football-related programme is to be launched to tackle two key issues by delivering an already tested physical and mental health education programme in areas hit hardest by CV19.

Families in targeted areas will be invited to take part in the project and work towards increasing their physical activity, becoming more resilient and strengthening their mental health.

NHS Grampian Endowment Fund, the official health charity of NHS Grampian, has awarded £50,000 to AFC Community Trust from funds allocated by NHS Charities Together.

It has been reported that people living in deprived areas are twice as likely to be affected by CV19. By educating people around their mental health and getting them physically active and eating more healthily, the programme aims to reduce obesity in targeted communities and to help families become more mentally and physically resilient.

AFC Community Trust is a registered charity, leveraging the power of the Aberdeen Football Club brand and the passion for football to change lives for the better, empowering communities and individuals and developing the next generation of young people. Education is at the heart of its mission, intrinsically linked to healthy communities and football for life programmes.



Scott Kerr

Mintra starts trading on Merkur Market

FOLLOWING a successful share issue in which Mintra Holding AS raised NOK 500 million (£42m) through a private placement, the company's shares have been admitted to trading on Merkur Market. The share is traded under the ticker code MNTR-ME.

Listing on Merkur Market paves the way for accelerated growth as the proceeds, in addition to reducing debt, will be spent on expanding and enhancing the offering and executing Mintra's ambitious merger and acquisition plan.

"We are humbled and pleased that the issue in the latter part of September aroused significant interest among investors," said Scott Kerr, chief executive officer of Mintra.

"We are very much aware that this is an early step on our journey to become a global leader within our e-learning space but we are confident that we will make this a value creating journey for our shareholders and other stakeholders alike. We are really looking forward to the next step of the journey."

Mintra is a digital learning and human capital management software company. The software and learning tools are used in a number of sectors, including energy, maritime, construction, aviation and seafood. The products are used by over 1.4 million people with more than 3,600 customers around the world.

Scots seeking healthier food

RESEARCH by the Food and Drink Federation (FDF) Scotland with Levercliff has revealed that 89% of Scots have at least one health goal and are actively seeking healthier food.

The research looked at consumer attitudes towards health and wellbeing and what drives them when purchasing food. It also gave an insight into small to medium sized Scottish food manufacturers' experiences of making their products healthier as well as identifying any gaps and challenges.

Reformulation is rated as one of the most effective ways the food and drink industry can help to target obesity. This is where a product is made healthier by amending a recipe, providing clearer information on portion size or changing the way it is prepared.

FDF Scotland's 'Reformulation for Health' programme, which is funded by Scottish Government, is helping small and medium sized food companies to make their products healthier. This includes reducing the amount of salt, sugar, fat and calories; limiting portion sizes; and increasing the amount of fibre or fruits and vegetables.

Technology for a net zero North Sea

THE OIL & Gas Technology Centre has released a comprehensive roadmap setting out the critical technologies needed to deliver an integrated net zero energy system on the UK Continental Shelf (UKCS), highlighting the major economic opportunity this transformation offers.

Closing the Gap: Technology for a Net Zero North Sea, produced by global natural resources consultancy Wood Mackenzie for the OGTC, with support from Chrysaor and the Scottish Government, sets out a technology roadmap for an integrated energy future in the North Sea.

The report outlines how accelerating the development of new energy technologies can dramatically reduce emissions and how adopting new technologies will harness the full potential of the UK's world-class natural resources from renewable power sources and oil and gas to hydrogen and long-term carbon storage.

Maximising the opportunities to innovate within the renewable and fossil fuel sectors could create more than 200,000 new jobs across the UK and contribute more than £2.5tn to the nation's economy by 2050. It would also create a diversified energy sector, support a new generation of highly skilled jobs and open up exciting export potential.

The oil and gas sector, including its workforce, supply chain and infrastructure, can enable and accelerate the growth of the renewables sector, while renewable energy sources will be critical in supporting the oil and gas industry on its journey to net zero.

Realising this integrated vision will require £430bn of new investment to close the gap on a number of crucial technologies and accelerate their deployment.



The SRV mock up

Submarine rescue vehicle for Korean Navy

JFD, the leading underwater capability provider serving the commercial and defence diving markets, has delivered a full-scale mock-up of its search and rescue vehicle (SRV) for the Republic of Korea Navy.

The mock-up is part of a multi-million-pound contract for the design and build of an advanced SRV, awarded to JFD, part of James Fisher and Sons plc, by South Korean shipbuilder Daewoo Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering (DSME).

It aims to ensure the highest standards in safety for submariners, confirming the capability of components ahead of the contract's completion.

DSME is currently constructing a new auxiliary submarine rescue ship for the Republic of Korea Navy. JFD's bespoke SRV forms a key part of this vessel and aims to enhance the operational capabilities of the navy's submarine rescue service. Once in operation the vehicle will be capable of rescuing the crew of distressed submarines at depths of up to hundreds of metres and will be launched and recovered from the submarine rescue vessel via a moonpool.

CV19 prompts training management upgrade

MAERSK Training in the UK has announced the launch of its upgraded Training Management Solution to improve the training management for companies dealing with fewer staff and remote working amid the CV19 pandemic.

The software is divided into two parts, a mobile app aimed at delegates and a web-based application for the administrators and training facilitators. It offers a customised solution to meet global training needs while removing the intermediary and reducing administrative time and costs.

The mobile app provides a full overview of the employee's individual training requirements, from training due to expire to current courses due to be completed and offers a training record accessible anywhere in the world.

The web application supplies the employers with a customised view and management of individual employee's training matrix, simplifying the administrative process including booking and cancellation system, logistics and cost optimisation at the same time. The application also allows for the upload of financial records ensuring further cost assurance that training is kept within budget.

Gin with a twist of whisky

FAMILY-OWNED business Duncan Taylor Scotch Whisky in Huntly has launched a plethora of new gin expressions which all have a whisky twist.

Using former whisky barrels which have housed some of Scotland's leading brands, the drinks firm has rested its Indian Summer Gin – best known for boasting saffron giving it its golden hue – in different casks to produce a whisky-infused gin.

The bottling business has used all sorts of different former whisky casks to create the unique expressions. Casks include Highland Park, Bunnahabhain, Speyside, Allt-a-Bhainne and the Bowmore brand.

Global whisky ambassador Fergus Simpson said the drink was inspired by old 'yellow gin' which used to be popular centuries ago when producers would transport their gins across the country in casks to get it to market. Storing it in this way for a period is what would cause the gin to turn yellow, with the alcohol also absorbing flavour and colour from it.

All-Energy postponed

ALL-ENERGY, the UK's largest annual renewable and low carbon energy exhibition and conference, and the co-located Dcarbonise, have been postponed to May 12-13, 2021, at the Scottish Event Campus (SEC).

This follows the announcement by SEC that NHS Louisa Jordan will continue to be in place at the venue until April 30, 2021.

Wood wins \$84m contract

CONTINUING its track record of more than two decades of successful delivery for Equinor, Wood has been awarded a contract to provide EPCI (engineering, procurement, construction, and installation) services in Norway.

Under the \$84m contract, Wood will deliver all topside modifications at Equinor's Grane installation in preparation for the tie-back of the Breidablikk subsea development.

Three new tenants on Aberdeen Innovation Park

MOORFIELD Group, a UK specialist real estate fund manager, has completed a trio of office lettings at the James Gregory Centre, its serviced office premises on Aberdeen Innovation Park.

Service Graphics, one of the UK's largest design and print companies, has taken space in unit 17 at the centre, City Electrical Factors (CEF) the UK's largest electrical wholesaler has opened a new office at unit 18; and Elevation Safety Ltd, established 15 years ago in Aberdeen to provide medical training and support services to the offshore and remote healthcare sector, has moved to unit 21.

Paying for CV19: Time to make a plan



by **Magnus Mackay**,
senior associate - private client, Stronachs LLP

THE cost of the coronavirus pandemic on UK finances has been huge. Estimates of government borrowing range between £263bn and £391bn for 2020/21 and the likelihood is that spending will need to continue to rise, at least for the short to medium term.

It is perhaps inevitable that the Treasury will seek ways to rebalance the drain on public finances. Press speculation has suggested that one way of doing so might be through an attack on Inheritance Tax (IHT) reliefs.

Back in January, an all-party report recommended reform of the UK's IHT regime. One radical proposal was the repeal of many of the existing IHT reliefs, including Agricultural Property Relief (APR) and Business Property Relief (BPR). This would be a monumental change and of huge significance for farmers, landowners and business owners.

Though not pursued by the UK Government as yet, the report should be a reminder to taxpayers to ensure that they have, and maintain, a succession plan. Current IHT reliefs may not be with us forever.

Take advantage of existing reliefs

APR is a relief given on the value of land and buildings used in agriculture. It is an extremely valuable relief, providing 100% IHT relief on values based on the notional assumption that the asset can only ever be used for agricultural purposes. Farming and other trading businesses can also take advantage of BPR to seek relief of 100% on the remainder of the business assets.

There are however significant exceptions to the assets covered by APR and BPR, such as rental cottages and land with significant development potential. Therefore regular reviews of farm/estate activities should be carried out to identify and deal with any assets that may not qualify for relief.

Keep things flexible

Tax laws are always subject to change and it is crucial to keep things under review and also have a will prepared and updated as required. One measure which can give some protection against future uncertainty is a 'discretionary will', under which

assets are left to a trust on death, with trustees managing the assets at their discretion for the benefit of identified beneficiaries. The sheer flexibility of the discretionary will makes it an ideal vehicle for adapting to changing circumstances, allowing trustees to manage the assets in light of the tax regime that applies at the time and not necessarily the regime that applied when the will was made.

Powers of attorney

Appointing trusted individuals to manage assets is not restricted to wills. A properly drafted power of attorney can allow an attorney to continue tax and estate planning work, or to make changes where appropriate, where the granter is no longer able to do so themselves.

It remains to be seen how the government will plug the UK spending gap but what is not in doubt is that the costs of CV19, both human and economic, will be with us for a long time. Estate planning has never been more important.

Stronachs

Sustainability stars



IF THE North-east is to 'build back better' as we emerge from the transformational CV19 pandemic then building sustainably is going to be vital.

That means many things to many different companies. It could be recycling food waste to produce energy from biofuel, cutting harmful emissions by using state of the art timber engineered solutions for construction, focusing on the circular economy by reuse of redundant oil equipment; or turning waste wood into beautiful garden furniture and household products while providing training for those with additional support needs.

This is what is being achieved by the outstanding Chamber member companies which have been chosen as finalists in the 'Driving Sustainability' category of the Northern Star Business Awards 2021 which celebrate the very best across every sector.

Legasea is an environmental oil and gas service company focused on the circular economy. In less than two years it has grown from concept to a rapidly expanding business employing seven with plans to more than double that by the middle of next year.

Clients now include major international oil and gas operators, oilfield service providers and renewable energy companies.

It specialises in production systems and controls, offering a range of electrical, hydraulic and mechanical engineering services. Manufacturing new equipment rather than reusing leads to considerable carbon emissions. Globally, manufacture of primary steel is responsible for 7-9% of all direct emissions from fossil fuels, with each tonne produced creating around 1.83 tonnes of CO₂, according to the World Steel Association.

It has been estimated that by 2023, in the North Sea alone, 462 wells may be plugged and abandoned, each with more than 100 tonnes of infrastructure to be removed.

Legasea's processes reduce carbon emissions by avoiding the production of primary steel and avoiding the machining, assembling and mobilisation impacts associated with making new products.

The company estimates that, taking all factors into consideration, over the next three years carbon savings will be more than 30,000 tonnes. It is also reusing a significant amount of subsea equipment which has either been stored as back up or only used a small number of times. When an oil or gas field is shut down much of it is considered obsolete and it is simply scrapped. However, many of the components have value and Legasea takes the opportunity to reuse them.

"We are still establishing a foothold in the industry but the positive reception that has been received has far surpassed our expectations," said operations director Ray Milne.

Several companies have placed repeat orders and worked to add the company to approved vendor lists.

"Legasea has been welcomed as a refreshing change to the status quo and positive feedback has been received from all visitors to our facility. Financially the business has been growing gradually, with modest revenue initially while the company was becoming established. Now we have a range of clients this has increased considerably.

"We are passionate about raising awareness in the local and wider community and have been campaigning to make people aware of the circular economy."

Legasea works closely with Wood RecyclAbility, a non-profit social enterprise which provides practical work experience for people with additional support needs through working with waste wood. Legasea's office furniture is supplied by them and it also repairs their skips, enabling them to be provided to local companies to collect waste wood for reuse.



Wood RecyclAbility was set up in 1997 and supports around 30 trainees, aged from 18 to 64, in a purpose-built workshop, yard and five acres of land at Pitmedden. Waste wood, mainly from the offshore industry, is sorted on arrival and any contamination removed. Suitable wood is de-nailed and graded for reuse or recycling. It is sold to local joiners and householders or used to make a variety of products onsite including garden furniture, nest boxes, bird tables, log-stores and household products, which are sold to the general public. Wood not suitable for reuse is made into kindling for sale or chipped and sold to be processed into fibreboard.

Wood RecyclAbility provides a cost-effective, convenient and sustainable alternative to landfill and has saved more than 30,000 tonnes of waste wood from landfill to date.

The trainees, all adults with learning difficulties, undertake all aspects of operations, from collecting the wood from consigners through sorting, cleaning, de-nailing and preparing it for use to making products for sale.

The company wants to diversify into recycling rigid plastics and tyres which councils and businesses currently send to landfill. Wood RecyclAbility will charge a fee to take the products which will be sorted and processed for sale to be recycled.

The recycled plastic is used in the manufacture of products like paint trays, coat hangers and car parts and the tyres are used in making speed bumps and bollards for boats and harbours.

Wood RecyclAbility is trialling plastics recycling with Aberdeenshire Council and is initially simply baling the plastic for transportation to recycling facilities. It wants to move to chipping and granulation of sorted plastic, to reduce the transport carbon footprint and generate significantly more income and margin.

“We have the space and experience in materials receipt and handling for this much needed diversification,” said operations manager Brian Reid. “The project would enable the recycling and reuse of significant volumes of waste currently going to landfill or, only slightly better, burnt to produce energy. We aim to process 890 tonnes of plastic and 252 tonnes of tyres per year. It will be more cost-effective for councils to send their waste for recycling at Wood RecyclAbility instead of landfill.

“We have been trialling plastics recycling with Aberdeenshire Council since July 2019 and we are in discussions with Aberdeen City and Angus Councils, which may also want us to take their waste rigid plastic.

“We have ready customers for the tyres and plastics, who use the materials to manufacture new products. The project would ensure Wood RecyclAbility is financially sustainable in the long term. This would enable us to upgrade vital capital equipment for our wood recycling and upgrade a rundown cottage into a training facility where we can provide training in subjects like budgeting and literacy.”

The benefits of timber construction are at the heart of the operations of Glulam Solutions Ltd, a small team delivering large projects from its Inverurie base. They design, supply, deliver and install timber engineered structures throughout the UK, working across all market sectors but having had considerable success within the education sector over recent years. Its solutions are based around a ‘timber first’ approach using the best of timber engineered technologies to deliver cost effective buildings.

“Timber being a naturally grown material, absorbs carbon during its lifespan and keeps it locked away within its growth,” said director Syd Birnie.

“This creates a substantial carbon reservoir and, as well as reducing the carbon footprint of the completed structure, it offsets a lot of the harmful CO2 creation within other construction materials on the site. All of these



mass timber materials are designed and manufactured off-site, allowing for delivery as a kit of parts, which ultimately eliminates site waste.

“Our solutions offer significant carbon sequestration, are fully biodegradable, recyclable and able to be re-purposed or re-used, all by using a natural material in timber which is a significantly more sustainable approach to more ‘traditional’ steelwork and concrete.

“We recently completed the design, supply, delivery and installation of Scotland’s largest volume mass timber project, a new primary school at Merkinch, Inverness, for Highland Council. This is a groundbreaking project, being the first entirely built cross laminated timber school in Scotland.”

He said it delivered unique benefits not just to the client but also its future occupants: “Testing has proved that timber buildings offer the students a better quality environment to work in, lowers heart rates, assists higher concentration levels and better sleep quality at home - all scientifically enhancing the teaching experience.”

Keenan Recycling started off nine years ago in New Deer as a composting business but is now the UK’s largest food waste recycling company operating nationwide

employing more than 100, with plans to double that.

It is headquartered in Aberdeen and its primary objective is to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill. Following a £2.2m investment from BGF in 2015, the company invested significantly in and is a key supplier for UK anaerobic digestion (AD) plants. Following funding from Zero Waste Scotland, Keenan invested in its own processing facility at Linwood near Glasgow where it processes more than 100,000 tonnes of organic waste a year, turning it into premium grade compost or generating electricity through AD.

It works across a diverse range of sectors including education, retail, hospitality and commercial business units. Clients include SSE, Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council and SUEZ Recycling and Recovery UK SUEZ. After successfully working alongside Aberdeen City Council and SUEZ for 18 years, Keenan was recently re-awarded the contract to recycle all household garden and food waste from the city’s brown bin service and recycling centres.

The Linwood plant unpacks and processes food waste which is turned into liquidised fuel and supplied to local anaerobic digester plants for conversion into green energy. Gas from Keenan’s biofuel is used to

create electricity, gas to grid and heat. The end product is a clean material called digestate which is used as a biofertilizer, free of contamination, ensuring a quality product for the agriculture sector.

“Our model is to reduce waste going to landfill which helps our customers save money and reduces the impact on the environment,” said managing director Grant Keenan.

“A fifth of UK greenhouse gas emissions are associated with food waste, making it a greater cause of global warming than plastic waste. By responsibly managing food waste we are able to cut back on the harmful emissions caused by rotting food. By adding value and incentivising at each step of the process to produce a high-value fuel, we hope to change the market drivers in food waste recycling to boost Scotland and the UK’s circular economy.”

The winner of the Driving Sustainability Award, as well as other stars of the North-east business community, will be announced at the glittering awards ceremony at P&J Live on March 11. Book your place at www.agcc.co.uk

An evolving business

Mark Fraser,
chief executive officer,
Nucore Group



FOR many businesses 2020 has meant it is vital, now more than ever, to focus on the values and pillars which they stand for.

At Nucore Group, the core of what we do has grown to encompass our 35 year history, expertise and knowledge in the sectors we operate in globally.

Long after we have survived the challenges of this global pandemic, our vision of committing to be the best-in-class provider of safety critical systems, engineering services and products will continue to drive our business forward.

Our values focus on our people, safety, integrity and sustainability - as we support our clients and each other to prosper, we will never compromise on what we believe is key to our success now and in the future.

Nucore Group is an evolving business with our expertise spanning fire safety and security to climate control engineering, providing critical support to the oil and gas, marine, renewable energy and petrochemical sectors. Our knowledge is built from our portfolio which includes HVAC & Refrigeration Ltd and Oteac and, with ever-changing environments and legislation, our specialist teams are what makes us the industry leaders in our area.

We unite experience and capabilities to ensure our clients have assurance of safety and integrity of their assets globally.

As we get closer to the end of 2020, it is time to focus on the opportunities that are presented to us as a company and continue to work collaboratively to support knowledge sharing opportunities for all our stakeholders.

Supporting the local business community through the Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce is an important part of our corporate, social and environmental responsibilities - the Northern Star Business Awards provide a platform for recognising the accomplishments of organisations on our doorstep.

Celebrating success is more important than ever during this challenging period and as principle sponsor, being part of the event is an exciting focus for the year ahead. We value our business relationships in every region we operate in and look forward to engaging with our fellow businesses as we move towards 2021.

“

“Supporting the local business community through the Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce is an important part of our corporate, social and environmental responsibilities - the Northern Star Business Awards provide a platform for recognising the accomplishments of organisations on our doorstep.”



What does a green recovery mean for business?

THROUGH the CV19 crisis there has been lots of talk about the 'green recovery', but what exactly is it and how would it be achieved?

Prior to CV19, the priority and attention of environmental issues was rising. Concern about plastic pollution and ecological destruction was growing and successive governments, including those in Scotland and the wider United Kingdom, had committed to achieving net carbon zero.

The damage caused by the global pandemic and the process of rebuilding our economy is thus being promoted as an opportunity to refocus our priorities around environmental protection. What this means in practice is still evolving but to be effective it will require radical policy and regulatory changes if the high ambitions of net carbon zero are to be achieved.

CV19 has seen changes in working habits that will potentially reduce travel patterns and change the way we use the traditional office forever. Technology and the emergence of simple, easy-to-use video conferencing is likely to reduce the need for long distance travel and there is an opportunity to lock in a generational rise in cycling and

walking by improving transport infrastructure.

While these changes are positive, they are only small in relation to the scale of transformation that is required. The extraction and processing of materials, for example, is responsible for around half of the world's carbon emissions and 90% of biodiversity loss which is why an increased focus on the circular economy is essential if we are to realise a real green recovery. Using and reusing the materials we already have will cut emissions, create more resilient supply chains and provide more affordable access to essential goods and services.

Zero Waste Scotland has identified five key priorities for a green recovery:

1. The use of economic levers such as credits and taxes to incentivise recycling, reuse and reprocessing of resources over landfill or incineration.
2. Harnessing the power of public procurement, worth £11bn per year, by integrating circular economy criteria into procurement processes.
3. Increasing Scotland's reprocessing capacity to build economic resilience by reducing reliance on importing materials and exposure

to shocks from increasingly volatile global supply chains. Although Scotland recycles more than 60%, much of this material is exported for reprocessing.

4. Embedding the circular economy across skills and education to develop a workforce that can deliver a circular economy.
5. Looking at the whole production and consumption system of any product or material so a much wider view of the use and reuse of natural resources is undertaken.

Whatever form the green recovery takes there is no doubt that we'll see legislation and incentives to drive behavioural changes from the public and from businesses. Consumer attitudes are changing. We are already seeing proposals to introduce a plastics tax and deposit return scheme while the EU has published a draft circular economy action plan and the Scottish Government a circular economy bill. The impact these changes will have on businesses will vary but, to ensure their future resilience, they need to consider them in their risk management processes.

If you wish to find out more about the Chamber's circular economy programme please email terri.vogt@agcc.co.uk.



What businesses say about the green recovery

SEM Energy Ltd develops disruptive technologies for the treatment and remediation of waste. Its aim is to generate zero waste by converting co-products into valuable by-products and commodities.

“As a company whose activities are centred around the circular economy and reducing waste, a green recovery presents significant opportunities. Sustainability criteria are becoming more and more central to funding applications and there is significant interest from investors to move away from more traditional polluting industries.” - Grant Leslie, *co-founder*

Grampian Housing Association develops sustainable communities through the provision of quality affordable housing for rent. This involves the maintenance and management of over 3,500 properties throughout North-east Scotland.

“The operation, management and maintenance of homes generates significant carbon emissions and waste which we are working hard to reduce. For us, a green recovery will encourage innovation in the supply chain which we rely on to achieve this.” - Neil Clapperton, *chief executive*

John Lawrie is an industrial metals reuse and recycling specialist which creates value and supports its clients as they work towards net zero through a circular economy approach.

“A green recovery means enabling our suppliers and customers to facilitate a reduction in consumption of natural resources and energy. By repurposing steel pipes from the oil and gas sector to piling in construction, our commitment to a circular economy significantly contributes to a green recovery across both the energy and construction sectors.” - Claire Sim, *group marketing manager*

Legasea takes recovered subsea production systems and cleans and disassembles them to component parts which are then recertified for reuse to fulfil the demand for urgent spares during routine preventative maintenance or failure.

“A green recovery will help drive demand for reuse, both in the oil and

gas industry and more widely, as companies seek to reduce the carbon footprint of their operations. Further incentives to encourage reuse would be a substantial catalyst for growth in the sector, creating economic and environmental benefits, whilst accelerating the move towards net-zero.” - Lewis Sim, *managing director*

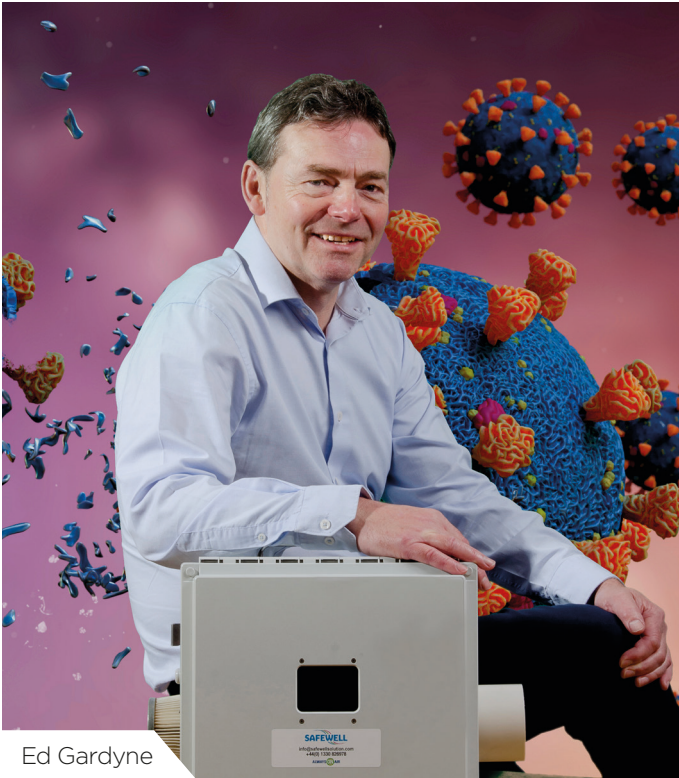
Space Solutions has led workplace change in Scotland for 22 years. Its experts cover every specialism from consultancy, design, fit-out, relocations to facilities management to join the dots between your space, people, technology and change.

“For us, the green recovery flows naturally from the growing interest in the circular economy. We place sustainability at the heart of our design solutions, from taking a considered view on materials and finishes, to prolonging the lifetime of what you have in terms of re-using or re-engineering existing furniture.” - Chris Carr, *senior workplace consultant*



EUROPE & SCOTLAND
European Regional Development Fund
Investing in a Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Future





Ed Gardyne

Safewell is ahead of the curve on CV19

AN ABERDEENSHIRE company is using more than 20 years of experience to help other businesses create safe working spaces using an innovative new air quality system.

Safewell Solutions, which is based in Banchory, has extensive global experience in the education and training of clients on 'invisible risk' awareness in the oil and gas, industrial, commercial diving pharmaceutical and aerospace sectors. It has now channelled its expertise into launching SafeSpace, a risk management solution which uses a suite of approaches to address surface and air contamination, including harnessing the Coandă Effect to create a predictable and controlled air flow current management system in enclosed spaces. The company plans to invest up to £250,000 in the new protocol.

In what is believed to be a first, SafeSpace enhances the Coandă effect using vacuum, thus radically reducing the distance of travel of microbial aerosol transmission and potential contamination from an airborne virus. This crucial, patent-pending element places SafeSpace and the thinking behind it ahead of the curve in terms of technology which can address suggestions that CV19 can be airborne and travel much further than two metres in enclosed spaces.

Director Ed Gardyne said: "We have a proven track record and thorough integrity in understanding just how important it is for people to breathe high quality air. Safewell Solutions was already heavily involved in breathing and process air quality work, and the challenges which arose due to the CV19 pandemic were a logical extension to what we were already doing. It was, therefore, a natural evolution for us to apply our knowledge and experience into a new, innovative addition to the portfolio."

College removes barriers to online learning

NORTH East Scotland College is investing more than £130,000 to support access to online learning by loaning devices to students.

NESCol will make the laptops available to ensure there are no barriers to attending virtual classes or using digital resources.

The college has adopted a blended approach for 2020/21, with a mix of on-campus provision and remote delivery as it follows Scottish Government guidance to allow the safe reopening of campuses.

That approach is supported by the well-established Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) programme, which enables NESCol students to obtain devices as part of their funding package.

More than 1,000 laptops had already been procured this summer as part of the BYOD initiative – and now an additional batch will be made available on a loan basis after fresh funding was secured. The Scottish Funding Council has allocated £132,000 to the college for digital provision as part of the response to the challenges presented by the coronavirus outbreak.

NESCol principal Neil Cowie said: "As a college we have been at the forefront of digital innovation and have pioneered BYOD, which over a number of years has given students the tools to study in a different way. That gave us an excellent platform when we moved to remote learning in March and now for the blended approach to 2020/21.

"As part of our planning for the new session we invited all students to provide feedback in a variety of areas, including access to digital learning. Through that we were able to identify a small but important group who were not catered for through the BYOD programme and we have moved quickly to provide a solution."

The college has also made provision for those without internet access by providing 4G connections.

Weatherford collaborates with Safe Influx

WEATHERFORD International plc has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Safe Influx, the world's only provider of automated well control technology.

Under the MoU, the companies will cooperate globally to focus on revolutionising well integrity during the construction phase by bringing to market the first ever integration of managed pressure drilling (MPD) solutions and automated well control technology.

"This unprecedented collaboration will leverage digitalisation and automation to enable operators to achieve more from their projects in the safest way possible, while having the confidence their wells will be drilled and constructed with the highest level of integrity available in the market today," said Kevin Fisher, vice president of managed pressure drilling, Weatherford.

Rate of return

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



SINCE lockdown was first imposed in March businesses across the North-east have been doing their utmost to adapt to new ways of working. Initiatives like the job retention scheme, the various loan schemes and dedicated grant funding streams have helped many firms to bear the brunt of initial lockdown measures. However, at the time of writing, we're moving into what looks like a difficult winter with further restrictions at a local and national level.

Although government is responding with additional support the only sustainable path forward is developing a coherent strategy which allows us to suppress the virus while keeping the economy moving.

As we look towards that sustainable, safe reopening of businesses, we need a renewed focus on reform in areas like taxation policy. It's vital to ensure that we're setting ourselves up to rebuild from a position of strength, eliminating drags on growth created by outdated systems that no longer reflect current economic conditions.

The pressing need to accelerate this type of reform is why Chambers of Commerce expressed concern at the Scottish Government's recent decision to postpone the planned 2022 Non-Domestic Rates Revaluation until 2023.

Right now firms across Scotland need decisive action to bring business rates bills in line with the harsh economic reality we face, not further delay. Delaying the 2022 revaluation is contrary to the core recommendation of the independent Barclay Review for more frequent revaluations, which the review recommended should take place every three years and which government accepted.

A key aim of the Barclay Review was to create a rates system which was more responsive to changing market conditions. This delay locks businesses into property values determined in 2015 for a further three years.

Furthermore, this issue of outdated values is even more pronounced in the North-east. Because values were based on a 'tone date' from 2015, the impact of the major oil and gas downturn at that time wasn't reflected when values came into force in 2017, an anomaly which has continually impacted firms in the region since.

Postponing the revaluation now is made even more damaging due to the some of the provisions in the Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Act 2020. The Act introduced new limitations around Material Change of Circumstance (MCC) appeal rights which significantly constrain the ability of businesses to proactively appeal their values due to economic changes.

This means that for many, a revaluation is the only practical route to fair values in the years ahead.

The government rationale for delay stemmed from a concern that the planned tone date, April 1st, 2020, wouldn't reflect the onset of CV19. A simple, fair and sensible solution, considering the ongoing coronavirus restrictions, would be to proceed with the 2022 revaluation but with a revised tone date of April 1, 2021. That ensures that the impact of CV19 on values is reflected, while avoiding the need for firms to wait another year for fairer rates bills.

Businesses are doing all they can to adapt to the impact of CV19. In this hugely challenging period, we need government to be flexible too and work in partnership to create the strongest possible conditions for recovery. In the months ahead, Chambers of Commerce will be making the case to ensure that the rigid non-domestic rates system doesn't act as a barrier to growth in a post-covid world.

SEM was born of a relentless drive to do this differently, to help both businesses – and the environment they inhabit – to flourish.

We are an environmentally conscious sustainability partner in waste and water effluent treatment, who avidly embrace and pioneer disruptive new technologies that process co-products from 'waste' streams, recover nutrients and deliver innovative water treatment solutions for industry.

This helps to minimise the impact of waste on the environment but where possible we also drive our vision of a circular economy by producing valuable by-products to add value of social, economic and environmental status to our client's waste streams.

Whilst being an environmental partner to established businesses to help them reduce their carbon footprint, SEM simultaneously works hard to practice what we preach, to inspire others to have the same outlook – that we all have an important role to play in our carbon footprint for this planet. For that reason, we have been working hard to offset our own carbon footprint and recently achieved our One Carbon World Neutral International Status.

SEM work across multiple sectors and understand that managing 'waste' and water means different things to different industries. By embracing these unique challenges, we are able to harness our innovative technology to do good for our planet.

Currently, we are working on a variety of projects, one of which utilises our PLUTUS technology to remove volatile contaminants and de-water category 2 fish waste on-site in Shetland. The resulting high protein solids that are recovered can be used to create fertiliser, while the water fraction is also treated allowing for safe environmental discharge. Recovered oils that we are extracting will also be converted into biodiesel for further use. Our technology provides a 97% carbon emission saving in comparison to the existing process.

Furthermore, we are currently in the pipeline of expanding this innovative process on an international level, where we are looking to develop our offering to include in the remediation of category 3 fish waste and capture the valuable oils for reuse and added value manufacturing in new markets.

SEM

**Future proofing
your business
for a greener
tomorrow**

f t i in

www.sem.world



Neil Gordon

\$3 trillion opportunity in the spotlight

THE theme for Subsea Expo in 2021 will be Oceans of Opportunity – harnessing the ‘blue economy’.

The exhibition and conference will explore how the UK’s underwater engineering industry can capitalise on the global blue economy, estimated to be worth \$3tn by 2030. Organised by industry body Subsea UK the three-day event will take place at Aberdeen’s P&J Live from February 23-25.

Europe’s largest exhibition and conference focused on the underwater industry is set to be one of the first post-pandemic, large scale physical, as opposed to virtual, events back on the international calendar.

Neil Gordon, chief executive of Subsea UK, said: “The underwater engineering industry currently generates annual revenues of £7.8bn and a large slice of that still comes from the oil and gas sector. However, as the industry extends its reach into offshore wind, defence, ocean and marine science and aquaculture, there is the opportunity to grow global marketshare of what’s now known as the blue economy or ocean economy.

“Forecast to be worth around \$3tn in the next 10 years, the blue economy is the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth. Oil and gas, offshore and marine renewables and aquaculture account for around a third of its value.”

Neptune extends CHC contract

NEPTUNE Energy has extended its contract with CHC Helicopters, covering the Dutch sector of the North Sea, for a further two years.

CHC will continue to conduct all helicopter flight transfers for personnel to and from Neptune’s 29 offshore platforms in the Dutch sector.

Interventek’s eight figure contract

INTERVENTEK has been awarded an initial eight-figure contract by Baker Hughes to deliver subsea intervention safety systems.

Interventek’s Revolution valve is a compact and powerful shear and seal safety valve for subsea well intervention which, unlike its peers, uses separate cutting and sealing components to ensure seal integrity. With other unique design features this new technology can cut through all forms of intervention media and provides rapid closure for improved safety and reliability. It also reduces manufacturing lead times and cost and is suitable for a wide variety of subsea systems.

Gavin Cowie, managing director of Interventek said: “We believe this contract marks the start of an exciting long-term partnership with Baker Hughes. Talks are ongoing regarding the provision of both our in-riser and open-water well intervention systems, plus our new, compact and lightweight controls package. We aim to support Baker Hughes expand their offering with technology which offers enhanced environmental and safety performance. Our recent investment in staff, new premises and onsite testing will ensure we are well placed to support this collaboration.”

Exports fall but opportunities ahead

A FOOD and Drink Federation (FDF) report shows that exports of food and drink in the first half of the year fell for the first time since 2015. The data shows that when compared to the same period last year, exports had fallen by 13.8%, to £9.7bn.

Exports to all but three of the UK’s top 20 export markets fell, with sales to China (+0.3%), Canada (+6.7%) and Norway (+46.9%) seeing growth during the first half of the year. Of the UK’s top 10 export product categories, only pork saw positive value growth (+17.5%) with sales of £300m, largely driven by exports to China which purchased £132m of UK pork in H1.

While the fall in exports is clearly linked to the global impact of CV19 analysis by KPMG as part of the report highlights that differing markets are at varying stages of the CV19 lifecycle. China is currently experiencing a period of growth whereas other nations are in recession.

KPMG identified brand trust as a key driver of consumer purchasing decisions across all markets and an opportunity for exporters throughout the remainder of the year. While overall exports of branded products fell by 7.1% in H1, sales of branded products to non-EU markets grew by 1.9%.

Looking further ahead, the UK-Japan preferential trade agreement announced in September presents a key opportunity for exporters with Japan currently the world’s largest net importer of agrifood and drink and the UK’s 19th biggest market in H1, worth £124.5m. Demand for imported food and drink in Japan is growing because of its ageing population and a continued shift toward Western consumption patterns.

November



Whether presenting a report to a client, management, colleague or supplier, this course will help you develop your report content and style.

24 Tue
1 Day

Improve your Professional Confidence

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

24 Tue
1 Day

Stakeholder Engagement and Relationship Management

Identify and engage with stakeholders to build effective and lasting relationships

25 Wed
1 Day

Report Writing

Learn to produce clear, concise, and effective reports

26 Thu
½ Day

Taking Notes & Minutes

Record meetings effectively and accurately with high quality minutes

26 Thu
½ Day

Resilience Survive and Thrive

Understand your strengths and increase your resilience score

27 Fri
½ Day

Social Media for the Uninitiated

Reduce marketing risk by understanding how powerful social media is in business and how to utilise it effectively

27 Fri
½ Day

Social Media Advanced - Using Mixed Media in your Digital Communication

Be confident in the utilisation of a range of media and form the outline of an overall digital communication plan

December

1 Tue
2 Days

Essential Management Skills

Become equipped with the knowledge and skills required of a manager

3 Thu
½ Day

Understanding the Oil and Gas Industry

Gain an understanding of the basics of production and processing

3 Thu
1 Day

Essential Supervisory Skills

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

8 Tue
1 Day

Change Management

Learn tools to drive change and avoid challenging situations

9 Wed
1 Day

Emotional Intelligence for Business

Develop situational awareness and influence positive outcomes

January



Learn the tools to analyse how you currently use your time and what you could do differently to boost your job satisfaction, productivity and profitability.

13 Wed
1 Day

Train the Trainer

Feel confident whilst developing and presenting different types of training

19 Tue
1 Day

Time Management

Identify time wasting activities and manage time more effectively

21 Thu
1 Day

Emotional Intelligence for Business

Develop situational awareness and influence positive outcomes

26 Tue
1 Day

Dealing with Difficult Situations

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

27 Wed
1 Day

Motivation and Delegation

Make delegation more efficient, understand different styles and how to adapt

28 Thu
1 Day

Essential Supervisory Skills

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

The EU exit is looming

Free movement ends in less than 75 days. Amidst the CV19 pandemic, some preparations may have fallen to the wayside however the importance of being ready for the change has never been more critical.

After December 31 you will need to complete customs declarations if you import or export goods. Once we leave, an additional 220

million of these declarations will need to be completed, meaning 150,000 more traders will need a declaration.

Complying with the new HMRC rules will be essential and will require specialist knowledge. The Chamber is here to help with our extensive portfolio of international trade training courses.

Beginner's Practical Guide to Exporting (1 day)

Sept 18, 2020 | Jan 19, 2021

A high-level overview of the export process

Commodity Coding System for International Trade (½ day)

Nov 26, 2020 | Feb 11, 2021

Guidance through the international coding process and the paperwork involved

Customs Declaration Training (eLearning)

Learn how to complete customs requirements accurately and efficiently

Customs Procedures and Documentation (1 day)

Dec 8, 2020 | Jan 14, 2021 | Feb 24, 2021

Explore the various customs systems, procedures, and documentation

Import Procedures, Inward & Outward Processing (1 day)

Nov 24, 2020 | Jan 28, 2021 | Mar 03, 2021

Avoid pitfalls when importing, understand methods of claiming relief

INCOTerms® 2020 (½ day)

Dec 03, 2020 | Jan 26, 2021

Benefits of International Commercial Terms for buyers and sellers

Preference Rules of Origin (½ day)

Nov 25, 2020 | Jan 21, 2021

Understand the rules and their importance

Understanding Export and Export Documentation (1 day)

Nov 20, 2020 | Feb 17, 2021

Demystify international trade concepts and procedures

These courses are delivered by our usual trainers running as Virtual Instructor Led Training (VILT) via Zoom to allow for greater flexibility and safety.

Government funding to go towards training is also available

which could make some of these courses effectively free for you and your colleagues.

For more information on our courses and the government funding please contact us at training@agcc.co.uk



Stronachs is a Scottish top scorer

LAW firm Stronachs has been recommended for its work across Scotland in six practice areas in the Legal 500 UK Guide: corporate and commercial, dispute resolution, employment, oil and gas, private client and commercial real estate.

In total 15 partners, three senior associates and a consultant received individual commendations in the latest edition of the guide which ranks the leading firms and lawyers in Scotland.

Stronachs' managing partner Neil Forbes said: "We are very proud to see so many members of our team recognised in this way. In addition, it is particularly pleasing to note that Legal 500 have highlighted Stronachs as one of the top scoring firms in Scotland in its client service survey, which is the largest and most comprehensive survey of client satisfaction conducted of the UK legal."

Cautious optimism for subsea industry

A SNAPSHOT survey of the UK's £7.8bn subsea supply chain has revealed that SME's operating in the underwater engineering industry are cautiously optimistic about the next six to 12 months.

Industry body Subsea UK recently surveyed its smaller member companies to find out how they were dealing with the fallout from CV19.

Almost 75% of respondents do not anticipate making redundancies in the near future and 56% are fairly optimistic about the next six to 12 months. However, almost 23% of respondents are making redundancies with only 3.5% actively recruiting. The last business activity review into the sector in 2019 reported that the subsea industry in the UK employed 45,000 people.

The top three priorities for subsea SMEs at this time are the health and wellbeing of employees, cash-flow and lack of visibility over project work and their order books.

Respondents also revealed that their target markets remain unchanged as a result of the global pandemic. In terms of geography, Europe remains a key market, followed by Gulf of Mexico, Asia Pacific and the Middle East.

While oil and gas is still the largest market for the subsea industry, diversification into other areas of underwater engineering is more important than ever. Offshore renewables now account for almost 25% of all subsea revenues (around £1.8bn) and income from aquaculture, defence and subsea mining is growing.

The snapshot survey reinforced this with respondents most interested in receiving market intelligence on offshore wind and other marine renewable opportunities.

The rise of the webinar has proved popular among respondents with a third keen to attend more online events to obtain market intelligence and share experiences.

Aberdeen Restaurant Week returns

ABERDEEN Restaurant Week is back from Monday November 2 to Sunday November 8 and is being run by Aberdeen Inspired in collaboration and partnership with Aberdeen Journals, Aberdeen City Council, VisitAberdeenshire and Aberdeen Hospitality Together.

Adrian Watson, Aberdeen Inspired chief executive, said: "During what continues to be a tough time for our city centre, we are pleased to bring back Aberdeen Restaurant Week to help reassure the public that it's safe to come out to meet and eat.

"The hospitality industry really needs the public's support more than ever and it's important that we do everything we can to showcase to customers all the great work done by our local businesses to make their spaces safe, welcoming and enjoyable places to spend time with family and friends.

"Many restaurants are finding it tough to make ends meet with capacity limits for indoor dining as well as apprehension from diners who might be feeling a bit nervous about eating out. We hope that Aberdeen Restaurant Week will act as a platform to help build confidence by encouraging people to come back out and enjoy safe dining experiences while respecting all the rules, and supporting local at a time when it really means the most."

The pricing structure consists of a fixed price lunch priced at £10 and dinner for £20. Afternoon teas, drink pairing menus and tasting menus are priced separately.

Ferries contract for Dales Marine

SHIP repair and maintenance company Dales Marine Services Ltd is one of three Scottish companies to secure work from Ferguson Marine on the two Caledonian MacBrayne (CalMac) dual-fuelled ferries under construction.

Operating from five dry docks in Aberdeen, Leith, Greenock, Troon and Grangemouth Dales Marine delivers the full range of ship repair and maintenance, vessel mobilisation, engineering and fabrication services.

The pipework fabrication will be carried out at three sites - Aberdeen, Leith and Greenock.

DEKRA merges two businesses

DEKRA has merged its UK process safety consulting, testing and advisory firm Chilworth Technology Ltd (trading as DEKRA Process Safety) with its UK behavioural change consultancy DEKRA Organisational Reliability, to form DEKRA Organisational and Process Safety (DO&PS).

The new organisation is now a one stop shop for high hazard process industries - from oil and gas, chemical and pharmaceutical to food, construction and beyond - offering practical solutions in behavioural safety, process safety and human reliability.



Bob Christie,
managing director, Concept Promotional Merchandise Ltd

What does your company do that others don't?

Concept Promotional Merchandise is now in its 22nd year in business sourcing, supplying and branding corporate giveaways, branded clothing and merchandise to a wide range of sectors across the UK. I strongly believe that what sets us apart is the personal touch that is delivered from start to finish. I build strong, meaningful relationships with my customers to ensure their needs are met and whenever possible exceeded. I feel this time investment not only shows we value our customers but also instils loyalty which helps to attract new customers from referrals and positive word of mouth.

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

CV19 has undoubtedly had a negative impact on our sales pipeline as we watched everything shutdown. For example, the demand for corporate workwear is significantly reduced as people are working from home, therefore orders for branded uniforms and workwear are postponed. If your staff are after branded slippers for their home office, then I'm your guy! Another challenge was the events industry coming to a standstill. No events mean no requirement for corporate gifts and giveaways. However, we are seeing that businesses are marketing themselves differently so we are continually adapting and getting creative to support those changing demands.

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

Without a doubt, CV19 has been the toughest challenge of my career. Six months down the line and I do not

know how we are still thriving. But tenacity, resilience and sheer hard graft combined with a positive outlook has paid off. I have never taken things for granted and that is never going to change.

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

During my first couple of months of trading back in 1998, one of my customers and now close friend, always told me to keep some finance back for a rainy day. This piece of advice has stayed with me forever and stood me in good stead.

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

Working for myself. I had worked for several large organisations previously and truly believed that with a focus on quality products combined with a personal, reliable service I could deliver something quite special. Here we are, 22 years later and the business has evolved into a professional and respected local company that is focused on helping clients' increase brand awareness through the effective use of promotional merchandise.

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

An 'Amazon' style app for local Aberdeen companies. Instead of the money going to the big guy, it would be great if people could 'shop local' easily in one place with next day delivery. It would help local businesses thrive and bring more awareness to the extensive range of quality services on offer in Aberdeen.



Quick fire round

What was your first job?
Apprentice engineer

When would you like to retire?
Yesterday

What did you have for breakfast?
Porridge with fresh fruit, as I do every day

Who, or what, inspires you?
My son

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

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Meetings and events may have changed but our commitment to providing the businesses of Aberdeen a safe place to hold events remains the same.

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We're looking forward to welcoming you back to P&J Live soon.



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John McDonald

OPITO moves into renewable energy

OPITO, the global skills organisation for the energy industry, has made its first move into the renewable sector with the launch of a new suite of safety and technical training standards and qualifications designed to address the skills requirements of a net zero economy.

The initial offering is tailored to the offshore wind sector which, together with solar power, is set to dominate the growth of renewables as a primary energy source over the next 30 years.

Offshore wind is expected to lead to the creation of 27,000 highly skilled roles in the UK alone by 2030, with the number of jobs in the sector globally forecast to rise to one million by 2050.

OPITO's new standards give learners the opportunity to choose from a range of products designed to equip them with the critical skills needed to work across the various aspects of the sector - including scoping and development, construction, operations and maintenance activities.

Chief executive John McDonald said: "For more than 40 years, OPITO has been at the forefront of the development of a safe and highly skilled global energy workforce, operating in remote, hazardous and highly-regulated environments.

"These new products mark a strategic shift for our organisation and will enable us to apply our vast experience to the renewable energy industry as the energy mix further diversifies. Recognising the clear synergies that exist across the different parts of the industry, these new products will help to ensure the provision of a multi-disciplined and flexible workforce, now and in the future."

Wood and SGN seek decarbonisation solutions

WOOD, the global engineering and consulting company, and gas distribution network company SGN are working together on a project to evaluate and deliver short, medium and long-term solutions for the cross-sectoral decarbonisation of the North-east and east coast of Scotland.

SGN is committed to reaching netzero carbon emissions by 2045, providing heat and warmth to 14 million people in homes and businesses across Scotland and southern England.

The North East Network and Industrial Cluster development project will deliver a comprehensive and practical roadmap which enables existing and future gas networks to help meet national net-zero 2045 decarbonisation targets, and the ultimate goal of providing 100% hydrogen from renewable sources. The feasibility of this will be investigated alongside a carbon collection network to sequester CO2 from difficult to decarbonise sectors and possible negative emissions.

The multi-disciplinary team from across Wood's global business, including renewables, carbon capture, hydrogen production and pipeline distribution experts will investigate re-purposing and further developing SGN's existing distribution gas networks on the east coast and central belt of Scotland as a viable alternative to natural gas, using hydrogen and carbon capture and storage (CCS) technologies.

According to the North East Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage Alliance (NECCUS), Scottish industry currently emits about 11.9Mt CO2 per year, the equivalent of around 2.6 million cars. With many of the largest emitters clustered together, key industrial locations such as Grangemouth, Mossmorran and St Fergus will be major focal points for the study.

Sainsbury's for Countesswells new town

UK RETAILER Sainsbury's is to open a store at Aberdeen's new and growing town, Countesswells.

The 4,000sq ft local store within the neighbourhood centre currently under construction is expected to open in the summer. It will offer a range of fresh food as well as other convenience products and will include an ATM cash machine.

Martin Dalziel, project director at Countesswells Development Limited, said: "Sainsbury's is a brand that is very much aligned with the aspirations of Countesswells. This investment in the new community supports local jobs and provides a much-needed local supermarket. It underlines our drive to make Countesswells a highly sought after and desirable residential community."

Backed by an innovative UK Government funding agreement, Countesswells is so far the first and only homes project to be supported by a HM Treasury Guarantee Scheme. The £86m guarantee was instrumental in helping to accelerate the project, allowing the developers to invest up-front in the landscaping and infrastructure on site.



Andrew Blain

Shepherd and Wedderburn wins award

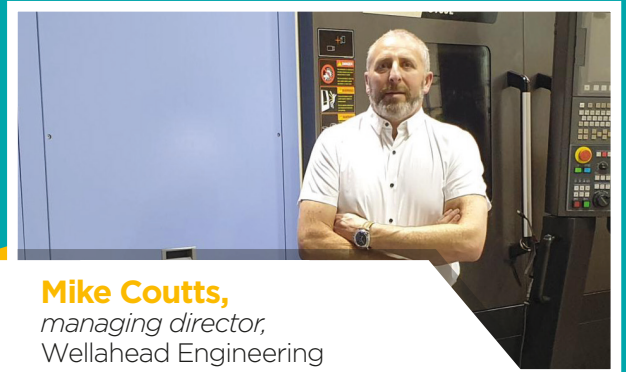
SHEPHERD and Wedderburn has been named Regional/Offshore Firm of the Year in the Legal Business Awards. Now in their 23rd year, the Legal Business Awards recognise the achievements of lawyers working in the UK and overseas.

The Regional/Offshore award recognises the achievements of the UK-based regional or offshore firm (with headquarters outside London) which has made the most significant progress over the past year in advancing its strategy. The key factors taken into account are evidence of effective leadership, impressive financial performance and increased market share.

The judges' decision was informed by research carried out by Legal Business, Legal 500 and independent legal experts into the quality of legal services, sustained growth and new business wins.

Andrew Blain, Shepherd and Wedderburn's managing partner, said: "The quality of our lawyers and the depth of our expertise across all our practice areas and sector groups positions us well to grow our business as we emerge from the pandemic. We will continue to look to invest in talent and technology and to seize the opportunities that present themselves this year, with a particular focus on our market-leading clean energy practice, which is working with clients to help accelerate a green recovery."

SME Spotlight



Mike Coutts,
managing director,
Wellahead Engineering

When was your business established?

Wellahead Engineering was established in 1998.

What does your business do?

We deliver precision machining services and engineering solutions for a wide variety of industrial, commercial and private applications including in oil and gas, marine and renewables.

What sort of companies do you do business with?

We work with a range of clients across many sectors but primarily within the energy industry.

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

Like many other companies within the oil and gas sector, we are faced with another downturn not long after the last one and with the added pressure of CV19, suppliers are being pushed for further cost reductions and increased payment terms.

And the biggest opportunity?

In June of this year Wellahead announced a multi-million investment from Serba Dinamik. This investment will allow us to grow and expand the business by looking at new international markets and the prospect of global expansion.

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

Receiving great customer feedback from our on-time deliveries and quality machining is a great reminder that we are doing a good job. It's important not to become stagnant and to move with the times so purchasing our 5-axis machine during the last downturn was an important move.

What has been most valuable to you as members of Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce?

Over the years the Chamber has been a great source of support and expertise in areas that we don't have a full-time need for in-house. As we begin to fully transition out of the EU, this will become even more prominent and important for us.

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Sustainable internationalisation

David Halliday,
business development manager,
Roemex



IN MAY 2019 I wrote a blog on considering the environmental impact of business development, specifically pertaining to international travel. At that time, I was travelling to Oslo for a series of client meetings and my conscience was being pricked by the environmental impact of what I was doing.

Ever increasing CO2 emissions will cause the UK to heat up by 5.4 degrees Celsius by 2070. That return flight from Aberdeen to Norway back in May 2019 would have dumped enough CO2 into the atmosphere for 160 hot showers or to allow me to commute a 50-mile return trip to the office for three weeks.

I don't proclaim to be Mystic Meg but I went on to discuss why we should embrace virtual meetings, use the technology and tools at our disposal; perhaps not all of the time but offset every other face to face meeting with a virtual meeting. Pondering how different that skill set might be, in March 2020 we need ponder no more. As the pandemic hit and the lockdown was implemented, we were forced to adapt, not only to have virtual client meetings but for every internal or external meeting of any kind.

Roemex has always been at the forefront of developing green chemistry, driven by our internal philosophy, our clients and environmental legislation in sensitive marine environments. We transitioned to a paperless office, increased our recycling and waste segregation. Yet 40 people were commuting into the office every day, largely by car. Furthermore, we were using air travel as the key means to reach clients in export markets, pumping tonnes of CO2 into the atmosphere and we were not alone there.

At the start of lockdown, greenhouse gas emissions from aviation reduced by 90%. Passenger car emissions reduced by 60%. Perhaps not surprising given the state of the country at that time, however by July there was still a reduction in passenger car emissions of 30%. We have proved that, where the job type permits, we can work effectively without travelling unnecessarily.

Both as an industry and as a nation we have done the unthinkable; we have bucked a trend. And from a sustainability aspect we must be mindful not to regress.

There is still huge value in face to face interactions, in fact it's the best way to build and maintain

relationships. I miss seeing my clients in person and the myriad of good coffees sadly lacking from my home office...

Going forward we must use the experience we have had in the last six months as a lesson in how to retain and grow our businesses - especially in international markets - without being there in person every time.




There is a toolbox open in front of us all, it is merely a case of determining if air, car, train, MS Teams or even just picking up the phone is the most appropriate. Commercially, every dollar saving on travel, assuming it can be undertaken effectively remotely, goes straight onto the bottom line. In these times more than ever, we need to constantly innovate, adapt, survive and thrive once again.



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November



Join us to hear insights from Colette Cohen of the OGTC and Steve Connor of brand agency Creative Concern



It's been a milestone year for HR professionals, sign up today to make sure you are across the key issues. Speakers include Caspar Glyn QC.

2 Nov

9:00 - 10:30
Webinar

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Business Breakfast: Europe's oil & gas capital, leading the world in energy transition

It's a year until COP 26 comes to Scotland. What an opportunity for the nation, and the North-east in particular, to demonstrate how it is ideally placed to be a global player in delivering the research, technology and new energy solutions to enable the drive towards net zero.

4 Nov

9:15 - 10:30
Event
Management
Webinar

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Tracepass - the new employee screening and reporting app

Would you like to find out how you can easily mitigate and manage health risk within your organisation?

Join us to learn more about Insiso's new app and how it could transform the way your organisation operates.

11 Nov

10:00 - 11:00
Webinar

In partnership with:



EU Exit - 50 Days to Go

Don't miss this event series of topical and interactive webinars designed to count down to the end of the EU transition period.

Full of practical information and advice on what businesses need to do now in order to be prepared for the changes on January 1, 2021, customs expert Liam Smyth will also guide businesses through the jargon and complexities of customs processes.

12 Nov

8:30 - 10:00
Online

Employment Law Webinar

The popular Annual Employment Law Conference, held in partnership with Scotland's leading employment law advisers Burness Paull LLP and Pinsent Masons LLP has been reformatted this year to a webinar. Hear about the latest in employment law from a range of legal experts.

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NORTHERN STAR2021 BUSINESS AWARDS



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

Recognising the exceptional accomplishments of organisations across a range of fields from innovation, marketing and sustainability to people development and international growth, this year saw a record 130 nominations submitted for the 12 categories.

Winners of the 17th annual awards, held in association with principal sponsor Nucore Group, will be unveiled during a glittering black-tie ceremony at P&J Live on March 11, 2021. The finalists in the categories are:

- **Business of the Year**
Aberdeen International Airport
Goldstar Cleaning Services
Infinity Partnership
Motive Offshore Group
- **Customer First**
Arrowdown
Grace May
Infinity Partnership
Nimbus Blue
Stompers Childcare Services
- **Driving Sustainability**
Glulam
Keenan Recycling
Legasea
Wood Recyclability
- **Family Business**
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Marshall Farms
The Knowes Hotel and Restaurant
- **Going Global**
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BIG Partnership and Aberdeen Football Club
- **Charlie House**
University of Aberdeen
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Taxassist
- **Staff Matter**
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- **Student Placement**
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Going Global sponsored by



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Inspiring Futures sponsored by



Student Placement sponsored by



The 2021 ceremony will also see a new award introduced, the Regional Contribution Award. The nominees for this award will be announced shortly.

Join us and help celebrate our region's success. A variety of options are available for attending. Full tables seat 10 people and are priced at £1,475 +VAT for members, £1,330 for premier partners and £1,100 for third sector organisations. We also offer individual seats at networking tables priced at £147.50.

Looking for extra brand exposure? A limited number of sponsorship opportunities are still available.

Contact events@agcc.co.uk for more information.

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Stuart Law

Anderson Anderson & Brown LLP (AAB), has appointed Stuart Law as director of payroll and taxes. He joins the team to support ongoing growth, with a focus on London and the central belt. Having spent his career in the professional services environment, Stuart brings significant experience and a wealth of knowledge to AAB.



Gerard Ryan

Gerard Ryan has returned to Crane Worldwide Logistics as president, global commercial. An established global leader in the logistics field his international leadership experience and ability to drive mutual strategic value for clients and 3PL organizations with proven results is a timely addition to advance and strengthen partnerships.



James Rushe

Allied Perimeter Safety Netting has appointed James Rushe as its new operations manager. James has more than 30 years in the marine and offshore safety netting sector and his wealth of experience will be beneficial in the inspection, installation and certification of helideck nets to ships and rigs worldwide.



Franziska Inman

Blue Water Shipping has appointed industry expert Franziska Inman to its Houston team as business development vice president. The Americas is a key growth point for Blue Water, and through the collaborative efforts of the teams in Houston, Guyana, Trinidad, and Brazil, Blue Water has demonstrated strong capabilities.



Agnes Fu

Creative agency Hampton has appointed Agnes Fu in a dual role as an account executive and studio planner. Prior to joining, Agnes was an event manager with full-service agency, Progressive, in Budapest, Hungary. In her new role she will support the account management team in delivering creative, marketing and digital campaigns for a wide range of clients.



Niall Simpson

ITWORX has strengthened its services team by appointing Niall Simpson as a systems technician. Niall is now part of the first line team to deal with customer support requests. His duties include ticket logging/handling, remote customer support, daily validation of backups, customer equipment preparation and asset processing.



Gemma Quirke

Wilson James has appointed Gemma Quirke as its chief operating officer. Previously the company's managing director for security and aviation, in this newly created position she is responsible for overseeing the company's growth strategy, implementing new corporate initiatives, strengthening strategic partnerships and ensuring that Wilson James remains resilient and agile as the group expands.



Pierre Girard

Neptune Energy has appointed Pierre Girard to the newly-created role of director of new energy. Currently director of commercial and joint ventures, UK, he previously held the role of interim managing director of Neptune's UK business. He has more than 30 years' experience in the oil and gas industry and a background in petroleum and reservoir engineering.



Caroline Hiscox

Professor Caroline Hiscox will take over as chief executive of NHS Grampian this month following the retirement of current chief executive Amanda Croft. Prof Hiscox joined the health board in 2015 and became executive nurse director in 2018. She has more than 30 years professional experience and was awarded a PhD in 2019.



Spencer Buchan

Spencer Buchan has joined London-based media specialists Quantum Digital as co-owner and managing director. Heading up growth strategies for the globally developing content business, Spencer will play a key role in developing Quantum Digital's wider remit outside of London.



Iain Taylor and Alan McIntyre

Global safety, training and competency organisation RelyOn Nutec has made two key director level appointments in Aberdeen. Iain Taylor has been promoted to UK commercial director from global sales manager at RelyOn Nutec Digital, whilst Alan McIntyre has moved into director for managed services and consultancy from his previous role in the business as operations manager in crisis management. Both bring significant experience in the training industry with Iain working in digital training roles prior to joining the RelyOn Nutec Global team, and Alan spending his career in emergency response and health and safety training following a stint offshore.

Other recent appointments

Adam Davies has joined Savills in the newly created role of Scottish tourism, leisure and events consultant. He will be working with the tourism, leisure and events team to provide strategic and operational advice to owners and managers of historic houses, rural estates, farms and leisure-based businesses on establishing new, or developing existing tourism, leisure and events enterprises.

Sistema Scotland has appointed **Paul Philbert** and **Catherine Muirden** as members of the charity's board. Sistema Scotland is committed to supporting children and young people to achieve their full potential through the Big Noise model of long-term, immersive music teaching and inclusive, community-focused orchestras, underpinned by the development of nurturing relationships with the inspirational Big Noise musicians. The charity runs four Big Noise programmes across Scotland including Big Noise Torry in Aberdeen.

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.

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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:
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