

MAY 2026 | CELEBRATING OUR REGION

# BUSINESS BULLETIN



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BUSINESS  
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Grampian  
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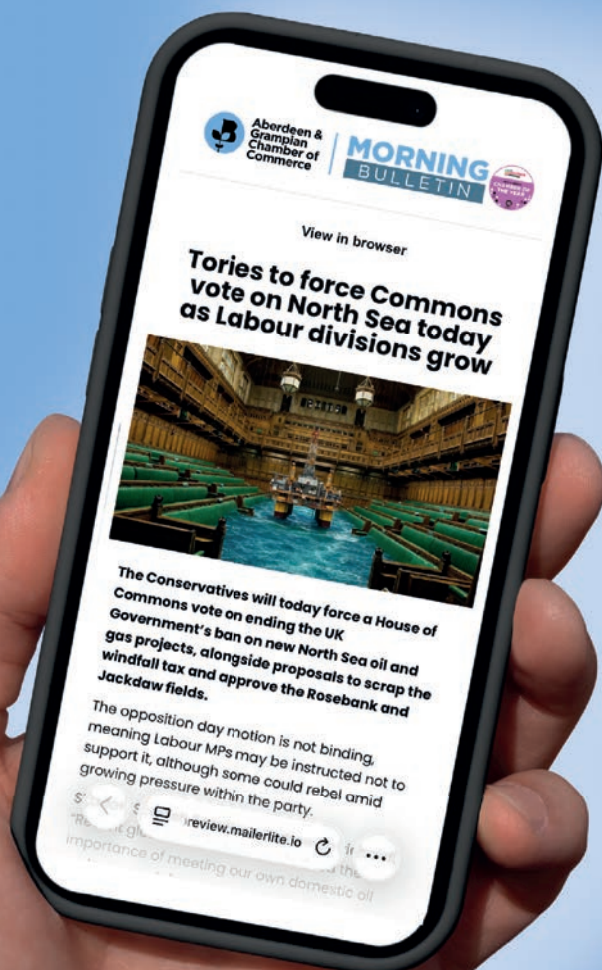
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T 01224 343900  
E [info@agcc.co.uk](mailto:info@agcc.co.uk)  
[www.agcc.co.uk](http://www.agcc.co.uk)

**Affiliated Chambers**  
Moray



### Bulletin Team



#### Editor

Ryan Crighton  
T 01224 343926  
E [bulletin@agcc.co.uk](mailto:bulletin@agcc.co.uk)



#### Advertising

Pauline Western  
T 01224 343919  
E [pauline.western@agcc.co.uk](mailto:pauline.western@agcc.co.uk)



#### Design & production

Geri Mulvany  
T 01224 343934  
E [production@agcc.co.uk](mailto:production@agcc.co.uk)



#### Journalist

Danny McKay  
T 01224 343939  
E [danny.mckay@agcc.co.uk](mailto:danny.mckay@agcc.co.uk)



#### Editorial

Rebecca Henderson  
T 01224 343907  
E [rebecca.henderson@agcc.co.uk](mailto:rebecca.henderson@agcc.co.uk)

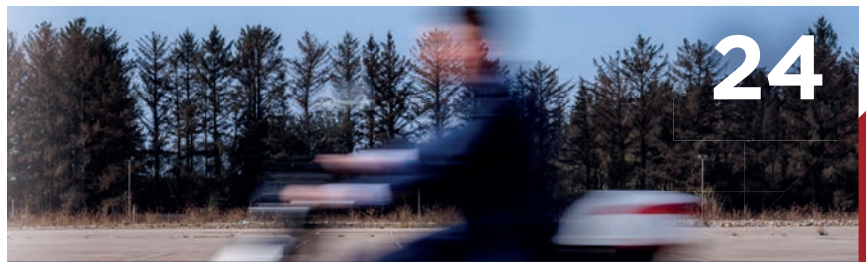
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# A region well worth celebrating...

**Across the North-east, we can sometimes fall into the habit of understatement. We get on with the job. We keep building, creating, adapting and delivering. We don't always stop to recognise what is being achieved around us.**

That is why this edition matters.

It is a chance to celebrate a region that continues to surprise people from the outside – and, if we are honest, occasionally from within too.

It is also a chance to recognise the individuals, businesses and organisations proving every day that the North-east of Scotland remains one of the most ambitious, resilient and capable places anywhere in the country.

The winners of this year's Northern Star Business Awards, featured throughout these pages, are a perfect example of that. They represent excellence across sectors, scales and specialisms. They show that success here is not limited to one industry or one postcode. It is broad, diverse and alive with possibility.

But they are also part of a much bigger story.

Over the past year, we have seen powerful reminders of what happens when this region believes in itself and works together.

Take the Tall Ships, one of our big winners at the Northern Star awards. For a few unforgettable days, Aberdeen became the centre of attention in the very best way. Our streets were full, our harbour was transformed, our hotels, bars, shops and attractions were buzzing, and hundreds of thousands of people experienced the city at its warmest and most vibrant.

The final figures tell their own story: almost half a million visits and more than £32million generated for the local economy. Those numbers matter. They mean trade for businesses, jobs supported and confidence boosted.

But the real legacy goes further than economics. Tall Ships reminded us that Aberdeen can host events of real scale and significance. It showed what can be achieved when the public sector, private sector, civic organisations and volunteers pull in the same direction. Most importantly, it gave people pride in their city again.

That pride is powerful. It changes how we talk about ourselves. It changes how others see us. And it creates momentum.

We are seeing that momentum continue.

The return of the FIA World Rally Championship to the UK – with Rally Scotland headquartered in Aberdeen from 2027 – is another landmark moment. This is a global sporting event with an international audience, major visitor appeal and huge economic potential for the North-east.

To secure it is a statement of intent.

It says our region has the infrastructure, the expertise and the ambition to compete for world-class opportunities. It says Aberdeen is not looking backwards. We are looking ahead.

With P&J Live as the hub, our airport on the doorstep, and some of the best rally stages in the world on surrounding terrain, the ingredients are here for something truly special. The projected economic impact over the first three years is substantial, but again the wider significance matters just as much.

Events like this inspire young people. They create volunteering opportunities. They showcase our landscapes and communities to global audiences. They bring energy and excitement. They help reposition the North-east in the minds of investors, visitors and decision-makers.

And there is more.

The extraordinary response to the new City of Aberdeen Half Marathon – selling out in just six days – tells us there is real appetite for experiences that bring people together and show off our region. It also gives us a strong platform for the return of a full city marathon in 2027.

Imagine what that can become: thousands of runners filling our streets, spectators lining the route, landmarks on display, businesses benefiting, and another annual reason for people to visit Aberdeen. It could do every year what Tall Ships did in 2025.

This is how modern places grow. Not through one silver bullet, but through momentum built across multiple fronts – business success, major events, infrastructure investment, culture, tourism and quality of life.

That is why our campaign for better transport links matters too. Public support for reopening rail connections to Ellon, Peterhead and Fraserburgh shows people understand that connectivity is central to opportunity. Better links mean stronger communities, easier commuting, wider labour markets and greater investment potential.

The North-east has never lacked talent or ideas. Too often, it has lacked the infrastructure and confidence to match them. That can change.

Of course, no region succeeds by standing still. We still face challenges. We are navigating economic transition, policy uncertainty and fierce competition for investment. But we should never confuse challenge with decline.

The story of the North-east is not one of retreat. It is one of reinvention.

We remain an energy capital, now broadening into renewables, decarbonisation and new technologies. We remain a world-class place to do business. We remain home to entrepreneurs, exporters, educators, makers and community leaders who are constantly raising the bar.

And we remain a region worth celebrating.

So as you read about our Northern Star winners and the many successes featured in this edition, I hope you feel the same optimism I do.

There is something happening here.

The North-east is building again. It is backing itself again. It is showing what it can do again.

And the best chapters of our story may still lie ahead.

  
**Russell Borthwick**  
 Chief Executive



# OUR PREMIER PARTNERS

The Chamber sits at the heart of the North-east business community and one of our core aims is to help create the economic conditions and business environment which will allow this region to flourish.

Our premier partners see the value of a strong regional Chamber and choose to engage with us at this level to reinforce their ongoing commitment to the region and its economy.

Without their support we would not be able to undertake much of the work that we do. Their engagement is hugely valued and appreciated.

**If you are interested in joining them, we'd love to talk to you!**



## NHV Group secures Breagh Alpha drilling campaign contract with INEOS

NHV Group has announced a new contract award with INEOS UK SNS Limited for the Breagh Alpha drilling campaign, marking a significant addition to its offshore operations portfolio.

The agreement will see NHV deploy its H175 helicopter to support drilling activities at the Breagh Alpha platform, with operations scheduled to commence in September 2026 and continue into 2027. The H175, known for its advanced capabilities and efficiency in offshore transport, will play a key role in ensuring safe and reliable crew transfer.

The contract reflects NHV's continued commitment to delivering tailored aviation solutions that meet the specific operational needs of its clients. The deployment will provide dependable and efficient support throughout the duration of the campaign.

This latest partnership further strengthens NHV's relationship with INEOS and highlights its position as a trusted provider of offshore helicopter services in the region. NHV looks forward to supporting INEOS in the successful execution of the Breagh Alpha campaign.



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## Boskalis marks first successful ROV deployment from its new Remote Operations Centre in Aberdeen

Boskalis has announced the successful first deployment of remotely operated vehicles (ROVs) from its new Remote Operations Centre (ROC) in Aberdeen, following an 18-month development program and an investment of £40million in ROVs and the ROC.

This milestone reflects the company's continuous focus on innovation, safety and future-proof offshore solutions.

The ROC significantly expands Boskalis' remote operating capabilities by enabling critical subsea tasks to be supported and controlled from shore.

The centre provides a central hub for fleet operations, offers additional on demand expertise to support offshore crews and is designed to enhance operational efficiency, strengthen safety and ensure consistent delivery across projects.

Bart Heijermans, COO and member of the board of management, commented: "The ROC is a proud milestone for our team and a significant step forward in the way we deliver subsea operations.

"It demonstrates how innovation and technology can make our work safer, more efficient and better integrated.

"It also represents an important investment in our subsea services offering from our Aberdeen office, creating more than 50 high-quality onshore roles in the next five years to support our offshore crew and vessels while maintaining the high standards our clients expect."

The center has successfully completed a test phase, during which ROVs underwent a week of intensive trials from the Boka Northern Ocean Construction Support Vessel in the North Sea to validate remote operations across a range of anticipated scenarios.

Boskalis will continue to enhance the ROC by integrating additional remote survey and inspection services, unlocking further efficiencies and reinforcing its position in subsea innovation.



## Anonymous North-east business donates £1million to NESCol

North East Scotland College has been awarded £100,000 by a long-standing benefactor – taking the total gifted by the company to £1million.

The local firm, which has remained anonymous since making its first gift to the college in 2020, has underlined its commitment to initiatives designed to enhance opportunities for individuals served by the Fraserburgh Campus.

The latest tranche of funding includes £50,000 to enable a pilot project to be established to provide tailored support for young people at risk of disengaging from education. There will also be a £30,000 investment in facilities for students in the care professions, with a simulated environment to be created to aid the teaching of practical skills. The remaining £20,000 will fund a cyclonic separation chamber, which will improve extraction in joinery workshops.

Neil Cowie, NESCol Principal and Chief Executive, said: “When the first generous donation was made by our benefactor in 2020 we could not have predicted the way this relationship between the two organisations would grow and evolve.

“To be marking the £1million milestone in 2026 is a significant achievement and our thanks go to all who have been so supportive of our college’s ambitions during this period.

“Throughout the past six years we have worked in partnership with the benefactor to identify opportunities to make a real difference to the individuals and communities we serve from our Fraserburgh Campus, as well as for enhancements to the Scottish Maritime Academy (SMA) in Peterhead.

“The latest donation will enable us to continue improving facilities as well as also providing seed funding for a pilot initiative that we see huge potential in. Further details on that will be shared as we develop the concept further, but at its core is a determination to ensure that every individual has the chance to fulfil their potential. By working with secondary school counterparts, we hope to demonstrate what is possible when new approaches are embraced.”

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# Celebrating 120 years of His Majesty's Theatre

## Aberdeen Performing Arts boss on the importance of creative arts

By Rebecca Henderson

**Few buildings capture the spirit of a place quite like His Majesty's Theatre. For 120 years, it has stood at the heart of the region's creative sector and provided a stage for world class performances.**

And for Aberdeen Performing Arts Chief Executive Sharon Burgess, ensuring its legacy lives on is not only a privilege but a responsibility.

**'We have a huge sense of pride and gratitude'**

Opened in 1906, His Majesty's Theatre has long been a cornerstone of the region's cultural identity. Now, as it marks its 120th anniversary, Aberdeen Performing Arts (APA) has launched a campaign to shine a light not just on the building, but on the work that keeps it alive.

"The reason we're doing it is that it gives me and the team an opportunity to amplify the work that we do that's not always seen," Sharon explains.

"We have a huge sense of pride and gratitude, and I feel it's a privilege to be a custodian of this building, and the others in our portfolio."

And that pride is matched by a deep sense of responsibility.

"There's a guardianship that comes with the job and we have to ensure that what has come from the past is going to be fit for the future," she says.

"It's about focusing on the buildings, the work that we're putting on our stages, and the future of Aberdeen Performing Arts in its entirety, and the pride that we give back to the North-east."

"Theatre is such an integral part of people's lives in the city," she adds.

"People come here to create memories and share experiences, so that collective feeling of community is enduring and means so much.

"People take real pride in it, and I guarantee anybody bringing a visitor to the city will walk past our building and say, 'that's our beautiful theatre'. You just can't not love it."

**'The resilience and willingness to adapt is a reflection of the region'**

While the theatre's façade remains timeless, what happens inside it has continually evolved.

"It's about always changing, retaining relevance and ensuring that we meet the needs of the communities we serve at any given time," Sharon says.

"If you think about 120 years ago, there would have been variety shows on these stages, now it's big West End musicals.

"That resilience and willingness to adapt is a reflection of the region itself."

Like the North-east economy, the arts sector has had to navigate decades of social and economic change, and APA has adapted alongside it.

“Our communities have had to change and adapt through economic and social shifts over the years,” she says. “Our focus has always been to ensure that everybody feels included.”

That commitment to inclusion is visible from the moment visitors arrive, with ‘Everyone is Welcome Here’ signs installed across APA venues. But for Sharon, inclusion must go far beyond signage.

“It has to be a feeling. When you come in, you feel welcome and you feel like this is a place for you.”

Aberdeen Performing Arts’ evolution into one of Scotland’s largest independent arts charities was a pivotal moment in its history.

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## “People are at the centre of everything we do...”

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“In my three years here, I’ve learned a lot about the organisation and its history,” she says.

“One of the fundamental defining moments before my time was when the charity was formed over 20 years ago.

“Becoming an independent charity to support the three venues created an opportunity to deliver work at scale.”

That shift enabled APA to expand its programming, connect its venues and significantly broaden its reach.

“We’re one of the largest independent charities in Scotland and we have significant influence in the sector, so that moment of becoming a charity was a real turning point,” she explains

But for Sharon, the buildings themselves remain central to that mission.

“If we don’t use them, we lose them. They build identity and show that the region is an incredible place to live and work.

“These buildings need to be maintained and loved, but more than anything, they need to be used. People need to step through the doors every day to keep them alive.”

## ENGAGEMENT AT THE HEART OF THE COMMUNITY

At its core, Aberdeen Performing Arts’ work is about people.

“People are at the centre of everything we do,” Sharon says.

“Theatre has a responsibility to bring people together.”

That philosophy underpins a wide range of engagement initiatives designed to tackle isolation and widen participation - from youth programmes to social groups for older people.

One initiative is a script-reading group for the over-60s.

“They come in, read together, then meet socially, and eventually attend a performance of the script they’ve read,” Sharon explains.

“That one project has a huge ripple effect and engagement can make a real difference in people’s lives.”

## LIGHT THE BLUE FESTIVAL

Among APA’s most impactful initiatives is its flagship youth festival, Light the Blue.

“Light the Blue is a festival for young people, by young people - and that’s the key,” Sharon says.

“It’s not just about watching, it’s about participating, creating and shaping.”

Now in its eighth year, the multi-arts festival attracts around 9,500 attendees each year with 1,500 young people actively taking part.

“It builds confidence, empowers participants and creates pathways into careers,” she adds. “I want to see those young people progress from age seven to performing on our stages as adults.”

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## ‘This work is never finished; it’s about continuous impact’

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Ensuring access to the arts remains central to APA’s mission, particularly at a time when many face financial and economic pressure.

“Participation is key,” Sharon says. “Through our engagement programmes, we bring people in who might not otherwise come.

“If people can’t afford to attend, we provide opportunities and operate a ‘no questions asked’ policy. Our doors are always open.”

To support this work, APA has launched a £120,000 fundraising campaign as part of its anniversary celebrations, aimed at investing in the next century of cultural life in Aberdeen.

“It will amplify our reach, raise awareness and expand opportunities for access for isolated or disadvantaged communities,” Sharon says.

“This work is never finished. It’s about continuous impact.”

Despite ongoing financial challenges across the sector, Sharon is clear about the importance of continued investment.

“Our sector, like many others, is under financial pressure, but we are constantly working to keep access affordable and protect what we’ve achieved,” she says.

"The case for support is ongoing - not just for now, but always."

And that case extends beyond culture alone.

"It's about the impact we have on people's lives and the memories we create, but there's also economic impact and opportunities for people who might not otherwise have them.

"But most importantly, it's about social impact and making a difference to people who live here and attracting people who don't live here yet."

## **RAISING THE CURTAIN ON LEGACY PLANS**

As APA looks ahead, Sharon's ambition is rooted in legacy.

"It's about lasting impact," she says. "I want people bringing their children to pantomime to become the same people bringing their grandchildren."

Ultimately, it comes down to connection and ensuring that the spark ignited within His Majesty's Theatre continues to shine for generations to come.

As the conversation draws to a close, Sharon reflects on how she hopes the organisation will be remembered.

"That it made a difference," she says. "A positive difference."



## Station Garage wins UK Dealer of the Year Award

Station Garage Torphins celebrated an outstanding and memorable evening at the KGM UK Dealer of the Year Awards, achieving remarkable success with three prestigious accolades.

The business was honoured with the top title of KGM UK Dealer of the Year 2025, marking the second consecutive year they have received this award, alongside securing first place in Sales UK Dealer of the Year 2025 and third place in Aftersales UK Dealer of the Year 2025.

These achievements represent a significant milestone for the team and reflect the dedication, professionalism, and passion consistently demonstrated across all areas of the business. From sales through to aftersales care, the awards highlight a commitment to delivering exceptional service standards and building lasting relationships with customers.

Central to this success is the continued support and loyalty of customers, both long-standing and new. Station Garage Torphins recognised that this achievement would not have been possible without the trust, recommendations, and ongoing relationships built within the local community and beyond.

Winning Dealer of the Year for a second year running further underlines the consistency and strength of the team's performance, reinforcing their position as a leading dealership within the network. This trio of awards not only celebrates past achievements but also highlights Station Garage Torphins' ongoing commitment to excellence and their ambition for continued success in the years ahead.



## CUT UK announces jump in revenue

Aberdeen-based cutting specialists CUT UK announced a 85% growth in Q1 revenue, compared to Q1 2025.

These figures are a result of a high number of subsea and topside cutting projects awarded to CUT, all over the world. The projects were varied, including cutting offshore platform legs, braces, FPSO mooring chains, large piles, pipelines and windfarm cable protection systems. A couple of very high-profile projects were completed, which will be announced by CUT in due course.

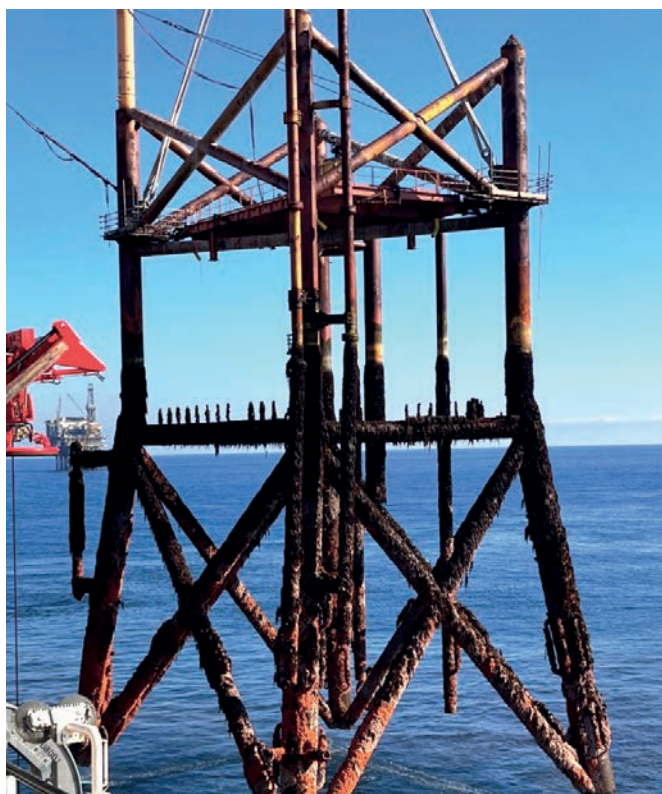
2025 was a record year for CUT. However, 2026 could not have started more positively, and CUT looks forward to a busy Q2 where they will be very active in the North Sea, Australia, Malaysia, South America and West Africa. Its patented services and unrivalled range of diamond wire cutting equipment are in high demand.

Bruce Sinclair, Business Development Manager, said: "CUT are proud of our track record, safety statistics, and ability to always get the job done quickly and within budget.

"Our customer satisfaction reports keep improving year-on-year and we are constantly looking to improve and evolve. It's satisfying when the company performance reflects the effort put in by the whole team."

Tiziana Marras, General Manager, added: "Q1 was hugely productive, with visits to clients in Holland and Australia, a new client, a number of live projects and project mobilisations.

"The cutting performance on the live projects was of the highest standard and is a credit to the everyone at CUT."



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Our customers are anyone seeking upskilling, change management support, or digital transformation guidance. We work best with people who share our vision, collaborating to build long-term solutions and relationships that evolve with their needs.

## What is the biggest challenge and opportunity your organisation is facing right now?

Our current challenge is aligning with the new Employment Rights Bill. But this also presents a major

opportunity: to demonstrate our agility and offer practical, compliant solutions to both existing and future clients. It's a chance to show that we live the values we teach—adapting quickly and supporting change through our Learning Toolkit and training expertise.

## What is your word of advice for fellow Chamber members?

Build relationships that last. Don't just solve the problem in front of you—show up with passion, consistency, and a genuine desire to help. That's how trust grows, and partnerships thrive.

## What is the best thing about being a Chamber member?

Best Thing About Being a Chamber Member Networking, credibility, and advocacy. The Chamber opens doors to valuable connections, boosts visibility through events, and gives businesses a collective voice to influence local policy—directly supporting growth and innovation.



**Ken Reid,**  
*Business Development Manager*  
ITWORX UK

## Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

ITWORX UK is the North-east's premier employee-owned IT Solutions provider.

For 15 years, we've delivered innovative and trusted managed IT, communications, and cybersecurity solutions that keep businesses

secure, productive, efficient, and ready for the future opportunities.

## Who are your customers?

We support a lot of well-known SMEs across the North-east and beyond who choose us for high-value reliable IT support, Cybersecurity, Modern Telephony, Networks, Compliance and Business continuity—all backed by our renowned reputation for service excellence.

## What is the biggest challenge and opportunity your organisation is facing right now?

Cyber threats are growing exponentially but so is demand for resilient layered IT and Compliance.

Our challenge—and opportunity—is helping businesses turn compliance and security into strengths that drive their growth and productivity.

## What is your word of advice for fellow Chamber members?

Prioritise trust, security, and nurture supportive relationships.

Look after your customers and they will look after you.

Business Success is only as strong as the people, partnerships and service behind it.

## What is the best thing about being a Chamber member?

The Chamber gives us a voice in the business community—connecting us with decision-makers, offering new opportunities to inform the business community about us and our values, and the platforms to meet people on a human personal level.

Relationships really matter to us.

# MEMBER MEET *the* ME



**Charlie Cameron,**  
*Managing Director*  
Rizon Training

## Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

We provide high quality training to high-risk industries covering subjects such as plant, machinery, work at height, confined space and rescue. We also provide leadership training from shop floor to the boardroom.

## Tell us about your management style and how it has worked for you.

My management style is fairly social and laid back, but with a strong focus on standards and detail when it matters. I believe people perform best in a positive, supportive working environment where they feel trusted and valued. That approach has helped build strong relationships within the team, encouraged open communication, and allowed us to maintain high-quality delivery without losing the human side of the business.

## What is the biggest barrier you overcame in the workplace and how did you tackle it?

One of the biggest barriers I've faced was building credibility and trust in a highly regulated, safety critical industry. I tackled this by leading from the front - ensuring our training met the highest standards,

investing in competent instructors, and never compromising on quality. Over time, consistent delivery and strong client relationships helped establish Rizon Training as a trusted name in the sector.

## What's the best bit of business or life advice you've ever received?

"Do what you say you're going to do." It sounds simple, but consistency, honesty, and follow through build trust - whether that's with clients, employees, or partners. That advice has stuck with me throughout my career.

## What's your top tip for someone joining your organisation today?

Be open to learning and take pride in what you do. We work in environments where safety, professionalism, and attention to detail really matter, so a positive attitude and a willingness to develop will take you a long way at Rizon Training.



**Lewis Downing & Zander Pennie**  
*Co-Founders & Co-CEO*  
Blu-Tech ADV

## Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

Blu-Tech ADV streamlines business operations through AI automation. We analyse workflows, identify inefficiencies, and build tailored systems that cut costs, save time, and boost productivity, turning complexity into clarity.

## Who are your customers?

Our customers are growth-focused SMEs across industries seeking to streamline operations and scale efficiently.

We work with businesses ready to embrace AI automation, whether in retail, logistics, finance, or beyond, without limiting ourselves to a single niche.

If you're wasting time or money, we're here to help.

## What is the biggest challenge and opportunity your organisation is facing right now?

Our biggest challenge is marketing without external funding.

As a self-made consultancy, limited capital restricts our ability to scale visibility and reach.

We're focused on building brand awareness through organic growth, strategic partnerships, and delivering exceptional results that speak for themselves.

## What is your word of advice for fellow Chamber members?

Keep learning and stay adaptable. Whether you're building a business or shaping your career, progress rarely happens overnight.

Focus on consistency, surround yourself with people who challenge you, and don't be afraid to start small.

Every step forward counts.

## What is the best thing about being a Chamber member?

The best thing about being a Chamber member is the sense of connection.

It opens doors to a supportive network of professionals, valuable learning opportunities, and real collaboration.

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## Walker's Shortbread unveils giant Scottie Dog shortbread sculpture at NYC Tartan Week

Walker's Shortbread, one of America's most beloved Scottish brands, made a spectacular return to the annual NYC Tartan Week parade on Saturday, April 11, unveiling an impressive Scottie dog sculpture made entirely from its world-famous shortbread.

The giant Scottie dog, masterfully created by UK food artist Prudence Staite from over 1,400 individual shortbread pieces, was revealed by Walker's Managing Director Nicky Walker at the Algonquin Hotel.

The sculpture proved a popular attraction with spectators, situated at the heart of the Tartan Day Parade itself on Sixth Avenue.

Every April, a wave of tartan sweeps through the city, and this year Walker's continued its tradition of creating show-stopping art, following its popular shortbread Empire State Building sculpture in 2024.

As part of the celebrations, Walker's invited this year's Tartan Day Parade Grand Marshal, Sam Heughan, to congratulate the winner of the popular Celtic Canine Competition.

The event, sponsored by Walker's and judged by Joseph Gadaleta, CEO at Walker's Shortbread US, highlighted the brand's partnership with The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) to support animal welfare.

As proud Tartan Day sponsors, representatives from Walker's Shortbread also took part in the Tartan Day parade, marching down Sixth Avenue led by the Robert Gordon's College pipe band.

The Giant Scottie Dog sculpture is a fitting tribute from Walker's, bringing to life one of the brand's most iconic and popular shortbread shapes. The structure also honours the company's long-standing ties with the USA.

The USA was the brand's first export market in 1976 and home to Walker's first international office, and the family-owned business has now been sharing the joy of shortbread with Americans for 50 years.

Nicky Walker, Managing Director at Walker's Shortbread, said: "The United States holds a truly special place in the history and heart of our family business.

"It was our first export market, welcoming our shortbread in 1976 and it remains our largest export market today.

"To commemorate our 50th anniversary in the US, we wanted to create a truly memorable tribute during Tartan Week.

"The giant shortbread Scottie Dog celebrates our shared heritage, and we were thrilled to have Sam Heughan join us to crown the winner of the Celtic Canine Competition."



Scottie Dog shortbread sculpture, made from more than 1,400 individual pieces, unveiled by Walker's Shortbread at the Algonquin Hotel in New York City



Sam Heughan and Nicky Walker

# It's time for the UK Government to celebrate the North Sea sector that helped build Britain

## "I will always act in the national interest."

That was the pledge made by Keir Starmer when he entered Downing Street. It is a phrase he repeats often, presenting it as the guiding test for every major decision taken by his government.

If those words are to mean anything, they must apply not only to Westminster priorities, but to the industries, communities and workers that have helped power Britain for generations. Few sectors embody that more than the North Sea.

For decades, the North Sea has been one of Britain's great industrial success stories. It has generated hundreds of billions in tax revenues, supported hundreds of thousands of jobs, strengthened our energy security and built world-class expertise in engineering, technology and offshore operations. It has transformed communities across the North-east of Scotland and far beyond, creating opportunities for families and businesses alike.

## Yet the argument for backing the North Sea goes beyond economics and security.

This is not a legacy to be apologised for. It is one to be recognised and celebrated.

Too often, however, the North Sea is spoken about as though it belongs only to the past - a declining industry to be tolerated on the way to something else. That misunderstands both its present value and its future importance.

At a time of growing geopolitical instability, the case for domestic energy production has become stronger, not weaker. Conflict in the Middle East, disruption to shipping routes and volatility in gas markets have exposed a simple truth, that Britain cannot afford to weaken its own energy base while becoming more dependent on imports.

Domestic supply matters. Gas produced in UK waters and delivered through existing infrastructure is more secure than cargoes shipped halfway around the world. It avoids the extra costs of liquefaction, transport, insurance and regasification. It is less exposed to global shocks and strategic chokepoints. And analysis by Stifel has shown that UK-produced gas can save the country billions compared with imported liquefied natural gas.

That matters to households facing bills, to manufacturers under pressure and to taxpayers exposed to economic shocks.

Yet the argument for backing the North Sea goes beyond economics and security. It is also about recognising the extraordinary capabilities our region has built over decades - and ensuring they are not squandered.

The North-east of Scotland has become a global centre of offshore excellence. Our engineers, technicians, fabricators, subsea specialists and supply-chain companies are respected around the world. Skills honed in the North Sea are exported internationally, generating value and reputation for the UK.

## The Prime Minister should recognise it, back it — and celebrate it.

Those same capabilities are now central to the energy transition. Offshore wind, carbon capture, hydrogen, electrification and decommissioning all depend on the industrial base that oil and gas helped create. The workforce, infrastructure and expertise required for tomorrow's energy system are deeply connected to the sector we have today.

That is why this should never be framed as a choice between supporting the North Sea and pursuing net zero. The two are not mutually exclusive. In reality, one depends on the other.

You cannot build the industries of the future by dismantling the industrial base of the present before replacements are ready.

And many of those replacement opportunities are not yet arriving at the pace once promised. Delays, inflation, grid constraints and investor uncertainty have all slowed progress.

In that environment, allowing existing capacity to decline faster than necessary is not strategic planning. It is self-inflicted damage.

Government therefore has a clear opportunity. It should replace the punitive Energy Profits Levy with a fairer long-term fiscal framework such as the Oil and Gas Price Mechanism. It should support investment certainty. And it should back strategically important developments such as Jackdaw and Rosebank, which can sustain jobs, reinforce supply chains and strengthen resilience during the transition years ahead.

Just as importantly, ministers should change the tone of the national conversation. The North Sea should not be discussed as an inconvenience. It should be recognised as one of Britain's great assets.

Because there is much to celebrate.

There is the ingenuity that unlocked one of the world's most challenging offshore basins. There are the generations of workers whose skill and graft powered homes, businesses and public services. There are the companies that grew from local enterprises into international leaders.

And there is the region itself, whose identity has been shaped by resilience, innovation and ambition.

Keir Starmer speaks often about national renewal. Our North Sea sector is part of that renewal story. It remains vital to Britain's economy, energy security and future prosperity.

The Prime Minister should recognise it, back it — and celebrate it.



**Ryan Crighton,**  
Director of Policy,  
Aberdeen & Grampian  
Chamber of Commerce



## Funding boost helps Home-Start Aberdeen strengthen early years family support

Family support charity, Home-Start Aberdeen has secured £62,874 in funding through the Perinatal and Infant Mental Health (PIMH) Fund, enabling the charity to further support families navigating the challenges of early parenthood.

The funding, provided by the Scottish Government and managed by Inspiring Scotland, will be used to help Home-Start Aberdeen continue delivering its tailored, relationship-led support to families during pregnancy and

the early years, a period widely recognised as critical for both child development and parental mental health.

Cameron McCready, Chief Executive of Home-Start Aberdeen, said: "We're incredibly grateful to receive this funding, which allows us to provide support at a time when it matters most, helping parents feel more confident, less isolated and better equipped to build strong, nurturing relationships with their children."



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**Lisa Cowie**  
Associate Director  
FG Burnett

### Describe your early career path.

My career path has been unconventional. As an early school leaver, I began training as a Beauty Therapist at NEScol and went on to work in several salons across the city. While I enjoyed this line of work and worked with some great people, I soon realised there was limited earning potential. One highlight was working in the salon at E&M's - I always enjoyed browsing the departments on my lunch break. I finished my time there before deciding to retrain in Administration in 2002. This marked a significant career shift, setting me on a new path that ultimately led me into the real estate industry, where I have since built my career.

### How did you arrive in your current industry?

I started in 2004 as a Commercial Secretary and built my experience and knowledge by asking plenty of questions and learning on the job. I have been fortunate to work with supportive colleagues throughout my career, particularly one individual who has backed me from the start. This gave me a solid grounding in the industry and the confidence to keep progressing and developing my career over time.

## In partnership with



### What's the best thing about your job?

Meeting people has always been one of my favourite parts of the job, who knew that when my teachers used to say, "Lisa likes to talk a lot," it would actually become crucial

to my career! I love connecting with a wide range of people from across the UK, each with their own stories. The work is incredibly varied, with no two days the same, and I especially enjoy seeing new businesses open and being able to support them as they grow.

### What has been your proudest achievement to date?

Without a doubt, one of my proudest achievements has been obtaining my MSc in Real Estate from the University of Aberdeen in 2024, alongside gaining my MRICS qualification. I did all of this while working full-time, running a household of seven, and attending classes on campus. I studied whenever I could - early mornings before work, evenings, and practically every weekend for 2-years! I even surprised myself by being awarded a prize for topping my class. Considering I left school at 16 with no undergraduate degree, this experience really showed me what dedication and perseverance can achieve.

### What advice would you give your 18-year-old self?

Trust the process. At 18, I probably thought I had it all figured out. I'm sure my parents would certainly agree! Looking back, I'd tell myself

to be patient, not to be afraid to ask questions, and that it's okay to feel uncomfortable at times. I've never been afraid to work hard, and while the path to get there may not always be straight, it will take you exactly where you need to go.

### What's something surprising that most people wouldn't know about your job?

One thing that has even surprised me about my job is that people often think commercial real estate is all about the property. The surprising part is how much it's actually about people - from clients to tenants. The property is often the easy part... it's the people who make the job interesting. Helping them find the right space, seeing new businesses open, and supporting them along the way is what makes the work truly rewarding.

### How do you unwind in your time off?

Pottering around at home and spending time with my girls and family.

### What did you want to be when you were little?

A beauty therapist on a cruise ship!

### What was your first job?

A paper girl.

# Eskuta's urban convenience harks to suave European moped culture

By Danny McKay

**Having not ridden a bike of any description since my early childhood, I was initially a bit apprehensive when offered the opportunity to try out an Eskuta courtesy of Sport Aberdeen and Eskuta Scotland.**

A very nervous, wobbly test drive didn't do much to improve my confidence, but after taking advantage of the quiet roads around AGCC's office in Bridge of Don to re-learn how to ride a bike, I was a pro in no time at all!

The Eskuta feels safe, comfortable and convenient. The hill-climb button makes setting off easy, and the power kicks in the moment you start to pedal, meaning there's no need to furiously pedal and tire yourself out.

## It's the best of both worlds.

I was given the SX-250 Series 4 electric bike, which delivers up to 40-50 miles per charge. It features a step-through steel frame, self-adjusting suspension, disc brakes, LED lighting, and security system.

The seat lifts up to reveal the well-hidden battery which is easy to take out and bring indoors to charge - which I only needed to do a once a week.

There's storage on the front and the back which is surprisingly spacious and can fit charging cables, a bike lock and a crash helmet with room to spare.

The Eskuta is a perfect blend of styles. It's big enough to feature storage boxes, wing mirrors, lights, indicators and a dashboard - plenty to feel right at home on the roads.

But the Eskuta is classed as a pedal bike, so retains advantages such as being able to use bus lanes and cycle paths - not to mention there's no need for road tax, insurance or any of the other pesky requirements that come with a motorbike or car.

It's the best of both worlds.

My initial loan of the Eskuta was delayed slightly as Aberdeen enjoyed/endured some of the heaviest snowfall we've seen in years, so I'd definitely recommend investing in a good pair of gloves for riding the Eskuta!

Thankfully I also got to experience the Eskuta in the finer weather, and the convenience of it was a game-changer, using it for the daily commute, to nip to the shops, to go to Pittodrie on matchdays, and even to the pub for a couple of (soft) drinks.

It really is ideally suited to urban life and reminded me of the moped culture in many European cities, with suave, stylish locals riding similar bikes and scooters everywhere you look.

Whizzing through city centre streets and along the beachfront, I could have been in Greece or Italy - only it was much colder and I wasn't quite as tanned.

Parking is never an issue either, as even when there's no bike rack there's always a lamppost nearby to chain it to.

The Eskuta comes with a built-in alarm, but I opted to use a bike lock as well for added piece-of-mind.

All too quickly, my time with the Eskuta came to an end and I had to reluctantly hand the keys back to the team at Sport Aberdeen, which has recently become the exclusive supplier of Eskutas in Scotland.

However, having started out thinking the Eskuta would just be a bit of fun, I've been fully converted and will now be looking to buy one ASAP!





# Luxury forest tranquility - just an hour from Aberdeen

## Chamber tries out Cairngorm Lodges and Bothies

By Danny McKay

**Sitting on the deck outside the immaculate Red Squirrel Lodge in the Cairngorms, with the birds and the breeze through the pines the only sound, it felt like blissful, serene, tranquility.**

We had to keep reminding ourselves we were only an hour from Aberdeen, and a mere seven minutes from Aboyne.

Myself and my partner Gillian were lucky enough to be invited to spend a night at Cairngorm Lodges and Cairngorm Bothies by Sarah and the team to see what all the fuss is about.

We were not disappointed.

Cairngorm Lodges and Cairngorm Bothies offer self-catering, eco-friendly, luxury accommodation in the wonderful (and extremely photogenic) forests of the Scottish Highland Estate.

Our first night was spent at the beautiful, cosy Hazel Bothy – a stripped back, small but fully equipped luxury glamping getaway from the hustle and bustle of everyday life in the city.

The woodburning stove had already been lit for our arrival, with a complimentary “Dark Sky” basket packed with snacks and handy gadgets like binoculars and headtorches should we wish to go exploring after dark.

After going for a wander along one of the many nearby woodland trails, we returned to our bothy and settled down on the picnic table on the deck for a drink and to watch the birds flying back and forth from the feeders.



As it started to get dark and the temperature dropped, we headed back inside and lit the stove which soon warmed up the bothy and created a cosy, relaxing atmosphere for the evening as we chatted and drifted off to sleep watching the fire.

The next morning we tidied up after ourselves, checked out and headed into Aboyne for lunch and an explore before checking into the luxurious Red Squirrel Lodge in the afternoon.

The lodges are far more spacious than the bothies and have a more modern feel, with TV and full kitchen, without losing that woodland cabin simplicity vibe.

An evening on the deck wildlife-watching here saw the birds joined by cautious, elegant red squirrels filling their cheeks with monkey nuts before scurrying off to stash them safely for later.

I could have happily watched them all night, but we eventually dragged ourselves away to curl up in front of the fire and watch a DVD before bed.

Before we left the next day, we were invited to a meeting of the Grampian Bonsai Society, where Chairman Rod and the team taught us about the native trees and sustainability.

We helped out clearing some saplings that were growing too close to the bothies, and made sure the roots were intact so they could be transported to a tree nursery.

We salvaged a few ourselves to take home, with Rod explaining to us how the versatile trees can be grown in pots in any number of creative and artistic ways.

All in all, we left Cairngorm Lodges and Cairngorm Bothies feeling refreshed and in awe of the spectacular landscape effectively on our doorstep.

There's no better way to experience the luscious forests and hills of the Cairngorms than by staying at one of the picturesque bothies or lodges which perfectly balance luxury, well-equipped comfort with back-to-nature simplicity and peacefulness.

We can't wait to go back!

Visit [cairngormbothies.co.uk](https://cairngormbothies.co.uk) and [cairngormlodges.co.uk](https://cairngormlodges.co.uk) to book your stay too.



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# LoLo+Co brings a personal touch back to Union Street retail scene

By Rebecca Henderson

**Walking into LoLo+Co in the heart of Aberdeen's Union Street, I realised this wasn't going to be a typical shopping trip.**

It was a grey, rainy day outside, but my time inside the boutique was anything but.

The welcome was warm, the space calm, and instead of rails to rummage through, I was met with a carefully curated collection and a team ready to make the experience feel entirely personal.

Stepping past the historic granite pillars and into the modern interior, there's an immediate shift in mood. It feels effortlessly stylish but with a sense of understated luxury and every detail seems thoughtfully chosen. Just moments from the bustle of Union Street, it's a space that feels a world away.

The shop, run by mother and daughter duo Rose and Lauren Reid, offers something increasingly rare on the high street - a personalised service paired with a number of brands you will struggle to find in Aberdeen.

During my visit, I browsed pieces from the likes of Ralph Lauren, Marc O'Polo, GANT and French Connection, alongside a selection of jewellery and accessories designed to complete the look.

But at the heart of LoLo+Co is its personal shopping experience. I was welcomed by Lauren, who spoke with genuine passion about the business and the importance of helping customers feel confident in what they wear.

For a £50 deposit, which is redeemable against any purchase, you can book a private session, with one-to-one styling, tailored recommendations and the entire boutique to yourself.

It's a relaxed and unhurried experience which you can bring friends to, enjoy a glass of fizz together and take your time finding the perfect outfits for you.

Lauren stressed that the approach is attentive without ever feeling pushy. The team focus not just on what you're looking for, but how you want to feel, offering guidance along the way whilst encouraging the customer to try something new and out of their comfort zone.

There's also a strong sense of the local community woven through everything they do. It's not just about selling clothes but creating a space where people can explore their style and build their confidence.

From carefully curated collections to styling advice, LoLo+Co is the perfect place for a relaxed, enjoyable shopping experience.



# WORDS OF ADVICE



**Jill Archibald,**  
*Client Engagement Director*  
Spectrum Service Solutions

## Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

Spectrum works with our clients to create clean environments where people thrive. We focus on people, consistency and continuous improvement, delivering flexible facilities solutions that deliver value for money and genuinely support our clients, their teams and their customers.

## Tell us about your management style and how it has worked for you?

I'm very people-led. I believe in encouraging others to be their best, giving support when it's needed and being honest. When people feel valued and trusted, they take pride in their work, and that always shows in results.

## What is the biggest barrier you overcame in the workplace and how did you tackle it?

Changing the mindset that cleaning is "just cleaning". I've tackled this by educating clients and teams on the impact cleaning has on wellbeing, safety and culture. When people understand its value, standards and respect improve dramatically.

## What's your top tip for someone joining your organisation today?

Bring ideas, take pride in what you do, and look out for the people around you. We grow together here, and that only works when everyone cares about the detail, speaks honestly, and wants to make things better, for clients, colleagues and themselves.



**Stuart Robb,**  
*Co-Owner*  
Thistle Tavern Games Hub

## Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

Thistle Tavern is Scotland's leading trading card and Hobby games store. We host a packed schedule of TCG events every evening and weekend. We offer a retail and online store, staffed by knowledgeable players, providing a wide range of games and accessories to suit everyone's passion.

## Tell us about your management style and how it has worked for you?

My business partner and I operate from the sidelines, focusing on growing Thistle Tavern as a brand. We empower our friendly, knowledgeable staff to take ownership of the day-to-day operations and maintain close relationships with our players and customers.

## What is the biggest barrier you overcame in the workplace and how did you tackle it?

The biggest barrier was scaling up from a small online store to a full retail premises. It required long evenings, but we tackled it by finding people we trusted. Finding passionate staff who take ownership allowed us to comfortably make the change.

## What's the best bit of business or life advice you've ever received?

The power of speaking to customers. It is easy to think you are building a great product, but you can miss key details. Regularly speaking to customers, or being a user of your own product, is the best way to see things clearly.

# SUPPORTING CHILDREN, FAMILIES, AND HOSPITAL STAFF ACROSS ABERDEEN



When a young dad was blue-lighted into Royal Aberdeen Children’s Hospital with his baby boy, nobody thought about how they’d get home. On the day of discharge, with just £20 in his bank account, he had no idea how to get them back to Elgin. A call to The Archie Foundation, and train tickets were arranged. It is exactly the kind of gap that falls between what the NHS can provide and what families desperately need - and exactly the kind of gap that HCS has been quietly helping to fill.

For over four years, HCS has partnered with The Archie Foundation to support their vital work across Aberdeen and the North-east. While HCS’ offshore teams have kept equipment running safely and reliably, their partnership with Archie has helped deliver care, comfort, and support to thousands of children and families at some of the most challenging times in their lives.

Founded to support babies, children, and families facing serious health challenges, Archie provides practical, emotional, and therapeutic services that complement NHS care. The charity focuses on seven pillars of support, including emergency grants, bereavement services, neonatal care, and play and creative therapies, ensuring families have the resources they need when the NHS alone cannot provide them.

## Turning Community Support into Real Impact

Through their ongoing monthly donations and additional ad hoc giving, HCS has helped Archie:

- Support 1,396 families with grants for travel, meals, overnight stays, and specialist equipment, ensuring children can attend essential appointments and receive care without added stress. One family, for example, was able to travel from a remote part of Aberdeenshire for vital outpatient treatment thanks to Archie’s funding.
- Provide 1,602 child bereavement referrals, giving children one-to-one support and resources to help them navigate loss and grief. These services include tailored activities, memory boxes, and specialist counselling sessions that guide children through some of the toughest experiences they may face.

- Assist more than 600 neonatal families every year, including funding counselling services and a partner bed in the new Baird Family Hospital. Parents facing the birth of a sick or premature baby often experience high stress and anxiety, and having support at their side can make an enormous difference in the early weeks of care.
- Enhance the hospital environment for 35,000 young patients annually at RACH. This includes funding Healthcare Play teams and external providers who deliver therapeutic music, art, and creative activities, helping children feel safe, supported, and engaged during treatment. Play and creative therapy can reduce anxiety, encourage recovery, and provide a sense of normalcy for children during hospital stays.

These services go far beyond financial assistance - they provide practical help, emotional support, and therapeutic care at critical moments for families and children.



## Partnership in Action

HCS' support has been consistent, structured, and tailored to Archie's needs. While the charity has many individual donors who give regularly, HCS is its only corporate partner making consistent monthly donations. By combining corporate giving with employee-led fundraising and hands-on support, HCS has helped Archie plan confidently, expand services, and respond quickly to urgent needs.

The partnership also reflects a wider impact: employees have participated in fundraising challenges such as the Archie Abseil, local running events, and hosting bake sales, directly contributing to the charity's activities and connecting the offshore business to the local community in a tangible way.

The difference HCS and Archie have made together is clear: children are cared for, parents receive critical support, and hospital staff have additional resources to enhance the quality of care they provide.

For HCS, supporting Archie has never been complicated. The charity does vital work, it touches the lives of families across the North-east, including some within HCS itself, and supporting it is simply the right thing to do. Four years on, that hasn't changed.

As one neonatal parent put it:  
*"I would honestly have been lost without the support. I think, like many others, it hits you at a later date - all the ins and outs of the neonatal journey."*



# A new Union Street begins to emerge after multimillion pound investment

By Ryan Crighton

**A new chapter for Union Street is beginning to take shape through cranes, capital and companies moving back into the heart of Aberdeen.**

At the corner of Union Street and Union Row, a once-underutilised building has been transformed into Aurora Aberdeen – a £5million redevelopment that is fast becoming a focal point for the city centre’s revival.

Delivered by The SRE Group, the project has created more than 43,000 square feet of Grade A office space, with the potential to bring up to 500 workers back into the city centre once fully occupied.

And that, increasingly, is the route to prosperity.

Union Street’s recovery will not be driven by a single project, but by the steady return of people – and the businesses that bring them.

Aurora is already beginning to deliver that shift.

The building has attracted a mix of energy, technology and professional services firms, including Ventex, Rahd.AI, True North Advisors, Mission10, NES Fircroft, Aurora Offshore and Rock Flow Dynamics – together representing hundreds of high-value roles.

The project builds on The SRE Group’s track record of transforming underused properties into thriving business hubs – including Union Point, formerly Salvesen Tower, at Aberdeen Harbour.

John Grewar of The SRE Group said: “This is a significant moment, not just for Aurora Aberdeen but for Union Street and the wider city centre.

“Our vision was to create a place that reflects the ambition of modern businesses while

contributing to the rebirth of this iconic part of the city,” he said.

“Bringing people back into the city centre is fundamental to its long-term success, and developments like Aurora are already helping to rebuild that critical mass.

“We’re seeing real momentum now, with businesses recognising the value of being in a vibrant, connected city centre environment.”

That idea – of repopulating the city centre through high-quality workspace – sits at the heart of Union Street’s wider regeneration.

Because without workers, there is no footfall. And without footfall, there is no recovery.

Further east along Union Street, another major investment is nearing a visible milestone.

The new £40million Flint market – taking shape within the former BHS building – is beginning to reveal its final form, with striking glazed panels and gold-coloured detailing now being installed at its main entrance.

Where Aurora is focused on bringing workers back, Flint is designed to bring crowds.

Once open, the market will host up to 10 food vendors and is expected to become a new anchor at the Market Street end of the Granite Mile – drawing visitors back into a part of the city that has struggled in recent years.



But its role extends beyond food.

The building has been designed to improve connectivity - linking Union Square, The Green, and the wider city centre - while making it easier for visitors to move between transport hubs and Union Street itself.

Plans for The Green entrance point to a more experiential future, with outdoor seating and a large LED screen capable of hosting cultural and sporting events.

In effect, Flint is not just a redevelopment - it is an attempt to reshape how people experience the city centre.

Taken in isolation, neither Aurora nor Flint is enough to transform Union Street.

But together, they point to something more significant, momentum.

One is bringing workers back. The other is designed to bring people back.

Both are underpinned by substantial investment - and both signal renewed confidence in Union Street as a place to build businesses, create jobs and spend time.

Bob Keiller, Chairman of Our Union Street, added: "Regeneration is not delivered overnight; it is built gradually through accumulation, with more companies choosing the city centre, more destinations opening, and more reasons for people to return."

Union Street is not "fixed", and there are still empty units, structural challenges and long-standing questions about its future. However, what is beginning to emerge is a different story - not one of decline, but of gradual reoccupation.

This is not being driven by a single flagship project, but by multiple investments starting to align. Crucially, it is no longer just about plans, but about visible change.

Glass is going up, lights are coming on, and teams are moving in.

After years of uncertainty, Union Street is starting to look, and feel, like a place with a future again.



## Partnership set to unlock African opportunities for leading specialist

Leading subsea controls specialist J+S Subsea Limited has taken a significant step forward in its international growth ambitions by announcing a partnership that will open doors in an important target market.

The Aberdeen-based company has recently teamed up with Westpaq International to expand its presence and tap into future potential in Sub-Saharan Africa. The MOU will see Westpaq provide local representation, business development, strategic market access and more, acting as the official in-country partner in Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon and regional interface for J+S Subsea Limited.

It will build on J+S Subsea Limited's existing presence in Côte D'Ivoire and Equatorial Guinea, and a string of successful projects in the region.

## P3 Business Care achieves Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation to strengthen client security

P3 Business Care, led by Founder Jim Grimmer, has achieved Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation, marking a key step in strengthening its cyber security systems and protecting client and partner data.

The certification confirms that appropriate security controls are in place to guard against common cyber threats, providing reassurance that sensitive information is being managed securely.

The accreditation process was supported by TechForce Cyber, with Aaron Stickle providing guidance throughout. His support helped ensure the process was completed efficiently and to the required standard.

# KR Group

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## Fugro awarded geotechnical survey contract for TotalEnergies' NSE 1 offshore wind farm development

Fugro has been awarded a contract to perform comprehensive geotechnical surveys for the NordSee Energies 1 offshore wind farm, a major renewable energy project being developed by TotalEnergies on the North Sea N-12.1 site.

The investigations will provide essential insights into seabed conditions at planned wind turbine locations and inter-array cable routes, directly informing the safe and efficient design of turbine foundations.

With a planned capacity of 2 GW, NordSee Energies 1 is expected to make a significant contribution to Germany's offshore wind expansion in the North Sea and strengthen Europe's long-term energy security and decarbonisation efforts.

Fieldwork is already underway, with Fugro mobilising a fleet of five specialist vessels to carry out the surveys approximately 170 km off the German coast, across an area of around 200 km<sup>2</sup>.

The campaign includes investigations at around 140 locations, reaching depths of up to 50 metres below the seabed.

To support safe, efficient and high quality data acquisition across the site, Fugro is deploying advanced technologies including its SEACALF<sup>®</sup> Mk V seabed cone penetration testing system.

Following the fieldwork, an extensive laboratory testing programme will be carried out at Fugro's laboratories in Wallingford, UK, and Louvain, Belgium.

The resulting Geo-data will be delivered through VirGeo<sup>®</sup>, Fugro's cloud-based Geo-data platform, and used to understand soil behaviour across the different turbine loading areas, as well as to inform the design, installation, and protection of the inter-array cables.

"With a five vessel programme, this is one of the largest offshore wind investigations we've undertaken in Europe," said Rimmelt de Jong, Fugro's Regional Business Line Director for Marine Site Characterisation in Europe and Africa.

"By combining advanced technology with expert analysis, we're ensuring TotalEnergies receives the foundation data needed to keep this project on schedule and support Europe's clean energy ambitions."



## Genny Hire boosts decommissioning capability with 1000kVA Rigsafe upgrade

Genny Hire Ltd has recently completed the full overhaul of one of its 1000kVA Rigsafe generators, marking another step forward in the company's ongoing investment in reliable, high-performance power solutions.

The overhaul forms part of a wider commitment to maintaining a modern, dependable fleet, capable of supporting a broad range of industries. By upgrading and enhancing existing assets, Genny Hire continues to ensure clients receive equipment that meets the highest standards of safety, efficiency, and performance.

The unit has been refurbished to Rigsafe standards, making it ideally suited for demanding environments, including offshore and hazardous area applications. The upgrade significantly strengthens the company's capability to support decommissioning projects, where reliability and compliance are critical.

Decommissioning operations often present complex power requirements, with equipment needing to perform consistently in challenging conditions. The overhaul of this 1000kVA unit provides increased capacity and flexibility, allowing Genny Hire to respond quickly and effectively to project demands.

Beyond decommissioning, the enhanced unit also supports operations across oil and gas, renewables, marine, and industrial sectors, ensuring clients across the board benefit from improved availability and resilience within the fleet.

Genny Hire would also like to thank Henderson and Dick for the decals and Concept Generator for their support and work throughout the overhaul, continuing to prove themselves as trusted partners.

This latest investment reflects Genny Hire's ongoing focus on delivering dependable temporary power solutions, backed by industry expertise and a proactive approach to fleet management.



## Scottish independent Fierce Beer brings Hazy IPA Plume to Asda shelves nationwide

Fierce Beer is excited to launch Plume, a 7.2% Hazy IPA, exclusively in Asda stores across the UK from.

The launch follows Fierce Beer's recent inclusion in Asda's Collab Collection, making Plume the brewery's second national listing with the retailer.

Brewed with El Dorado, Galaxy and Citra hops, Plume delivers a soft mouthfeel and a bright, tropical hop character designed to cut through a crowded category.

The launch marks another step in Fierce Beer's major UK retail expansion. Shoppers will be able to access this new Scottish-brewed Hazy IPA across 250 stores.



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## Archibald Simpson The SRE Group



The SRE Group has delivered a flagship £5million redevelopment of one of Aberdeen's most prominent office buildings - the former Caledonian House at the corner of Union Street and Union Row.

The building has been transformed into Aurora Aberdeen, a 45,000 sq ft, Grade A office hub designed to bring hundreds

of high-value jobs and modern businesses back into the heart of the city.

Completed in 2025, Aurora Aberdeen represents a bold private-sector investment in the regeneration of Union Street. The development provides high-specification, flexible workspaces that meet the needs of future-focused companies, setting a new benchmark for sustainable, all-electric office space in Aberdeen's business district.

The project has already attracted a diverse and dynamic mix of tenants, including climate tech venture studio Ventex, AI firm Rahd.AI, strategic communications agency True North Advisors, global manpower provider NES Fircroft, and reservoir simulation leader Rock Flow Dynamics. Once fully let, Aurora will accommodate around 500 workers, injecting daily footfall and spending power into the city centre.

Aurora builds on SRE's proven track record of revitalising underused properties, such as the successful transformation of Union Point (formerly Salvesen Tower) at Aberdeen Harbour. Guided by its ethos of "Reinventing the Standard", SRE specialises in breathing new life into landmark buildings, turning empty spaces into thriving business communities.

Aurora's impact extends beyond economic numbers. The building has attracted a new wave of innovative, high-growth companies that reflect Aberdeen's evolving economy — from climate technology and artificial intelligence to communications and engineering.

## Business of the Year Aberdeen International Airport



Aberdeen International Airport (AIA) is a vital transport hub for the North-east of Scotland, serving as the gateway to Europe's energy capital and home to the world's busiest commercial heliport.

Owned by AGS Airports Limited and backed by global airport investor AviAlliance, AIA plays a critical role in regional connectivity and economic development.

In 2024, AIA welcomed 2.3 million passengers, supported by strong domestic and international demand. The airport reported a pre-tax profit of £17.2million, more than double the previous year, on turnover of £56.4million. This growth was driven by operational improvements and increased route capacity.

AIA supports over 3,400 jobs and contributes more than £110million annually to the local economy. It is committed to sustainability, having achieved carbon neutrality for direct emissions and holding Airport Carbon Accreditation Level 3+. The airport is powered by 100% renewable electricity and sends zero waste to landfill.

With a strong focus on innovation, AIA has introduced next-generation security scanners and invested £3.7million in capital projects to enhance passenger experience. Its community engagement is equally robust, with initiatives like the ABZ Propeller Fund and the Midnight Runway Run raising tens of thousands of pounds for local causes.

In 2025, airline partners introduced new routes to Krakow and Paris Charles de Gaulle, with airBaltic announcing the return of Riga in 2026. The airport maintained a "Good" rating from the CAA for its PRM (Passengers with Reduced Mobility) services.

## Customer First AV One Solutions



Established in 2016, AV One Solutions is a trusted provider of audiovisual solutions that enhance communication, collaboration, and engagement.

Based in Aberdeen, AV One Solutions designs, installs, and supports cutting-edge AV systems for workplaces, events,

cultural venues and specialist offshore environments across the UK and beyond.

Its expertise spans seamless video conferencing and collaboration systems, immersive digital displays, and bespoke entertainment and communication solutions. AV One also delivers full technical production for conferences, business events, and award ceremonies, from large-scale showcases to intimate gatherings.

AV One has built long-term partnerships with over 150 clients across multiple sectors. Its client base continues to grow organically through referrals, and an outstanding 98% client retention rate.

The company's success is underpinned by its customer-first ethos. AV One acts as an extension of its clients' teams, delivering reliable, creative and future-proof AV solutions while offering dedicated support every step of the way. By investing in both people and technology, AV One ensures clients receive service excellence that is personal, dependable and consistently ahead of the curve.

Internally, its culture of accountability ensures every team member feels empowered to put customers first. Ongoing training, wellbeing support and recognition initiatives motivate its people to deliver consistently excellent service, creating positive outcomes for clients, staff and the wider community.

## Driving Sustainability North East Scotland College



North East Scotland College (NESCol) is the largest provider of further education across the North-east of Scotland, delivering a wide range of learning opportunities tailored to individuals, communities and employers. With campuses in Aberdeen, Altens, Fraserburgh and Peterhead, NESCol offers industry-aligned facilities and professional learning environments.

Each year, over 6,500 full-time and 15,000 part-time students enrol across subject areas including business, engineering, health and social care, computing, creative industries and energy transition.

NESCol continues to make significant strides in reducing its environmental impact and embedding sustainability across all business functions. While the nature of its service delivery continues to evolve, NESCol remains committed to achieving a 50% reduction in carbon emissions, with the latest data indicating excellent progress of 48% towards this target. This progress has been driven by previous capital investment, heating and lighting optimisation and sustainable transport initiatives, including mileage monitoring and the addition of a second electric vehicle at the Fraserburgh campus.

These achievements to date are informing the development of a new Carbon Management Plan for 2025-2030. In February 2025, NESCol launched the "Energy on the Move" outreach vehicle - a hydrogen dual-fuel mobile classroom designed to engage young learners in the energy transition. April 2025 saw the introduction of an improved Active and Sustainable Travel Strategy, developed in consultation with staff and students. In July 2025, NESCol launched mandatory all-staff sustainability training aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and developed in partnership with Learning for Sustainability Scotland.

August 2025 saw the doors opening to NESCol's Energy Transition Skills Hub, a state-of-the-art facility adjacent to our Altens campus, providing community spaces and renewables training aligned with strategic regional growth sectors.

## Family Business Whittaker Engineering



Whittaker was founded by Ken and Janet Whittaker in 1983, offering quality turn-key manufacturing, design and engineering solutions for the global energy industry and offshore construction projects.

The company has consistently demonstrated excellence in engineering and manufacturing, marked by innovation, commitment to quality, and a strong focus on customer satisfaction for the past 42 years.

Murray Whittaker joined the company in 2011 and has participated in key decision making, helping him gain firsthand experience with strategic thinking, conflict resolution, and accountability, helping to ensure a smooth transition, for the next 40 successful years of Whittaker ownership.

Murray's eldest son has now also started his engineering career with a mechanical / hydraulic apprenticeship with another company in Aberdeen, helping him to build a strong technical foundation for the future.

This year, Whittaker employed a new General Manger - Hamish Oag. As well as lightening the daily load for the both Ken and Murray, this ensures there is a progression plan in place, and the company is more 'future-proof'. Staff have regular performance evaluations, leadership potential assessments, and open discussions about long-term goals and interests. This has helped to highlight key team members who show strong leadership potential, value alignment, and a genuine interest in the future of the business. Many senior members of staff within the company have progressed from other roles and some started out as trade apprentices and are now project engineers and managers.

## Going Global John Ross Jr (Aberdeen)



John Ross Jr (Aberdeen) Ltd proudly continues the heritage of artisan fish smoking using original red-brick kilns dating back to 1857. These time-honoured techniques, combined with the finest Scottish salmon, allow John Ross to produce an award-winning range of smoked salmon that is globally recognised.

While the UK remains a key domestic market, international trade has been at the heart of the company's growth.

Europe is the company's strongest export region, with Germany and Belgium as key markets.

Beyond Europe, the brand has built a presence in the Middle East, the United States, the Caribbean, and the Far East - demonstrating both the global appeal and operational capability of a business rooted in traditional Scottish craftsmanship, yet driven by modern ambition.

Against a challenging international backdrop - where the Global Sales Index projects a modest 1.2% increase in global trade for 2025 - John Ross has significantly outperformed market expectations. The company has achieved 38% growth in new overseas revenue over the past 12 months.

Despite the significant and ongoing challenges posed by Brexit, the team at John Ross has demonstrated exceptional resilience and determination in navigating complex regulatory frameworks and adapting to unforeseen bureaucratic hurdles.

While many exporters withdrew from the EU market, the team at John Ross remained committed and, in total, operates across Antigua, Austria, Bahrain, Barbados, Belgium, Bermuda, China, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Mauritius, St Lucia, Switzerland and the United States.

## Inspiration from Innovation

### IKM Testing UK



IKM Testing UK is a complete service provider to the energy industry across the UK, Europe, East Mediterranean, and Africa, supporting both traditional oil and gas operations and the renewable energy transition.

Part of the IKM Group, the company combines local technical expertise with the scale of an international network.

Guided by its mantra, “Challenge Convention, Inspire Innovation”, IKM Testing UK is dedicated to developing its people and empowering them to deliver bold, responsible, and clear solutions.

IKM Testing UK has developed and introduced its Methane Emissions Quantification (MEQ) service, with particular success in the Source Level Identification and Quantification (SLIQ) method.

SLIQ was created through IKM Testing UK’s internal innovation programme by Sam Rowley (MEQ Lead Engineer).

SLIQ is proof of how embedding innovation into culture enables employees to develop solutions that directly address industry challenges, align with the company’s mantra Challenge Convention-Inspire Innovation, and create lasting value for both clients and the wider environment.

Innovation at IKM Testing UK is a company-wide endeavour. All employees are encouraged to submit ideas through its monthly innovation scheme. Staff have in total generated 360 ideas, of which 11 progressed to innovation projects that improved services or optimised internal processes. This structure empowers employees at all levels to contribute.

## Making the Difference

### Port of Aberdeen



Port of Aberdeen – the UK’s oldest existing business having been founded in 1136 - is a national strategic asset, handling more than 40% of Scotland’s commercial vessel traffic across energy, cargo, cruise and ferry operations.

Through partnerships, investment, and innovation, Port of Aberdeen is creating sustainable growth, driving energy transition, and creating prosperity for generations.

The port’s stakeholders include not only customers but also the local community. Guided by its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Policy, Port of Aberdeen applies a transparent and accountable framework for charitable giving. This ensures contributions address real community needs while aligning with strategic framework.

Its charitable and socially responsible initiatives focus on four key areas where it can deliver meaningful impact:

- Health and wellbeing – supporting vulnerable groups and tackling social isolation.
- Inspiring future generations – encouraging interest in STEM and maritime careers.
- Sustainability – promoting environmental responsibility and a just transition to net zero.
- Skills and employability – helping people access training and job opportunities.

These objectives are embedded within the port’s strategic framework under the priority to ‘foster strong and trusted relationships with the communities local to the port’. Delivery comes through its CSR programme, People & Culture goals, and charitable giving, with an ambition to support 50,000 children and adults in the region over five years.

# Marketing Magic

## Aberdeen Football Club



Aberdeen Football Club, founded in 1903, is one of Scotland's most historic and successful football clubs, with a proud record of domestic and European success.

Aberdeen FC is proud to play a central role in the local economy and cultural identity of the city and region, with a growing influence across Scotland and beyond through its brand, media presence, and fan engagement initiatives.

The 'Worth The W-eight' campaign was launched immediately following Aberdeen FC's historic Scottish Cup win in 2025, ending a 35-year wait for the trophy. 'Worth the W-eight' was designed to incorporate this as the club's eighth Scottish Cup victory, while also capturing the weight of emotion and time that had passed since the last triumph in 1990.

The campaign was planned in anticipation of victory against all odds, designed to capture the pride, joy, and emotion of this landmark success and to maximise its impact across all areas of the club's business.

Objectives were threefold:

1. To quickly establish a campaign identity that would provide a consistent theme throughout the celebrations that followed, ensuring the club owned the messaging.
2. To deliver outreach through a combination of large-scale public events and more targeted engagement with the wider community.
3. To capitalise commercially through increased merchandise sales, season tickets, and memberships.

By combining a powerful campaign identity with marketing and operational delivery, the campaign sought to cement the Scottish Cup win as a defining moment for the club and city while laying the foundation for longer-term supporter growth.

# Rising Star

## Sophie Sibley, Synergie Environ, part of PD&MS Group



Sophie Sibley is a Senior Engineer at Synergie Environ, an environmental consultancy which is part of PD&MS Group, specialising in decarbonisation, sustainable energy systems, and environmental compliance.

In her time as an engineer, her responsibilities have grown, and she now undertakes a wide range of functions including: energy audits, feasibility studies, simulation modelling, and technoeconomic assessments for complex, multi-stakeholder projects.

Sophie has already managed many large-scale projects. These include a decarbonisation audit evaluating over 120 police buildings identifying huge reductions in carbon and energy bills and she has also helped lead the ESOS Phase 3 compliance for major clients.

She has supported the success of transformative projects with scenario modelling, including an ambient heat loop network at a prestigious UK university, which reclaimed heat from a data centre, resulting in an emissions reduction of 80%.

Sophie is committed to leadership, inclusion and advocacy and plays a key role in training colleagues. She has served as Secretary for the CIBSE special interest group 'Resilient Cities'. She has been profiled in industry publications to champion diversity in STEM, and has led game-based workshops with students to help promote an awareness and interest in sustainability.

Through all of Sophie's roles to date her approach to projects blends technical innovation with measurable social and environmental impact, whilst taking varied stakeholders on the journey with her.

## Staff Matter

### North East Scotland College



North East Scotland College (NESCol) has implemented a range of strategic initiatives that have positively impacted staff retention, reduced recruitment costs and supported long-term organisations sustainability. As a not-for-profit institution its focus is on delivering social and economic impact within the North-east.

Retention has improved through a strong emphasis on staff wellbeing, inclusivity and fostering a sense of belonging. Initiatives such as its Respect commitment, Care Day and Neurodiversity Celebration Week promote a culture of empathy and safety.

Flexible working, long-service awards, free access to on-site gyms and an Employee Assistance Programme support staff wellbeing.

A highpoint of the college calendar is the annual staff Wellbeing Day, which sees employees taking part in a range of activities including walks, crafting, paddleboarding and trips to Codonas.

Recruitment costs have been reduced through early engagement with new hires. Research by the People Services team led to the creation of an onboarding hub in May 2025, providing pre-start date induction materials, campus information and a welcome message from the Principal.

This early connection improves early-stage performance and retention. NESCol's inclusive recruitment strategy, aligned with SCQF Inclusive Recruiter principles, ensures fair access to roles and supports internal progression. Staff in support or lower-level roles are encouraged and equipped to move into promoted posts through tailored development and line management support.

## Start-up Business of Year

### Dax Group



Dax Group is a people-first digital transformation consultancy based in Aberdeen, helping organisations harness technology, data, and AI to work smarter, faster, and more effectively. It combines strategic insight with hands-on delivery - from digital readiness audits and data strategy workshops to bespoke software development through its

RADAX platform, which enables rapid, cost-effective digital product creation. What sets Dax Group apart is its ability to bridge strategy and implementation.

Whether helping teams adopt AI safely, streamline workflows, or digitise complex operations, Dax Group makes digital transformation practical, human, and results focused.

Dax Group was founded from a simple but powerful belief - that digital transformation starts and ends with people, not technology. In just 12 months, Dax Group has established itself as a trusted digital transformation partner, delivering measurable impact across multiple industries and continents.

With over £1.2million in contracts secured, four local jobs created and eight active development projects in delivery, the company has quickly built a reputation for combining innovation with a people-first approach that drives real change.

Its clients span the UK, Norway, and key energy hubs around the world - supported by a growing team that includes on-the-ground expertise in Malaysian Borneo. Beyond digital delivery, Dax Group has also expanded into AI education and training, helping small and mid-sized businesses embrace artificial intelligence with confidence.

Internally, Dax Group continues to grow steadily by integrating creative specialists, hiring a part time business strategist to help with its consultancy work, and preparing to expand its in-house development capability.

# Student Placement International Medical Management



Marketing student Megan Wortman began her placement with International Medical Management (IMM) looking to gain significant experience in the sector and found it hugely satisfying to see her own work displayed in the clinic reception area as well as distributed to clients and staff medics.

Originally offered roles around her preference of marketing and creative tasks, Megan was soon given the opportunity to take on more responsibility and explore other areas.

By the midway point of her placement year, IMM had gained a number of significant clients and with that came an increase in staff medic onboarding and expanded work for the logistics team.

Megan found HR sparked an interest and was delegated responsibility with tasks including new start inductions, interviews, developing policies and procedures for the team and helping with personnel info and training.

Megan also began working with the accounts team and spent one day a week learning how to upload and pay invoices to the system, completing bank reconciliations and sending monthly invoices to clients.

By the time Megan's placement came to an end, she was efficiently juggling a more HR and finance-based role in the team and was offered an extended contract on a full-time basis as the HR and Finance Executive, going part-time until she has completed her studies at RGU.

IMM General Manager Ashleigh McDonald said: *"We are absolutely delighted with the progress Megan has made with her student placement. Her growth in confidence has been remarkable, and her positive attitude and adaptability have made her a valued member of the team."*

# Regional Contribution The Tall Ships Races Aberdeen 2025



The Tall Ships Races 2025 had Aberdeen at its busiest in decades, with over 400,000 visits over the course of the weekend as young and old, families, couples and friends flocked into the city centre to sample the carnival atmosphere.

From the stunning boats themselves, to the parades, stalls, and concerts, the Granite City was buzzing with excitement.

It was in 1997 that the Tall Ships last visited Aberdeen, and the goal was always, not just to recreate that magic, but to surpass it. And that's exactly what was delivered. Across four unforgettable days, the city was transformed.

From boat tours, to food stands, to live music on the quayside, the event was pulled off without a hitch and quickly became the biggest event Aberdeen has seen in a generation.

People arrived in their droves as blue skies welcomed the first ships from Dunkirk.

Gloomier weather on the Saturday didn't dampen spirits. Thousands and thousands of people descended on the city for a chance to experience history up close.

By the Monday the fleet was preparing to depart. Thousands more gathered to watch the Parade of Sail. One by one, they set off for Norway, leaving behind more than just an empty harbour.

Memories and experiences to last a lifetime. And more than that. A lasting legacy, a legacy in the city, and a legacy in our communities.

This was more than a festival ... this was Aberdeen at its very best.

# Regional Contribution

## Sarah Malone



From humble beginnings in Peterhead, to rubbing shoulders with royalty - and presidents - few have had an impact on the North-east quite like Sarah Malone.

Over two decades, she has overseen hundreds of millions of pounds of investment in the region, transforming ambition into reality, and vision into legacy.

And it all began with a £1.2million refurbishment of a much-loved city centre landmark, re-opened by royalty.

The transformation of the Gordon Highlanders Museum was curated by Sarah, bringing new life, new jobs, and new visitors to Aberdeen.

Before long Sarah returned to her Aberdeenshire roots, swapping trenches for bunkers. Learning the world of golf was a challenge she rose to... almost as big a challenge as keeping her boss in check.

In 2012 the first 18 holes were unveiled at the now iconic Trump International Golf Links at Balmedie. And the greatest 18 soon became the greatest 36 - in no small part thanks to the dedication of Sarah.

Today, Trump International stands as a global beacon for golf, welcoming visitors from across the world, hosting international tournaments, and continuing to bring tourism, opportunity, and pride to the North-east.

At the heart of it all - Sarah Malone.



Drinks reception sponsor



Trophy sponsor



# AGCC joins P&J's Corporate Membership Programme to ensure team and members have 'fingers on the pulse'

By Danny McKay

**AGCC and The Press and Journal are highlighting the importance of supporting quality local journalism and campaigning, as the Chamber takes out a corporate subscription to The P&J.**

It's a source of regional pride that The P&J - the oldest English language paper in the world - is still going strong and is the biggest selling regional newspaper in the UK today.

The P&J has a proud tradition of serving and being at the heart of communities in Aberdeen, the north and North-east of Scotland since 1747.

While The Press and Journal is the voice of the north, Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce is the voice of business, and the two have always enjoyed a strong partnership with shared values and priorities striving to better and champion the region, making this an even better place to live, work, study, visit, invest and do business.

Something at the heart of the Chamber's role is supporting its 1,350+ members to do better business through a range of support services and helping create the economic conditions that will enable companies and their people to thrive here.

Chamber Chief Executive Russell Borthwick explains: "Founded in 1747, it feels like that was around the time I started my first job straight out of school in The P&J's circulation department!"

"Most of my career was spent in regional publishing and I still have a huge affinity for newspapers and the roles they play in their communities - not just in reporting the news, but in reflecting the views of readers and the wider population, in making sure their

voices are heard, and positively shaping the agendas that matter to the region."

And Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce, the UK Chamber of the Year, is the latest organisation to commit to taking out corporate subscriptions for its entire team; supporting meaningful engagement with members and stakeholders and helping maintain its position as the best Chamber in the business!

The corporate membership programme gives all Chamber staff unlimited access to The P&J's website and app, with app alerts highlighting important regional stories. It means the team has access to The P&J's subscriber-only content and trusted reporting of North-east stories which have a national impact.

Russell continued: "We have more than 1,350 member organisations at the Chamber and a team of relationship managers, part of whose role it is to make sure they're informed about what's happening in the world of business.

"If they get asked questions by our members or other stakeholders they're talking to, it's important they have their finger on the pulse of the things that matter here.

"What the Chamber is about is trying to create the economic conditions that mean that the businesses and people of this region can prosper, and I think it's really important that we have the right information flow and the right knowledge and skills to make informed decisions.

"So having access to all the great content which is produced by The Press and Journal means that our team will be fully informed on everything they need to know about what's happening in the North-east of Scotland.

"And it is the latest in a wide suite of benefits we offer to help retain and attract staff.

"Today, we have diverse information sources at our fingertips but having a trusted regional voice like The Press and Journal is something that we shouldn't take for granted. We should covet it. It should be a source of real pride.

"In a changing world, people and businesses here shouldn't just assume that will be there forever. They need to support it. They need to buy into it.

"We're happy to be joining other organisations like Blackadders, which have made a similar commitment and hopefully this is a signal from the Chamber to other companies that might consider doing likewise because we really ought to support the great work that The P&J's team of journalists and content creators do for the region."

Craig Walker, Editor of The Press and Journal, agreed, saying: "We really appreciate Russell's support. Our aim is to amplify the voices of our businesses and our readers to make them the focal point of our area and beyond.

"The relationship between AGCC and The P&J is one of pushing each other to do better, progressing towards common values and goals, and collaborating on campaigns and projects."

To illustrate Craig's point, The Press and Journal and the Chamber have collaborated on a range of initiatives in recent times including:

- The Common Sense Compromise campaign in relation to the city's bus gates
- P&J subscribers getting priority tickets for Chamber UMF Events

- Promoting the Northern Star Business Awards and the brilliant companies, people and initiatives pushing forward our economy
- Pushing Governments to adopt more pragmatic energy policies to protect and grow our economy
- Working together as part of 'Team Aberdeen' to attract and support major events and attractions like Tall Ships, the World Rally Championship and the Aberdeen Adventurer tourist bus

And, most recently, AGCC and The P&J have worked together amplifying the key aspects of the Chamber's Scottish Election Manifesto - backed by a poll of 1,300 North-east voters by Diffley Partnership and True North - demonstrating strong support for a new community stadium, reconnecting Ellon, Peterhead and Fraserburgh to the rail network, continued town and city regeneration, better taxi provision at key times and hubs and much more.

You can see a range of short films with Craig and Russell in conversation about these and other related topics on the P&J website. Search 'Press & Journal campaigns'.



The Press and Journal offers subscriptions at a discounted rate under its Corporate Membership Programme, allowing businesses to purchase subscriptions for all sizes of teams. To set up a corporate subscription or to find out more, email [corporatemembership@dcthompson.co.uk](mailto:corporatemembership@dcthompson.co.uk)

Local heroes together.



# Maskame & Tait strengthen partnership with Peterhead Academy to inspire the next generation of trades professionals

Maskame & Tait Ltd, the long-established joinery and construction services provider based in Peterhead, has reaffirmed its commitment to developing the region's young workforce through an ever-expanding partnership with Peterhead Academy.

In addition to sponsoring and supporting a number of local clubs, groups and charities, the collaboration between Peterhead Academy and Maskame & Tait forms a key part of the company's wider strategy to invest in future talent, preserve local craftsmanship, and provide construction career pathways for young people across the North-east of Scotland. As a proud Learning Partner of Peterhead Academy, Maskame & Tait deliver hands-on, real-world learning experiences that introduce pupils to the construction industry at an early stage. The company contributes to the school's Skills for Work programme, volunteering alongside three other large local employers to provide a full academic year of industry-led projects for free.

Over the last three years, Maskame & Tait have worked with the school on a number of such projects and volunteered at mock interviews, delivered a 10-week woodwork class in the Technical Department and most recently, guiding a group of ten third-year pupils through a live refurbishment project within one of the school's most neglected areas across a full school term.

This initiative was designed to encourage job ownership, accountability, and give genuine insight into how modern construction projects are delivered. In the first week, pupils carried out a full site survey and inspection before producing a professional-style report for the company's office team.

To find out more:  
[info@maskameandtait.com](mailto:info@maskameandtait.com)



## MASKAME & TAIT

Joiners · Building Contractors · Glaziers

From this, Maskame & Tait created a formal Works Order and followed full H&S procedures with the pupils, mirroring the workflow used in commercial projects.



Maskame & Tait's partnership with Peterhead Academy extends beyond classroom learning. Through its work with National Gas at the St Fergus Gas Terminal, the company has also provided pupils with opportunities for site visits at major infrastructure projects.



Director Scott Maskame emphasised the importance of nurturing future talent:

**"Each passing year brings fresh labour challenges for our industry and we must all do our bit to support the next generation. By engaging with pupils now from 3rd year onwards in our 'Skills For Work' programme, not only do we provide clear progression routes into construction, but also deliver free opportunities for young people in our community to gain valuable skills and confidence which can assist them in any career."**

Maskame & Tait's commitment to youth development is reflected across the business. The company currently supports multiple

apprentices across Joinery, Painting & Decorating, and Business Administration, with many progressing into full-time roles and opportunities for future promotion into senior positions as the company continues to grow. Their long-standing partnership with Peterhead Academy, alongside CITB, and North-East Scotland College ensures clear progression routes from school through to qualification and beyond.

# BUSINESS LESSONS I'VE LEARNED



**Chris West,**  
*People & Strategy Director*  
Dron & Dickson

## **Who or what has been the biggest influence on your career?**

There have been many influences, but one defining moment stands out from my time as a software development graduate. During a critical application failure, while chaos reigned, I watched my team lead calmly and methodically recover the system, step by step, seemingly in slow motion. That experience taught me the immense value of staying calm in a crisis.

## **What's the most effective piece of training or personal development you have undertaken?**

Attending the Future Industry Leader Programme (FILP), supported by Scottish Enterprise after the 2015 downturn, was transformative for me. The combination of an immersive cohort retreat and personal coaching provided deep, personal learning, enriched by the experiences of my peers; many of whom I still keep in touch with. FILP sparked my ongoing curiosity for development, wellness, personal and professional growth.

## **What's the biggest lesson you have learned in business?**

At their core, companies are just groups of people united by a common goal or purpose. As leaders, we must never forget that everyone matters, deserves respect, and should return home safely. When you have great people around you, the best thing you can do is support them and get out of their way, they'll amaze you if you let them.

## **What's been your proudest career achievement to date?**

I've never sought the limelight. My proudest achievements are the quiet moments of support and inspiration I've offered colleagues throughout my career. I strive to be available to others and, especially in recent years, to lead with a coaching mindset, asking questions rather than simply giving advice.

## **What's the best thing about doing business in the North-east of Scotland?**

The North-east is often described as a village, despite its size, thanks

to its vibrant and close-knit community. Wherever you go, you meet colleagues past, present, and future. And if you pause to look around, you'll see we live in a storybook wonderland, landmarks, culture, rivers, beaches, mountains, lakes, and wildlife everywhere. We're privileged to call one of the most beautiful places on the planet home.

## **What was your first job?**

"Herald and Post" paper round quickly followed by various roles at the Copthorne Hotel. I always wanted to work as soon as I could.

## **Who or what inspires you most?**

Elite sport inspires me most, everything about team performance and momentum in sport translates directly to the workplace.

## **What word or phrase in business-speak exasperates you?**

"We need some blue-sky thinking", usually said by the person least willing to do it!

## **How do you relax?**

I relax by losing myself on the golf course or fishing on the River Dee.

# Digital Carnets set to modernise movement of goods

On June 1 2026 the United Kingdom, EU, Norway and Switzerland will take a major step forward in modernising international trade with the official launch of digital ATA Carnets.

The launch will mark the beginning of the global transition in which the paper and digital Carnets will coexist until all participating customs authorities are ready to handle the digital format.

This milestone is part of the global digitalisation initiative led by the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and the World Customs Organization (WCO), with UKNATACO and HMRC at the forefront of the UK's transition.

## Why digital Carnets matter

By embracing digitalisation, the UK is streamlining one of the most important facilitators of cross border trade. This change will save businesses time, reduce risk, cut administrative costs, and support more sustainable operations.

## What happens next

Over time, digital is expected to become the standard worldwide. This means that the type of the Carnet issued (during the transition period) will depend on the Itinerary:

## When to use paper Carnet or digital Carnet during the transition?

Itinerary including **paper** countries only



Itinerary including **digital** and **paper** countries



Itinerary including **digital** countries only



**ATA Carnets involving paper destinations only:**

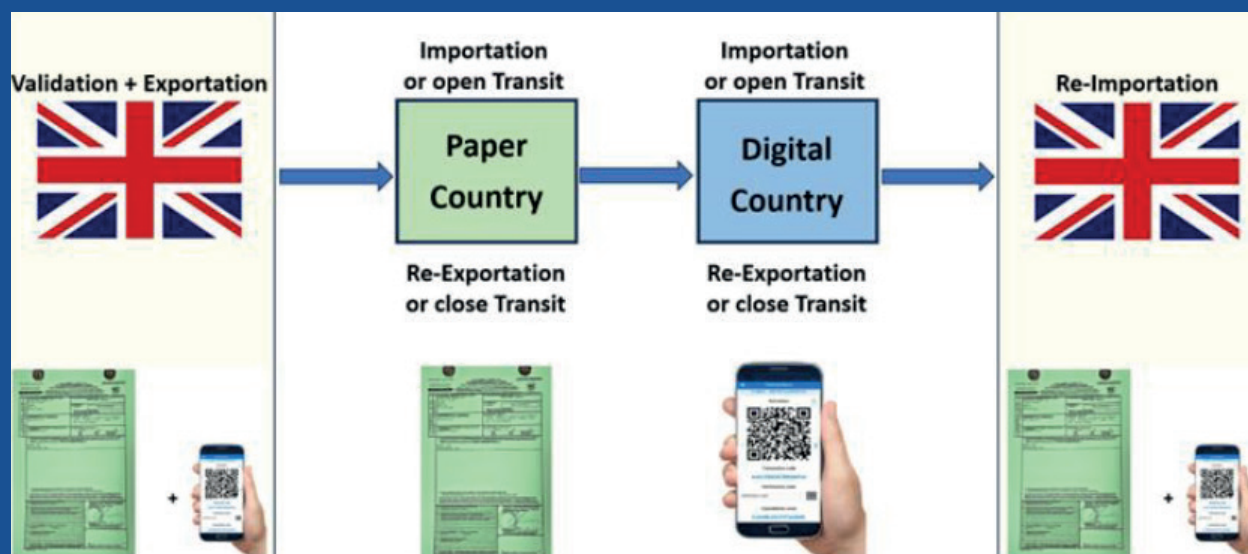
- The Chamber will only issue the paper Carnet. All transactions will be done using Paper document as it is the case today

**ATA Carnets involving digital destinations only:**

- The Chamber will only issue the digital Carnet (by releasing the Carnet ID and password to the applicant). The applicant uses ATA Carnet App (ACA) or ATA Carnet Desktop App (ACD) to create Travels. Customs transactions are done by presenting the relevant QR Code to the Officer

**ATA Carnets involving paper and digital destinations:**

- The Chamber will issue both the paper and digital Carnet. The user will need to present paper Carnet at paper destinations and digital Carnet at digital destinations (the ATA Carnet Front Cover will separate countries into paper and digital for ease of reference)



As the June 1 launch date approaches, the documentation team at the Chamber making sure internal processes are up to date and clear, and encouraging users to test digital Carnets alongside their paper Carnets.

The team are always happy to chat with customers about the changes and provide advice.

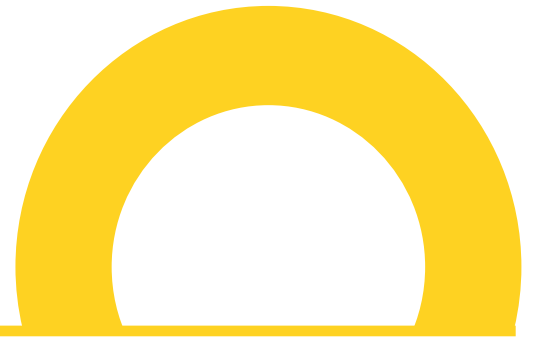
Lorraine Neish, International Trade Documentation Manager at AGCC, said: "This is a big deal for people who use Carnets. The paper Carnets are archaic and belong in the past. Digital Carnets mark a major modernisation of the system.

"Once all countries are signed up to do digital it should alleviate the necessity for cumbersome paperwork and should make border crossings faster.

"It's going to be fully trackable in real-time. It'll eliminate manual errors and provide real-time visibility across borders.

"People should be getting prepared. We've got lots of resources for customers to look at."

# VisitAberdeenshire celebrates 10 years of tourism leadership in the North-east of Scotland



**VisitAberdeenshire is celebrating the 10th anniversary of its formation, a decade after the ambitious merger of Visit Aberdeen, Visit Royal Deeside, Banffshire Coast Tourism Partnership to create a pioneering destination marketing and management model, supported by Opportunity North East, Aberdeenshire Council, Aberdeen City Council.**

From a baseline measure in 2019, the value of the visitor economy grew by 35% to over £1.2 billion in 2024, driven by dedicated team members who have brought sector specialism and marketing experience to VisitAberdeenshire's mission.

Significant moments for the organisation have included stewardship of Destination Strategies for the North-east; establishment of the Tourism Business Growth Programme in 2018 that has supported 80 local businesses; and a positive and empathetic response to the pandemic and the subsequent delivery of a Business Recovery Programme.

During the past decade, VisitAberdeenshire's Convention Bureau has helped to secure over 140 conferences across all priority sectors in the North-east economy. These have included significant events within the tourism sector itself, with Aberdeen hosting UKInbound's Convention in 2022, the Scottish Tourism Alliance Signature Conference in 2023 and VisitScotland flagship 'Connect in 2024 and 2025, all of which have

fortified the region's position as a place to do business within the Scottish visitor economy.

VisitAberdeenshire's work has been recognised throughout the period with a Northern Star Marketing Magic win in 2019 and securing UKInbound's prestigious Destination of the Year award for excellence in 2024.

Looking to its second decade, VisitAberdeenshire will continue to drive growth of the North-east visitor economy through strong brand partnerships that support innovative marketing campaigns to further increase awareness, visits and associated spend, while fostering innovation, growth and collaboration among local tourism businesses.

**Stephen Gow, Chair of VisitAberdeenshire said:** "From the outset, VisitAberdeenshire has set the pace for regional tourism growth in Scotland, establishing itself as a pioneer that other destinations look to for inspiration. This would not have been possible without the vision and support of Opportunity North East, Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council, and every director who has served on our board"

**Jennifer Crow MBE, CEO of Opportunity North East, said:** "Creating VisitAberdeenshire was central to achieving the regional ambition to grow the visitor economy as part of broader economic diversification. As a core funding partner for the past decade, Opportunity North East is one of many individuals,

businesses and organisations that have contributed to the successful growth of our tourism sector, increasing the number of visitors who choose to come here, stay longer and contribute more to our region. The sector has doubled in value over the past decade and is now worth more than £1.2 billion a year. It's a fantastic achievement, and we have every confidence that the region's unique offer – from vibrant city and stunning coastline to mountains, rich culture and heritage, Scotland's finest food and drink, and so much more – will continue to attract more visitors."

**Julie Wood, Aberdeen City Council's Chief Officer – City Development and Regeneration, said:** "Over the last decade VisitAberdeenshire has played a pivotal role in championing our tourism offer. The region's success in hosting major events – including the magnificent Tall Ships Races in 2025 – shows exactly what our communities and businesses can achieve together. With the World Rally Championship set to arrive next year, VisitAberdeenshire is ready again to showcase everything that makes the North-east so special – outstanding hospitality, vibrant city and rural attractions, and a warm welcome that keeps visitors coming back."

Paul Macari, Head of Planning and Economy at Aberdeenshire Council, said: "We are proud to celebrate a decade of regional partnership that has helped visitors discover our vibrant food and drink scene, outdoor adventures from world-class golf to paddleboarding along our coastline,

and the rich heritage of our historic towns and Royal Deeside. Guided by VisitAberdeenshire, Aberdeenshire's tourist appeal has grown greatly over the last decade. With exciting new events such as the recently announced World Rally Championship, alongside long-standing favourites like the Braemar Gathering, Portsoy Boat Festival and Run Balmoral, visitors have a range of opportunities to explore our region, and we look forward to what can be achieved together as we enter the next chapter of VisitAberdeenshire."



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**Scott Duguid**  
*Managing Director*  
 eGroup

## In partnership with



### Describe your early career path.

My early career path began in my hometown, working for a company in the same field as I remain in today. As a school leaver looking to get into office-based work, I secured my 1st full time job as a production administrator at the age of 17. I remained in that business for 10 years, at the point of leaving I was working in the position of Facility Manager. I then joined eGroup in 2007 as Quality Manager, prior to becoming Operations Director, then onto my current position as Managing Director. It's been an exciting progression, with lots of hard work and learning from the bottom up on the journey.

### How did you arrive in your current industry?

Ironically, it was simply by sheer chance. I have been in this industry all my career, it simply began with a close family member who is sadly no longer with us, who drove me around the local industrial estate where I lived – and we simply went door to door looking for an opportunity. At that time, I had no idea my career and life would revolve around surface preparation and specialist coatings. It's funny when you look back, because had I not got the initial opportunity where I did, who knows what field and level I would be working in today.

### What's the best thing about your job?

That is a good question, and not an easy one to answer – as I have a genuine passion for what I do, so enjoy so many aspects of the job. I have always enjoyed the hands-

on aspect, and to this day I retain my FROSIO III coating inspection qualification. So I think still being able to support the QC team and support the business with project specific coating procedures - are things I enjoy still having an active presence in, as it keeps me involved and up to speed with current projects, specifications and products on the market.

### What has been your biggest career challenge to date?

Having held the position of Operations Director since 2012, when I was approached by the board of management to consider the position of Managing Director, this was my proudest achievement to date. Having worked my way up the ladder from administration roles as a teenager, to ultimate responsibility of a business by my early 40's, is something I will always be proud of myself for. Hard work and commitment can pay off, and being backed and empowered by the right people goes a long way also.

### What advice would you give your 18-year-old self?

If I am being truthful, at 18 career progression was not my priority in life. My priority was working through the week to enjoy the

weekends. Looking back, although I'm sure there was plenty of things I may have regretted, ultimately, I wouldn't change it. You are only young once, and life is short. So, my advice to an 18-year-old me would be in line with how I lived it – have fun & enjoy yourself when you are young.

### What's something surprising that most people wouldn't know about your job?

I think a lot of people have a perception that an MD will sit in an ivory tower, and only work on budgets, strategies and high-level tasks. In reality at an SME, although you still have the budgets & strategies to work on – a lot of day to day life is very hands on. I participate in all site inspections, support with contractors' work permits on site, deal with client QC visits, compile project specific coating procedures and ITP's, manage client audits, and even assist in booking in clients jobs when I have too, to help the team. I wouldn't have it any other way, as part of leading by example, is having a presence, and being there to support to team in all functions within the business.

### How do you unwind in your time off?

I love nothing more than spending time with my beautiful wife and two boys. Family time is always my priority. That is of course when I am not found on the golf course, coaching my youngest sons football team, or following Aberdeen across Scotland and Europe!

# What the data tells us about the North-east success story

**The North-east has long been defined by expertise, resilience, and global reach. From the 'Herring Boom' and major fishing port days to the era of North Sea exploration and rise as the 'Oil Capital of Europe', the region has continually reinvented itself. Today, it's carving out a leading role in renewable energy, low-carbon innovation, technology, AI and digital technologies, further proof that evolution is embedded in its character.**

That evolution is not just cultural; it is measurable, with long-running sector surveys and regional business data showing how the economy shifts, adapts and reinvests over time.

Decades after the discovery and development of the North Sea transformed Aberdeen, the same assets - engineering strength, deep supply chains, and a highly skilled workforce are driving world-class progress in offshore wind, hydrogen, carbon capture, and decommissioning.

That momentum matters, because Scotland's offshore wind pipeline alone is working towards 8-11GW by 2030, while CCUS analysis points to more than 50,000 MtCO<sub>2</sub> of potential storage in the North Sea.

Let us travel through the data as it reveals an even richer story of how the region always prospers.

## **From Herring Capital of Europe to oil and gas capital of Europe, to...**

The herring industry had been described as Europe's largest at its peak.

As fishing declined, we adapted, redirecting our assets and expertise to new opportunities discovered off our coastline.

At the height of the North Sea boom, nearly 180 oil and gas platforms occupied former fishing grounds, with 14,801 km of pipelines running to North-east Scotland.

Now, as those resources come under pressure and the call to diversify grows louder, our Energy Transition Survey is one of many sources to show that organisations are evolving into "all-energy" businesses.

Firms like JBS Group in Peterhead for example highlight an oil and gas engineering business pivoting to renewables, marine, space, and defence.

There is solid evidence of diversification beyond oil and gas, especially in digital tech, hydrogen, CCUS, offshore wind, and advanced manufacturing.

Development catalyst Opportunity North East (ONE) says Aberdeen is home to one of the UK's fastest-growing tech clusters, with over 300 businesses, 4,800 jobs, and a share of Scotland's digital economy rising from 7% to over 11% in four years.

The region navigates boom-and-bust cycles by adapting rather than retreating. Businesses thrive through reinvention, innovation, and diversification.

So how do we do it? What fuels this resilience? Sector strength and transferable skills, yes—but also connection. Energy remains core, but Aberdeen's collaborative culture pays off across sectors.

The world's largest free street-art festival draws 100,000+ visitors while partnering on AR murals and AI trails; ONE turns ideas into impact via SeedPod (food/drink), Tech Hub (digital), and EnergyTech Bridge (climate-tech startups with Barclays

Eagle Labs and CodeBase). Agritech firms are applying AI at scale, demonstrating the collaborations and evolutions beyond energy.

I couldn't capture every part of the North-east success story—but I've aimed to highlight some evidence to confirm that once again we're diversifying with intent.

## **Looking ahead**

History (the data) suggests that in the North-east, we don't wait for change we look forward. We learn from evidence and build the next chapter. The numbers might change, but the pattern endures as we evolve, connect, and carry on. (aye, aye, aye)

This capacity to build on existing strengths while embracing change defines our local economy, and if you're ever looking for more proof, I'd direct you to our regular Chamber Investment Tracker, for a summary of cross-sector investment and progress across the region.



**Sarah McColl,**  
Research and Insights Manager,  
Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber  
of Commerce

[sarah.mccoll@agcc.co.uk](mailto:sarah.mccoll@agcc.co.uk)

# INVESTING IN PEOPLE TO POWER REGIONAL GROWTH

Grampian’s success is built not only on its industries, but on its people. Across Aberdeen and the North-east, businesses are recognising that the key to long-term growth lies in investing in their workforce.

In a region known for its strength in energy, engineering, food and drink, and emerging sectors, the ability to adapt and innovate depends on how well employees are equipped to succeed in their roles.

Celebrating the region means recognising those organisations that prioritise their people. From apprenticeships to professional development programmes, businesses that invest in training are not only strengthening their teams, but also future proofing their success.

By Dianne Gardiner, Training Lead at AGCC

## SALES AND KEY ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT

This course looks at key, strategic and operational processes that will enable delegates to get the account management strategy right and develop the skills needed to do it. This course will also focus on live challenges that affect the businesses we work with, providing real solutions that can be taken back to the workplace and implemented immediately.



*find out more*

## BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT EXCELLENCE

This program demonstrates the effective application of a business development methodology, leading to successful outcomes in acquiring new business and enhancing the growth of current customer relationships. Crucially, it will explore the evolving landscape of sales and the significant role that digital and social media play in fostering and bolstering business development efforts. This course is designed for a captivating and interactive delivery, tailored to the distinct requirements of participants and their respective companies.

Both courses are held in a relaxed, engaging way ensuring all participants, whatever their level, enjoy the day and leave enthused and encouraged in their sales and management journeys.



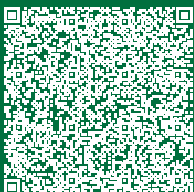
## MEET THE TRAINER: DAVID MACLEAN

David Maclean has been an Associate trainer for Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce for three years. With over 30 years senior management experience across the private, public and third sectors, for the past 10 years, David has run his own business consultancy, delivering support, training and coaching to businesses across the UK.

As a preferred consultant for numerous local authorities, colleges and universities, and business consortiums, David focuses on support in the areas of business development, strategic planning, growth and individual and team development.


Our open courses run throughout the year, but if you don't see a date in mind please do reach out to our team – [training@agcc.co.uk](mailto:training@agcc.co.uk) and we can discuss options.

With up to **45% discount** on our tailored courses for member companies, which not consider holding your own dedicated course at your venue and date of your choosing.



*find out more*





*'Fantastic course delivered by David once again. Great trainer, and very knowledgeable in his subject. Friendly mannerisms and enjoyable course.'*

- Business Development Excellence



Get in touch with the Chamber training team at  
[training@agcc.co.uk](mailto:training@agcc.co.uk)  
01224 343900



*'Very well-presented course by Louise, interactive and great pace very friendly'*

- Customer Service Excellence



# the MEMBER MEET the M



**Lisa Stewart,**  
*Director*  
McGregor Glazing

## Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

We're a trusted local glazing specialist providing quality window and door solutions across Aberdeen and the North-east for more than

30 years. Built on honest service, craftsmanship and reliability, we always deliver with a personal service and a commitment to doing the job right, first time.

## Who are your customers?

We work with homeowners, landlords, and local businesses who value quality, transparency, and dependable service. Many of our clients come through word of mouth and repeat business, reflecting the strong relationships we've built across Aberdeen and surrounding areas over the years.

## What is the biggest challenge and opportunity your organisation is facing right now?

Rising material and energy costs continue to challenge margins, but they also push us to be more efficient and innovative. We regularly negotiate with manufacturers and

suppliers and keep a close eye on energy consumption. It's about working smarter, not just harder, and making sure we're as efficient as possible.

## What is your word of advice for fellow Chamber members?

Stay true to your values and grow at your own pace. Relationships matter - invest time in building trust with customers, suppliers, and your team.

## What is the best thing about being a Chamber member?

Joining the Chamber offers valuable marketing exposure and greater visibility for our business. As new members, we're looking forward to connecting with like-minded members, attending events, and benefiting from shared learning, support, and opportunities within the Chamber community as we continue to grow.



**Sarah McLean,**  
*Business Development Manager*  
Caledonian Sleeper Limited

## Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

Your hotel and travel in one, Caledonian Sleeper brings seamless, overnight travel between Scotland and London to business travellers. Designed to save time, money and reduce your carbon footprint, we're passionate about helping you avoid the red eye to get more shut-eye, and arrive refreshed, productive, and ready to make the most of your day.

## Who are your customers?

We cater for UK businesses that value their people - corporate organisations that want to offer smart, productive and sustainable travel options that support employee wellbeing and help meet sustainability goals. Caledonian Sleeper allows business travellers to save time, avoid the red eye, and travel overnight in comfort, arriving refreshed, energised, and ready to perform at their best.

## What is the biggest challenge and opportunity your organisation is facing right now?

Our biggest challenge is the modernisation of rail infrastructure to make travel even greener, while maintaining seamless, reliable service and delivering value for taxpayers as a publicly owned company. We'd love to increase our fleet size in line with growing demand, enabling us to offer more routes and services for our guests. There is a real opportunity for us to grow corporate travel to help businesses cut travel costs, protect employee wellbeing, boost

productivity, and meet sustainability goals by choosing overnight travel that's efficient, comfortable, and low-carbon.

## What is your word of advice for fellow Chamber members?

Focus on truly understanding and anticipating your customers' needs. Delight them with a seamless, efficient experience that makes their life easier, reduces their stress, increases their sense of wellbeing, and makes their experience of your product or service enjoyable and memorable.

## What is the best thing about being a Chamber member?

The best thing about being a Chamber member is the opportunity to connect with a wide business audience and raise awareness of your brand and services. It's a great platform for networking, meeting new people, sharing ideas, and keeping up with industry trends - all of which can help improve and grow your business offering.

# MEMBER MEET *the* ME



**Rory Brock,**  
*Director*  
RBK Architecture Ltd

## Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

RBK Architecture is a specialist in high-quality residential and commercial design, focusing on house extensions, internal alterations, and conversions.

We deliver practical, creative solutions that bring clients' visions to life. Whether it's transforming a home or reimagining a commercial space, we take on challenging projects with a fresh approach and personal service.

## Who are your customers?

- Homeowners looking to extend, renovate, or reconfigure their homes
- Property investors or landlords needing conversions, refurbishments, or internal alterations
- Commercial clients seeking to adapt or convert shops, offices, or other spaces
- Clients with unique or challenging projects who want creative, practical design solutions

## What is the biggest challenge and opportunity your organisation is facing right now?

My biggest challenge right now is that, as a fairly new business, I'm still getting my name and work out there.

My biggest opportunity is that I believe in what I do and know I can do it really well, so building my reputation is key.

## What is your word of advice for fellow Chamber members?

"Do what you say you're going to do." It sounds simple, but consistency, honesty, and follow through build trust - whether that's with clients, employees, or partners.

That advice has stuck with me throughout my career.



**Seema Miah**  
*Owner*  
Seema Miah Photography

## Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

I help business owners and professionals get confident, natural headshots and branding photos that build trust on LinkedIn and their website - without the awkward photo experience!

## Who are your customers?

Business owners and professionals who want to stand out with confidence and credibility.

## What is the biggest challenge and opportunity your organisation is facing right now?

There's understandable caution around investment right now, but as more decisions are made online, strong, authentic visuals are a powerful way for businesses to stand out and build trust early.

## What is your word of advice for fellow Chamber members?

I suggest treating your LinkedIn profile photo as a business asset, not a social one, because it's often the first impression you make with a potential client.

## What is the best thing about being a Chamber member?

Being part of a community of professionals and self-starters is genuinely inspiring.

I love Aberdeen, and it feels important to be part of a group that champions the city and highlights the energy, ambition, and good work happening locally.

# ‘It’s just wonderful’: Tourists and locals lap up new and improved Aberdeen Adventurer tour

By Danny McKay

## The Aberdeen Adventurer is back. And it’s a hit with visitors and locals alike.

I hopped on board the open-top tour bus as the tourist season got underway to check it out for myself and see what the other passengers made of it.

As I rocked up to the shiny, newly cleaned bus stop on Broad Street, bus driver Robert was cheerily chatting away to passengers, telling them about the city and tour and giving out sweets to youngsters.

A Dundonian, Robert ordinarily drives a regular bus route, but was drafted in as cover for a couple of days on the Adventurer route last summer.

He said: “I came up here for two days last summer and never left. I was here for seven weeks.

“It’s so much fun!

“I just try and enhance their holiday.”

While chatting with the driver, two elderly gentlemen from Toronto, Canada, came past and took a flyer.

Decked out in tartan, the pair were clearly enjoying immersing themselves in the Scottish culture.

They headed off for a closer look at Marischal College but said they were planning to take the Aberdeen Adventurer the next day.

A father and his young daughter from Aberdeen also got on at Broad Street, taking advantage of the fine weather to be tourists for the day and see their city from a new perspective.

They were joined by two ladies from Luxembourg who had just visited Glasgow and were heading to Inverness after exploring Aberdeen.

After a trip through Old Aberdeen enjoying the architecture and history, we made our way down towards the beach via the Kings Links Golf Course and Pittodrie.

The commentary on the tour, which is available in different languages, is also full of interesting facts such as that golf was banned during the 1500s because it was proving a distraction from military duties...

The beach was packed and bathed in glorious sunshine, prompting both the dad and daughter and Luxembourg duo to jump off for an ice cream.

The big benefit of having two Aberdeen Adventurer buses this year is that it makes it much easier to hop off, explore and take in the area around the stop, and then hop back on the next bus around 45 minutes later.

As we headed round to the harbour and then the grand granite buildings of Queen’s Cross, I chatted with some other passengers.

Milinda, along with her son and grandson, was visiting from Diana in South America, and all three loved the Aberdeen Adventurer, smiling and snapping pictures while the youngster waved at locals as we passed.

Milinda said: “It’s just wonderful.

“Everything is so amazing, it’s a very good area.

“The beachfront is amazing.”

I also chatted with Sarah, who had brought Erik, 8, on the Adventurer for what was his fifth or sixth trip.

She said: “He absolutely adores things like this. The kids just love all of that.”

Sarah said the tour including a good mix of attractions, with Erik preferring things like the stadium and the boats at the harbour, while she enjoyed the history of Old Aberdeen.

Asked what his favourite part was, Erik said: “Being up on the top and just getting to see everything. I like the big ships.”

The tour route concludes taking us down Union Street, highlighting the stunning Nuart pieces, by the spectacular Union Terrace Gardens and Art Gallery, and back to Broad Street where we began.

Tickets are valid for 24 hours from the time of purchase, meaning people can hop on and off as much as they like.



# Aberdeen Adventurer bus stops gleaming thanks to Triumph Cleaning



Scan to find out more

**As preparations ramped up for the return of the Aberdeen Adventurer, city firm Triumph Cleaning stepped in to spruce up the bus stops and shelters to make their tour an even more enjoyable experience.**

Director Alex Cardow and his team were hard at work scrubbing away moss and graffiti in the weeks before the second season of the tour hit the roads of the city to ensure the stops are gleaming and looking their best for when tourists and locals alike line up for the tour.

Alex explained: "It was a fairly substantial job but certainly nothing we couldn't handle."

"We applied an eco-friendly treatment that removes algae and moss from the frames and plastics and also tackled any graffiti, so everything now looks fresh and well-maintained."

"It's great to be able to play a small part in something positive for the city."

"Aberdeen sometimes gets a bit of negative press, but it's a fantastic place with a lot to offer."

If we can help present the city in the best possible light, that's something I'm really proud to contribute to."

Triumph Cleaning volunteered to carry out the work free of charge after hearing the Aberdeen Adventurer organisers needed assistance.

He said: "We're doing it completely for free. The Chamber and its partners needed help and I thought it was a good opportunity to give something back."

Alex, originally from London, moved north while serving in the Royal Marines.

"I was born and raised in London but joined the Royal Marines, which brought me up to Arbroath. I spent five years in the Marines and met my wife while I was here. We eventually settled in Aberdeen and it's been home ever since."

"I thought I might miss London when I moved up here, but I really don't. I'm a big fan of Aberdeen — you've got the coastline, the countryside and the hills right on your doorstep."

Working on the Aberdeen Adventurer project has also given him the chance to learn more about the city's past and present.

He said: "I've always had an interest in history, and Aberdeen has a huge amount of it. Being involved with the tour stops has been a great reminder of that and I've really enjoyed learning

more about the stories behind some of the landmarks."

As proved by their volunteer work on the bus stops, Triumph Cleaning offers a wide range of professional exterior cleaning services across the region.

"We specialise in exterior cleaning, from window cleaning on residential properties through to rope-access work on large commercial buildings such as Union Point."

"We also carry out graffiti removal, roof cleaning, façade cleaning and cladding cleaning on both residential and commercial properties."



# Redefining Asset Management:

## A blueprint for extending asset life and driving sustainable growth

**Author:** Sandy Bonner | President Western Europe | Bilfinger



**Sandy Bonner, President Western Europe at Bilfinger, explores how integrated services and innovative collaboration models are reshaping asset management in the energy sector, offering a pathway to safer, more efficient, and sustainable operations.**

The energy industry is at a crossroads. As organisations navigate the dual pressures of operational efficiency and sustainability, the need for innovative approaches to asset management has never been more urgent. Ageing infrastructure, rising costs and increasing environmental expectations are forcing a rethink of traditional operating models.

A prime example is Torus, a venture launched in 2022 by Bilfinger and nexos – a revolutionary model which brings together the full range of topside services under a single integrated contract. By consolidating operations and maintenance, engineering, construction, integrity inspection, fabric maintenance, access support and MCDR liquidation, Torus offers a smarter way to manage late life assets.

Torus represents a bold reimagining of how late-life asset management can be approached, particularly in the offshore sector. It provides a route to extend asset life, reduce costs and improve safety, while supporting the industry’s sustainability objectives. Beyond its operational success, Torus offers valuable lessons for the wider energy sector on the power of collaboration, innovation and integration.

The North Sea, once a symbol of energy abundance, now faces the realities of aging platforms and declining production. Operators are tasked with extending the life of these assets while maintaining

safety, reducing costs, and meeting increasingly stringent environmental standards.

Traditional, fragmented contractor models struggle to meet these demands. Disconnected planning cycles, multiple interfaces and siloed operations create inefficiencies, increase operational risk and drive up costs. What the industry needs is not incremental improvement, but a fundamental shift in how asset management is delivered.

This is where integrated services models like Torus come into play. At its core, Torus is more than a service provider; it is a strategic partner that redefines how late-life assets are managed. By integrating all services under one management structure, Torus eliminates the inefficiencies of traditional models and creates a framework for innovation and collaboration.

Key principles of the Torus model include:

- **Single point responsibility**, improving accountability and accelerating decision making.
- **Integrated services**, reducing interfaces, simplifying processes and enabling collaboration.
- **Campaign based execution**, supporting rolling plan cycles and reducing repeated mobilisations.

The impact of this approach is measurable. Integrated teams and streamlined processes have delivered a **30% reduction in safety incidents**, alongside a **40% increase in near miss reporting**, reflecting stronger safety culture. Cost savings of **20–25%** have been achieved through vendor consolidation, with **15–20% lower unit costs** driven by campaign based execution. Clear ownership and fewer mobilisation

cycles have enabled **project schedule acceleration of up to 30%**, alongside improved productivity and reduced shutdown durations on late life assets.

Looking ahead, the principles behind Torus have the potential to reshape asset management across the energy sector. As the industry navigates the complexities of the Just Energy Transition, integrated services models will be critical in extending asset life, improving performance and embedding sustainability at every level. By combining innovation, collaboration and intelligent integration, models like Torus offer a blueprint for a more resilient and sustainable energy future.



**BILFINGER**

OPINION  
OPINION

## Mermaid marks half decade of North Sea operations

Mermaid Subsea Services (UK) has further extended its contract with the Island Valiant, the subsea support vessel which has been the lynchpin of its North Sea operations for the last three years.

Having first began using the ship in 2024 for well plug & abandonment (P&A) activities and Inspection, Repair & Maintenance (IRM) campaigns, the new deal further reinforces Mermaid's commitment to the UK market, in which it has been operating since 2021.

The Aberdeen-based division of the global subsea services provider last year completed 10 wellhead severances, a critical decommissioning process, and a well intervention for the Anasuria FPSO.

This followed on from a strong 2024 when it set the benchmark for the highest number of vessel-based well decommissioning operations ever completed in a single year within the basin by plugging and abandoning 30 wells.



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## Thistle Tavern announces £2million milestone

Thistle Tavern, one of Scotland's leading independent tabletop gaming venues and retailers, has announced record-breaking growth.

Following a successful two-year residency on Aberdeen's Union Street, the company has doubled its annual turnover to £2million and is set to become Scotland's largest dedicated tabletop event space by player capacity, with room for over 150 players across two floors.

The business is in the final stages of lease negotiations to take over the unit directly above its current location at 395 Union Street. The expansion will allow Thistle Tavern to host dedicated tabletop miniatures events while adding 70-100 additional seats to its existing games calendar. The move is supported by a collaborative effort between the business, its landlord, and city initiatives.

"Our growth in Aberdeen would not have been possible without the continued support offered by Our Union Street and Aberdeen City Council," says Stuart Robb, Director of Thistle Tavern.

"Their commitment to helping independent businesses scale has given us the confidence to make this long-term

investment. By expanding our footprint, we are creating a regional destination capable of hosting major national tournaments."

Adrian Watson, Chief Executive of Aberdeen Inspired, said: "The Thistle Tavern team are at the top of their game with this exciting boost for the city centre, creating Scotland's largest tabletop event space while bringing underused space back into life on Union Street.

"This sort of innovation is at the heart of the Upper Floors Project, now being trailblazed by Aberdeen Inspired, working with Aberdeen City Council and other city centre stakeholders. It also dovetails with our city centre retail and property strategy that places major emphasis on creating leisure and entertainment attractions.

"Thistle Tavern's plans underline the importance of independent traders in regenerating the heart of the Granite City by bringing people into the city centre to support and enjoy our fantastic hospitality and retail businesses, including Thistle Tavern themselves."



# WORDS OF ADVICE



**Brian Ritchie,**  
*Group Managing Director*  
Denholm Environmental

## Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

We deliver cutting-edge environmental services that help businesses reduce their ecological footprint and comply with the latest regulations. We support businesses in navigating the complexities of environmental impact while driving positive change and, with a team of dedicated experts, we provide tailored solutions in waste management, environmental consultancy, recycling services, and sustainability strategies.

## Tell us about your management style and how it has worked for you?

I try to lead with fairness, respect, and accountability. People do their best work when expectations are clear, voices are heard, and everyone feels empowered by being treated well and consistently. Open communication, transparency, and accountability are important in supporting growth, learning, and collaboration for individuals and the wider company.

## What is the biggest barrier you overcame in the workplace and how did you tackle it?

Like so many companies, the pandemic presented unprecedented challenges for us and our strategy for survival was adaptability and collective responsibility. Flexible ways of working and staying focused on shared goals allowed continuity and the experiences gained during those difficult days bolstered our resilience whilst underpinning our determination to succeed.

## What's the best bit of business or life advice you've ever received?

The best advice I've received is to focus on what you can control and consistently show up with integrity. You can't control outcomes, timing, or other people's decisions, but you can control your preparation, your effort, and how you treat others. Over time, that builds trust, resilience, and opportunities that short-term thinking won't.



**Greig Douglas,**  
*Training & Compliance Lead*  
AISUS

## Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

AISUS delivers clear, reliable inspection data to help asset owners make informed integrity decisions. Using advanced robotic technology, we safely access hard-to-reach areas, reducing risk and cost. Our expertise and innovation ensure efficient, value-driven solutions for even the most challenging projects.

## Tell us about your management style and how it has worked for you?

My management style is very people-focused. I try to communicate respectfully and kindly to build trust and engagement. I believe that by sharing the vision and involving others in the process, I turn potential obstacles into partners, which creates alignment and drives successful outcomes.

## What is the biggest barrier you overcame in the workplace and how did you tackle it?

The biggest barrier I've overcome is self-doubt. It held me back from reaching my potential, but by stepping outside my comfort zone and embracing challenges, I built resilience and confidence in my abilities.

## What's the best bit of business or life advice you've ever received?

"I've missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times, I've been trusted to take the game-winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed." (Michael Jordan)

# Businesses and communities urged to rally round WRC and get involved

By Danny McKay

**Ahead of the World Rally Championship coming to Aberdeen and the North-east next year, organisers have set out how businesses and volunteers can get involved.**

With teams, spectators and media from around the globe set to descend on the North-east, volunteers will play a vital role in the smooth running of the event.

**We are incredibly proud that P&J Live will sit at the heart of the World Rally Championship when it comes to Aberdeen.**

There are also plenty of opportunities for businesses to get involved through commercial partnerships and capitalise on the “almost unlimited potential” for the economy.

Colin Clark, Commercial and Events Director at Motorsport UK, said: “We are eager to engage the local community to be involved in the project, so it is ‘owned’ by the local community and it is the community who benefit.

“There will be numerous volunteering opportunities for the local community across the event, becoming ‘rallymakers’ in support of the event, helping at the Rally HQ / Service Park or in a myriad of roles out across the event.

“Motorsport UK is eager to engage the local business community and support their involvement in the event in tailored programmes that help support their individual business and marketing objectives.

“This may be from global exposure via the WRC’s significant media footprint, product placement, hospitality, local community engagement, corporate social responsibility programmes and more.”

Individuals and businesses keen to get involved can register their interest at [www.RallyScotland.org](http://www.RallyScotland.org)

Aberdeen’s P&J Live venue will take centre stage during the WRC as the designated headquarters for the rally teams participating, rally control and the world’s broadcast media, as well as a spot for spectators to see the cars being prepared and repaired.

Rob Wicks, Managing Director at P&J Live, said: “We are incredibly proud that P&J Live will sit at the heart of the World Rally Championship when it comes to Aberdeen. Hosting the Rally HQ, Service Park, international media centre and global broadcast operations is a powerful opportunity to showcase not only the scale and versatility of the venue, but also the exceptional standard of infrastructure and delivery we have here in the North-east.

“Events of this magnitude shine a global spotlight on the venue, the city and the region, and we are excited to demonstrate our ability to support world-class international events across multiple functions – from operational delivery through to media, fan experience and stakeholder engagement.

# Make no mistake, the World Rally Championship brings almost unlimited potential for the city centre economy

“Just as importantly, this is a fantastic opportunity for local businesses and communities to get involved and share in the benefits of hosting a truly global event. We look forward to working closely with partners across the region to ensure the WRC leaves a lasting legacy for Aberdeen and beyond.”

Chris Foy, VisitAberdeenshire’s Chief Executive, highlighted the opportunities open for locals and businesses to get involved and help show the world the very best of Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.

He said: “From experience at Rally Finland in 2025, we know that this global event is for locals as well as for visitors from further afield.

“Beyond spectating and enjoying the high (non) octane atmosphere, local quines and loons will find volunteering opportunities to help with the smooth running of the event, and thousands of chances to extend warm welcomes to our visitors.

“Our own Welcome to Aberdeenshire volunteers who meet passengers off cruise ships have proven that the North-east population as adept at making first impressions count, and at creating lasting memories for our visitors.”

Adrian Watson, Chief Executive of Aberdeen Inspired, added “Make no mistake, the World Rally Championship brings almost unlimited potential for the city centre economy and Aberdeen Inspired wants to make sure our bricks and mortar businesses are in pole position to make the most of this opportunity.

“I would urge city centre restaurants, bars, shops and attractions to get involved, get ready to welcome thousands of visitors and make sure that they are on the winners’ podium thanks to the WRC roaring into the North-east, not just next year, but for all three years.”



## Colby River launches as a property market first after Dandara Living spin-out

Colby River, a new end-to-end living sector management business, has launched in the UK following a spin-out of Dandara Living Management from the Dandara Group.

It's the first business of its kind to operate across all living sector asset classes, covering investment, asset management, leasing and property management.

As part of this transition, its build-to-rent developments in Aberdeen – The Point and Forbes Place – are moving from Dandara Living to the Colby River brand.

They will continue to operate as normal, with no disruption to residents.

Brenda Troup, Head of North East and Scotland Operations at Colby River said: "Bringing The Point and Forbes Place under the Colby River brand marks a key step for the business and in Aberdeen, and we remain focused on delivering our award-winning service and high-quality lived experience for residents in the city."



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# Consideration for business owners looking to exit

**Author:** Kevin Mackenzie | Group Director  
| Acumen Financial Planning



For many business owners, particularly those running privately owned companies that are looking to exit in the next few years, the prospect of a substantial liquidity event brings a long list of decisions, and plenty to keep them awake at night.

## Legislative considerations:

The changes to business relief (BR) and agricultural relief (AR) announced in the 2024 Autumn Budget came into force on 6th April 2026. The original 2024 Autumn Budget placed a cap of £1 million on BR. However, following a government U-turn this was increased to £2.5 million per individual from 6th April 2026. This will be welcome news for many business owners and farmers. It means that ownership of a qualifying business up to £2.5 million will be exempt from Inheritance Tax. While this is beneficial during a period of ownership, once a business is sold, the proceeds become part of the individual's estate and will be fully subject to inheritance tax. From a tax perspective, business owners may also benefit from Business Asset Disposal Relief, which allows up to £1 million to be taxed at a Capital Gains Tax rate of 18%, which was increased from 14% on 6th April 2026.

## Family wealth considerations:

What should the business seller consider after the liquidity event? Once a business is sold former business owners often become stewards of family wealth, with increased responsibility for managing and preserving assets across generations. According to a recent STEP study\*, 77% of financial, wealth and legal practitioners are seeing

evidence of the 'great wealth transfer' in the last 12 months. Wealth transfer can create tension within families, often driven by differing objectives between generations or a desire by the previous business owner to retain control.

In our work with families, we often support the development of shared mission statements and long-term visions that can be passed down through generations. This thought-provoking process can help align wealth with purpose, acting as a guiding framework for future decision making. Philanthropy can also play an important role, helping to reinforce family values and bring generations together. Alongside potential tax planning opportunities, it can provide a meaningful sense of purpose, satisfaction and gratitude.

A key challenge is that the next generation and recipients of future wealth may not have the experience or knowledge to manage substantial wealth. This can be a concern for the stewards of wealth and a barrier to transferring wealth, especially if there is the risk that many years of hard work and sacrifice could be squandered by the next generation. That is where education and coaching across multiple generations is vital.

Communication across family members will foster trust. What would happen if the steward of family wealth lost mental capacity? Have they appointed a power of attorney? Has there been full disclosure of the level of wealth that the power of attorney will be responsible for? A sudden death could result in a significant transfer of wealth to individuals who may not be prepared to manage it. This is why our approach when

working with high net worth families, with complex dynamics, is to bring together financial, legal and tax professionals in a coordinated multidisciplinary way. By collaborating in this manner, we aim to support families in managing complex dynamics and increase the likelihood that wealth from a business sale is preserved and can last generations for over 100 years.

\*STEP Barometer 2026



**Acumen**  
Financial Planning

OPINION  
OPINION

# MOTOR MOUTH

**The most meaningful assessment of any vehicle does not come from a controlled test route or a specification sheet. It comes from how it performs when dropped into everyday life.**

For me, that meant time off over the Easter holidays with the kids, followed by a busy weekend. Predominantly city driving, with the usual stop-start patterns that come with school holidays, balanced with a couple of longer runs into the countryside. A fair test of how a vehicle integrates into real routines rather than ideal conditions.

The experience started really well. The car was delivered by Raymond from Station Garage Torphins, who took the time to walk me through the vehicle properly. Not a quick handover, but a thorough, considered run-through of the key features and settings. It set the tone. When you are dealing with a brand that is less familiar, that level of care and knowledge makes a tangible difference.

KGM ACTYON  
K50 HYBRID:  
A MEASURED  
VIEW FROM A  
REAL-WORLD  
WEEKEND

By Calum Lawrie, Head of  
Sales at 3T Training Services  
Limited

I came to the KGM Actyon K50 Hybrid without any prior exposure to the brand. That is often a useful starting point. No bias, no expectation, just a focus on delivery. What I did not expect was how quickly I would settle into it, and more importantly, how much I would enjoy driving it.

In an urban setting, the car is composed and easy to live with. The hybrid system is particularly well judged. It is smooth off the mark, quiet in operation, and well suited to the stop-start nature of city driving. There is a refinement to it that takes the edge off busy traffic, and over the course of that period, it became something I genuinely appreciated rather than simply expected.

Interestingly, it did not go unnoticed. On more than one occasion I was stopped, once by a taxi driver and again by a couple of passers-by, asking what the car was and how it drove. Always a slightly surreal experience explaining a car you have only had for a short time, but it speaks to the presence the Actyon has without trying too hard.



From a comfort and practicality perspective, it delivers strongly. Cabin space is generous, the seating position is spot on, and visibility is excellent. It is a straightforward car to drive well, which is not always a given in this segment.

On more open roads, the Actyon maintains that same composure but adds a layer of enjoyment.

It is not trying to be a performance SUV, but there is enough responsiveness and control to make a countryside run feel engaging rather than purely functional. The steering is predictable, the ride is well balanced, and it carries itself with a quiet confidence that encourages you to keep driving.

The in-car technology is relatively advanced for its class. There is a short adjustment period required to become fully familiar with the various systems and settings, but once you are up to speed, it becomes part of the experience rather than a distraction and you begin to appreciate the level of thought behind it.

What stood out most over that time was how naturally the car fit into daily life. It did not feel like something you were testing. It felt like something you were using, and more than that, something you were quite happy to keep using.

In my role as Head of Sales at 3t, working in an environment where performance, value and delivery matter, there is a clear distinction between products and services that present well and those that consistently perform. The latter are far rarer, and far more valuable.

The Actyon aligns with that second category. It does not rely on bold claims. It builds confidence through consistent delivery, and does so while still offering an enjoyable driving experience.

Not everything needs to carry a premium badge to justify its place. Some products earn their position by

how they perform in the real world and this feels like one of them.

By the end of my time with the Actyon, it had demonstrated exactly what most drivers require. Comfort, efficiency, practicality and dependability, alongside a level of refinement that makes you want to get back behind the wheel.

For a brand that may not yet have widespread recognition, that level of delivery is notable.

Ultimately, the KGM Actyon K50 Hybrid leaves a strong impression not by demanding attention, but by justifying it.



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# BUSINESS LESSONS I'VE LEARNED



**Sarah Rodrigues,**  
*Director of Marketing & Communications*  
Bilfinger UK Ltd

## Who or what has been the biggest influence on your career?

I've been fortunate to cross paths with many inspiring individuals throughout my career, but none have influenced me more than my father. His calm approach to challenges and ability to make thoughtful decisions under pressure taught me the value of clarity and perseverance. He also encouraged curiosity and lifelong learning, while instilling the importance of leading with integrity and intention - principles that continue to guide me today.

## What's the most effective piece of training or personal development you have undertaken?

The most effective development I've experienced hasn't come from a single course or training session, but from a mindset of continuous learning. I've always believed that staying open to new ideas, being willing to challenge yourself, and pushing beyond perceived limits are essential for growth. This outlook has been heavily influenced by my background in sports, where discipline, resilience, and mental toughness are key. These qualities have translated into my professional life, helping me manage difficult situations and lead with confidence.

## What's the biggest lesson you have learned in business?

One of the most valuable lessons I've learned is the importance of returning to fundamentals. In a fast-moving business environment, it's easy to get caught up in trends and tools. But when challenges arise, clear communication, strong relationships, and strategic thinking provide the direction you need. Moving too quickly without solid foundations can create instability, whether you are launching a campaign or building a team, success starts with clarity and purpose.

## What's been your proudest career achievement to date?

One of my proudest achievements has been leading the strategic transformation of Bilfinger UK's marketing and communications function. This involved aligning our messaging with the company's evolving goals, strengthening our brand presence, and building a high-performing team that delivers impactful, measurable results. I'm also proud of the culture we've created. One that values creativity, collaboration, and a commitment to evolving and improving. Beyond the tangible outcomes, it's incredibly rewarding to see how our work has contributed to the company's growth and reputation. Being recognised as a trusted advisor within the business and helping shape its narrative has been a deeply fulfilling part of my journey.

## What's the best thing about doing business in the North-east of Scotland?

The North-east of Scotland has a unique energy — both literally and figuratively. It's a region with a rich industrial heritage, particularly in energy, and it continues to play a vital role in powering the UK. What many people don't realise is just how much innovation and resilience exists here. The community is strong, proud, and deeply connected to the land and its industries. There is a spirit of collaboration and a shared sense of purpose that makes doing business here incredibly rewarding. It's a place where tradition meets transformation, and where people are genuinely invested in building a sustainable future.

## What was your first job?

Summer internship at Imperial College London.

## Who or what inspires you most?

My husband — his dedication, drive, and positive attitude in everything he does continually inspire me.

## What word or phrase in business-speak exasperates you?

"Let's just get something out there."

## How do you relax?

Relaxing at home with my husband and our cat, usually binge-watching a great Netflix series!

## AMS Global enters new phase following management buyout



Gary Bruce, left, and Neil Carr

Aberdeen-based AMS Global Group has entered a new phase following a management buyout, with the company acquiring the shares of co-founder and Marine Director Gary Bruce.

Bruce will remain involved in the business in a part-time role as Senior Marine Advisor, continuing to support the Aberdeen Marine Surveyors division.

The move comes 10 years after Bruce and Managing Director Neil Carr established the business in Aberdeen. What began as a concept on a single sheet of paper has grown into a 50-person organisation, generating around £8million in turnover and £1 million in profit in its latest financial year.

Today, AMS supports high hazard operations through technical services, inspection and equipment, working with clients globally. The business has an in-country presence in Baku, Azerbaijan, operates across multiple African ports, and has recently secured partnerships in Las Palmas and Stavanger.

Carr will continue to lead the business alongside Operations Director Martin Taylor, who has played a key role in strengthening delivery and supporting the company's recent growth.

Bruce said the decision followed a period of reflection after a decade of building the business.

"It has been ten years non-stop. When I look back at where we started, coming from a fishing background in Peterhead, I could never have imagined what we would build.

"It has been challenging at times, with long days and real pressure, but something I am very proud of.

"More recently I have taken time to reflect on work-life balance, particularly after losing a close friend. That changed my perspective and led to this decision.

"I have full confidence in Neil and Martin to take the business forward, and I will continue to support AMS where I can."

Carr said: "Gary and I have worked relentlessly over the past ten years to build AMS into what it is today. I am incredibly proud of what we have achieved together and of the team we have built.

"Martin has been instrumental in strengthening the business in recent years, particularly across operations and delivery. That leadership will continue to be key as we move into the next phase.

"This transition allows Gary to spend more time with his family while still contributing to the business. We will continue working closely together as we take AMS forward."



**Lana Hall**

Film-Ocean, an Ellon-based specialist provider of global subsea intervention services, has appointed Lana Hall as Marketing and Communications Manager, further strengthening its team as the business continues to scale.



**Josh Creedy**

UK top 10 accountancy and business advisory group Azets has appointed Josh Creedy as a Tax Partner as it continues to expand its private client and SME tax services offerings.



**Mark Langham and Jamie Aitken**

The Aberdeen City & Shire Hotel Association (ACSHA) has appointed Mark Langham as its new Chair and Jamie Aitken as Vice Chair as it continues to champion and support the region's hospitality sector.



**Becky Orlinski**

SugarBird Wines has appointed Becky Orlinski as Marketing Manager, supporting the continued growth of its Aberdeen and Cape Town businesses.



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### Stuart MacPherson

MHA, the chartered accountancy and business advisory firm, has promoted Stuart MacPherson to the role of Partner. With 25 years' experience, he has deep expertise in advising clients across the manufacturing and engineering sectors.



### Professor Ingo Hein

The James Hutton Institute, an internationally renowned research centre, has appointed Professor Ingo Hein to Deputy Director of the National Potato Innovation Centre (NPIC).



### Nicola Neish

CBRE has appointed Nicola Neish to Area General Manager, where she will take responsibility for a number of contracts across the North of Scotland.



### Jim Leighton

Aberdeen FC Community Trust (AFCCT) is in safe hands as Aberdeen legend and former Scotland International goalkeeper Jim Leighton joins the team as Partnerships Executive.



**Jon Grainger**

Professional services firm AAB has appointed Jon Grainger as the company's Chief Operating Officer where he will lead AAB's technology, operations and integration teams, driving the next phase of operational excellence.



**Burness Paul**

Burness Paul has promoted five of its lawyers to Partner as the firm recognises commitment to excellent client service, continues to invest in developing talent, and readies itself for further growth.



**David Cole**

Wood has appointed Dr David Cole FREng as Executive President of its Consulting business. He brings more than 30 years of experience across defence, aerospace, petrochemicals and the energy sector.



**Jayne Simpson and Lauren Moroney**

Aberdeenshire-based steel, cladding and sheet metal specialist, KR Group has announced two senior internal promotions, reinforcing its leadership team as the business continues to grow.



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### Craig Walker

Genny Hire Ltd has strengthened its growth strategy with the appointment of Craig Walker of CLW Business Development Services to lead business development activity across key sectors.



### Debbie Olson MRTPI

Buchan Offshore Wind has appointed Debbie Olson MRTPI as Head of Consents and Land, a critical senior role responsible for driving the land and consenting delivery strategy for the nationally significant floating offshore wind energy infrastructure project.



### Hannah Lobocki

Prospect 13 has strengthened its digital capacity with the appointment of Hannah Lobocki as Digital Marketing Specialist. In her role, Hannah will help support high-quality delivery as client demand accelerates.



### Arlene Ewing

Anderson Strathern Asset Management Limited (ASAM) has appointed Arlene Ewing as Managing Director as it looks to grow its team and services across Scotland.

## Major site acquisition enables more capacity in North-east



L-R Stuart Common, Managing Director; Roddy Adam, Site Supervisor; Mac Mackie, Chair

A major new site acquisition is set to unlock fresh opportunities for a leading Scottish ice cream producer as it looks ahead to its next chapter.

The purchase of a 50,000 square foot distribution facility in Kintore, Aberdeenshire marks a significant step in Mackie's of Scotland's long-term plans, creating new capacity while reinforcing its commitment to the North-east economy and community.

The move comes as the business celebrates 40 years in operation, having grown from a small family farm into the UK's fastest-growing premium ice cream brand, while still remaining true to its founding values.

Stuart Common, Managing Director of Mackie's of Scotland, said: "This is an exciting move that strengthens our foundations and gives us greater control over how we

get our products to customers efficiently and, importantly, sustainably, from right here in Aberdeenshire."

Located just 15 minutes from the company's existing base, the Kintore site will serve as a key distribution hub, allowing Mackie's to manage more of its operations from the North-east while reducing unnecessary food miles.

The investment addresses long-standing logistical challenges within the business. Previously, products destined for Scottish customers were required to travel significantly longer routes through third-party distribution networks.

With the new facility, Mackie's will be able to store and dispatch products closer to home, cutting journey distances by hundreds of miles in some cases, and delivering clear gains in both efficiency and sustainability.

## New partnership boosts choice for hospitality businesses

A new partnership aimed at giving business owners greater choice, flexibility and value has hit the ground running.

Family-run, Aberdeen-based Caber Coffee has taken on Scottish distribution for Dr Coffee UK to significantly expand the range of coffee machines it provides to customers, strengthening its position as a leading independent supplier to the market.

## Discover The Bothy: A fresh new chapter at Palm Court Hotel Aberdeen

Palm Court Hotel is delighted to introduce an exciting new dining experience following the refurbishment of its Aberdeen restaurant: the newly reimagined Bothy Restaurant & Bar.

Designed as a welcoming space to bring people together, The Bothy offers the perfect setting for everything from casual lunches to indulgent dinners and weekend treats. Rooted in Scotland's rich culinary heritage, the menu combines traditional favourites with contemporary bistro classics, all crafted using carefully sourced, seasonal ingredients.

# CHAMBER TALK

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