

OCTOBER 2025 | FINANCE

# BUSINESS BULLETIN

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**Aberdeen &  
Grampian  
Chamber of  
Commerce**

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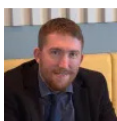
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# NORTH-EAST SCOTLAND. A SOUND INVESTMENT

**This is a region that returns handsomely on investment made here. We don't require bailouts, just the right conditions for our innovative and entrepreneurial people and businesses to drive the growth the nation craves.**

This has been evidenced through the ages with a recent example being the Aberdeen City Region Deal. Reckoned by many to be a beacon of best practice in planning, partnership, pace of delivery and ability to leverage in supporting funding which took the initial UK and Scottish Government funding package of £250million to an envelope of activity worth over £1billion. Including key projects such as the establishment of the Net Zero Technology Centre, the building of ONE BioHub, Tech Hub and SeedPod facilities.

And this perfectly demonstrates our economic diversification strategies in action. Providing focus, stimulus and investment to unlock growth in our sectors of strength and potential-life sciences, digital, tourism and food, drink, agriculture and fisheries.

It's not unfair to say that the development these sectors may have been stunted by the emergence of the region as a world-leading energy centre of excellence over recent decades. But no longer.

However, no matter how successful we continue to be in this, these sectors cannot alone maintain the North-east's stellar performance in innovation, productivity, GVA, living standards and contribution to exchequer.

We are increasingly hearing politicians and commentators promoting our long held belief that the next few decades for our domestic energy security should be on an "And not or" basis.

This is equally true of our economy as a whole. We absolutely must continue to champion and support our growth sectors but alongside being successful in establishing Aberdeen as a globally significant all-energy hub. Not instead of.

You'll read elsewhere in this edition about some of the other projects which underpin my growing confidence that this region is on the cusp of something special.

A good barometer of positive progress is often seen in commercial property activity. So, it's got to be a good sign that Aberdeen accounted for 24% of all commercial property deals in Scotland for the first half of 2025.

And the EY UK Attractiveness Survey published in June tells us that Scotland was the sixth best performing region in Europe. And that Aberdeen is again within the top ten UK regions – still punching well above our weight and scale, despite the well documented headwinds of the past decade.

Designing and delivering a new energy future is within our grasp, if we see the necessary policy tweaks made by our governments in the next few weeks.





And this will be supported by the soon to go live North East Scotland Investment Zone that will provide the opportunity to accelerate the growth of the Green Energy and Digital Tech sectors in the region, commercialise research to leverage our significant academic and innovation expertise, develop skills pathways to grow the talent pool and provide new employment and career opportunities.

The inclusion in the programme of two tax sites in the region will offer hugely attractive terms to investors who locate here as part of a £160million package of tax incentives, capital and revenue support for projects that can catalyse two of our growth sectors and attract hundreds of millions of pounds of matched investment.

Alongside this, we have a one off opportunity to relook at how we market and proactively seek inbound investment opportunity and activity. We recently took a delegation to see the Marketing Manchester operation, considered to be best in class and many of the learnings are in place to build on the current model as an extended and powerful combination of our local authorities, the Chamber, ONE, ETZ, SDI, universities and other private sector partners.

This could be a gamechanger and has to be a priority for the next few months.

As I said in my opening remarks at Offshore Europe, let's tell the world that - despite some reports to the contrary- Aberdeen is still very much in the game.

  
**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!**



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# Backing Business Growth in the North East



The FSE Group is helping ambitious companies in the North East of Scotland realise their growth potential with **flexible loans** from £100,000 to £2million from the British Business Bank's Investment Fund for Scotland.

The FSE Group has specialised in supporting SMEs with high-growth ambitions since 2002. **Our team in Scotland is led by Norrie Cook, who is supported by a team of experienced Investment Managers, Jim Pritchard, Dave Young and Gina Cleife, alongside Business Development Manager Patrick Burke.** Each brings expertise in supporting businesses at different stages of growth, ensuring that SMEs receive not just funding but also the guidance needed to scale successfully.

Unlike traditional lenders, FSE takes a projection-based approach, focusing on the strength of a company's growth plans, management team and market opportunity rather than relying solely on past trading performance or tangible assets. This approach is already enabling Scottish businesses to accelerate their development.

Ailsa Reliability, a specialist engineering business, recently secured a £500,000 loan to drive expansion, create new jobs and broaden its service offering. Other examples include Connekt EV, which is building a rapid charging network for electric vehicles, and companies across biotech, aquaculture, healthcare and advanced manufacturing.

Debt finance can be a powerful tool to support activities such as product development, recruitment, marketing and expanding premises. For businesses across Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, this represents a unique opportunity to access growth capital tailored to their needs, delivered by a team embedded in Scotland's business ecosystem.

**Companies interested in exploring how The FSE Group can support their growth journey can find out more at [www.thefseggroup.com](http://www.thefseggroup.com) or by contacting the Scotland team directly:**

Our North East customers work with Dave Young, who has a strong understanding of the region's opportunities and challenges and is focused on connecting with local SMEs, understanding their ambitions and helping to structure funding that supports sustainable growth.

**[david.young@thefseggroup.com](mailto:david.young@thefseggroup.com)**



**David Young**



**Norrie Cook**



**Patrick Burke**



**Jim Pritchard**



**Gina Gleife**



# Welcome to the Chamber



## Grosvenor Casinos

Grosvenor Casinos is a prominent UK-based chain of 53 casinos, part of The Rank Group, offering a luxurious gaming experience. They provide traditional table games like roulette and blackjack, modern slots, and live casino options both in physical venues and online. They also feature sports betting and are known for their high-quality entertainment.

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**C** Ross McConville, General Manager



## Jungle Berry

Jungle Berry is a vibrant café concept bringing premium açai bowls and smoothies to Aberdeen's Union Street. Focused on health, flavour, and community, Jungle Berry offers a refreshing space where families, students, and professionals can enjoy nutritious treats in a welcoming, energising environment.

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JOIN IN**

# P&J Live shines a light on Aberdeen's diverse industry sectors as associations choose the city for health, life sciences, agrifood and civic events

Long recognised as Europe's energy capital, Aberdeen is fast building a reputation across a range of knowledge-led sectors.

P&J Live, operated by Legends Global, will welcome a significant line-up of non-energy conferences and congresses this autumn, each reinforcing the region's strengths in health and life sciences, agrifood and public policy, while advancing the ambitions of the North-east of Scotland's Regional Economic Strategy.

Events this quarter include:

- The UK Congress on Obesity: September 10-11, 2025; 280 delegates
- The Association of Anaesthetists Annual Congress: 17-19 September 2025; 700 delegates
- The European Society of Breast Imaging (EUSOBI) Annual Scientific Meeting: September 25-27, 2025; 2,000 delegates
- Scottish National Party Annual Conference: October 11-13, 2025
- Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust Annual Conference: November 19-20, 2025; 400 delegates
- UK Stroke Forum - 20th Anniversary Conference: November 25-27, 2025; 2,000 delegates

The surge in healthcare and life sciences conferences is supported by a local knowledge economy rooted in the hospitals and the University of Aberdeen. These are key reasons EUSOBI is heading to Aberdeen this year, as explained by Professor Gerald Lip, clinical director, North East of Scotland Breast Screening Programme and local ambassador who led the bid: "Bringing EUSOBI to Aberdeen recognises the region's world-class credentials in breast imaging and data-driven diagnostics. Our clinical and academic community, spanning the University of Aberdeen, hospitals and private companies, is pushing boundaries in AI-enabled screening, and we're thrilled to share that innovation with colleagues from across Europe at P&J Live."

For perioperative medicine, Aberdeen offers both the scale and practicality that modern congresses demand. Zack Puttock, head of education and events, at the Association of Anaesthetists commented: "Annual Congress 2025 is designed to maximise learning, debate and hands-on skills. P&J Live provides the flexible spaces our programme needs, from high-impact plenaries to interactive workshops, and the city's collaborative approach offers a welcoming setting for our community to come together."

Earlier in May 2025, Aberdeen also hosted the International Family Therapy Association Congress and PCST 2025 - Public Communication of Science and Technology, further broadening the city's credentials in health, wellbeing and science communication.

Delivering on the region's strategy, with conferences as a catalyst, P&J Live's pipeline will deliver significant value to the region far beyond just the delegate spend:

- Health & Life Sciences/Healthy & Skilled Population: UK Congress on Obesity, Association of Anaesthetists, EUSOBI and the UK Stroke Forum will deliver major clinical learning, skill development and research exchange in Aberdeen.
- Visitor Economy/Thriving Economy: Hosting the SNP Annual Conference underlines Aberdeen's capacity for major civic events, driving national media attention and significant economic impact across hotels, hospitality and transport.
- Food, Drink and Agrifood: The Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust's conference showcases North-east Scotland's agrifood ecosystem and rural leadership, from primary production to innovation and entrepreneurship.
- Community and Cultural Identity: International gatherings such as PCST and the International Family Therapy Congress build global connections and celebrate Aberdeen's outward-looking, knowledge-sharing culture.

Steve Daun, head of sales – Associations, Legends Global, added: "Aberdeen's long-term future lies in diversification, both within the energy sector and the other key sectors identified in the Regional Economic Strategy that offer high - value economic activity. This autumn's calendar, spanning obesity research, anaesthesia, breast imaging, national policy, agrifood and stroke care, shows the depth of our regional strengths and the versatility of our venue and city. With seamless space for plenaries, parallel sessions and exhibitions, plus two on-site hotels and excellent connectivity, we're proud to host events that support the region's economic strategy and leave a lasting skills and knowledge legacy."

Laura Wilson, head of convention bureau, Aberdeen Convention Bureau concluded: "Together with P&J Live and our academic and clinical partners, we're showcasing the breadth of Aberdeen's strengths beyond energy. The months ahead bring world-leading health and life sciences, agrifood and civic debate to a destination that is compact, connected and collaborative. From our universities and NHS partners to a thriving community and vibrant cultural scene, Aberdeen makes it easy for people and ideas to come together."



# As global finance comes to Scotland, the North-east must seize its opportunity

**Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire are on the brink of another great economic chapter – and that story now stretches well beyond oil, gas and wind.**

As investors arrive in Edinburgh for Scotland's Investment Summit 2025 this month, our region is ready to show how its engineering grit and scientific flair can deliver growth for decades to come.

For 50 years this region has powered the UK through the North Sea. Today, projects from the ScotWind and INTOG leasing rounds promise nearly £100billion of investment over the next decade, much of it off the Aberdeenshire coast.

Scotland has one of the world's largest floating offshore wind pipelines, and Aberdeen's Energy Transition Zone beside the harbour is becoming a base for turbine assembly, servicing and innovation.

But to seize that prize, we need faster reform of transmission charges and a grid built for the future. SSEN Transmission's £22billion upgrade is vital if clean power from this coast is to flow south.

Oil and gas remains a cornerstone of the economy and will be part of the UK mix for years. With stable policy, another 7.5 billion barrels could add £165billion in value while underpinning security of supply.

Just as importantly, nine in ten offshore workers here can redeploy into renewables, hydrogen or carbon capture – an advantage few regions enjoy.

Yet repeated tax changes, including the Energy Profits Levy, have shaken confidence and stalled electrification projects. Phasing out the levy would support a responsible decline, protect jobs and let companies focus on cutting emissions.

Decommissioning is a quieter success but no less strategic. Worth £44billion UK-wide, it's an arena where Aberdeen already leads the world. Well plugging and abandonment – half of all spend – sits squarely in the area's subsea wheelhouse.

Again, a clear tax regime and steady contracting would give firms confidence to train people and deploy technology that cuts costs and carbon alike.

Beyond energy, Aberdeen is emerging as a powerhouse for life sciences. The new BioHub on the Foresterhill health campus is a £40million investment designed to grow start-ups in digital health, diagnostics and drug discovery.

Linked to two universities, a major teaching hospital and a vibrant research network, it offers lab and collaboration space for companies tackling everything from precision medicine to disease-monitoring sensors. With the global health-tech market booming, the BioHub gives the North-east a serious diversification engine alongside its energy base.

Carbon capture and hydrogen are also reshaping the local landscape. At St Fergus, the Acorn Project anchors the Scottish Cluster, forecast to generate £17.7billion of economic benefit and more than 15,000 jobs to 2050.

Hydrogen ventures – from Kintore Hydrogen to the Aberdeen Hydrogen Hub with BP and ETZ's new Green Hydrogen Test and Demonstration Facility – show how oil-and-gas skills can pivot into clean-fuel exports.

For investors, the pitch is clear. Within a short drive of each other lie world-scale offshore wind zones, a carbon-capture cluster, a hydrogen test bed, the global centre for decommissioning, a still-significant oil and gas sector, and now a life-sciences campus with international reach.

All of it is supported by a workforce used to solving hard problems in tough conditions, and by universities producing talent in engineering, medicine and data science.

But ambition alone won't deliver. Governments must give clarity and pace. That means phasing out the Energy Profits Levy to allow a managed transition, accelerating reform of transmission charges, guaranteeing regular Contracts for Difference rounds, and backing grid upgrades, storage and smart systems.

It also means staying the course on hydrogen, carbon capture and life-sciences support so private capital knows Scotland is serious. The North-east has the people, ports, pipelines and now laboratories to turn climate targets and health innovation into real-world industries. Billions of pounds of projects are waiting, but investors need certainty and speed.

As delegates gather for Scotland's Investment Summit, they should look past the headlines to the region that powered Britain for half a century and is ready to power – and heal – its low-carbon future.

Back Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, and you back a prosperous, sustainable Scotland.







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



## Strategic growth journey continues for AAB

AAB has announced the latest step in its rapid growth journey with the acquisition of Integrity Financial Management in addition to a strategic brand consolidation.

Integrity Financial Management is a trusted financial planning firm renowned for its commitment to evidence-based advice and deep client relationships. This acquisition underscores AAB's ongoing ambition to expand both its presence and expert offering.

This deal represents AAB Wealth's fourth acquisition in 15 months as it continues its longer-term momentum to scale rapidly across the UK.

WealthFlow and Magus Wealth both joined AAB during the period and will be rebranded to AAB Wealth. This marks the next step in consolidating the AAB financial planning firms under the award-winning AAB Wealth brand.

Clients of WealthFlow and Magus Wealth will benefit from streamlined access to a broader range of services, including personal tax advice, continuing the trust and quality they've long expected.

This rebrand reinforces AAB Wealth's reputation as a national, independent chartered financial planning firm delivering high-quality, evidence-based financial advice to individuals, families, and business owners.

Andrew Dines, head of AAB Wealth, commented: "This rebranding, combined with the acquisition of Integrity Financial Management, marks an exciting phase in the continued expansion of AAB Wealth. We're proud to bring our teams together under one distinguished name and combine our talents to deliver even greater value for our clients."

Glenn Brophy, founder of Integrity Financial Management, said: "Joining AAB Wealth equips our clients and team with unmatched expertise and resources, while preserving the close-knit, client-focused ethos that defines Integrity Financial Management. We have received an extremely positive response from our clients on sharing the news of the deal."

Duncan Glassey and Helen Learmonth of WealthFlow added: "Rebranding WealthFlow as AAB Wealth is a natural next step after joining the AAB Group in 2024. We're proud of the relationships we've built with clients over the years, and this move allows us to combine that personal approach with the scale, expertise, and resources of AAB. It's an exciting new chapter that strengthens the support we can provide for our clients' futures."

Michael Aitken, founder of Magus Wealth, commented: "I'm delighted to see Magus Wealth rebrand as AAB Wealth. This is an exciting step that builds on the strong reputation Magus has created, while opening up even greater opportunities as part of AAB. The team's commitment to clients remains unchanged, and I'm confident this new chapter will strengthen our client offering and deliver even more value in the years ahead."

AAB Wealth is currently ranked 7th in the Top 100 Financial Adviser Firms for 2024 by FT Adviser. The firm was also honoured with the PFS Financial Planning Firm of the Year award in 2023 and has been recognised as a top-rated firm by VouchedFor, the UK's leading review site for financial planners and advisers.



Glenn Brophy, left, and Andrew Dines



# BUSINESS LESSONS I'VE LEARNED



**Grant Alexander,**  
*Business Unit Director,*  
aaa Consulting

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

I wouldn't say there's been one standout influence, I've learned a huge amount from various directors and business leaders over the past 20 years.

In some cases, I've learned what not to do, which has been just as valuable!

What's had the biggest impact on me is working within mature, well-structured organisations where development processes, customer engagement, and personal growth are taken seriously.

Those experiences have shaped how I lead and what I'm aiming to build at aaa Consulting.

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

There are a couple of things that come to mind.

We use the 70/20/10 model for training, which I think is a brilliant

framework for supporting new team members, and it's equally valuable for personal development.

70% of what we learn is on the job, making mistakes and learning from them.

20% comes from interactions with colleagues and mentors and 10% is through formal learning, such as courses and workshops.

Sword, our parent company, also organised Executive Coaching which I found really useful and would highly recommend.

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

Kitchen porter at the Ivy House in Ayr.

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

The team at aaa Consulting, the wider Sword group and my family.

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

Low hanging fruit, this makes a sale sound easy when it's anything but!

## **How do you relax?**

I enjoy watching football and relaxing with a good curry and a pint.

## **If you had the power to change one thing in the world, what would it be?**

I often think about what the future will look like for my son, and I'd love to play a part in making it a little brighter for him and his generation. Oasis tickets wouldn't go amiss either!

## QUICK-FIRE ROUND



A man, a woman, and another woman are standing together, smiling. The man on the left is holding a tennis racket. The woman in the center is holding a water bottle. The woman on the right is wearing a watch. They are all wearing athletic clothing. The background is dark.

# POWER INTO **PREMIUM**

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Linksfield Rd, Aberdeen AB24 5RU



### Discover the New Lifestyle Premium Membership at Aberdeen Sports Village.

Aberdeen Sports Village (ASV) has transformed the way you train with the launch of its new Lifestyle Premium Membership - the ultimate way to experience everything ASV has to offer with added exclusivity and results-driven benefits.

At the heart of this membership is exclusive access to ASV's brand new Re:form Studio, the largest reformer studio in the Northeast. Sleek, spacious, and fitted with top-of-the-range reformer beds, it offers a timetable of classes to suit every ability. Premium members enjoy three reformer classes a week (worth £144 per month) included in the £85 monthly fee.

On top of this, Lifestyle Premium includes:

- Full access to the gym and swimming pools
- 125+ group fitness classes, plus 45+ virtual classes
- Racket sports and athletics track access
- 10-day advance booking rights
- A monthly guest pass
- A personalised fitness programme
- ASV app access for quick booking and cancellations
- 10% café discount for post-workout refuelling
- Exclusive Club Perks discounts via the ASV app



ASV's Head of Business Development, Kris McIntosh, explains: "Premium is a standout because it's the only fitness offering in Aberdeen that combines all the amazing facilities of the gym, pool, and classes, plus access to our Re:form Studio, all wrapped up into one membership. We're offering unmatched value in the city for this membership at £85 per month.

ASV is making further significant investments in 2025, a six-figure gym upgrade will be completed by January 2026 which will ensure it's the best equipped gym in Aberdeen. Our cycle studio is also getting a refresh this year, with brand new bikes, screens, and an upgraded environment which is all part of ASV's commitment to continuous improvement".

With Lifestyle Premium, you'll be training in one of the city's most sought-after fitness spaces – with the tools, flexibility, and support to help you get the most from every visit.



Access all our amazing facilities and classes, plus 12 Re:Form Studio sessions, a monthly guest pass, and a personalised programme that fits around your lifestyle – all for £85 a month.

**Premium has it all. Join today.**



# the MEMBER MEET the



**Martin Gregg,**  
*Retail Partnerships Manager,*  
ShopSafe Limited

## **Give us the elevator pitch for your business.**

For 30 years, ShopSafe has kept businesses connected and protected. Based in Suffolk, we've evolved from radio communications to a smart security ecosystem. Our Alert platform integrates radios and body-worn cameras, enabling instant

incident reporting, data-driven decisions, and crime prevention. Trusted by UK retailers and police, we enhance safety nationwide. Find out more at [www.shopsafe.io](http://www.shopsafe.io)

## **Who are your customers?**

We have a broad customer base, with major retailers using the platform as their primary incident reporting platforms across 5,000 locations globally.

We also have over 150 major retailers using the platform through our community safety partnerships where we work with local police forces, BIDs and Business Crime Reduction Partnerships (BCRP). In addition, we provide services to national private security guarding providers and work with national initiatives such as the National Business Crime Solution (NBCS).

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

Reporting crime directly to the police with a single incident report is the major discussion nationwide. It's complex, but collaboration is driving real progress. We're delighted to be working closely with police and other partners to make this vision a reality. Success in this area will deliver significant efficiencies and improved outcomes for both police and retailers.

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

Collaboration is crucial. Our success is down to working with as many people from as many sectors as possible. Their experience enriches our knowledge, and working together is the best way to deliver great results.

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

The opportunity to meet and speak to other businesses, exchange ideas and understand their challenges. It comes back to collaboration, which is key to success.



**Zara Weston & Chris McDonald,**  
*Directors,*  
SZN Media Ltd

## **Give us the elevator pitch for your business.**

SZN Media Ltd is a creative production company based in Aberdeen, specialising in 3D product animation, video production and audio services.

We help businesses tell their stories through compelling visuals and sound, delivering engaging content with a personal, hands-on approach.

## **Who are your customers?**

We work with local businesses and individuals of all sizes, from startups to established companies, who want to stand out with their media content without the price tag that's usually attached.

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

Our biggest challenge is keeping up with rapidly evolving technology in media production. The opportunity lies in harnessing these new tools to offer innovative solutions that keep our clients ahead of the curve.

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

Invest in telling your story well! Authentic content helps you connect with your audience and build trust.

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

Connecting with like-minded businesses and accessing a supportive network that helps us grow and collaborate locally.

Email: [info@sznmedialtd.co.uk](mailto:info@sznmedialtd.co.uk)  
Website: [www.sznmedialtd.co.uk](http://www.sznmedialtd.co.uk)  
Instagram: @sznmedialtd  
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# MEMBER MEET *the* ME



**Nick McKay,**  
*Business Development Manager,*  
STATS Group

## **Give us the elevator pitch for your business.**

STATS Group is the market leading provider of pipeline isolation and intervention solutions to the global energy industry, offering services including pressurised pipeline isolation, hot tapping and line stopping equipment. STATS Group's

best-in-class tooling provides our customers with the highest level of operational safety through true double block and bleed isolations.

## **Who are your customers?**

STATS customers are owners and operators of process and pipeline facilities and infrastructure that have an operational requirement to perform maintenance or repair. STATS operate at a Global Level with nine operational facilities worldwide. Here in the UK & Europe, we cover traditional offshore oil and gas, subsea and onshore refineries as well as the National Transmission System and the Gas Distribution Network.

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

Our challenge and opportunity are the same thing currently – growing STATS Group's presence in Europe and showing where our market-leading technology can provide huge

value to the European market over current methods being used.

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

“Be patient and stay consistent.” This is a lesson that I have learned over the last few years and find it can be applied to not only growing as a business, but to personal goals also.

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

Being a member of the AGCC provides STATS with valuable access to local businesses, exposure for our company and helps us create new relationships which in turn helps us promote growth.



**Aaron Dias,**  
*General Manager,*  
Palm Court Hotel, Aberdeen

## **Give us the elevator pitch for your business.**

Palm Court is redefining boutique hospitality in Aberdeen — where exceptional service, quality dining, and standout events come together to deliver premium experiences for guests and lasting value for the city.

## **Who are your customers?**

We serve discerning travellers, local professionals, event organisers, and anyone seeking a sophisticated yet welcoming experience in the North-east.

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

We're pushing through recruitment challenges while aggressively investing in innovation from digital upgrades and growing our events portfolio to future-proof the business and lead in the hospitality space.

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

Think boldly. This region is full of potential, but it rewards those who move fast, stay agile, and raise the bar.

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

The Chamber connects you to a powerful network of like-minded leaders.

It's where opportunity meets action.



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# FUTURE OF ENERGY HOLYROOD TAKES SOURCES CENTRE STAGE AT MUSIC HALL DEBATE

The future of the North Sea and the wider energy transition came under the spotlight in September as Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce and Shepherd and Wedderburn brought the Holyrood Sources podcast live to the Aberdeen Music Hall.

The live event, held during Offshore Europe, brought together leading political figures to debate the transition from oil and gas to renewable energy.

## Offshore Europe provides backdrop for debate

In front of an audience of 500, UK Energy Minister Michael Shanks, Shadow Energy Secretary Claire Coutinho, and Scotland's Deputy First Minister Kate Forbes debated the big questions shaping the industry.

The wide-ranging discussion covered North Sea licensing and taxation, the burden of transmission charging, community benefit from wind projects, and the continuing challenge of high energy bills for households and businesses.

## Energy Future takes centre stage in Aberdeen

The event, chaired by Geoff Aberdeen, Andy Maciver and Calum Macdonald, amplified the Chamber's long-standing calls for energy policies which protect jobs, secure affordable energy and position the North-east as the engine of the UK's energy transition.

The panel examined the balance between maintaining oil and gas production in the North Sea and accelerating investment in wind, hydrogen and other low-carbon technologies.

Questions from the audience pressed speakers on whether government are doing enough to protect jobs while ensuring Scotland meets its net zero commitments.

Organisers said the event aimed to "*bring politics closer to people*" by hosting the debate in the heart of the North-east, where the stakes of energy policy are felt the most.



Watch the podcast here:



[holyroodsources.com](https://holyroodsources.com)





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## ARO helping firms use AI to defend against cyber threats

As cyber threats continue to escalate across industries, ARO is taking decisive action to help organisations build resilience through advanced Microsoft technologies and AI-powered security solutions.

With digital transformation accelerating, businesses face increasing pressure to balance innovation with robust cyber protection. ARO, a leading technology partner, is addressing this challenge head-on by integrating cyber security into every stage of digital development.

### Microsoft accreditations signal deep expertise

ARO has earned multiple Microsoft accreditations, including infrastructure, security, digital and app Innovation, Business Applications, and Modern Work.

These certifications reflect the company's technical depth and its commitment to delivering real-world outcomes for clients.

"Our accreditations are more than just credentials, they're a testament to the value we bring to our clients," said

Wayne Mackay, regional director at ARO.

### Real-world impact: Trace Group case study

ARO's approach to cyber resilience has already delivered measurable results. Trace Group, a professional services firm operating in insurance, finance, and property, partnered with ARO to implement a multi-layered email security and data protection solution.



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The draw takes place on 19 December 2025



### T&C's

Entries must arrive by 6pm Friday 19 December 2025

All holidays to the value of the prize won must be booked with Mike Mackay, Not Just Travel consultant. To enter for free by post please send your full name, mobile number, email address, country of residence to: CHAS Fundraising Office, 2nd Floor, Buchanan Tower, Buchanan Park, Cumbernauld Rd, Stepps, Glasgow G33 6HZ. Free Postal Entries are limited to one per person. Entrants must be over 18.

Children's Hospices Across Scotland (known as CHAS) is a Scottish charity, SC019724, regulated by the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR).



Children's Hospices Across Scotland

# WORDS OF ADVICE



**Euan Grant,**  
*BMS Manager,*  
Greenwell

## **Give us the elevator pitch for your business.**

Greenwell has led the North-east in warehousing, office furniture, and modular buildings for nearly 30 years. We work across different industries to deliver the highest standards of safety, quality and best practice. These values are at the heart of our operations.

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

I would describe my management style as straight forward, fair and consistent, ensuring a stable, friendly environment for our team to work in. We're proud of team members who've been with us 10 to 20+ years and progressed across our four divisions.

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

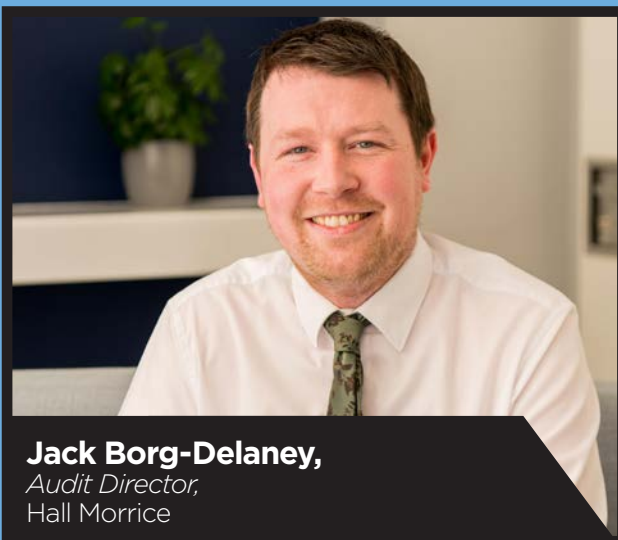
One of the biggest barriers I have faced during my time at Greenwell, was trying to tackle knowledge loss by creating systems and written processes to train and guide new staff. This has allowed us to retain skills in-house and be more proactive to workplace changes.

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

"Always play it with a straight bat". Be honest and straightforward, that way, strong relationships are built to last. I consider that the best long-term business strategy.

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

Be friendly, don't be afraid to ask questions, and don't fear mistakes. Mistakes are opportunities to learn and grow.



**Jack Borg-Delaney,**  
*Audit Director,*  
Hall Morrice

## **Give us the elevator pitch for your business.**

Hall Morrice is a modern accountancy firm that combines commercial thinking with hands-on service (we still answer the phone!). With a team of 80 people between our Aberdeen and Fraserburgh offices, we deliver audit, tax, accounts and advisory services to a range of clients across Scotland.

Over the past two years, we've been on an upward growth trajectory thanks to restructured leadership, modernising our systems, improved audit delivery, and tightened compliance. We're operating with more focus than ever.

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

I lead with clarity, accountability and respect for people's time, focusing on empowering rather than micromanaging. I strive to model the same level of dedication and commitment that I ask of others. Together, we've raised the bar on quality, improved decision-making and encouraged open dialogue and healthy challenge. This approach shifted the culture from passive agreement to active ownership ensuring everyone feels heard and respected.

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

We've worked hard to shift fixed mindsets that relied on traditional methods. We changed how we promote, brought in new managers, and set clear expectations. It was uncomfortable at times, but it's built momentum and improved delivery. You can't modernise a business without changing how it's led, and that's what we've successfully achieved.



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- ATA Carnets
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# Stay ahead of fraud: 5 fraud analytics best practice tips for FinCrime Prevention



**Authors:** Siraj Alimohamed, global data & AI lead, and Matt Kenny, managing consultant, Lancia Consult

**Picture this:** your business is running smoothly. Cash flow is steady, costs are under control, and revenues are climbing. Dashboards glow green, and leadership finally has space to think about the future rather than worry about the month-end close.

Then, quietly, something shifts. A payment doesn't match its schedule. A supplier invoice arrives at an unusual hour. A few expenses fall just outside the pattern. On their own, none seem alarming, but together they could point to something serious. Fraud rarely announces itself. It slips through small gaps in processes or moments of inattention.

Fraud has always been a part of business, but the methods used to perpetrate it have evolved. What used to be forged cheques or falsified invoices is now faster, more complex, and harder to spot. Criminals use automation, synthetic identities, and even AI to bypass controls. With digital payments and supplier transactions multiplying, manual checks alone can't keep pace. There is an estimated £7billion cost of fraud to the UK economy and nearly two fraudulent acts every minute, according to CFIT (2025). Furthermore, UK Home Office data shows a mean annual cost of £16,000 per business due to fraud, in addition to reputational damage and increased internal controls.

**The smarter approach is to design prevention from the start:**

- 1. Define fraud in your context.** Work with business users to identify the specific risks you face, such as supplier fraud,

payroll abuse, and expense manipulation. Context matters: what's risky in an engineering firm differs from what's risky in retail banking.

- 2. Adopt a flexible framework.** Use AI models within an agile approach. Deliver quick wins but leave room to adapt as you learn.
- 3. Review and refine.** Fraud tactics evolve. Continuously measure effectiveness, refresh models, and retrain as new patterns appear. Prevention is never a one-off project.

Based on our experience, five best practices make fraud analytics work in practice:

- **Prioritise speed over perfection.** An 80% accurate model that detects fraud quickly is more useful than one that takes months to polish while criminals adapt.
- **Move beyond pilots.** Turn prototypes into real, usable tools that finance teams can access quickly.
- **Leverage what exists.** Cloud providers and specialist vendors offer proven fraud models; using them saves time and reduces risk.
- **Empower finance teams.** Fraud analytics isn't just a data science project. Equip finance staff to interpret and act on alerts while reserving engineers for model upgrades.
- **Stay lean.** Often, one data scientist, one engineer, and one analyst are enough to run effective fraud analytics.

**3. Review Outputs and Refine**

**1. Identify Risks of Fraud**

**2. Adopt Flexible AI Framework**

**lancia**  
consult

OPINION



# the MEMBER MEET the MEMBER



**Scott Douglas,**  
*Business Development Manager,*  
AISUS Offshore Ltd.

## **Give us the elevator pitch for your business.**

AISUS delivers high-quality advanced non-destructive testing (ANDT) data, enabling clients to make informed decisions on asset integrity. AISUS is trusted by clients across the global energy industry to capture critical inspection data via a range of pioneering advanced

robotic inspection technology. We remove risk by deploying remotely operated crawlers, internally and externally, all operated topside by a minimal team. Our streamlined approach adds value, combining vast industry experience with pioneering technology supporting challenging projects globally.

## **Who are your customers?**

AISUS is active across the energy industry, supporting clients locally and further afield globally. With a market-leading track record in deploying remote and robotic inspection systems for offshore platforms, FPSO, renewables infrastructure, marine, defence and decommissioning sectors. Clients like us as we help solve their problems! We have in-house technical expertise who can adapt our tools for each project as required. We reduce risk by ensuring quick and efficient delivery, enabling our clients to understand the condition of structural components.

## **What is the biggest challenge and opportunity your**

## **organisation is facing right now?**

A big part of our business involves data management and interrogation so AI will play a part and is already providing efficiencies. Transitioning to the renewables sector is ongoing but we are comfortable of our space there. As long as there are pipelines, ROSEN will have work to do.

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

Beware of clinging onto outdated strategies... periodically assess your direction and ask, "are your efforts yielding the desired results?" If the answer is no, adapt, pivot or even abandon the approach entirely. Agility is key to progress.

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

Being a Chamber member ensures AISUS can showcase our technology advancements to a wide audience and connect with peers at key industry events. By raising awareness of our innovation, we help clients gain an understanding of how we can support, minimising risk and maximising value for their assets.



**James Callander,**  
*Freelance Copywriter,*  
Envisage Copywriting

## **Give us the elevator pitch for your business.**

Do you feel your web content or copy is as exciting as Andy Murray reading an instruction manual for Ikea? If so, I can help with your brand voice. I'm a qualified copywriter and skilled in WordPress. If you need a

web content tune-up or related, let's chat.

## **Who are your customers?**

My clients include anyone running a small to medium-sized business, as well as start-ups and tradespeople. I believe in the importance of helping each other achieve our business goals. I want to work with those who feel stuck when creating web content. I understand how challenging it can be for business owners to find the time to learn WordPress and SEO, so I am proficient in both areas and ready to assist those who need it.

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

AI and other technological advances are huge factors. The influx of mass content that is lacking quality is a concern. However, I've had to adapt and evolve, by keeping up with the latest trends. Upskilling

into copyediting, WP web design, and SEO have been the biggest challenges and changes.

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

Keep an open mind when you're introduced to start-ups. I see too many talented people brushed aside due to lack of experience. Take part in networking events and be open to new ideas. Every day is a school day!

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

Too early to tell! But I do like that the Chamber takes an active voice in helping your business online and in print. They help you get seen, which is fundamental not just for business growth, but establishing meaningful connections and meeting people.

# MEMBER MEET *the* ME



**Annie Kenyon,**  
*Founder and Principal Architect,*  
Annie Kenyon Architects (ak|a)

## **Give us the elevator pitch for your business.**

We are a vibrant design studio who thrive on designing stylish, respectful solutions for our clients. With a passion for historic buildings, I enjoy retaining the heritage of Scotland and breathing new life into buildings. As an architect/developer we can provide a full turn-key service from design through to

completion. Our company's values are creativity, fun, appreciation, honesty and respect - I always refer back to these in design and life in general.

## **Who are your customers?**

Primarily they are individuals who respect and value good design. Residents throughout Scotland who have a desire to extend their existing home or to have a new build completed. We have many clients who have moved to the area solely to buy an ak|a home, due to my ability to join the dots between landowners and prospective clients with my secret portfolio of land opportunities. We have some beautiful sites available.

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

The biggest challenge in the industry is people's expectations or affordability versus reality. The market of valuations has not caught up with the increase in prices, so we have increasingly more conversations regarding build costs and projects

having to be scaled back or put on hold. Along with the general unease of people committing to spending money at the moment. But we are really excited about the opportunities - with our new studio in Inverurie, we are right in the heart of the Shire and have a lot of exciting projects on the drawing board. We are also spending time looking at how we tell our story to a wider market as we have nearly 20 years of building up a unique brand that we want to shout about.

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

Reach out - in all industries running a business or working in companies that are vulnerable can be a daunting and lonely place at times, but we are surrounded by an incredible business community and there is always someone there to help. It's easy to think you can sort things out by keeping your head down, but I've found that the older and wiser I get, reaching out to people and getting advice always helps to solve the tricky problems.



**Leona Scott,**  
*Sales and Business Development*  
*Manager - North,*  
Event Collection

## **Give us the elevator pitch for your business.**

At Event Collection, we don't just plan events we deliver them, end-to-end, with our own expert team and in-house equipment. We specialise in corporate fun days, team building, event management, and evening entertainment, offering a complete,

turnkey solution for businesses that want reliability, creativity, and a partner who truly understands their goals.

From large-scale family fun days to engaging team-building experiences or managing your full annual event calendar, we handle every detail safely, professionally, and with genuine passion. We're not just here for one day, we're here to help you deliver consistently exceptional events all year round.

## **Who are your customers?**

Our clients range from corporate businesses and professional services to hospitality venues, industry associations, and forward-thinking SMEs. What unites them is the desire for events that are not just well executed but strategically aligned to their business goals. We often work with organisations who want more than just one-off support, they're looking for a trusted partner to manage their full event calendar, from concept through to delivery.

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

Our biggest challenge and opportunity is awareness. We've built a strong reputation through word-of-mouth and repeat clients, but now that we've joined the Chamber, we're excited to connect with a wider network. The opportunity lies in positioning Event Collection as the go-to event partner for Chamber members who value professionalism, consistency, and creative excellence in their events - not just one-off support, but long-term collaboration that has real impact on their team and business.

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

Invest in building relationships, not just contacts. Whether it's your team, your clients, or your suppliers, the most successful outcomes come when you truly understand the people you're working with. That's how we approach every event and every client, and it's how we're approaching our Chamber membership too. Show up, stay curious, and find out how you can be genuinely useful to others.



## Tech investment and market expansion fuel high levels of confidence as Scotland's private firms target growth in H2

More than nine in 10 (94%) private business owners in Scotland are confident of delivering growth in 2025, according to KPMG's mid-year Private Enterprise Barometer check-in.

Earlier this year, KPMG unveiled its first-ever Private Enterprise Barometer, an annual survey capturing the perspectives of 1,500 privately owned businesses, including 128 in Scotland, from across various industries.

Following a challenging six months of economic headwinds, KPMG has revisited businesses to understand how developments in the first half of 2025 may have influenced their outlook. Earlier this year, nine in 10 (90%) private businesses in Scotland expressed confidence in their growth prospects for 2025. By the mid-year mark, this sentiment has grown, with confidence levels rising to 94%, reflecting an enhanced outlook regarding their growth ambitions.

Technology continued to dominate as a leading investment priority for Scottish businesses, with almost two-thirds (64%) identifying areas such as artificial intelligence (AI), cyber security and broader digital transformation as key focuses. This significantly outpaces other priorities, such as workforce and skills development (38%) and innovation (35%).

Diversification is also high on the agenda for private businesses across Scotland. A growing number of firms (71%) are looking to enter new markets, meanwhile seven in 10 (70%) want to introduce new service lines and expand their client offering. Both of these figures show an increase (from 70% and 66%, respectively) compared to the start of 2025.

When it comes to external challenges, inflation remains the most pressing concern, cited by almost half (45%) of respondents. This is followed by potential tax rises in the Autumn Budget, which a third (34%) of business leaders flagged as a key risk.

The appetite for alternative funding options is also gaining momentum, with almost half (47%) of the nation's businesses now open to private equity investment. This growing interest reflects a broader willingness among firms to explore new sources of capital in support of innovation, growth and long-term resilience.

Vishal Chopra, Scotland office senior partner at KPMG UK, said: "These latest findings reflect the growing optimism across Scotland's private business community, even amid a complex economic backdrop. The uplift in growth confidence, now at 94%, speaks volumes about the determination and adaptability of these firms."

"What stands out is the continued prioritisation of technology and diversification, with businesses clearly focused on long-term transformation, market expansion and resilience. It's a signal that Scotland's business leaders aren't just navigating change, they're actively embracing it."



# FAB

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# Free financial wellbeing workshops a hit with businesses across country

**The question of how to teach children how to understand money is well documented. But what about the challenges that continue to face us as we get older – and what of the worry that the support you offer your colleagues and staff financially might better stretch beyond a salary?**

It's a question that one of Royal Bank of Scotland and NatWest's regional boards considered in 2024 – reaching the general public through the businesses and organisations it currently banks to equip workforces with the money skills for modern life.

A pilot scheme was introduced last year which saw bank colleagues volunteer to deliver sessions across the country. They delivered 270 workshops to approximately 5,200 people. Now, after the demand and appetite for it, it is expanding the scheme across the UK and aims to reach 52,000 people through the workshops by the end of the year.

**'The engagement level with it is really, really good'**

Russell Whyte, regional director, commercial mid-market in Aberdeen, said: "Understanding money can still be an issue for some people – they don't know when to talk about it or feel that they should already know more than they do. It can be difficult to chat

about. Some of the content of the programme is designed to try and help people engage in those conversations at a time that suits them.

"Whether it is our branch colleagues or our relationship managers, all of our colleagues have been getting involved as their experience with customers makes them realise how valuable this can be.

"I've heard the feedback from employees of one of our commercial customers. The engagement level with it is really, really good. We start off with the basics of budgets, how you manage your credit score, what happens if you enter financial difficulty, how do you keep yourself safe online, how can you avoid scams and fraud.

**'From our clients' feedback they think it's worth its weight in gold'**

"It starts to really engage people. There's a sense of trust as we aren't selling or promoting a product – we are sharing our knowledge and experience, the information on how these things work."

He added: "The appetite is clearly there. We've now hosted more than 11,000 sessions across the country."

Research from the Money and Pensions Service showed 45% of UK adults don't feel confident managing their money every day.

Meanwhile, money problems are a huge source of worry for UK workers. A CEBR report in 2010 showed 10% of full-time and part-time employees had missed days at work "due to financial worries", with 18% of workers feeling a decline in productivity at work due to those worries. The CEBR estimated absenteeism due to financial distress costs UK employers up to £2.5billion per year.

**'This isn't about a commercial benefit for us. It is helping us making a difference to the communities which we serve'**

It was figures like this that led Royal Bank to formalise the pilot and name it Financial Foundations.

**Russell Whyte**, regional director, commercial mid-market in Aberdeen



# Royal Bank of Scotland

## Financial Foundations

**Build your money skills and confidence with our workshops**

Our free Financial Foundations workshops are designed to build your financial resilience, empowering you to take control of your money and future. We support businesses, organisations and community groups, helping individuals at all stages of life.

[Click here to watch our workshops in action](#)

"I would like to thank all of those involved in pulling this workshop together and then delivering it so effectively. I would definitely recommend this to other businesses who are looking to support their staff with their financial wellbeing"

Neil Johnson, Operations Director, Apex Recruitment



Royal Bank of Scotland

TOMORROW BEGINS TODAY

### What to expect

- We offer both virtual and in-person workshops, depending on your location.
- For those starting out on their money journey, we recommend completing Building Blocks, Changes and Choices and Fraud and Scams.
- We don't give advice, but our workshops have been created to offer money tips and boost confidence.

- Workshops usually last between 45 and 60 minutes.
- The workshops are designed to be interactive. Come ready to explore money matters with the rest of the group – and bring questions!
- After each workshop, we share takeaway notes that summarise the main points and provide further resources.

### Book a workshop

Get in touch on [financial.foundations@natwest.com](mailto:financial.foundations@natwest.com)



It is a free service for companies – whether Royal Bank customers or not – who often have strategies to help employees' physical and mental wellbeing but perhaps don't yet have one for financial wellbeing.

Russell said: "From our clients' feedback they think it's worth its weight in gold as it offers value to their colleagues which some of their competitors' don't. Also, if their employees are more in control of their finances and feel financially well, then it gives them more space to be at their best when they're at work."

Some of the areas the programme covers include how to budget, what people's relationship with money is like, whether people are "spenders or savers", and how credit scores work. Another key element is how to handle debt and where you should go if you are in financial difficulty.

It has drawn interest from a variety of businesses of different scales – from SMEs across a variety of sectors, through to wider brand names like Vodafone. The programme has also been introduced to a number of Scottish further education colleges for staff and students.

Russell said: "Of those who have taken part, the feedback suggests around 95% would recommend it to a family member or friend with a similar number saying that they feel more confident about money since taking part."

"This isn't about a commercial benefit for us. It is helping us making a difference to the communities which we serve. If we can help people to learn to deal with life's basics, in the places where we live and work, then everyone gains."

**Royal Bank of Scotland are proud sponsors of Business of the Year and Family Business at Northern Star Business Awards 2026.**

**To enquire and book a workshop, contact:**  
**[financial.foundations@natwest.com](mailto:financial.foundations@natwest.com)**



# MOTOR MOUTH

There are cars that get you from A to B, and then there are cars that make the journey the highlight of the day. The Porsche Taycan Performance Plus 4WD Gran Turismo is firmly in the latter category. I recently had the opportunity - thanks to Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce and Porsche Centre Aberdeen - to test drive this exceptional machine on a full - day trip from Oldmeldrum to Aviemore, with a paddleboard in the boot and a swim at Loch Morlich as the day's goal.

The verdict? A stunning piece of engineering that blends performance, comfort, and practicality in a way few electric vehicles can match - though not entirely without a few aspects to get used to. Power Meets Precision Let's start with the obvious: the Taycan is blisteringly quick. The combination of dual motors and Porsche's Performance Plus battery pack translates to instant, relentless acceleration that never loses its novelty.

## PORSCHE TAYCAN PERFORMANCE PLUS 4WD GRAN TURISMO

By Steven Wares, Aberdeen  
site manager, Vattenfall

Whether overtaking slower traffic on the A96 or tackling the winding roads through the Cairngorms, the Taycan feels utterly composed, agile, and deeply rewarding to drive. The all-wheel-drive system and low centre of gravity give it a level of grip and stability that inspires real confidence, even when pressing on. It's a Porsche through and through - electric or not - with handling that feels precise, balanced, and alive.

### Comfort Without Compromise

What surprised me just as much as the performance was the Taycan's comfort and refinement. The ride is smooth and composed, even on patchier road surfaces, and the cabin is beautifully insulated from road and wind noise. The seats offer just the right balance of support and cushioning for long drives, and even after several hours on the road, I stepped out feeling fresh. In terms of practicality, the Taycan Gran Turismo exceeded expectations. The rear boot comfortably swallowed all the paddleboarding and swimming kit, including a deflated board, wetsuits, and gear bags. It's not a cavernous SUV, but it's more than capable of handling an active day trip without compromise.



### Discovering the Driver Assistance Features

Part of my time with the Taycan involved getting acquainted with its wide range of driver assistance systems. They're designed to keep you alert and supported, but they certainly encouraged me to adjust

my driving habits and learn the best ways to work with them. The lane-keeping alerts, speed limit reminders, and collision warnings are all very proactive, sometimes stepping in earlier than I expected. While it took a little exploration to fine-tune

or temporarily adjust some of the settings—often tucked into deeper menus—it gave me the chance to really dive into the technology and understand just how much Porsche has built into the Taycan to enhance safety and awareness on the road.



## The Charging Experience

One of the most valuable parts of driving the Taycan was learning how to navigate the current charging infrastructure. The Performance Plus battery gave us an excellent real-world range, but charging in rural Scotland required a bit of planning ahead. Mapping out our route and making sure fast chargers were available became part of the adventure—an opportunity to understand what EV ownership looks like beyond city limits. Far from being a drawback of the Taycan itself, it highlighted how the wider transition to electric driving is still evolving, and how a little preparation can go a long way in making the journey smooth and enjoyable.

## Final Thoughts

The Porsche Taycan Performance Plus 4WD Gran Turismo is an electrifying blend of performance, practicality, and premium comfort. It devoured the Highlands with

enthusiasm, proving equally at home in spirited driving and everyday utility. A huge thank-you to Porsche Centre Aberdeen for making this unforgettable drive possible. The Taycan offers a thrilling glimpse into the future of high-performance motoring—one that's exciting, sustainable, and incredibly rewarding for those ready to embrace new technology, plan their routes smartly, and enjoy the ride.



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\*Terms and conditions apply: Chamber member exclusive offer. Model used for illustrative purposes.

Combined fuel consumption (internal combustion model range): 24.1mpg – 26.0 mpg, combined CO<sub>2</sub> emissions 266 – 247 g/km.

Fuel consumption weighted (PHEV model range): 62.5 – 70.4 mpg, Electrical consumption combined (weighted) (model range): 3.2 – 3.1 mi/kWh, Range combined (model range): 44 – 51 miles, CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions (weighted) combined (model range): 103 – 90 g/km.



## Aberdeen FC and Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce announce extended partnership



Russell Borthwick and Robbie Hedderman

Aberdeen FC and Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce (AGCC) have announced the continuation of their partnership, further strengthening the ties between two of the North-east's most recognisable and respected organisations.

As part of the renewed agreement, the Chamber will elevate their status to an Official Partner of the Dons, while the club will continue to benefit from Premier Partner status with AGCC, as both strive to influence and deliver the future economic prosperity of the region, using sport as a mechanism for engagement and change.

The Scottish Cup Winners will also sponsor the trophies at the forthcoming Northern Star Business Awards (NSBA), AGCC's flagship event celebrating business excellence across Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.

Russell Borthwick, chief executive of Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce, said: "Together, we share a common goal: to celebrate and support the strength of business and community in Aberdeen and the North-east. This continued partnership is a fantastic opportunity to bring the business community and local sport together in a meaningful way.

"We are especially proud that Aberdeen FC will be the NSBA trophy sponsors for the next two years, helping to shine a spotlight on excellence across the business community. Like the club, the Chamber is committed to fostering ambition, resilience, innovation, celebrating success and together we look forward to strengthening the connections between business, sport, and our wider community."

The collaboration mirrors Aberdeen FC's wider commitment to partnerships that go beyond football, aligning with organisations that share its values of teamwork, ambition and community impact. Robbie Hedderman, commercial director at Aberdeen FC, said: "The Chamber plays such an important role in supporting and celebrating the success of businesses across the North-east, and we are delighted to continue our partnership with them.

"Sponsoring the Northern Star Business Awards trophies is a great way for us to recognise the huge contribution businesses make to the region, and we look forward to working closely with Russell and his team to champion both the achievements of our business community and the wider impact of collaboration between sport and commerce."

## Four Aberdeen accountants named among Scotland's 'Top 35 Under 35'

Leading independent chartered accountancy firm, Hall Morrice, is celebrating four of its talented young accountants being named among the top in Scotland.

The four team members have been recognised in this year's ICAS (Institute for Chartered Accountants in Scotland) Top 35 CAs Under 35 for 2025, a prestigious list celebrating young CAs who are making a significant impact across the profession, whether through innovation, leadership, or community contribution.

Frazer McCuaig, Lewis Wilshire, Ross Milne, and Peter Cowan are officially among the country's top rising stars, a testament to Hall Morrice's focus on talent development, innovation, and excellence in client service.

Peter Cowan, audit and accounts director, was also announced as the winner of the Innovator category, in recognition of his exceptional leadership in driving digital transformation within the firm and across the wider profession.

At 31, Peter has already led several key strategic initiatives, including the implementation of cloud-based systems and Power BI dashboards, significantly enhancing operational efficiency and client insight.

As a representative on the PrimeGlobal IT Communities of Practice, Peter contributes to shaping global best practices in accountancy technology. His leadership style, rooted in practical problem-solving, mentorship, and community involvement, has also earned him respect both within and outside the accountancy sector.

On Peter's win, the ICAS judging panel noted: "Peter is a prime example of a CA who is both forward and outward-looking. He exemplifies a new generation of strategic leaders in accountancy, driving digital transformation while fostering strong client and team relationships."

These major industry accolades showcase the strength of Hall Morrice's team and its ongoing commitment to nurturing the next generation of accountancy leaders.

Louise Smith, partner at Hall Morrice, commented: "To have four of our team named in ICAS' Top 35 Under 35 is a phenomenal achievement, and we're really pleased to see Peter's innovation and leadership recognised at the highest level.

"We are especially proud that this kind of industry recognition is earned through the high standards, commitment and innovation our team brings to work every day. Our people are at the heart of everything we do, and these accomplishments also reflect the inclusive culture that we've built, one that values growth, creativity and excellence."

This year's ICAS recognition comes just months after Peter was named as a Rising Star in the inaugural Finance & Accountancy Business Awards. The "Fabbies" awards, held in May 2025, were created to celebrate excellence in finance, accountancy and tax across North-east Scotland.

Angus-born Peter qualified as a Chartered Accountant (CA) in 2018 and has quickly risen through the ranks to become one of Hall Morrice's most promising young leaders.

His enthusiasm for serving the company's growing and diverse client base is surpassed only by his passion for modernisation and digitisation which has been central to laying the foundations for recent growth.

Founded in 1976, Hall Morrice is one of Scotland's fastest-growing independent accountancy and has a reputation for a client-first approach in serving a range of sectors including energy, construction, retail, and professional services.

For more information, visit [www.hall-morrice.co.uk](http://www.hall-morrice.co.uk).



Back row (l-r): Peter Cowan & Ross Milne. Front row (l-r): Lewis Wilshire & Frazer McCuaig



# BUSINESS LESSONS I'VE LEARNED



**John Storm,**  
*Director of MBA Programmes,  
University of Aberdeen*

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

Tong Yeung, my next door neighbour in Hong Kong! He was chairman for a group of apparel companies and passionate about making impact.

He introduced me to the concept of sustainable development – which I then studied as a Masters degree and subsequently worked in. His companies were early adopters of the Global Reporting Initiative and various sustainability initiatives.

For cotton farming communities at the beginning of the supply chain, he created partnerships to build a vocational college to support 10,000 farming families. I found his enthusiasm contagious and he showcased to me the opportunities that emerge when businesses and educational providers partner together to deliver impact.

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

I recall my mum giving me a cooking lesson as a kid. She opened the fridge and started taking out pieces of veg. Two of those, a bit of that. Oh, an extra couple of these etc. It felt like she was making it up, so I asked her. 'That's what cooking is' she replied. 'Using your experience and playing around a little.'

This is not necessarily a life lesson that will be universally agreed but at the personal level it resonates profoundly. I have never been one for detailed or repetitive tasks. I struggle to work on single projects for long spans of time but require variety. I need opportunities to gain exposure to new things and thrive in open-minded environments. As in cooking, I seek that bit of play in work and life.

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

Integrity and competence build a reputation. And in the business world, it is not what you know, it is not who you know, it is who knows you! Reputation for integrity and competence creates opportunity.

I learned this through failure and at a heavy cost – where these values helped me survive and bounce back. But it was a great lesson and these values guide all my major decisions since.

I also think the world does not sufficiently acknowledge contentment. If you are able to say 'no' to opportunity, then this may be a good indicator of having achieved success and a state of contentment.

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

Back when I was running my own businesses, one of my proud points was that every intern who came through our doors went on to

enjoy highly successful careers. We provided them with the confidence and launch pad to do very well.

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

The North-east has an incredible history of invention and re-invention. Few regions can feel so local yet globally connected at the same time.

And especially in today's unstable climate, there is tremendous opportunity and potential.

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

Engaging with eager minds, diverse audiences, hearing different perspectives and seeing others succeed.

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

'Collegiate' far too often used to dismiss and suppress.

## **How do you relax?**

Creating chaos and delivering a brutal diving elbow drop on their beleaguered daddy!

## Two decades of impact backed by renewed SFC funding

As it celebrates 20 years of driving business-academic innovation, Interface has secured a double commitment from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC).

A new three-year funding agreement, running from August 2025 to July 2028, enables Interface to continue connecting businesses with the expertise of universities and colleges across the country.

The SFC has also confirmed ongoing support for the Standard and Student Placement Innovation Voucher Programmes, which enable small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), universities and colleges to collaborate on projects leading to new products, processes and services.

Since it was set up in 2005, Interface has played a key role in connecting over 2,200 SMEs with college and university expertise, 92% of which said their project would not have happened without Interface's support. Once established, over half the partnerships continue to work together on further research and development.

Impacts from Interface's work include:

- 11,000+ new or improved products, processes, services and workforce practices
- More than 3,300 jobs created or safeguarded

- Over £28million increased turnover in the businesses which have accessed the free and impartial service
- 89% of projects in the last five years have delivered positive impacts for social inclusion, environmental sustainability, or equality and diversity.
- Since its launch in 2009, the Innovation Voucher programme has provided £13.25million to date to create, develop, test and analyse new and existing products, processes and services.

Interface has also staged the Scottish Knowledge Exchange Awards for the past 10 years, celebrating the people and projects behind the successful collaborations and helping to raise the profile of knowledge exchange across Scotland.



Francesca Osowska, chief executive of the Scottish Funding Council and Amelia Whitelaw, director of Interface

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# If Aberdeen was a business, would you invest in it?



**Author:** Moray Barber,  
Aberdeen Office Managing  
Partner and Tax Partner

**If we were to view Aberdeen as a business – ‘City of Aberdeen Ltd’, as it were – what would its financial statements and the strategic outlook section of those accounts tell you?**

Using this ‘investment’ framing offers a useful lens. It forces stakeholders and future investors to consider: is the economic model resilient? How do they view City of Aberdeen Ltd’s assets? Would they hold onto those assets and use them to fund future growth in new areas or should you run the asset base down?

Starting with the balance sheet: it has been a settled opinion that Aberdeen is one of the UK’s economic success stories – and not just by Aberdonians, but globally.

The energy sector, particularly oil and gas, has built up significant ‘capital’ – not just financial, but human, institutional and reputational. However, with that sector undergoing protracted debate about the direction of travel, the historic reserves of City of Aberdeen Ltd are being re-assessed.

The challenge is not that the balance sheet is weak – it isn’t – but how it is interpreted by those carrying out the review is important. They need to be objective in their assessment of the Balance sheet.

So how can the business leverage the assets it currently has? From a policy perspective, is City of Aberdeen Ltd extracting maximum value from strategic assets – its universities, skilled workforce, global connections, and natural environment? Strategic value-adding projects – like the Energy Transition Zone, the long-awaited North East Investment Zone, the government funding commitments to the Acorn Project, and the Aberdeen Hydrogen Hub – are positive steps, but is City of Aberdeen Ltd moving fast enough? Is coordination between public and private sectors creating real

momentum? This question has been posed for so long it’s almost become rhetorical.

How does the organisation show up at trade shows? The mantras of All Energy and collaboration is nothing new – what can brand City of Aberdeen Ltd do to truly inform public perception and dictate the narrative on our energy needs and demands so that people on the street (as much as investors) ‘get’ the importance of a successful and thriving City of Aberdeen Ltd.

If City of Aberdeen Ltd is to succeed in the next economic cycle, it must continue to be seen as a leader in renewables, offshore wind, hydrogen, and carbon capture. Government policy should focus not only on enabling infrastructure but also on accelerating investment and cutting through planning delays.

An important part of the organisation’s long-term strategy must also include an element of diversification and de-risking innovation. There are encouraging moves into life sciences, digital, tourism, and food and drink – but these industries need to scale. That means nurturing scaleups, supporting export strategies, and building networks beyond the region. All governments have a critical role in setting the conditions for this broader economic mix to take root. The organisation itself can help fund developments in these areas where its core sector continues to be profitable.

No business can succeed without a strong workforce, and this is perhaps City of Aberdeen Ltd’s most pressing challenge. The city’s educational institutions are excellent, but graduate

retention remains low, and the city needs to make itself more attractive to retain younger people. Strategic investment in placemaking, culture and city-centre living will be key to reversing these trends.


We must also consider how to strengthen pathways from education into local employment, particularly in high-skill sectors.

So, how would I assess City of Aberdeen Ltd as a business to invest in?

It’s a business organisation with a strong foundation, an entrepreneurial mind-set and a can-do attitude. But it needs the support of government (local, Scottish and UK) to recognise and super-charge those strengths, not inhibit them.

To attract continued investment, City of Aberdeen Ltd requires confident policy backed by long-term thinking and a shared vision for a knowledgeable, inclusive, net zero future. The organisation itself must expedite diversification to reduce dependency on legacy income and retain talent while attracting new people to supplement its talented work-force and to bring diversity of thought.

How City of Aberdeen Ltd is viewed by those outside of the North-east and the global sector it supports is more important now than ever. Energy is a very powerful word – it’s City of Aberdeen Ltd’s greatest strength and prized asset. The organisation needs to put that to work – and fast – and then the rewards will be there for decades to come.



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# WORDS OF ADVICE



**Carla Bruce,**  
*QHSE Lead,*  
Prism QHSE

## **Give us the elevator pitch for your business.**

Prism QHSE is a division of Prism Energy. Across the whole business, our consultancy services are strengthened by software which continually improves thanks to our in-house software team. Prism QHSE's consultancy services range from ISO implementation to business improvements, auditing support and GAP analysis, and there are no limitations on the business type we work with.

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

As a manager, I strive to lead with humility, preferring to achieve overall organisational success over personal recognition. I endeavour to foster a safe environment where people are heard and respected. Understanding the individual needs of your team and leading with authenticity ensures the work is completed without micromanaging.

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

The implementation of Management Systems kick-starts the cycle of change within an organisation and initially change can be met with resistance. By communicating transparently and building trust through clarity, the changes feel less intimidating. I work with teams to guide them through transitions with empathy, patience and encouragement.

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

It would have to be the old Scottish saying, passed down through generations, "What's for you will not go by you". In business it's about trusting the process. If you lead with purpose, not pressure and stay true to your values, the right opportunities will align when the time is right.



**Michael Silva,**  
*Founder & Creative Director,*  
Farsight

## **Give us the elevator pitch for your business.**

Too many businesses rely on bland content and a generic strategy, then wonder why it didn't work. At Farsight, we take the time to understand you and your brand, your audience, and use storytelling and psychology-driven strategy to help you show up, stand out, and be remembered.

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

Communication is everything. I don't have time for empty hype or inflated egos. I believe in growth; there's always room to improve and push yourself further. I started this company to make progress, challenge ourselves, and keep evolving.

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

Landing my first client was a challenge. I had to show we could offer something different from the usual. My approach is to build genuine rapport, understand the people behind the business, and think a little differently. Sometimes, the smallest shift in thinking makes the biggest difference.

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

First of all, back yourself. Listen to your peers; it doesn't matter what industry they're in, business is business, and there's always something to learn. However, be mindful of who you let into your circle. The people around you shape how you grow.

# The sky is not the limit

Join brand visionaries Victoria Best and James Bradley as they reveal how creativity powered Skyscanner's flight path to the top.

4pm, Thursday 13 November 2025  
Union Kirk



HAMPTON   
THE MARKETING SOCIETY

## Integrity HSE in live test of its travel security support

It is not often that a managing director gets to be on the receiving end of his company's services, but that is exactly what happened to Steven Harris during a recent business trip to Doha with Jennifer Hall, Integrity HSE's head of business development.

Steven and Jennifer were on a flight approaching Doha when Israeli missiles struck the city. Steven and Jennifer's phones immediately came to life with intelligence and contingencies from Rob Diver, Integrity HSE's head of risk and resilience.

Before 95% of the flight even knew Doha was under attack, Steven and Jennifer had contingencies in place for Qatar and several other destinations where they could potentially be diverted.

Steve said: "All our personnel receive the same service our clients do. In this instance, whilst flights were being cancelled in the UK and many were being advised to vacate the country, Jen and I were able to carry on and complete the objectives of our business trip. A security service provides many things, and facilitating informed decisions is at the top of that list. Rob and his team allow that like no other, and it was great being in his care."





# the MEMBER MEET the



**Simon Davidson,**  
*General Manager,*  
Fast Lane Indoor Raceways

## **Give us the elevator pitch for your business.**

Fastlane Indoor Raceways aims to breathe life into Aberdeen's motorsport scene. We strive to provide a premium racing experience to our clients and offer a wide variety of events to nurture the competitive spirit. From adrenaline junkies to families looking for exciting birthday parties, we cater to all.

As a new business with young employees, we aim to pioneer motorsport in Aberdeen with young people at the helm. By training and upskilling our employees, we are emboldening young people and helping them find their footing in the industry.

## **Who are your customers?**

We provide a premium racing experience for a wide variety of demographics. As a company stemming from a passion project, we want to give the young people of Aberdeen a foot in the door of motorsport. We have junior karts to allow children a safe taste of adrenaline and powerful adult karts to sate the need for speed.

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

Our greatest challenge is remaining relevant in the fast-paced, and everchanging environment that is the entertainment industry. As a new business, competing with well-established, and well-known

businesses is always difficult. We aim to make Fastlane a household name, as far-fetched as that may be. Our greatest opportunity has been providing team-building exercises for some of the largest names in the construction, fabrication and oil industries. On top of providing memorable experiences for the lovely people of Aberdeen.

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

If business is stressing you out, why not come and let off some steam at Fastlane Indoor Raceways? Book in your work pals for a much-deserved night out. Prove yourself on our track and make sure your co-workers know the hierarchy.

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

Having a continuous feed on the business market in the North-east. Being a chamber member keeps us in the loop constantly. The Business Bulletin lets us look out for other companies that we could possibly cooperate with and allows us to stay well-informed about the ins and outs of our city.



**Linda Fyffe,**  
*Managing Partner,*  
Laurie & Co

## **Give us the elevator pitch for your business.**

Laurie & Co is a long-established, trusted law firm which delivers the full range of legal services from offices in Aberdeen, Aboyne and Ballater. By blending traditional service delivery standards with

modern methods, the company has experienced exponential growth across its individual, family and business client base.

## **Who are your customers?**

Across our three offices, customers can access advice and support in all areas of law from residential and commercial property, wills, trusts and executries, to dispute resolutions, employment, commercial and property litigation and family law. In our landmark 70th anniversary year, we have sharpened our focus on investing in people, legal resources and technology to remain nimble and flexible in meeting changing client needs.

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

The biggest challenge is also the biggest opportunity for us: finding and retaining staff. It is an exciting privilege to be investing in the

lawyers of the future by taking on trainees, and this is an important focus for us. We've had up to four trainees with us at a time and that's quite a lot for the size of the firm, but it's hugely important to get them on that career journey. The challenge is then retaining them!

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

My number one piece of advice would be to ensure your business has access to good legal advice and ensure that comes with continuity of care and customer service. It's important that you have a single point of contact in your legal representation who has an overall view of your situation and can bring in colleagues as required whilst retaining that overview.

# MEMBER MEET *the* ME



**Jen McHugh and Monica Walker,**

*Directors,*  
Granite Occupational Health Ltd

## **Give us the elevator pitch for your business.**

We are an Occupational Health provider that delivers responsive and friendly OH services, remotely, onsite, and in our Westhill and Inverness clinics, as well as across the UK through our growing network partner providers.

We offer offshore and industry specific medicals, health surveillance (including onsite services), Travel health vaccinations, counselling, absence management and much more.

## **Who are your customers?**

We have a large diverse demographic of clients, ranging from construction companies requiring onsite health surveillance, to hospitality establishments requiring mental health counselling and support.

Being Aberdeenshire-based, a large part of the clients we support are in the offshore energy sector and require specific medicals such as OEUK, Fit to Train's and Emergency Response Team Medicals before they can mobilise.

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

Governing health bodies such as the HSE and OEUK guidelines are ever changing, and it can be a challenge - not only keeping up to date with

the latest news - but adapting our services to cater for these medicals as well as communicating any relevant changes to our client base.

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

Being open to all connections. Even if the person you engage with may not use your services and vice versa, it's likely they know someone that might. If you have made a good informative impression, they may very well recommend your business to someone that does require your services.

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

Firstly, the Chamber staff are fantastic and supportive and really helped us understand the full benefits of being a member.

We haven't yet attended any events or training courses, but are booking them in as we speak and we are sure the connections and new learning opportunities will be hugely beneficial to Granite OH and our team.



**Andy McKay,**  
*Sales & Marketing Manager,*  
Safetrade 247

## **Give us the elevator pitch for your business.**

At Safetrade 247, we provide industry-leading storage solutions and safety equipment tailored to meet the demands of tough working environments. From manual handling and lifting gear to site safety, access

equipment, and tool storage, we offer a comprehensive range of products. We help businesses create safer, more productive workplaces—24/7.

## **Who are your customers?**

Our client base extends all around the world across multiple countries and industries including:

- food and drinks manufacturers
- onshore wind/renewables
- defence both UK and US
- healthcare; hospitals and maintenance facilities
- engineering/manufacturing
- nuclear/power
- construction
- public utilities; water, waste

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

The UK market has been significantly impacted by inflation and rising costs, leading many companies to operate under tight budget

constraints. Unfortunately, one area where we're seeing compromises is workplace safety. However, this also presents an opportunity for a company like Safetrade 247 to step in - sourcing innovative, cost-effective products that meet our customers' evolving needs. Backed by a global supply chain, we're delivering smarter, safer solutions without compromising on quality or compliance.

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

Diversification is essential. Expanding your product range, exploring new markets, and operating across different regions helps reduce dependence on any single industry or location - especially in today's volatile marketplace. Grow your network, stay alert to new opportunities, and be open to change. Flexibility and adaptability are key to long-term success.



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## TAQA awards Brae Alpha decommissioning contract to Allseas

TAQA UK has awarded a major contract for the decommissioning of its Brae Alpha platform topsides in the Central North Sea.

TAQA has awarded the work to leading offshore contractor, Allseas, following a competitive tender exercise. The award marks another major step in the execution of one of the UK's largest decommissioning programmes.

The engineering, preparation, removal and disposal contract (also known as EPRD) for Brae Alpha will start later this year. Allseas' Pioneering Spirit, the world's largest heavy-lift vessel, will carry out the removal of the 33,000-tonne topside and 12,000 tonne upper jacket in two separate campaigns.

Sandy Hutchison, managing director of TAQA UK, said: "This milestone reinforces TAQA's position as a leader in safe, efficient late-life asset management and decommissioning. It represents a major project for a platform that has played a significant role in the UK's energy security over four decades."

Allseas is also undertaking the EPRD decommissioning programme for all four of TAQA UK's Northern North

Sea assets including North Cormorant, Tern, Eider and Cormorant Alpha, in what remains the largest single offshore decommissioning contract awarded in the UK to date.

Allseas' president, Pieter Heerema, says: "We are proud to continue working with TAQA on this next phase of their decommissioning journey, which will see the Brae Alpha topsides removed by Allseas' single-lift capability."

TAQA has committed to reusing or recycling at least 95% of recovered topsides material.



# BUSINESS LESSONS I'VE LEARNED



**Stuart Bain,**  
*Partner and member,*  
andersonbainLLP

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

That would be Malachi Mulligan, the solicitor who trained me.

A brilliant lawyer, and an even better man, who had real empathy with and loyalty to his clients.

He was exceptional in every way, and I had huge respect and admiration for him.

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

Delivering the local Green Final as an 11-year-old on Saturday evenings.

I had to collect the cover price from customers and if I chatted to them and took an interest in them/their family they gave me much larger tips!

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

Two pieces of advice if I may.

Firstly, make people feel important.

Secondly, keep clients informed – if nothing is happening then tell them that nothing is happening because they won't know that!

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

Setting up Anderson Bain with Peter Anderson and Christine (now Sheriff) McCrossan.

That we are still growing and developing 25 years on is a source of real satisfaction and pride.

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

The folk that I do business with. In the legal sector the North-east is lucky to have practical, honest and helpful solicitors who, for the most part, make the job fun!

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

Grouse Beater. Alas, I was one of twenty who were sacked for going on strike on health and safety grounds. Not my finest moment!

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

Folk with a strong work ethic. I recall a friend of my father telling me when I was a young teenager that he would far rather employ someone who gave their all than someone who was more talented but without that ethic. That advice always stuck with me.

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

"It can't be done". Business is about finding a way to do what the client wants. Its not about putting semantic legal hurdles in the way.

## **How do you relax?**

Wine, walking and sport. Have followed Aberdeen FC since my father took me to see them thrash Raith Rovers 5-1 in the early 70s.

## **If you had the power to change one thing in the world, what would it be?**

Accessibility to legal help. Those who can't afford legal services are completely disenfranchised. There are too many occasions when those with the most financial heft prevail regardless of the merits of a case.

## QUICK-FIRE ROUND



# Strength in numbers: How Gary Walker balances wealth, health and community

By Danny McKay



**For more than four decades, Gary Walker has built a reputation as one of the North-east's most trusted financial voices – a man whose career has been dedicated to helping others plan, prepare and prosper.**

As founder of Gary Walker Wealth Management, he has guided thousands of clients through the complexities of money and markets, delivering not just financial advice but confidence about the future.

Now, during one of the most challenging periods of his own life, that same spirit of support and community has been returned to him in abundance.

In December, Gary underwent surgery after being diagnosed with stage-three prostate cancer following what began as a routine health check.

His resilience, positive outlook and commitment to “controlling the controllables” have been central to his recovery.

Family and friends have rallied around him – not least his daughter, newly graduated as a doctor, who jokes that she’s preparing to take care of him in his later years.

It’s a reminder of the strong personal networks Gary has always valued.

Far from stepping back, Gary has continued to focus on the things that energise him most – his business, his fitness, and his community. Just months after surgery, he completed a half-marathon to raise funds for Aberdeen Royal Infirmary’s SURE Unit.

It’s a continuation of a lifetime spent giving back. From helping raise over a million pounds through the Friends of Hazlehead group to running marathons across the world, Gary has always combined personal endurance with charitable purpose.

Gary explained: “Unfortunately I was recently diagnosed with prostate cancer.

“I went to the doctor for a regular check-up, and from that routine health check I got diagnosed with stage-3 prostate cancer.

“I got my prostate out in December and I’ve recovered well but I’m just getting monitored closely.

“In life, I’m a great believer in dealing with the controllables. Too many people worry about things they can’t influence and can’t control.

“I surround myself with great people and have done over the years, people I’ve met through business and personal friends.

“My daughter’s just graduated to be a doctor so she’s going to look after me in my old age.”

His diagnosis is something Gary hasn’t allowed to stop him doing what he loves, both at work and in one of his other passions – fitness.

Gary still goes to the gym daily and in September took on the Copenhagen half-marathon to raise funds for the SURE Unit at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, a joint campaign from UCAN and Friends of ANCHOR.

Raising money for charity is nothing new for Gary. With roots in Hazlehead, Gary was involved in forming the Friends of Hazlehead group, raising well over a million pounds for improvements to the park.

Gary has also run marathons around the world for charity, but has had to cut back following complications while in hospital for an operation to repair an old football injury.



He said:

**“I’ve been through the mill, but resilience is really important, surrounding yourself with great people to keep your confidence up.”**

“Business is a bit like life, it’s got challenges on the way, ups and downs, and it’s how you deal with them.”

Gary is hugely passionate about Aberdeen as a city – but also about the football team.

It was even an ex-Aberdeen player, Duncan Davidson, who first introduced Gary to financial services.

Before that, he worked at a travel agent and organised supporters buses to take fans around Europe in the 80s.

He said: “I was only 17 at the time and Aberdeen were flying high in Europe in the early stages of the successful 80s.

“I approached my boss and said I’d like to take a coach of Aberdeen fans to Europe.

“I took three coaches to Munich and a double decker coach to Waterschei.

“For the final we left on the Sunday and got back on the Friday, travelling all the way from Aberdeen through to Dover, across to Hamburg and arrived in Gothenburg the morning of the game and returned right after the match.

“I wasn’t really enjoying the travel industry – maybe it’s because I was sitting on a bus – and I decided travel agent wasn’t for me long-term.

“I spoke to Duncan and he said he was prepared to take me under his wing.

“I love helping people and I love helping people have a plan for the future.

“I think financial planning, getting your finances in order, helps your general health and wellbeing.

“I’m very passionate about delivering financial wellbeing for clients.”

After two years of cold calling and direct selling, Gary moved to a company called Stuart Wyse Ogilvie General Accident before spending 13 years with TSB and setting up his own business at St James’s 21 years ago.

Gary said: “My business has grown from myself and a part-time PA to managing £400million of clients’ funds and about 1,600 clients.

“We have a team of about 18 people here now and the business continues to grow.

“We’ve got some fantastic relationships with the Chamber of Commerce, Aberdeen Football Club, and most of our business just comes through word of mouth from referrals and existing clients.

“I love doing what we do. The job has changed in a lot of ways, but in other ways it hasn’t changed. It’s about trust and it’s about relationships and that hasn’t changed in all the years I’ve been doing the job.

“It doesn’t matter what age you are, it doesn’t matter if you’re starting off your first job or you’ve left it even into your 50s – it’s never too late to do some kind of planning.”

The importance of financial education and planning is a message Gary was keen to share as, in partnership with Aberdeen FC, he took the Scottish Cup on a tour round Aberdeen and the North-east, visiting businesses to celebrate the trophy and spread the word about the services his firm offers.

He said:

**“We’re very passionate about financial education in the workplace as well and going out to businesses, be it trainees or people at retirement age, we want to help people at all stages from cradle to grave.”**

“It’s really important to educate people about planning for their future.”





# BUSINESS LESSONS I'VE LEARNED



**Claire Grant,**  
Head of HR,  
Rubberatkins Ltd

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

Rather than a specific person, it was actually a situation that had the biggest influence on my career. Early in my first full-time role, an HR consultant delivered a short in-house course on employment law.

That experience sparked a genuine interest in the subject, which ultimately shaped the direction of my career from that point forward.

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

I would say the most impactful piece of personal development I've undertaken is completing my recent Master's in Organisational and Business Psychology.

Studying later in life offered a very different experience for me, one where I was able to approach learning with greater focus, maturity, and real-world context. Having professional experience to draw on made the content more meaningful and allowed me to apply concepts more critically and effectively.

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

The biggest lesson I've learned in business is not to take things personally. Ideas may be challenged or turned down, but it's important not to give up. Instead, take the opportunity to re-evaluate, consider

the feedback, and refine your approach.

Building strong relationships with key stakeholders is also essential as it helps you understand their perspectives and align your ideas more effectively, taking their priorities into account.

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

My proudest career achievement to date would be completing my studies and recently becoming a Chartered Fellow of the CIPD.

Academic work has never come naturally to me; I found school challenging and have had to put in a great deal of effort to succeed in my studies alongside full-time work.

Balancing both meant early mornings and late nights, 4am starts with psychology textbooks weren't exactly fun but the hard work and determination have made the achievement all the more meaningful.

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

We've been extremely fortunate to have oil and gas in the North-east. When you speak to friends and family in other parts of the UK, you realise just how lucky we've been here. The region has benefited from decades of investment and job creation, which has built a highly skilled workforce.

Having worked here for over 20 years, I've found the local business community to be incredibly supportive people are always willing to lend a hand, and there's a real sense of collaboration and pride in the region.

## What was your first job?

Part-time silver service waitress: first full-time role was as an operations secretary.

## Who or what inspires you most?

My biggest inspiration is my dog. His constant joy and enthusiasm for life even while battling cancer was truly remarkable. His resilience and positivity reminded me daily of the strength we all have inside us, no matter the circumstances.

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

"Fostering" — the overused word that makes it obvious someone has used AI!

## How do you relax?

Walking the dog, paddleboarding, and attempting to golf — emphasis on attempting!

## If you had the power to change one thing in the world, what would it be?

Creating a peaceful world would be my one change.

## QUICK-FIRE ROUND



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# Offshore energy industry beats official environmental targets

A new analysis of environmental monitoring in the North Sea oil and gas industry published by Offshore Energies UK gives welcome evidence of performance outstripping official targets.

There has been a 34% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions between 2018 and 2024, comfortably exceeding a 25% emissions reduction target outlined in the North Sea Transition Deal (NSTD) for 2027.

There has also been a 57% reduction in methane emissions over the same period against an original target for methane reductions of 50% by 2030.

Official industry targets require a 10% total emissions reduction by 2025, 25% by 2027, and 50% by 2030, relative to the 2018 baseline.

The monitoring data published in OEUK's 2025 Environmental Insight report show a 78% reduction in overall volumes of reported unintentional oil and chemical releases in the six-year period 2018 to 2024.

The report also shows a 14% reduction between 2023 and 2024 in the amount of naturally occurring radioactive material (NORM) brought to the surface during oil and gas extraction.

Additionally, there has been a reduction in dispersed oil within produced water discharges and in the overall volume of chemicals discharged, with the majority being classified as posing little or no risk (PLONOR).

Although the report shows there was a higher number of incidents of unintentional releases of oil and chemicals compared to last year, the total volumes released into the sea were smaller.

Caroline Brown, environment manager at OEUK, said: "This year's Environmental Insight report highlights the offshore industry's continuing progress in reducing its environmental footprint - not just in terms of greenhouse gases, but critically in the way we manage and reduce chemical use and discharges. We've seen a significant reduction in the total volume of oil and chemical releases, a huge achievement driven by investment in cleaner technologies, improved operational practices, and tight permit controls.

"The data also shows encouraging trends in the types of chemicals being used. The vast majority of those discharged to sea are now classed as PLONOR and we've reduced the volume of NORM brought to surface while also making measurable improvements in how we manage produced water, dispersed oil, and drill cuttings.

"These gains are not accidental. They reflect a culture of continuous improvement, growing collaboration across the sector, and a clear recognition that good environmental performance is essential to our social licence to operate."

Mark Wilson, HSE and operations director at OEUK, added: "This year's data show an encouraging picture of an industry meeting its environmental targets and producing oil and gas in an environmentally responsible manner.

"There is some way to go on our path to net zero, however these figures highlight that the industry is in action and the high standards that are set for North Sea oil and gas production.

"Oil and gas will remain essential for decades to come. It is better from all points of view - financial, environmental and social that energy comes from our own homegrown North Sea supplies."



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# Market Research: Investment, not cost

When businesses think about investment, the focus is usually on technology, people, or infrastructure. Rarely is **market research** given the same recognition. Too often, it's seen as a "nice-to-have" or, worse, an avoidable cost. In reality, market research is one of the smartest investments a business can make. When done properly, it delivers measurable returns, supporting better decisions, stronger strategies and ultimately, higher profit margins. Instead of thinking "what will this project cost us?", we should be asking "what will this project return?"

## Research through a financial lens

Finance teams rely on tools such as **Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA)**, **Net Present Value (NPV)**, and **Internal Rate of Return (IRR)** to assess whether an investment makes financial sense. These same methods can be applied to market research to demonstrate that it is not just a cost but a value-adding activity.

**CBA** weighs all project costs including direct expenses (such as survey design and fieldwork), indirect costs (like staff time), and opportunity costs against the expected benefits. In the case of research, those benefits might include improved customer targeting, better product positioning, or stronger marketing returns. If the projected gains outweigh the costs, the research is financially sound.

**NPV** converts future benefits into today's money, recognising that a pound today is worth more than a pound tomorrow. A positive NPV indicates that the research project will generate more value than it consumes, making it a worthwhile investment.

**IRR** expresses a project's expected returns as a percentage, offering a clear benchmark to compare against an organisation's required return or cost of capital. If the IRR exceeds this threshold, the investment is considered worthwhile meaning the research is generating enough financial value to justify the spend.

Finance teams usually run these models, while project managers use them in business cases. Even in smaller projects, businesses apply the same logic—asking: "Will this return more than it costs, and how quickly?"

By applying these models, market research stops being seen as an abstract "insight exercise" and instead becomes a robust business case, quantifiable, comparable, and strategically defensible.

## Aberdeen Tall Ships: proof in practice

Take this summer's Aberdeen Tall Ships 2025 event, which brought more than 400,000 visitors to the city. The Research Chamber was commissioned to help organisers collect robust data through face-to-face interviews. Behind the scenes, the evaluation team is now analysing visitor, vendor, and business feedback and is focusing on measuring the event's economic, cultural, and social impact.

Is this evaluation a cost: On the surface, yes—it requires staff time, fieldwork coordination, and reporting, in reality it is a strategic investment. The insights are expected to help Aberdeen City Council and partners secure future funding, attract cultural events, and design experiences that deliver higher visitor spend. Financial modelling makes that value tangible:

- Even a 1% uplift in future visitor spending achieved through better planning advised by the evaluation, could mean hundreds of thousands of pounds in returns, far exceeding evaluation costs.
- On conservative assumptions, if the evaluation is expected to support funding bids for events worth £50k-£100k, in today's terms, this equates to an NPV of £47k-£95k.
- Based on HM Treasury (Green Book, 2022), public-sector projects are generally considered good value if they deliver a 3-10% IRR. On the assumptions used for the Tall Ships, the estimated IRR showed every £1 spent on research could generate over

£2 in benefits—from increased visitor spends to future funding opportunities.

Negotiations to bring the Tall Ships Races back to Aberdeen soon have already begun and the data collected through our fieldwork, and the final overall evaluation results, will serve as strong evidence to back those discussions, demonstrating to organisers and funders the tangible value to the City.

In other words, the evaluation isn't just about accountability, it shows how data drives long-term value.

## Why this matters for your business

Whether you're launching a new product, entering a new market, or working out your marketing spend, market research brings clarity. It reduces risk, guides investment, and helps avoid costly mistakes. Consider this:

- A poorly targeted product launch can cost millions in wasted advertising and unsold stock
- Misjudging customer expectations can damage reputation and retention
- Failing to measure impact means repeating mistakes instead of building on success

By contrast, well-planned research provides evidence to steer the right course. And when assessed with the same rigour as any other financial investment, the returns speak for themselves.

## The bottom line

Market research is not just about gathering data, it creates valuable assets for your organisation. Value that can be measured, benchmarked, and proven using the same financial tools used for any investment.

So, next time you ask whether research is "worth it," remember:

**Insights aren't a cost line in your budget; they are an asset on your balance sheet.**

# Inheritance Tax can hit your family hard, especially when **business assets** are involved.

**Burnett  
& Reid**

The UK tax system is changing rapidly, and with it brings significant impact to family businesses, farms, and estates with substantial assets, potentially requiring the sale of assets to cover IHT bills and preventing family businesses from continuing.

**There are strategic steps you can take to reduce the impact of these changes.**

**Planning now could help you to:**

- Maximise available reliefs and exemptions, such as the £1m allowance.
- Explore lifetime gifting strategies to reduce your taxable estate.
- Restructure businesses to reduce IHT exposure and bring the next generation into your business.
- Review your Will to ensure it reflects your wishes and minimises IHT exposure.

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## Aberdeen accountancy graduates in love merger made to last

Two Aberdeen accountancy graduates are closing the books on single life... and beginning their professional lives together.

Love really does add up for Claudette Castrence and Cedie Herrera who have been taken on by accountancy firm MHA as part of the latest intake of graduate students - just months before their wedding.

Claudette, 28, and Cedie, 32, met through mutual friends in 2015, studied accountancy and finance together at Robert Gordon University and got engaged on board a cruise ship last summer.

And now the couple will embark on the start of their careers at MHA's Aberdeen office before marrying next March in Inverurie.

They will be part of a five-strong intake - Claudette working in the tax department, while Cedie and the remaining students and graduates will take up posts in audit and accounts.

Claudette said: "It's great that there will be someone there from the start who I know, although it's definitely a good thing that we'll be in different departments.

We're very much our own people and will do our own thing.

"It's a brilliant opportunity to do our graduate placements at MHA where there is such a strong emphasis on developing the next generation."

MHA is a leading professional services provider of audit and assurance, tax, accountancy and advisory services, based in the UK with an international presence. Its Scottish offices are in Aberdeen's Carden Place and Edinburgh's St Colme Street.

In Aberdeen, the firm has been proudly supporting students for 28 years. Its first ever placement student was Louise Smith, who now looks after the talent coming through the office's Carden Place doors.





# CHAMBER TRAINING

## FINANCE FOCUS

### Meet our trainer - Sue Stephenson

Sue is a finance professional with more than 30 years of experience spanning both the private and public sectors. Her career has taken her from small enterprises to multinational corporations, as well as universities, charities, and not-for-profit organisations. For the past sixteen years, Sue has worked at senior leadership level, most recently as a company director, ensuring she brings both strategic vision and practical insight to every role. She keeps her expertise sharp and relevant through continuous professional development.

Alongside her financial leadership, Sue has spent much of her career coaching and training individuals and teams. She is passionate about helping people unlock their potential while strengthening the organisations they work within. Known for her approachable style, Sue has a unique ability to make complex, technical financial concepts clear, engaging, and even enjoyable. Delegates often leave her courses not only better informed but surprised at how much they've enjoyed learning about finance.

Sue is a trained coach, hypnotherapist, and Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) practitioner, an Associate of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (ACMA), and holds an MBA from Durham University. She blends these skills to bring real-world experience, practical tools, and a touch of inspiration to everything she does.



### Daunted by finance?

**Unlock the story behind the numbers with our courses**

Finance is everyone's business and not just for accountants! That's why Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce is proud to offer a series of practical, accessible finance courses designed to build real-world confidence, capability and commercial acumen.

**DOWNLOAD OUR TRAINING BROCHURE TO SEE ALL CHAMBER TRAINING COURSES.**



### What you can expect:

- ✓ Clear, jargon busting content
- ✓ Practical skills you can apply immediately
- ✓ Courses suitable for all levels of financial knowledge
- ✓ Expert trainer with real business experience

From understanding the profit and loss, balance sheet and cashflow to mastering budgets and forecasts, our finance training is designed to help you make smarter, faster, and more informed decisions.

#### The basics of business finance

Build the skills to read, understand, and use financial information with confidence. Learn how the profit and loss account, balance sheet and accounting systems work — and how they can help you in your role.

#### Business finance skills

This two-day intensive course will help you to gain the finance and commercial skills that drive smarter business decisions. Learn to interpret the financial statements, understand the importance of cashflow, create and manage budgets and make investment choices.

#### Tailored finance training

We can tailor a course to your organisation's specific requirements, please email [training@agcc.co.uk](mailto:training@agcc.co.uk) to find out more.

# Sheryl Newman, CEO, Appetite for Business

## Why investing in Digital Skills Training pays off for SMEs

For many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), margins are tight, and every investment must deliver clear value. Yet one area where many businesses underinvest is in staff training, despite it offering some of the most significant financial returns.

Employees who don't receive proper training are **40% more likely to leave within their first year**, driving up recruitment and onboarding costs.

By contrast, SMEs that prioritise digital skills training **see measurable results**. Research shows **income per employee can rise by as much as 218%** when training is embedded into business strategy.

Retention also improves: **94% of employees say they would stay longer** with an employer that invests in their development, reducing the expense of constant rehiring.

For smaller businesses, the financial benefits go beyond productivity.



Digital skills training also equips teams to innovate, adopt new technologies, and remain agile - ensuring competitiveness against larger players. A digitally skilled workforce requires less supervision, makes fewer costly errors, and drives business growth from within.

One suggested course on the topic of digital skills is **Microsoft 365 for High-Performing Individuals** - delivered at the Chamber or location of your choosing and allowing your workforce to leverage the full potential of the Microsoft 365 platform within your business.

## Don't just take our word for it

Here are just some of the companies we are already supporting with our training offering.







### Sarah Chew

The Wood Foundation, a venture philanthropic organisation focused on empowering communities, advancing education and fostering enterprise in Scotland, has announced the appointment of Sarah Chew as the foundation's new UK chief executive officer (CEO).



### James Christie

Subsea Technology & Rentals (STR) has appointed experienced sector leader James Christie to head up activities across Europe and Africa following significant growth and plans for further global expansion.



Left to right: Chris Ion, Molly Peeters, Shona Boyd

### Shona Boyd and Molly Peeters

Graham + Sibbald, Chartered Surveyor and Property Consultants, has welcomed Shona Boyd and Molly Peeters as senior surveyor and graduate surveyor to the Aberdeen commercial team.



### Greigsy and Webster

Two of the most recognisable voices in Scottish radio will soon have a brand-new home as STV Radio has signed much-loved presenters Greigsy (Greig Easton) and Webster (Stuart Webster) to join Scotland's newest radio station.



### Donald Smith

Shepherd and Wedderburn is pleased to announce that corporate finance specialist Donald Smith has joined the firm as a partner in the corporate finance team, bringing a wealth of corporate finance and boardroom expertise.



### Barry Summers

Complete service provider for the energy industry, IKM Testing UK, has appointed seasoned industry professional, Barry Summers, as regional director, following the retirement of Mark Rasmusen.





### John Cardno

Mitchell and Murdoch Care Ltd is pleased to announce the appointment of John Cardno as its new growth and development manager, marking an exciting chapter in the organisations continued commitment to innovation, partnership, and sustainable growth.



### Jack Millington

Signal is excited to welcome Jack to the team as the company continues to grow and expand its creative capabilities. With more than 15 years of experience in the world of 3D animation and design, Jack brings a wealth of expertise and a passion for crafting visually striking content.



### Charlie Gough

Brightsolid has appointed Microsoft Most Valuable Professional (MVP) Charlie Gough as head of Cloud solutions to support the company's continued development of hybrid cloud and cyber security services.



### Doug Cowie

AB Fiftyone has appointed Doug Cowie to the newly created role of growth manager. Doug brings a strong track-record in marketing, account management and business development.





Left to right: Emma Watt, Minnie Buchan, Rowan Monk and Georgina Hay.

### Bold St Media

Bold St Media celebrated its ninth anniversary with the promotions of Georgina Hay to account director, Emma Watt to account manager, Rowan Monk to senior graphic designer, and Minnie Buchan to account executive.



### Graham Bruce

AM Phillip Trucktech, one of Scotland's leading commercial vehicle specialists, has appointed Graham Bruce to the role of commercial vehicle sales for the Aberdeen and Grampian area.



### Patrick Sweeney

IFB has appointed Patrick Sweeney as senior network engineer. The strategic hire marks a significant step in IFB's ongoing commitment to delivering cutting-edge IT solutions and exceptional customer service.



### Christine Tomlin and Kayleigh Duthie

Create Financial Solutions has strengthened its growing business and commitment to client-focused financial planning, appointing Christine Tomlin as senior paraplanner, and Kayleigh Duthie as an administrator.



### Chris Hudson

Integrity HSE is pleased to announce the appointment of Chris Hudson as business development manager, a strategic addition that highlights the company's ongoing investment in and commitment to supporting clients across the North-east of Scotland.





### Paul Tawse

Asset One Partners LLP has appointed Paul Tawse as partner, head of business development, to further strengthen the company's leadership team as it continues to expand across the UK and international markets.



### Gareth Lonie

Openreach has announced the appointment of Gareth Lonie as its new policy and public affairs manager for Scotland and North of England. Gareth comes with a huge amount of experience with recent roles being at Drax, where he led external affairs in Scotland.



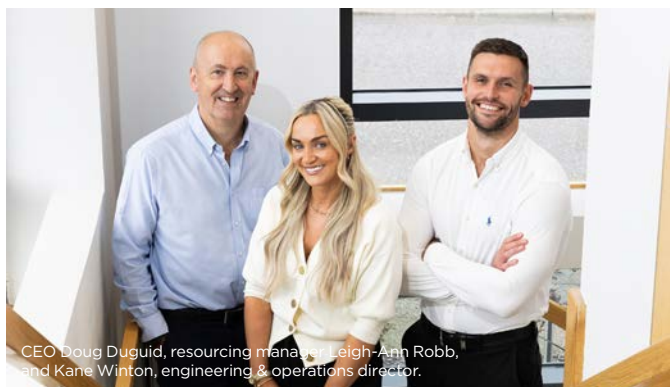
### Brayden Sutherland

Evolve iMS, the UK-based digital transformation company with offices in Aberdeen and London, appointed Brayden Sutherland as its new business development executive. With over 11 years' experience in sales and business development, Brayden has worked across a range of sectors.



### Alan Duguid

Annie Kenyon is delighted to welcome Alan Duguid to the team as its new construction manager. Alan joins the team following an impressive 22-year career at Scotia Homes, where he gained extensive experience and built a strong reputation in the construction industry.



CEO Doug Duguid, resourcing manager Leigh-Ann Robb, and Kane Winton, engineering & operations director.

### Leigh-Ann Robb

Leigh-Ann Robb has been appointed resourcing manager at Aurora Energy Services to support and direct the company's UK and international resource needs across multiple business lines.



### Stuart Mclean

C-SAM, a leading provider of asset management and software solutions, has appointed Stuart Mclean as its new business development manager. With extensive experience in business development and customer relationship management, Stuart brings a wealth of expertise.



## £2.3million grant funding boost for council's civic improvements programme



Councillor Alex McLellan (centre) with Fiona Robertson from Historic Environment Scotland grants team (left) and Anna James, senior investment manager, The National Lottery Heritage Fund Scotland (right)

Aberdeen City Council has announced a £2,276,180 grant funding boost which will help drive forward a five-year heritage and conservation programme aimed at addressing social, economic and environmental issues in the eastern part of Aberdeen City Centre.

The funding comes from National Lottery Heritage Fund Scotland and Historic Environment Scotland which both granted £1,138,090. It will be added to the £2.1million earmarked by the council, along with a further £975,000 contribution from building owners for the Silver City Heritage and Place Programme which is part of the local authority's 20-year City Centre and Beach Master Plan.

Councillor Alex McLellan, the Council's Finance and Resources Committee Convener, said: "I'm delighted that National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic Environment Scotland are making such a significant financial contribution to our transformative plans for the Castlegate and surrounding area.

"The total of £5.4million for the Silver City Heritage and Place Programme will help deliver capital investment in historic buildings, public realm and green spaces in parallel with community heritage activities and traditional skills training.

"We will offer building repair grants to owners of historic buildings, to support the repair of historic fabric, including the threats to heritage resulting from climate change. In addition to helping repair buildings of historic significance that provide community and visitor activities, we will also prioritise shopfront grants to improve the frontages along the length of Justice Street and support a number of Priority Projects that provide community benefit."

Caroline Clark, The National Lottery Heritage Fund director for Scotland, said: "Heritage sits at the heart of Aberdeen's identity, underpinning its character and values. Heritage connects people, cultures and communities to a place, supports cohesive and sustainable economic regeneration and boosts local economy through skills, tourism and a genuine pride in place.

"Thanks to National Lottery players we have already supported the development of the heritage-led regeneration plan for Aberdeen Silver City. We are delighted to now confirm up to £1,138,090 that will support putting that plan into action.

"Through projects such as Aberdeen Silver City we aim to help drive heritage and community focused regeneration right across Scotland. As well as supporting repairs and restoration of our historic towns and cities, Heritage Fund support drives meaningful engagement with local people and the places they value, delivering long-term, sustainable improvements based on the heritage they cherish."

Dr Susan O'Connor, head of grants at Historic Environment Scotland, said: "With the right investment, our historic environment can be a rich and vibrant place to live, conduct business, and spend time with your community. The Silver City Heritage and Place Programme will empower the community of eastern Aberdeen to repair historic buildings by providing grants and training in the traditional skills that are so important for our heritage, as well as investing into the green space and public places that bring people together.

"We are proud to support this ambitious programme and look forward to seeing the project develop."

Find out more



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## Mark McCue

MA (Hons)

Chartered FCSI

Director

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