

APRIL 2026 | TECHNOLOGY, INNOVATION & SECURITY

BUSINESS BULLETIN

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Accelerating AI-driven entrepreneurship in the North-east

By Jennifer Crow MBE, CEO, Opportunity North East

The North-east of Scotland has always been a region that solves complex problems — something our businesses have been doing for decades. From offshore energy and advanced engineering to world-class food and drink production, companies across the region have built global reputations by operating at the frontier of innovation.

Today the opportunity is to translate that capability into the next generation of companies. With the rise of artificial intelligence, climate technology and digital innovation, entrepreneurs in the North-east have powerful new tools to build globally competitive businesses from this region.

This ambition also reflects the direction of Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation, which recognises that building and scaling innovation-driven companies will be central to the country's future economic growth.

At Opportunity North East (ONE), our ambition is simple: to support more people to start and scale innovation-driven companies that can compete internationally while creating high-value jobs here in the North-east.

At the ONE Annual Event last autumn, I spoke about the importance of strengthening the region's culture of innovation-driven entrepreneurship. That means supporting more people to start companies, helping those businesses scale, and ensuring the North-east becomes a place where ambitious entrepreneurs choose to build globally competitive ventures.

Working with partners, ONE has developed a set of innovation hubs designed to accelerate entrepreneurship in key sectors of the regional economy.

ONE TechHub supports digital tech companies. ONE BioHub translates Aberdeen's world-class life sciences research into new companies developing therapies, diagnostics and treatments to tackle some of today's most pressing health challenges, with artificial intelligence both accelerating discovery and enabling entirely new life sciences ventures to emerge.

And ONE SeedPod is Scotland's food and drink innovation hub.

Together these hubs form the physical backbone of the region's innovation ecosystem — spaces where entrepreneurs, researchers, investors and industry partners come together to turn ideas into companies.

I see that momentum whenever I visit ONE TechHub. Teams that started with a concept are now building companies with international potential. Being surrounded by experienced mentors, industry partners and other entrepreneurs shortens the learning curve and accelerates progress.

Alongside these spaces, we are strengthening capability by bringing world-class entrepreneurial education directly to the North-east.

In February we welcomed Ben Soltoff, Entrepreneur in Residence at MIT, to Aberdeen.

Ben works with companies building climate and energy ventures and introduced our ecosystem to the MIT Disciplined Entrepreneurship framework for climate and energy ventures.

One of the most powerful ideas in that Disciplined Entrepreneurship framework is deceptively simple: successful companies begin by solving a real problem for a clearly defined customer. Entrepreneurs who understand their customer deeply — and build solutions people are willing to pay for — dramatically increase their chances of building ventures that scale. Climate technology represents one of the most exciting innovation opportunities for our region.

Climate tech covers a wide range of solutions that reduce emissions, improve resource efficiency or support the transition to more sustainable industries — from energy systems and climate data to industrial processes and sustainable food production.

The North-east combines energy expertise, engineering excellence, digital capability and decades of experience operating complex industrial systems.

That combination provides a powerful foundation for building companies that help industries decarbonise, operate more efficiently and adapt to a changing global economy.

We continued that momentum in March when global expert Paul Cheek delivered an entrepreneurial bootcamp and a practical workshop on artificial intelligence.

The bootcamp immersed entrepreneurs, mentors and partners in the MIT framework — a proven methodology for building and scaling companies.

The AI workshop explored how artificial intelligence is changing the way companies are built. Participants learned how AI can help analyse markets, validate customer problems, prototype solutions and accelerate growth.

Artificial intelligence is quickly becoming core infrastructure for innovation-driven businesses, enabling small teams to test ideas faster, develop products more quickly and reach customers earlier.

AI is not only accelerating how companies are built — it is also creating entirely new categories of businesses.

For regions like the North-east, this creates a significant opportunity.

By combining our industrial expertise with digital technology and AI capability, we can build the next generation of climate, energy and industrial technology companies.

Entrepreneurship is also thriving in sectors where Scotland already has global credibility. Inside ONE SeedPod I regularly meet entrepreneurs developing the next generation of premium Scottish food and drink products, moving from early ideas to market-ready brands with the support of specialist facilities and mentoring.

Stories like these remind me that innovation ultimately comes from people — individuals willing to experiment, learn and build.

Our role at ONE is to create the conditions where more of those entrepreneurs can succeed.

That means connecting innovators with expertise, partners, customers and investors, and helping them build companies designed for international scale.

With the right ambition and collaboration, the next generation of globally competitive companies will be built here in the North-east.

Jennifer Crow,
Opportunity North East



Jennifer Crow MBE, CEO

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.

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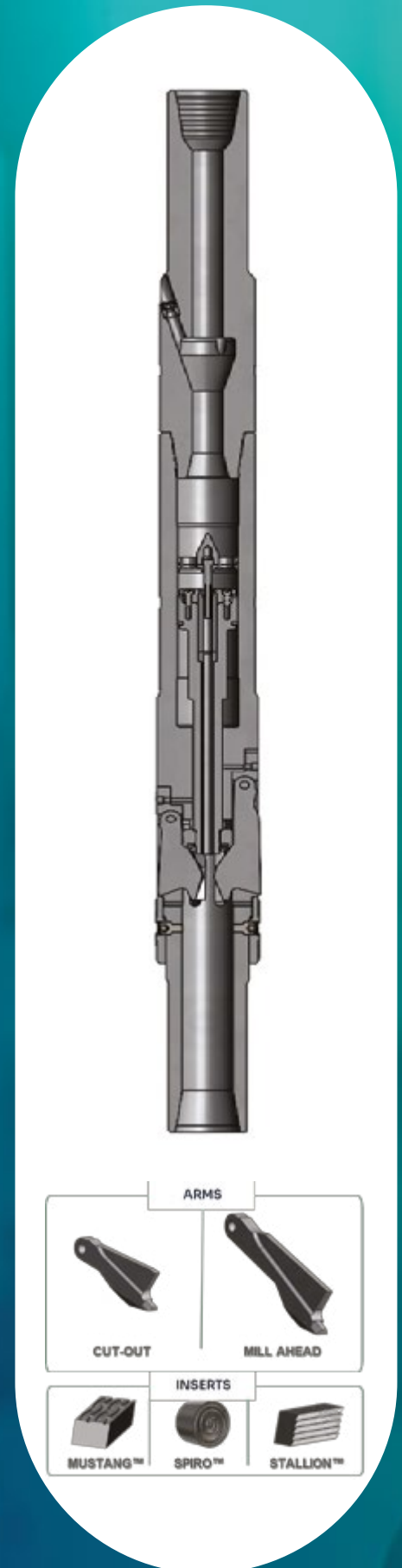
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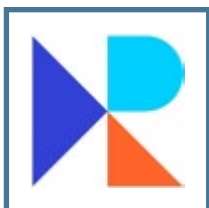
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The Wild Goose named among UK's Top 100 Brunch & Lunch Restaurants

The Wild Goose has been recognised as one of the UK's Top 100 Brunch & Lunch Restaurants by national booking platform OpenTable, and is the only restaurant north of Scotland's Central Belt to make the list.

The prestigious ranking is compiled using verified diner reviews and booking data from across the country, identifying the restaurants that consistently deliver exceptional food, service and overall guest experience.

Out of thousands of venues nationwide, The Wild Goose secured its place based on consistently strong ratings and customer feedback.

Located in the heart of Aberdeen overlooking Union Terrace Gardens, The Wild Goose has become known for its seasonal brunch and lunch menus, locally sourced ingredients and relaxed but high-quality dining experience.

Since opening, the venue has built a loyal following for its all-day offering, speciality coffee, cocktails and welcoming atmosphere.



Marex provides definitive answer to offshore dangerous goods compliance

Risk consultancy Marex has delivered a comprehensive solution for a major offshore wind farm operator facing complex regulatory hurdles with the transport of compressed nitrogen.

The project has provided the client with the clarity needed to maintain safety, efficiency and project timelines within the fast-paced renewable energy sector.

The challenge centred on a fleet of crew transfer vessels (CTVs) operating under "dual coding", so they can be classified as either a workboat or a high-speed offshore service craft. This distinction created significant uncertainty regarding the number of technicians allowed on board while simultaneously carrying 38-litre nitrogen bottles, which are essential for offshore maintenance.

To resolve the confusion, Marex provided a clear, two-tiered solution:

- Use the vessel as a workboat while carrying dangerous goods, allowing for up to 12 industrial personnel.
- Ensure vessels have a specific DoC to enable them to carry dangerous goods as a high-speed offshore craft.

Beyond the initial analysis, Marex produced a 16-page technical guidance document and conducted face-to-face briefings with the marine assurance manager and site deputies. By explaining the nuances of these certifications, Marex enabled the operator to make informed commercial decisions regarding their charter requirements.



Over 100,000 North-east premises to receive ultra fast broadband

Tens of thousands of families, farmers and local business owners across North-east Scotland are set to see their digital lives transformed as GoFibre begins construction on a landmark project to deliver lightning fast, ultra reliable, full fibre broadband to around 100,000 homes and businesses in some of the region's hardest to reach communities.

For the first time, rural residents in parts of seven local authorities – Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen City, Angus, Dundee, Highland, Moray and Perth & Kinross will enjoy the same world class connectivity as Scotland's major cities - enabling seamless remote working, effortless streaming, smarter farming and giving local enterprises the tools to compete and grow.

The build is being delivered by Scottish broadband provider GoFibre as part of a major government contract to improve connectivity in underserved areas.

In July, GoFibre was chosen as the supplier to deliver full fibre broadband to around 63,000 hard-to-reach premises across North-east Scotland as part of joint efforts by the UK and Scottish governments to supercharge internet access in mostly rural areas.

Project Gigabit is the UK Government's programme to enable hard-to-reach communities to access lightning-fast gigabit-capable broadband.

The Scottish Government is playing a key role in delivering Project Gigabit procurements in Scotland by administering and managing the delivery of the contracts.

GoFibre will be adding additional premises to the build on a commercial basis, with no public subsidy, meaning at least 100,000 premises across the North-east will be added to its full fibre network.

This major infrastructure investment will also unlock economic growth and create 30 local jobs directly during build, with up to 180 jobs created across the lifetime of contract, including through subcontractors.

The first areas to see network build start, this month are Stonehaven, St Cyrus, Laurencekirk, Auchenblae, Letham Angus and Longforgran. Survey began in January with build kicking off in these areas in February.

This will expand GoFibre's existing network of around 10,000 premises in Aberdeenshire (in Laurencekirk, Stonehaven and Newtonhill) and around 15,000 premises in Angus (Montrose, Forfar and Kirriemuir).

Neil Conaghan, CEO of GoFibre, said: "We know how frustrating unreliable broadband can be, whether you're trying to run a business, help your kids with homework or just stream a film without it buffering. This project is all about changing that.

"As a company with its roots firmly in Scotland, we are incredibly proud to begin construction in the North-east. We're bringing faster speeds right to people's front doors, and we can't wait to see the difference it makes. It's going to open up opportunities and make everyday life easier. Best of all, we're doing it while creating jobs and investing in the communities we serve, because this is home for us too."

Headquartered in Edinburgh and founded in the Scottish Borders, GoFibre has been recognised as one of Scotland's top 10 fastest growing companies. This North-east contract, the largest in Scotland, joins another Project Gigabit contract the company is delivering in the Scottish Borders and East Lothian, with two already completed in Teesdale and North Northumberland.

Once live, the network will enable broadband speeds of up to 1Gbps - fast enough to download a full HD movie in under a minute. Residents and businesses are encouraged to register their interest now to be the first to connect when services become available. To check availability and register for updates, please visit: www.gofibre.co.uk.



AI's next frontier: Tackling the \$200bn decommissioning challenge

By Ryan Crighton

Artificial intelligence has already reshaped industries from finance to healthcare. Now, an Aberdeen technology company is targeting one of the energy sector's most complex and expensive problems: decommissioning.

rahd.AI, a fast-growing technology company operating at the intersection of artificial intelligence and energy infrastructure, believes its platform could transform the way ageing oil and gas assets are retired around the world.

With billions of pounds in decommissioning liabilities looming across mature basins such as the North Sea, rahd.AI is positioning itself as a front runner in the AI automation of planning and executing decommissioning campaigns.

The scale of the challenge is enormous. Governments and operators face decades of work dismantling offshore platforms, subsea infrastructure and associated facilities. The global market is already worth around \$10billion per year and is expected to grow significantly as energy systems transition and fields reach the end of their life.

rahd.AI's proposition is simple: use advanced data analytics and artificial intelligence to bring order to a process that has traditionally been slow, manual and uncoordinated.

"Decommissioning is one of the biggest financial challenges facing the global energy industry," says Chairman Stuart McLeod.

"For decades the process has been data-poor and inefficient. We believe AI can establish a

new digital standard for not only how operators plan and execute decommissioning programmes, but also in areas like interventions, assessment of legacy assets during M&A and carbon capture & storage planning."

Turning data into decisions

At the heart of rahd.AI's offering is a proprietary platform designed to ingest and organise vast volumes of technical, operational and commercial data related to offshore assets.

Decommissioning projects typically involve thousands of documents, engineering plans, regulatory requirements and supplier interactions. Historically, much of that information has been stored across different systems and formats, making it difficult for operators to plan effectively.

rahd.AI's technology aims to change that.

The platform absorbs fragmented legacy data and automatically structures it into a self-populating dataset, generating digital well schematics in the process. With the unique ability to query data and rapidly uncover risks, the rahd.AI solution enables operators to optimise decommissioning programmes.

The result, the company claims, is a step change in efficiency.

"Our technology allows operators to bring together decades of scattered data and turn it into actionable intelligence," McLeod explains.

"Once that information is structured and analysed by AI, you can plan projects faster, identify cost savings

and manage risk much more effectively."

The potential financial impact is significant. Early campaign modelling using rahd.AI suggests the platform could enable cost reductions in the region of 10% for well decommissioning programmes. Achieving this at scale would place the technology roughly two years ahead of the UK government and industry target to reduce decommissioning costs by 10% by 2028.

McLeod added: "Beyond cost reduction, improved planning certainty can also strengthen shareholder confidence by helping operators better quantify and manage decommissioning liabilities on their balance sheets, potentially freeing capital for production-focused investment."

The company is seeing increasing operator engagement and benchmarking activity, with new contracts already secured this year with operators in the Americas offshore market and Australia.

The platform now provides the foundation for the next phase of development: expanding functionality over the next 18 months toward fully integrated, 360-degree decommissioning campaign planning.

By optimising well planning, logistics, vessel scheduling and supply-chain coordination, rahd.AI believes the approach could unlock cost reductions of up to 30% across decommissioning programmes.

Beyond analytics, the company is developing a digital ecosystem designed to connect operators directly with the supply chain required to deliver those campaigns, helping streamline a market that has traditionally relied on complex tendering processes and manual coordination.

Built by industry veterans

rahd.AI's leadership team brings together experience from across the technology and energy sectors.

The company is led by Chief Executive Jake Stride, a former Microsoft global energy lead, alongside chief operating officer Innes Grant, former UK chief operating officer of Avanade. Both bring extensive experience in large-scale digital transformation.

McLeod adds deep entrepreneurial and investment expertise. Having founded and led multiple companies across international

markets, he has a track record of scaling technology businesses and delivering major transactions.

"Building companies has always been about spotting structural shifts before the market fully recognises them," McLeod says.

"Artificial intelligence applied to complex industrial data is one of those shifts."

The wider team includes executives with experience in energy services, finance and major project delivery – an important factor in a sector where domain knowledge can be as important as technology itself.

Timing the AI revolution

The rapid emergence of generative AI and large-scale machine learning models has accelerated interest in applying advanced analytics to complex industrial problems.

In energy, where operational data often spans decades and multiple asset owners, the opportunity for AI-driven optimisation is particularly significant. For rahd.AI, the timing may prove critical.

The North Sea alone is expected to see tens of billions of pounds spent on decommissioning over the coming decades, with similar

challenges emerging across mature basins worldwide.

Rather than reinventing the process, rahd.AI is applying modern data and AI tools to support industry experts in planning and executing decommissioning campaigns more efficiently, bringing together information that has historically been fragmented across operators, contractors and decades of operational records.

"Energy companies are under enormous pressure to manage costs while delivering safe and responsible decommissioning," says McLeod.

"Our role is not to replace the expertise that already exists in the industry, but to give those experts better tools, enabling them to move from fragmented planning to coordinated, data-driven campaign execution."

As decommissioning gathers pace across mature energy basins worldwide, driven by regulatory obligations, ageing infrastructure and increasing pressure on operators to manage costs, the industry is increasingly turning to data-driven planning to tackle one of its most complex and costly challenges.



Jake Stride,
Chief Executive

Stuart C. McLeod (Stumac)
Managing Partner

Innes Grant, Chief
Operating Officer

New astronomy facility approved for Cruickshank Botanic Garden

Planning permission has been approved for a new astronomy facility at the University of Aberdeen, to be built within the grounds of Cruickshank Botanic Garden.

With a planned opening in 2026, the project will coincide with the bicentenary of the foundation of the Cromwell Tower Observatory (CTO), located in the King's College quadrangle, the university's existing observatory which was established in 1826.

Although the CTO has not been operational for more than two decades, due to limitations in accessibility and a lack of space required to accommodate a larger modern telescope, it served as a distinguished centre for teaching, research and public engagement in both Astronomy and Meteorology throughout its history.

Among its notable contributions, Sir David Gill (1843–1914) – renowned for his pioneering high-quality photographs of the moon, taken in Aberdeen – used the CTO to synchronise his clock, which he had built himself, with accurate celestial time. Eventually, this system was expanded to provide precision timekeeping to Aberdeen City Centre, direct from the CTO to the Town House Clock – a service that was highly valued locally and played an important role in the city's scientific and civic life in the late 19th century.

The new facility, which will be home to a powerful telescope with advanced imaging equipment, will build on this heritage. It also inherits the legacy of John Cruickshank (1787–1875) who was not only Professor of Mathematics at Marischal College, but also responsible for maintaining the scientific apparatus which included telescopes that are now in the University of Aberdeen's special collections. He had a lifelong interest in Astronomy and was an active Astronomer in his day, publicising a number of planetary observations. His daughter, Anne Cruickshank (1820–1911), generously donated land, buildings and funds for the establishment of the Cruickshank Botanic Garden in 1898.

On her death, she bequeathed her whole estate (via a special trust) to the University of Aberdeen – with the provision that part of it be used to found a Lectureship in Astronomy, including Meteorology and Navigation, in honour of her father. For over a century, the holders of this title have been responsible for maintaining the university's Observatory along with active teaching, research and public engagement in astronomy.

The new facility with modern on-site and remote-control systems will support the university's astrophysics degree programme, delivered by the Department of Physics, while providing an inclusive space for a wide range of users with its practical accessibility. It will support the university's teaching and research in astrophysics while creating new opportunities for interdisciplinary work in areas such as data science and artificial intelligence. It will further enhance public engagement by enabling

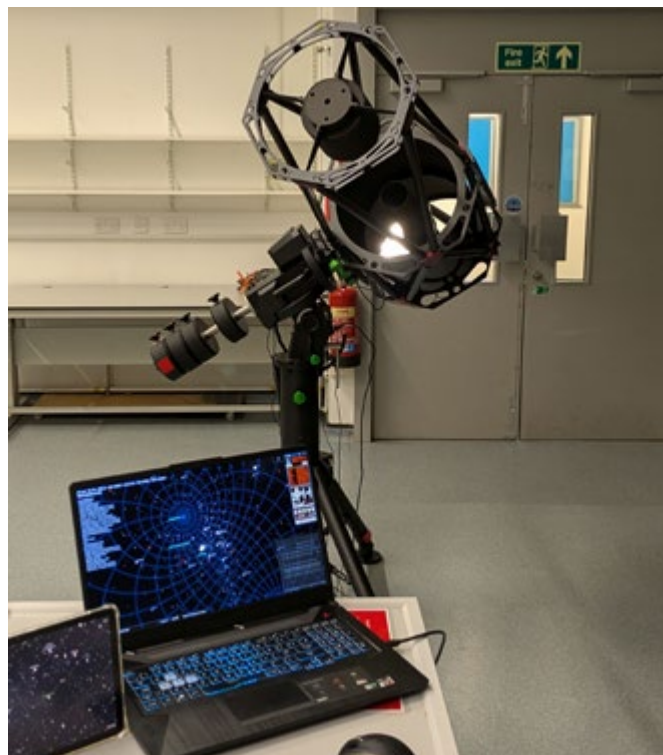
more outreach opportunities through local schools and community groups, strengthening connections between the university and the wider community.

The project is being funded primarily through the generosity of 'Miss Anne H Cruickshank's Special Trust' and the 'Dr C Allan Young and Mrs Norma Young Fund'.

Dr Charles Wang, the sixth and current 'Cruickshank Lecture in Astronomy', who championed the project and will lead it with strong support from university colleagues and local astronomical communities, said: "We are delighted that Aberdeen City Council has approved plans for a new astronomy facility at Cruickshank Botanic Garden. This accessible facility will transform the experience of astronomy students at the university providing hands-on access to modern observational tools and creating exciting opportunities to inspire the next generation of scientists."

Professor Nicholas Forsyth, Acting Senior Vice-Principal and Vice-Principal Research said: "The approval of planning permission is a major milestone for this project and for the university. This new facility allows us to honour our remarkable astronomical heritage while investing in the future of teaching, research and public engagement in science."

Morag Beers, Director of Estates and Facilities, added: "Cruickshank Botanic Garden provides a unique and fitting setting for the new observatory. The design has been carefully considered to respect both the natural environment and the historic character of Old Aberdeen."



Adura becomes lead industry partner of Energy Transition Skills Hub



Adura has assumed the lead industry partner role for Scotland's largest Energy Transition Skills Hub, building on the founding support provided by Shell UK.

Adura – which is jointly owned by Shell (50%) and Equinor (50%) – will work with North East Scotland College (NESCo) to help support 1,000 people into jobs with a focus on energy transition in the first five years of the facility's operation.

The now operational Hub, located on the site of a disused former Aberdeen dairy, was officially opened in 2025 and is the anchor project of the Skills Campus in the city's Energy Transition Zone.

The Hub was founded by ETZ Ltd, Shell UK and North East Scotland College, with support from UK Government funding and the Scottish Government's Just Transition Fund.

Featuring a state-of-the-art welding academy, advanced manufacturing zone and future technology digital training suites, it has already provided 150 training places in welding, trebling NESCo's previous training capacity. With further expansion planned for 2026/27, this could rise to four times the pre-Hub capacity.

Beyond welding, the Hub supports a wide range of training and events activity, with over 130 students regularly using the advanced manufacturing, innovation, renewables and flexible workshop spaces. By the end of the academic year, the Hub will have hosted over 340 local school pupils, including 300 participants in the Girls in Energy programme and 25 competitors in the Ocean Winds Virtual Welding Challenge.

The Hub was handed over from ETZ Ltd, which spearheaded its delivery, to NESCo, ensuring the industry and public sector collaboration needed to cement North-east Scotland's position as a global leader in energy and supply chain excellence. Since its inception, additional funding for the Hub has been provided by skills body ECITB and transmission networks provider SSEN.

The Hub recently hosted the Girls in Energy conference, with 300 students from across schools in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire taking part. The Girls in Energy programme will also be supported by Adura from the start of the 2026 academic year. Adura will build on the strong foundation established by Shell, expanding opportunities for young women and encouraging them to consider careers in the energy industry.

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From pensions and protection to support your family's future, to workplace pension schemes and investing business profits; we work with a huge range of clients across Aberdeen and the shire.

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

Our biggest challenge is the ever-changing legislative and tax environment and navigating these complexities.

There is huge opportunity for growth for us as we look to acquire other businesses whilst growing and training a team of financial planners for the future.

What is your word of advice for fellow Chamber members?

Your time is precious. Plan your finances to allow you to spend your time and your money on the things that are most important to you in life.

What is the best thing about being a Chamber member?

It's early days for our membership but it's brilliant to have an organisation backing local businesses and making good things happen in our city.



Stacey Homoki,
Casino Manager - Hosting
Grosvenor Casino

Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

With Grosvenor Casino situated in the heart of Aberdeen, the long-standing club offers a premium gaming and entertainment experience, and is a vibrant part of Aberdeen's nightlife.

Members can enjoy live and electronic games including poker, black jack, roulette and slots, all delivered by a dedicated team committed to first-class customer experience.

Who are your customers?

Our customers range from regular local members to visitors exploring this historic city. We are introducing a new client relationship programme focused on rewarding loyalty, offering high-value customers exclusive benefits, social events and exciting monthly promotions whilst continuing to welcome new members.

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

Maintaining and growing a strong high valued customer base within the city is always a challenge. However, with the launch of our new client engagement programme, we are confident this will create opportunities for growth and

strengthen long-term relationships with our members.

What is your word of advice for fellow Chamber members?

Aberdeen offers strong opportunities for business growth, from local customers to tourism. By working together, communicating and supporting one another, businesses across the city can help drive Aberdeen forward and contribute to thriving local economy. Aberdeen is changing for the better, and these improvements will see us to great heights.

What is the best thing about being a Chamber member?

Being a part of the Chambers allows us to connect with local businesses, strengthen partnerships and better understand the needs of the city. Networking and collaboration help create valuable and meaningful opportunities for growth across Aberdeen.

MEMBER MEET *the* ME



Mobesher Ahmmad,
Senior Engineer
Cadherent

Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

Cadherent delivers innovative engineering and visualisation services across the whisky distillery, oil and gas and renewable energy sectors. Our capabilities include 3D laser scanning, photogrammetry,

pipework and structural design, technical animations and immersive VR/AR solutions.

Who are your customers?

We support whisky distillers, energy operators and renewable developers who require technically robust and compliant engineering solutions.

Clients rely on us for design, analysis and optimisation across pressure equipment, lifting systems, piping and structural design and digital visualisation. Our work is underpinned by compliance with international codes and standards including BS, Eurocodes, AISC, API, ASME, DNV, ISO, LR, and NORSOK, ensuring safety, reliability and regulatory confidence.

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

The challenge is enabling clients to

deliver projects that meet sustainability and net zero commitments while maintaining cost efficiency and reliability.

The opportunity lies in applying advanced engineering methods such as Fitness for Service and Engineering Critical Assessments, alongside high level FEA to optimise everything from whisky distillation plant upgrades, to offshore pressure systems, to renewable energy infrastructure.

What is the best thing about being a Chamber member?

The Chamber provides a platform to connect with businesses across sectors, highlight the breadth of engineering capability in the North-east and collaborate on projects that drive innovation. It also amplifies the region's voice in national discussions, ensuring our industries remain competitive and future ready.



Sasha Jaypalan,
Founder/Director
Grace May

Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

I set Grace May up in 2015 driven by a desire to focus on people. Recruitment can be quite fast-paced and I wanted to slow the process down at the beginning to speed it up in the end: taking time at the start to get to know a client means you can

be more efficient in finding the right people for them.

It sounds counterintuitive, but it really does work: we have an excellent retention record where 97% of all candidates placed are still in their roles at least one year later.

Who are your customers?

Whilst technology and the energy sector are still the mainstays of the business, organic growth and an expanding client base has allowed a successful move into senior management roles in new verticals such as legal, HR, engineering plus an increasing volume of energy positions including renewables.

With the Aberdeen area accounting for half of our business, geographical expansion into Glasgow, Edinburgh, Birmingham and Manchester is also broadening our client base.

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

Making the UK an attractive place to do business will help everyone, but this is not happening enough. Grace May has a focus on the energy sector and a just transition will be a great move forward, but we also need to ensure energy security. The transition needs to be done well, and I am deeply passionate about that because we have such talented people in the area.

What is your word of advice for fellow Chamber members?

Focus on long-term relationships rather than short term gain. For me, recruitment is about partnerships rather than transactions: it's not just about filling roles, but about investing in lasting relationships. Trust isn't built overnight: it grows through consistency, honesty, and showing up for people. That's the kind of work that lasts and makes the biggest difference.



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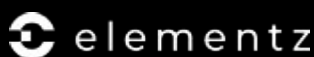
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Drones, robotics, and the future of security

Author: Biju Chudasama, Chief Technology Officer, Wilson James



Can drones and robots replace the human security workforce?

The question isn't whether drones and robots will replace the human security workforce.

The real challenge for clients responsible for safety, compliance, and public confidence isn't whether machines will replace people. Instead, our focus needs to be on where automation could lead, where humans must lead, and how the two should interact for maximum impact.

The future of security won't be decided by choosing humans over machines. It will be defined by how effectively organisations can combine human judgement with technological reach, and apply each intelligently to different risks, environments, and outcomes.

Where autonomous technology adds genuine value

Drones, robotics, and smart sensors are at their best in conditions that are remote, repeatable, and expensive to resource with people alone.

In low-density or hard-to-patrol environments such as rail corridors, energy assets, solar farms, coastal boundaries, and rural perimeters, autonomous systems can deliver persistent coverage without putting lone workers at risk.

They extend visibility, reduce time-to-detection, and often lower operational costs.

They also excel at routine and rules-based tasks, where consistency matters more than interpretation: perimeter monitoring, out-of-hours

patrols, access control checks, and inspections. In these scenarios, technology isn't replacing judgement, it's driving efficient decision-making. It's tackling the 'always on, always consistent' work that humans simply weren't designed to do for extended periods.

People remain essential

In complex, public-facing, or high-consequence environments such as airports, hospitals, city centres, nuclear sites, and major construction programmes, context matters.

A sensor detects movement. A drone streams footage.

But it takes a trained professional to determine if something is a threat, a mistake, a misunderstanding, or a welfare issue, and to respond proportionately.

Not forgetting the value of trust and connection. In moments of uncertainty, people look to people.

Visible, capable security professionals do more than respond; they reassure others, providing calm direction, de-escalating conflict, and protecting reputations.

From guarding to governance: The evolution of security

The most progressive security models are shifting away from presence and patrol, towards intelligence, orchestration, and assurance.

The right technology enables people to better-focus on:

- Interpreting data and assessing risk
- Incident management
- Stakeholder engagement
- Ensuring compliance
- Making proportional decisions under pressure

The outcome is fewer incidents, faster response, clearer accountability, and improved stakeholder confidence.

Hybrid by design

The most robust security strategies reject two extremes: believing technology alone can solve complex risk and defending traditional workforce models.

The future is hybrid by design.

Drones and robots won't replace the security workforce, but they are already redefining it.

The organisations that get ahead will do so based on the simple consideration: ***'Where does automation create advantage, where does human judgement protect outcomes, and how do we engineer the solution so that each component part strengthens the other?'***



OPINION
OPINION

The North Sea still has a future – if the UK chooses to back it

Few industries have shaped the modern British economy as profoundly as North Sea oil and gas. For more than half a century, the basin has powered homes, fuelled industry and supported hundreds of thousands of skilled jobs across the UK.

Yet in Westminster the narrative around the North Sea has shifted dramatically. Increasingly, the sector is portrayed as an industry of the past – something to be wound down as Britain accelerates toward net zero.

That framing, championed by politicians including Energy Secretary Ed Miliband, suggests the UK should rapidly move away from new exploration and production.

But the evidence tells a more complex story. Even as the basin matures and production declines, the North Sea still has significant remaining resources – and could continue playing a critical role in the UK's energy system for decades.

A mature basin – but far from empty

The UK Continental Shelf has been producing oil and gas for around 50 years. Production peaked at the end of the 1990s and has steadily declined since then as fields have matured. Today, output is roughly three-quarters lower than its 1999 peak.

That decline has helped shape the perception that the basin is effectively exhausted. But the reality is that large volumes of hydrocarbons remain beneath UK waters.

Parliamentary research suggests the UK will still require between 13 and 15 billion barrels of oil and gas between now and 2050, even

in scenarios aligned with net zero targets.

How much of that demand is met domestically is a political and economic choice.

If investment continues and new projects are developed, analysis suggests up to half of the oil and gas the UK will need in that period could still come from the North Sea. Without that investment, the country would simply import more.

Energy security still matters

The North Sea remains central to the UK's energy mix.

Domestic production still supplies around half of the UK's gas demand and roughly 60% of the oil it consumes. That reduces reliance on international markets and shields the country from geopolitical shocks.

In 2023 the sector contributed around £25 billion to the UK economy, with Scotland accounting for more than half of that total.

The energy crisis triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 – and what we currently see unfolding in the Middle East – underlines how exposed countries can be when global supplies tighten.

Those who understand how our energy system works understand that replacing domestic production with imports does little to cut global emissions. Instead, it risks outsourcing both the environmental impact and the economic value of energy production.

In that sense, the question is not whether Britain will still use oil and gas in the coming decades – but where those fuels will come from.

The economic backbone of a region

Beyond energy security, the North Sea remains a major economic driver.

In 2023 the sector contributed around £25 billion to the UK economy, with Scotland accounting for more than half of that total.

Across the UK, the industry directly supports roughly 115,000 jobs, including around 66,000 in Scotland, many concentrated in Aberdeen and the wider North-east.

However, employment has been falling. The number of jobs supported by the sector has dropped significantly since the mid-2010s as production declines and investment slows. For many in the industry, that trend highlights the stakes of policy decisions taken in London.

Communities built around offshore energy have already experienced cycles of boom and bust. Another sharp contraction could reshape the economic fabric of the North-east of Scotland.

The policy crossroads

The political debate around the North Sea has intensified in recent years.

In 2022 the UK government introduced the Energy Profits Levy, pushing the headline tax rate on North Sea producers to around 78%.

While designed to capture windfall profits during the energy crisis, industry leaders argue that frequent fiscal changes undermine investor confidence in a basin already facing natural decline.

At the same time, the UK has committed to achieving net zero emissions by 2050, placing pressure on policymakers to reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

For ministers such as Ed Miliband, the focus has shifted toward accelerating renewable energy deployment while limiting the expansion of oil and gas extraction.

But critics warn that policy risks moving faster than the realities of energy demand.

Even in ambitious decarbonisation scenarios, oil and gas remain part of the UK energy system for decades. Demand falls gradually rather than disappearing overnight.

The transition question

For many analysts, the real challenge is not whether the North Sea should end – but how the transition is managed.

The offshore workforce possesses skills that are highly transferable to emerging industries such as offshore wind, hydrogen and carbon capture.

The infrastructure built for oil and gas could also underpin new energy systems, from CO₂ storage to electrified offshore platforms.

But those industries are still developing, and they are not yet creating jobs at the same scale as the traditional offshore sector.

That raises a fundamental question: if investment in oil and gas falls faster than new industries grow, what happens to the workers and supply chains in between?

A basin at a turning point

Few expect the North Sea to return to the heights of the early 2000s. Production is forecast to continue declining as fields mature.

Yet the basin is far from empty.

Significant resources remain, and domestic production could still meet a substantial share of the UK's energy needs for decades. For example, there is enough gas in the North Sea to power every home in Britain for a decade.

Whether that potential is realised will depend less on geology than on policy.

For communities that have powered the UK for half a century, the debate now unfolding in Westminster is not simply about energy. It is about whether the North Sea's final chapter is written as a managed transition – or an abrupt decline.



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



Applied Innovation

Restructured. Now what?

The North Sea has seen more organisational change in the last five years than in the previous twenty. The structures change overnight but the management systems don't.

Synapse, AI driven technology built by **Clairvynt**, reads your management system and maps it to your organisation. It shows leaders immediately where the gaps are, where accountability is clear and where it isn't. Now when things change, your systems keep pace.

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BUSINESS LESSONS I'VE LEARNED



Mark Lunney,
Chief Operating Officer
Clairvynt AI

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

There have been many!

I think you always take lessons forward from what you see and experience, both good examples and bad.

An engineering manager I worked under around 30 years ago left the biggest impression on me.

He was an effective manager and a great leader because of good behaviours and clear communication; skills I think we all need to remember the value of.

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

A Dale Carnegie course I did when I was 19 taught me a lot about the importance of communication and how to interact with people at every level, from the drill floor to the boardroom.

I was young enough that it influenced much of what I encountered later in my career.

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

Don't try to do it all yourself and reflect on your mistakes to get the learnings.

Build a good team, share the load, and make sure you still have energy for family.

What's been your proudest career achievement to date?

Building PD&MS from four founding directors in a flat, figuring out what to do next, into the high-performing international business it became, through downturns, market crashes, and headwinds along the way.

That was chapter two, let's see what chapter two looks like with Clairvynt and AI - it's an exciting challenge!

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

The close-knit network.

References, connections, and introductions can happen quickly, and you can trust that the conversations will be productive.

Everyone knows someone who knows someone.

That's been invaluable getting Clairvynt off the ground.

Within weeks of starting, we were in productive conversations with clients about real problems.

You don't get that in many places.

What was your first job?

Landscape gardener!

Who or what inspires you most?

Positivity, logic and practicality.

What word or phrase in business-speak exasperates you?

Having been exposed to the Private Equity world for several years, I think I've heard them all and am now immune! 'Let's circle back on that' still makes my toes curl though, and I don't really know why!

How do you relax?

Road trips in the camper van and anything on a bike. I have signed up for the Scottish Enduro Series but I'm old now though, so it's on an eMTB this time!

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

The speed at which the energy sector explores and adopts proven technology. The solutions exist. The pace doesn't. For a cutting edge industry we're still very risk averse and reticent to change.

Aberdeen FC sign exclusive deal, launching with innovative fan experience platform Jump

Aberdeen Football Club is delighted to announce it has selected Jump as its exclusive fan experience and ticketing platform for the 2027/28 season and beyond.

This strategic partnership is the first of its kind in the UK and European sports ecosystem and is a watershed moment commercially for the club as it looks to implement its visionary plan to bring innovation to its supporter base.

The partnership also marks Jump's first professional sports agreement outside the United States, reflecting Aberdeen's reputation as an innovative club operating within one of the most passionate and complex sporting environments in the world.

"Our new alliance with Jump doesn't just signal one of the most significant commercial deals in the club's history; it's a huge statement for the game in Scotland," said Alan Burrows, Chief Executive at Aberdeen FC.

"We have one of the most vibrant sports cultures in the world and when thinking about our fan experience, we saw an opportunity to be at the forefront of innovation and offer an experience no other team has in our league. By selecting Jump, we're investing in a modern operating foundation that supports smarter decision-making, stronger fan relationships, and long-term commercial growth, on our terms."

Through a singular, club-owned ecosystem, supporters will benefit from a seamless and personalised experience when interacting with Aberdeen FC. Ticketing, merchandising, and other matchday services will be brought together into a single Aberdeen-branded platform, helping the club better understand and serve its fans while supporting long-term commercial sustainability. Aberdeen FC's new fan experience, powered by Jump, enables supporters to conduct business directly with the club, cutting out systems that traditionally operate between clubs and supporters.

Jump has an established presence within professional sports, serving as the fan experience platform for premier U.S. sports organisations like the Minnesota Timberwolves and Lynx of the NBA and WNBA, respectively. The company, co-founded by Marc Lore, Alex Rodriguez, and CEO Jordy Leiser, is backed by leading investors including Forerunner Ventures and Alexis Ohanian's Seven Seven Six.

Leiser shares a background with Aberdeen FC Chairman Dave Cormack as Battery Ventures-backed enterprise software founders. Their mutual experience in building scalable, high-performant technology platforms makes this partnership a natural fit, grounded in a long-term view of innovation, operational excellence, and investing in the future.

Purpose-built for sports clubs, Jump unifies previously fragmented digital channels into one cohesive platform, improving operational efficiency and enabling teams to build stronger, deeper relationships with supporters over time.

"Aberdeen FC is a club with deep tradition and a clear vision for the future," said Leiser.

"Coupled with the club's chairman Dave Cormack, a successful US-based enterprise tech entrepreneur, we are honoured to support the next phase of its supporter engagement strategy. Football clubs operate with unique structures, competitive demands, and supporter cultures, and our platform is built to support that complexity while giving clubs greater ownership of their fan relationships. This partnership is an important milestone as we begin expanding more broadly into European football."

This partnership represents a major step forward in Aberdeen FC's digital strategy, with more details to be shared with fans ahead of launch in 2027.



SSEN Transmission accepts five-year Ofgem funding settlement

SSE's transmission business has accepted a new five-year funding settlement from energy regulator Ofgem, securing a major programme of investment for grid upgrades across the north of Scotland.

The agreement forms part of Ofgem's RIIO-T3 price control — the framework that sets how much revenue electricity transmission operators can collect between April 2026 and March 2031, and what infrastructure and performance targets they must deliver in return.

Following a detailed review of the Final Determination, SSEN Transmission said it recognises the outcome as an "investable and deliverable settlement overall".

The company said: "The RIIO-T3 price control comes at a critical time for securing clean, affordable and reliable power for families and businesses across the country. The investment it delivers will help reduce reliance on imported energy from overseas, remove grid bottlenecks and strengthen energy security.

"It will also act as a major catalyst for economic growth, jobs and supply chain investments across the UK to unlock the country's full clean energy potential."

SSEN Transmission's investment programme includes 11 major transmission reinforcements designed to expand capacity and connect renewable generation. The company has already secured 75% of major planning consents, with six schemes fully consented and five in construction. Securing the remaining approvals will be a key focus for the rest of the year.

It added: "SSEN Transmission continues to work constructively with Ofgem, Government and wider stakeholders as it delivers the investments in new and upgraded infrastructure that are required to help deliver clean power, energy security and lower bills for current and future generations."



Sales soar to record high £24.8m at Mackie's of Scotland

Record sales have pushed turnover at Mackie's of Scotland to £24.8million for the year to May 2025 — an 11% year-on-year increase — alongside a 3% rise in profits.

Growth was driven by continued UK sales momentum, with the brand securing space in 2,110 additional retail stores, including increases across Tesco (+11%), Sainsbury's (+20%), Morrisons (+54%) and ASDA (+17%), particularly in its Traditional, Raspberry Ripple and Honeycomb ranges.

Stuart Common, Managing Director, said: "These results come down to sticking to what we believe in and not cutting corners. We've always taken a long-term view, whether that's how we make our ice cream, how we look after the farm, or how we invest in the business and our staff.

"We're proud to be growing, but just as proud that we've done it by focusing on quality, doing things properly and making products people genuinely love."

A marketing drive behind its 'Full Cream Ahead' campaign lifted shopping purchases by 8% in targeted areas, compared to 3% elsewhere. Over the financial year, the company attracted more than 300,000 new UK buyers and was purchased by more than a quarter of Scottish households.

Cost pressures remained significant, with cream prices between June 2024 and May 2025 averaging 37% higher than the previous year, contributing to the more modest increase in profits despite strong sales growth.

Stuart added: "We're realistic about the challenges ahead but remain intent on offering a product that embodies affordable luxury. We're also conscious that costs are still high and that households are under pressure, so we're keeping a close eye on how the market is changing.

"That's why our focus is on building a business that's resilient and adaptable, without losing what makes Mackie's, Mackie's - which is great tasting ice cream, made in Scotland, with care, for customers here at home and further afield."

Executive Chairman Maitland (Mac) Mackie said: "Our family has been proudly making high-quality ice cream for close to four decades.

"Since that first scoop in 1986 right through to 2026, we're incredibly proud that Mackie's of Scotland has become a firm family favourite, and continues to appeal to more and more ice cream lovers across the UK."

UK shipping and trade under pressure as Middle East conflict chokes key routes

Escalating tensions involving Iran are beginning to affect global logistics networks, with implications for UK importers and exporters.

Disruptions across Gulf airspace and maritime corridors are already altering flight routes and shipping schedules. Even businesses that do not trade directly with the region may experience knock-on effects through longer transit times and reduced capacity.

What has changed

Two transport channels are currently under pressure: aviation and maritime shipping. Several Middle Eastern countries have restricted or closed airspace following recent military developments. As a result, airlines have begun cancelling or rerouting flights across key European, the Middle East and Asian corridors. Longer routes increase flight times and reduce the number of rotations aircraft can complete, tightening available cargo capacity for time-sensitive shipments.

At sea, security concerns around the Strait of Hormuz have caused some shipping operators to pause sailings or reassess transit plans. The Strait is one of the world's most important maritime chokepoints, handling a significant share of global oil and container traffic. Any interruption here can ripple through international shipping schedules and equipment availability.

The wider market is already reacting. War-risk insurance premiums in the region have risen sharply, while some carriers have begun introducing emergency conflict surcharges. These costs are typically passed through the supply chain and may appear as additional charges on freight invoices.

Why the UK is affected

The UK sits at the end of highly interconnected global logistics networks. When vessels or aircraft are rerouted to avoid risk areas, the effect is not limited to the Middle East. Equipment, containers, and aircraft become displaced from normal schedules, reducing available capacity on other trade lanes.

For UK businesses, this can result in shipment delays, cancelled sailings, or rolled bookings. Goods moving between Europe and Asia may take longer routes, while congestion can develop at diversion hubs where traffic is redirected.

Industries reliant on predictable supply chains, such as manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, and retail, may be particularly sensitive to these disruptions.

Likely short-term effects

Over the coming weeks, businesses may see several operational changes. Transit times may increase as aircraft and vessels avoid high-risk areas. Air freight routes that previously crossed the Gulf may now require longer detours, while maritime routes could face delays due to security checks or vessel congestion.

Capacity constraints may also emerge. When transport assets spend longer on each journey, overall network capacity effectively shrinks, even if demand remains constant. Freight costs are also likely to fluctuate. Increased fuel consumption from longer routes, combined with insurance and security surcharges, can push overall shipping costs higher.

How UK importers and exporters should respond

Businesses should focus on reducing uncertainty and improving supply chain resilience during this period.

First, confirm routing details with logistics providers. Understanding whether shipments pass through affected airspace or maritime corridors helps identify potential delays early.

Second, review delivery timelines with customers and suppliers. Where possible, replace fixed delivery dates with flexible windows to account for transit disruptions.

Third, reassess Incoterms and contractual responsibilities. Many disruptions create confusion over who bears additional freight costs or delays. Clarifying these responsibilities in advance can prevent disputes later.

Fourth, prioritise critical shipments. Time-sensitive cargo may require premium freight services or alternative transport options to avoid rollover or cancellation.

Fifth, consider contingency routing. Identifying alternative shipping paths or transport modes in advance allows businesses to adapt quickly if conditions worsen.

Finally, maintain close communication with freight forwarders and carriers. During periods of disruption, regular operational updates are essential to track shipment status and respond to schedule changes.

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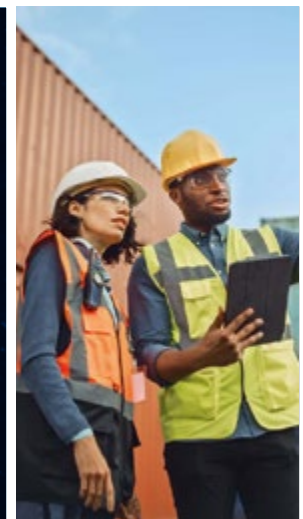
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Research reveals public sector firms far quicker to utilise AI

Research by EY Scotland and Livingston James has revealed public sector companies are far quicker to utilise AI in business than private and third sector firms.

The data forms part of a new report, *Investigating the Future CEO*, for which more than 200 c-suite executives in Scotland were interviewed across public, private and third sectors.

Key findings include:

- 71% of organisations are regularly discussing AI at board level, but only 36% actually have a strategy in place
- Public sector are ahead of the private and third sectors in terms of adoption in Scotland
- Lack of clarity over who should lead AI initiatives could be contributing to lack of strategy
- However, despite the rise of AI, challenges around people are what keep Scotland's CEOs 'awake at night'

It examines how the modern CEO is judged not only on what they deliver, but how they deliver it, navigating a rapidly changing world dictated by technological advancement, talent shortages, economic uncertainty, shifting stakeholder expectations, and heightened demands for trust, transparency and sustainability.

Despite the rapid rise of automation and AI, one theme remains constant: People (not processes) are dominating the CEO agenda.

Attracting, retaining and developing talent continues to be one of the most pressing challenges for CEOs. In today's volatile market, people risk is strategic risk; culture, capability and inclusion now sit alongside cash flow and technology as critical drivers of organisational resilience.

AI readiness: Awareness is high, action is lagging

This year's report places particular focus on AI governance and capability at board level. While AI has firmly entered the boardroom conversation, strategic maturity remains under developed:

- 71% of organisations regularly discuss AI at board level
- Only 36% have a formal AI strategy
- 8% do not have a designated AI owner, signalling gaps in planning and accountability

The findings highlight a clear shift: technology is no longer an enabler, it is the battlefield.

What's keeping CEOs awake at night?

CEOs identified three dominant challenges when executing strategy:

- Clarifying and communicating a compelling vision
- Access to experienced, capable leadership and resources
- Winning hearts and minds to maintain momentum through change

These concerns reinforce the importance of human centred leadership during complex organisational transformation.

Priorities for the year ahead

Leaders across all functions consistently pointed to a shift in priorities:

- Customer Value Proposition (CVP) remains the number 1 strategic priority
- Shareholder value is close behind
- Employee Value Proposition (EVP), while still critical, has dipped slightly compared to last year's report
- Environmental impact and D&I remain important, though sentiment is evolving from awareness to accountability

The attributes defining the future CEO

The leadership traits that will define the Future CEO are shifting. This year's report highlights:

- Vision and determination topped the list—overtaking resilience
- High EQ continues to rise in importance amid hybrid working and stakeholder complexity
- Courage to lead, especially in the context of AI and transformation, is increasingly essential
- Resilience remains the baseline expectation
- Adaptability, transparency and humility complete the profile

The result is a CEO archetype who blends strategic clarity, emotional intelligence, ethical decision making and the ability to lead through disruption.

Succession: Confidence high, pathways low

Survey findings also highlight a significant leadership development gap:

- 75% of CEOs believe their successor is already within their senior leadership team
- 80% of functional leaders believe they have the potential to become a CEO
- Only 29% of functional leaders are part of a formal succession plan
- 70% of functional leaders say pathways to the CEO role in their organisation are inadequate

This year's report adds a new Development Section, outlining the strengths and development needs of leaders from commercial, operational, finance and technology, and HR backgrounds, including what each group requires to transition successfully into the CEO role.



Introducing Aberdeen's newest business centre and co-working hub in Bridge of Don

A dynamic new business centre and co-working facility has opened its doors at Donside House, within the heart of Aberdeen's thriving Innovation Park, offering a modern, collaborative alternative to traditional office space.

Set in Campus 1 of Aberdeen Innovation Park, the facility caters to the region's growing community of entrepreneurs, start-ups, freelancers and remote workers, providing flexible office solutions from dedicated desks to private office suites, all with a full suite of amenities to support business success.

Devised by AM Sci Tech as a space where independence meets collaboration, this new co-working hub offers a welcome answer to the evolving demands of the post-pandemic workforce. Whether it's the isolation of home working, or the desire to grow within a community of like-minded professionals, the new centre promises a vibrant, professional and productive alternative.

Located just 10 minutes from Aberdeen city centre and 20 minutes from the airport, the Innovation Park is already well-regarded for its modern infrastructure and tranquil woodland setting. The new co-working facility at Donside House builds on this reputation, offering occupiers 24-hour secure access, free parking, electric vehicle charging, and access to nearby woodland walks to boost well-being throughout the working day.



Inside, businesses can enjoy superfast WiFi, bookable meeting rooms, informal breakout zones and a professional reception area to greet clients. The facility also includes communal kitchen and a nearby nursery, making it ideal for working parents.



Ready to get started?

As a small business ourselves, we fully understand the challenges that SMEs are facing today.

Rather than brushing these challenges under the carpet, we want to help organisations acknowledge them and address them head-on. To help do that, we offer a wide range of transformative solutions designed to deliver real results. So if you're ready to tackle your IT challenges and build a more secure, sustainable digital environment, we're ready to help. Get in touch with us to find out about how we can help.



WORDS OF ADVICE



Stephen Glanas,
Associate
SBP Accountants & Business Advisers

Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

At SBP, we're more than accountants, we're trusted advisors guiding businesses through financial complexities. Based in the North-east, we provide expert support in strategic growth, tax planning, and future progression. With 3,000+ clients relying on us for statutory accounts and tax services, we deliver industry expertise with a proactive approach to success.

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

Experience fuels growth, and the best way to learn is through hands-on engagement. Empowering staff with autonomy builds confidence and responsibility, while constructive feedback sharpens their skills. I take pride in being approachable, always willing to offer guidance and support to foster continuous development and professional success.

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

I tackle challenges head-on, addressing issues proactively with a commitment to efficiency and problem-solving. I ensure tasks are completed promptly and approach difficult conversations with professionalism and clarity. Adaptable and results driven, I take initiative, communicate openly, and focus on delivering effective solutions in any environment.

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

Learning is everywhere—embrace the wisdom of those around you. At SBP, our experienced team offers invaluable insights gained over years in the field. Every colleague and mentor has something to teach, so listen, ask questions, and absorb their knowledge—it's the foundation for continuous growth and professional success.



Lloyd Davies,
Director | Chartered Financial Planner
rockwealth Aberdeen Ltd

Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

At rockwealth Aberdeen we give clients the clarity and confidence to take control of their financial future.

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

Nothing revolutionary but I try to lead by example and would never ask anything of anyone which I would not be prepared to do myself.

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

An inability to say no. Understanding that not every client is a good fit for you / your business and being honest with prospects when you're not the best person to help them leads to better outcomes for all parties.

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

Integrity is what you do when no one is watching; it's doing the right thing all the time, even when it may work to your disadvantage.

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

Put delivering great client outcomes front and centre of everything you do.

Harper UK is a precision engineering and fabrication company in Aberdeenshire, delivering integrated design, engineering and fabrication solutions to the global energy sector. Supporting projects across oil and gas, renewables, marine and emerging energy industries, our manufacturing facilities and team deliver high-precision fabricated structures and engineered solutions for performance, safety and efficiency. Innovation plays a central role in delivering complex engineering projects. Our robotic CNC cutting technology creates a seamless transition from digital design to fabrication-ready steel, improving accuracy, reducing waste and accelerating production. Integrating directly with 3D CAD models, our robotic cutting system transfers digital data to the shop floor. This removes manual interpretation, reduces layout error and prevents tolerance build-up between design and fabrication, preserving dimensional accuracy from drawing to finished component.

Intelligent Precision Cutting

Our multi-axis robotic cutting system processes a wide range of structural steel sections, including beams, channels, hollow sections, circular profiles and complex plate components. Automated weld preparation, bolt hole cutting and part marking ensure components arrive ready for fabrication.

Integrated 3D laser measurement scans incoming material to detect camber, distortion or torsion, automatically adjusting the cutting path to maintain accuracy and reduce rework. Consistent torch positioning and controlled bevel cutting deliver repeatable edge quality beyond manual capability, improving fit-up and welding efficiency.

High-Capacity Production

Our robotic CNC platform supports 24-hour production when project schedules demand it, delivering significantly higher throughput without proportional increases in labour. From renewable energy infrastructure and offshore facilities to nuclear and hydrogen projects, this capability helps maintain programme certainty and support critical delivery schedules.

Reduced Waste, Lower Carbon Impact

Precision cutting and optimized nesting reduce offcuts, scrap and remakes. Higher first-time-right production lowers raw material use and embodied carbon per component while improving energy efficiency per processed tonne.



Reduced Manual Preparation

Cutting, marking and weld preparation are completed automatically, reducing manual material preparation by up to 40%. Components arrive accurately cut, weld-prepped and marked, ready for immediate fabrication — allowing teams to focus on assembly and accelerating project delivery.



From one-off engineered structures to large structural packages, Harper UK's robotic cutting capability delivers faster, safer and more sustainable outcomes. Whatever the scale or complexity of your project, we deliver engineering certainty and project acceleration.





EXECSPACE: A FREE VENUE FINDING BUSINESS WITH PEOPLE AND SERVICE AT ITS HEART.

This Successful small Scottish business has been running for 18 years and has helped over 2500 customers in 2025 alone!

With an experienced team and huge collective knowledge of hotels, venues and supplier partners, let ExecSpace save you the challenge of organising meetings or events yourself!

Bringing your team members and customers together for any reason is an investment. We work on a brief with you to understand what you need to achieve from your event, it's not just about the number of people and the date!

ExecSpace sources venues for you, negotiates value for money pricing and upgraded inclusions, together with ensuring no hidden fees or unnecessary costs should you need to cancel. We deliver a full proposal to you to enable you to make an informed decision on your venue of choice.

We liaise with the hotels, so you do not have to field chase calls or wait for responses!

We also look after bedroom groups, restaurant bookings, team social events and ground transportation.

Our service is free to you to use as hotels and venues pay us commission as an accepted practice of doing business, without inflating the negotiated pricing.

ExecSpace works with businesses in any sector and books hotels and venues in the UK and worldwide.

Take the hassle out of arranging your next meeting or event by contacting our friendly team, quoting Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce.



Enquiries@execspace.co.uk 0131 297 4418 ExecSpace.co.uk

AKR Fitness invests in team development with Path to Potential programme

AKR Fitness has recently completed a team development programme in partnership with Gary Smith of Path to Potential, as part of its ongoing commitment to professional growth and delivering a highly personalised member experience.

Every member of the AKR team completed a Mindflick Spotlight profile, followed by an individual one-to-one review with Gary. The programme concluded with an in-house team session focused on communication, collaboration, and understanding how individual strengths contribute to collective performance.

The team profile identified AKR as “empathically engaged” — reflecting a culture built on connection, awareness, and high standards of care.

Aberdeen International Airport staff choose SAMH as new charity partner

Aberdeen International Airport is delighted to announce that SAMH (Scottish Action for Mental Health) has been selected as its official charity partner.

The North-east’s largest transport hub has chosen SAMH for the next two years following a staff vote.

SAMH has been supporting Aberdeen’s mental health for many years, including through its work to prevent suicide and the provision of mental health link workers to the city’s GPs.

SAMH’s latest offering is The Nook, a ground-breaking, walk-in mental health and wellbeing hub based in Marischal Square. Due to open this summer, The Nook will offer non-clinical, stigma-free support to adults, young people, and families seven days a week, without the need for appointments, referrals, or waiting lists.

Asset55 awarded software contract by Technip to enhance operational efficiency, productivity and safety

Asset55 is pleased to announce that it has been awarded a contract by Technip, a global leader in engineering and technology for the energy industry, to deploy its advanced bolted joint integrity software, Calculate, across Technip's flange management operations.

This is in line with Technip's drive to continuously modernise and streamline engineering workflows, while reinforcing the company's long-standing commitment to operational excellence and safety.

Transforming engineering efficiency

Calculate will support Technip's engineering teams by providing accurate bolt load calculations, eliminating

timely processes, and ensuring bolt load integrity. With faster processes, improved accuracy, and optimised data management, Technip engineers will be able to deliver high quality flange management across a wide range of projects.

Strengthening safety through precision

Above all, Calculate contributes directly to Technip's unwavering focus on safety.

The software's robust calculation engine, developed in accordance with the latest ASME PCC-1 Standards, reduces the risk of hazardous hydrocarbon leaks and strengthens Technip's dedication to the safety of its employees.

£3m turnover for ambitious specialist with eyes on international growth

Elementz, a leading industrial software company specialising in subsea inspection and asset integrity management, has achieved turnover of more than £3million.

The company launched in Aberdeen in mid-2024 with 2025 representing its first full calendar year of trading.

During that time, the ambitious team exceeded expectations thanks to a string of new projects and contract renewals that sparked exponential growth in key domestic and international markets including Australia, Africa, Canada and Europe.

During 2025, the company also added six staff and a further four have already joined the ranks since the start of this year.

It is anticipated that another four new jobs will be created by the end of 2026.

Among the landmark wins that set Elementz on a course to success was a contract to provide Integrity Elementz as a modular and scalable Software as a Service (SaaS) solution for subsea infrastructure and pipelines for a major Australian-based energy company and one of the country's largest domestic gas producers.

Other key highlights in 2025 included the creation of the operator-led strategic advisory board, Compass, and the Tide Breaker programme which aims to define technical challenges, mentor participants, and evaluate outcomes for field deployment.

It is being co-led by The Data Lab, Scotland's innovation centre for data and AI, which will support technical delivery, participant selection, and programme governance.

With ONE Digital Tech also supporting, Tide Breaker will benefit from connections into the region's wider entrepreneurial ecosystem and help ensure the programme drives impact at scale.



James Brown, CEO, Elementz

You wait all year for one, then two come along at once...

Aberdeen open-top tour bus returns due to exceptional demand

The Aberdeen Adventurer, the city's own hop-on, hop-off open top bus tour, returns this month, bigger and better than ever following strong demand in its first year.

The popular tourist attraction will once again take passengers on a journey across the Granite City, this year with an additional bus meaning more frequent services.

The service is a continued partnership between McGill's Xplore, Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce, VisitAberdeenshire and Aberdeen Inspired, and will now run 11 rotations per day, seven days a week, every 45 minutes.

Passengers will also benefit from new features this year, including the addition of Polish-language commentary alongside existing tour narration, helping even more visitors discover the history of the Granite City.

New partners have also joined the discount scheme, giving passengers even more opportunities to enjoy exclusive offers across the city during their visit.

The route includes **12 stops:** Broad Street, High Street in Old Aberdeen, Pittodrie, Aberdeen Beach, Fittie, Guild Street (for Union Square, rail and bus stations), Duthie Park, Queen's Road (The Chester Hotel), Queen's Cross, Union Street (Music Hall), Rosemount Viaduct (His Majesty's Theatre) and LittleJohn Street.

JUST SOME OF THE MANY ATTRACTIONS COVERED BY THE ROUTE INCLUDE:

- Marischal College
- Provost Skene's House
- Denis Law statue
- 'Poised' sculpture
- King's College
- Old Aberdeen & University of Aberdeen
- The University Wee Shop
- Old Town House
- Pittodrie Stadium and Sir Alex Ferguson statue
- Aberdeen Science Centre
- Beach Ballroom
- Codona's Amusement Park, Queens Links Leisure and beach front cafes
- Fittie historic fishing village
- Aberdeen Maritime Museum
- Shiprow Village
- Duthie Park
- Old Brig o' Dee
- Queen's Cross
- West End independent shops and cafes
- The Music Hall
- Union Terrace Gardens
- His Majesty's Theatre and The Terrace Bar & Café
- Aberdeen Art Gallery and Cowdray Hall
- St Nicholas Kirk
- Castlegate & Mercat Cross
- Aberdeen Townhouse



Ticket holders will have access to a number of great discounts and offers from partners including: Aberdeen FC, Codona's Amusement Park, Shiprow Village venues, The Terrace Bar & Café, Aberdeen Archives, Gallery & Museums, and The Wee Shop in Old Aberdeen.

Russell Borthwick, Chief Executive of AGCC said: "The return of the Aberdeen Adventurer is fantastic news for the city, building on the success of its first year with more stops and an additional bus on the route.

"The expansion will make it even easier for passengers to explore the Granite City and discover everything it has to offer.

"This isn't just for visitors, it's for residents of city and shire who want to rediscover the best of Aberdeen, seeing the city from a different perspective.

"Experiences like this play an important role in showcasing Aberdeen's unique attractions, supporting local businesses and strengthening the region's growing visitor economy."

Chris Foy, Chief Executive of VisitAberdeenshire, said: "The return of the Aberdeen Adventurer for a second season, with a second vehicle is a vote of confidence in Aberdeen as a visitor destination.

"Whether it's a day trip or a weekend break, a day ashore from a cruise ship or time outside of the conference hall, visitors, local residents, and indeed local businesses can all discover top deck views of the Granite City from the distinctive orange fleet.

"Insightful commentary along the route can inspire deeper exploration and longer stays, strengthening our visitor economy in 2026 and beyond.

Stephen Riggans, Area Director, McGill's Buses, said: "It's a fantastic moment for us as we get

ready to roll out season two of the Aberdeen Adventurer on Monday, March 30, 2026.

"Last year's launch created such a buzz, and we're thrilled to bring back an open top experience that captures Aberdeen at its very best, big skies, fresh air, and a whole new perspective on the city we're so proud of. With brilliant support from Aberdeen City Council, the Chamber, VisitAberdeenshire, the Port of Aberdeen and Aberdeen Inspired, we're excited to offer a tour that locals love, and visitors can't wait to discover.

"I would encourage anyone who hasn't done so to get onboard and take in the fantastic route around Aberdeen."

"2025 was a standout year for Aberdeen, filled with moments that put the city firmly in the national spotlight. From the spectacular Tall Ships visit which brought around 400,000 visits to the city and transformed the harbour into a global maritime hub to Aberdeen Football Club's unforgettable Scottish Cup victory, the Granite City was bursting with excitement and pride.

"It was also the year Aberdeen was recognised by Conde Nast Traveller as one of the Best Places to Go in the UK for 2025, thanks to its vibrant food scene, rejuvenated public spaces and growing cultural energy. McGill's was proud to play a part in such a landmark year, and we're carrying that momentum and positivity straight into 2026.

"We're especially pleased to introduce a new and improved timetable this season,

with open-top buses now running every 45 minutes.

"The response to our inaugural year was incredible the enthusiasm, the feedback, the support it all exceeded our expectations. We can't wait to welcome everyone aboard again for a bigger, brighter, and even more memorable season two of the Aberdeen Adventurer".

Councillor Alex McLellan, Convener of the Finance and Resources Committee at Aberdeen City Council, said: "The Aberdeen Adventurer provides is a great way for visitors to our city, and for residents, to get around Aberdeen and see everything our city has to offer.

"I would encourage anyone who hasn't done so to get onboard and take in the fantastic route around Aberdeen."



The Aberdeen Adventurer will run from March 30 until September 20, 2026.

Day Ticket Prices

Adult
£20.00

Students
£12.00

Child
£10.00
5-15 years old

Family
£45.00

*Two adults and up to three children

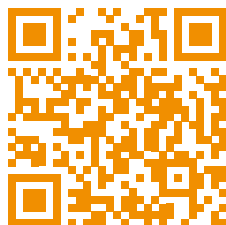
Child Under 5 travel

FREE

*1 per fare paying adult

EACH TICKET IS VALID 24 HOURS FROM TIME OF PURCHASE.

SCAN HERE TO BOOK YOUR TICKETS



Come to THE WEE SHOP
Gifts & Sweets and enjoy **10% OFF Everything***

*with your AA bus ticket

Come to our Museums & Gallery Shops and enjoy **10% discount***

*with a valid ticket *exclusions apply

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- PROVOST SKENE'S HOUSE
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Aberdeen Archives, Gallery & Museums
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OUR ABERDEEN

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£5 OFF! BOOK ONLINE!

CODONAS.COM

UNLIMITED outdoor rides

- x1 round of Pirate Island Adventure Golf
- Choice of 3rd activity - Smugglers Cove soft play, laser tag or go-karts
- Big Mannys' Pepperoni or Margherita Pizza or Mac 'n' Cheese

T&Cs and height restrictions apply.

Stop Location

Route Direction

Places of Interest

Rail Line

Train Station

Bus Station

Parks and Gardens

Adventure Further

TOUR STOPS

- Broad Street
- High Street, Old Aberdeen
- Pittodrie Stadium
- Aberdeen Beach
- Fittie
- North Harbour/Union Square
- Duthie Park
- Queens Road
- Queen's Cross
- Music Hall
- His Majesty's Theatre
- Littlejohn Street

Hop on at any stop and pay the driver!

Tour operates 30th March - 20th September
Tickets valid for 24 hours from time of purchase
First tour departs stop 1 at 10:00
Last tour departs stop 1 at 17:50
Buses run every 45 minutes
Operating 7 days a week

multilingual commentary on board

See more of what Aberdeen has to offer
Scan the QR code to find out what's happening, discover the best bars, restaurants, and local hotspots.

VisitAberdeenshire

STADIUM TOURS

20% OFF
STADIUM TOURS WITH CODE: 'Adventurer'

COME ON AN INSPIRATIONAL JOURNEY WITH US!

FIND MAPS AND TOURS HERE

LUNCHTIME DEAL

3 small plates for £20
Tuesday to Friday
11.30am - 15.30pm

THE TERRACE
AT HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE

COFFEE - LUNCH - DINNER - DRINKS

SHIP ROW VILLAGE

LOCAL INDEPENDENT RESTAURANTS, CAFES & BARS
ALL ON ONE STREET!

10% DISCOUNT AT ALL VENUES ON DAY OF YOUR TOUR

SCAN FOR MORE INFO

TICKET options

Adult	£20
Child	£10
Concession	£10
Student	£12
Family (2 Adults & 3 Children)	£45
Children Under 5 (Accompanied with an adult)	FREE

scan and book your tickets today



Departure Times

Stop 1 City Centre, Broad Street	1000 1045 1130 1215 1300 1415 1500 1545 1630 1715 1750
Stop 2 High Street, Old Aberdeen, Old Town House	1009 1054 1139 1224 1309 1424 1509 1554 1639 1724 1759
Stop 3 Golf Road, Pittodrie Stadium	1016 1101 1146 1231 1316 1431 1516 1601 1646 1731 1806
Stop 4 Esplanade, Beach cafes & attractions	1022 1107 1152 1237 1322 1437 1522 1607 1652 1737 1812
Stop 5 Fittie (Footdee)	1026 1111 1156 1241 1326 1441 1526 1611 1656 1741 1816
Stop 6 Guild Street, Union Square, Rail & Bus	1034 1119 1204 1249 1334 1449 1534 1619 1704 1749 1824
Stop 7 Great Southern Road, Duthie Park	1042 1127 1212 1257 1342 1457 1542 1627 1712 1757 1832
Stop 8 Queens Road, Chester & Malmison Hotels	1053 1138 1223 1308 1353 1508 1553 1638 1723 1808 1843
Stop 9 Albyn Place, Queen's Cross	1055 1140 1225 1310 1355 1510 1555 1640 1725 1810 1845
Stop 10 Union Street, Music Hall	1100 1145 1230 1315 1400 1515 1600 1645 1730 1815 1850
Stop 11 Rosemount Viaduct, His Majesty's Theatre	1104 1149 1234 1319 1404 1519 1604 1649 1734 1819 1854
Stop 12 Littlejohn Street	1111 1156 1241 1326 1411 1526 1611 1656 1741 1826 1901

For any enquiries call 03330 16 61 62



The ABERDEEN Adventurer

HOP-ON HOP-OFF



THE GRANITE CITY uncovered

March-September 2026

Discover Aberdeen's top sights in style



Don't forget to share your feedback and photographs!
We'd love to know what you got up to - be sure to tag us or use the hashtag #AberdeenAdventurer

Please Note: Route subject to change due to roadworks and major events

PLACES OF INTEREST

- 1 Marischal College
- 2 Provost Skene's House
- 3 Denis Law statue
- 4 'Poised' sculpture
- 5 King's College
- 6 Old Aberdeen & University of Aberdeen
- 7 The Wee Shop
- 8 Old Town House
- 9 Pittodrie Stadium & Sir Alex Ferguson statue
- 10 Aberdeen Science Centre
- 11 Beach Ballroom
- 12 Codonas Amusement Park & Queens Links Leisure
- 13 Footdee (Fittie) Village
- 14 Maritime Museum
- 15 Shiprow Village
- 16 Union Square (Shopping, rail & bus stations)
- 17 Duthie Park
- 18 Old Brig o' Dee
- 19 Queen's Cross
- 20 West End (independent shops & cafes)
- 21 Music Hall & Coda Café
- 22 Union Terrace Gardens
- 23 Central Library and St Mark's Church
- 24 His Majesty's Theatre and The Terrace Bar & Café
- 25 Aberdeen Art Gallery & Cowdray Hall
- 26 St Nicholas Kirk
- 27 Castlegate & Mercat Cross
- 28 Aberdeen Townhouse

ADVENTURE FURTHER

- 1 Cruickshank Botanic Garden
St Machar's Cathedral
Seaton Park
- 2 Royal Deeside
Castle Trail
Balmoral
- 3 Gordon Highlanders Museum
Johnston Gardens
Hazlehead Park



Tom Main
Partner in Family Law
Aberdein Considine

Describe your early career path.

Following the successful completion of my traineeship with Aberdein Considine in 2017, I continued with the firm. I transitioned internally to the Family Law team and have worked my way up ever since, moving to Senior Solicitor, Associate, Senior Associate in 2024 and then Partner as of January 2026.

A key part of my success has been the additional training I have undertaken. In 2023, I undertook training to be a collaboratively trained solicitor and joined Consensus Scotland, the body for collaboratively trained practitioners. I also was awarded my Family Law Specialist accreditation in 2025 by the Law Society of Scotland. Outside of the office, I've embarked on a number of voluntary roles, my latest being President of Aberdeen Bar Association for 2025, a role which I shall continue in for 2026, which I think has allowed me a key audience with members of the judiciary as well as helping me demonstrate and develop additional management skills and further my network.

How did you arrive in your current industry?

I arrived in law via the traditional route. After completing my LLB



In partnership with



at university, then my Diploma in Professional Legal Practice, I then completed my traineeship with Aberdein Considine. I wasn't always a family lawyer, however. Throughout my two-year traineeship and for a full year after

qualifying, I solely did conveyancing work. I then transitioned to family law including Court work and haven't looked back since.

What's the best thing about your job?

I love being able to take the weight of stress off my clients. They often come to me in one of the most turbulent periods of their lives, or under extreme pressure, and I aim to help shoulder that for them. There is no better feeling than getting a great outcome for a client that secures their financial future, or their relationship with their children, and seeing the weight lift from their shoulders.

What has been your biggest career challenge to date?

Transitioning from a role solely based in conveyancing to the Family Law team was a very steep learning curve! This involved learning a whole new area of law, including new skills such as Court advocacy, all within a very short space of time. I would say this was a success as despite only practising Family Law for a relatively short period I was recognised as a Family Law Specialist by the Law Society of Scotland in 2025 - the youngest person to be recognised for that specialism at that time.

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

Ideally attend more lectures and fewer parties! I think I would say that everything passes - the good times and the bad times - so enjoy the good ones as they come and know the bad ones will pass eventually.

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

In contentious Court actions, I do sometimes have to run what is effectively a civil trial, which includes large, tabulated folders of paper, leading evidence and cross-examining witnesses - just like on TV, but without the glamour!

How do you unwind in your time off?

Running or hillwalking is a great outlet for me. We are very lucky with what we have on our doorstep so I try to make the best of it!

What did you want to be when you were little?

I wish I could say a lawyer, but I always wanted to be a physiotherapist. Just a different way of helping people, I guess!

What was your first job?

I worked in a chip shop. The banter was great with the regulars, as were the free suppers after a long shift.

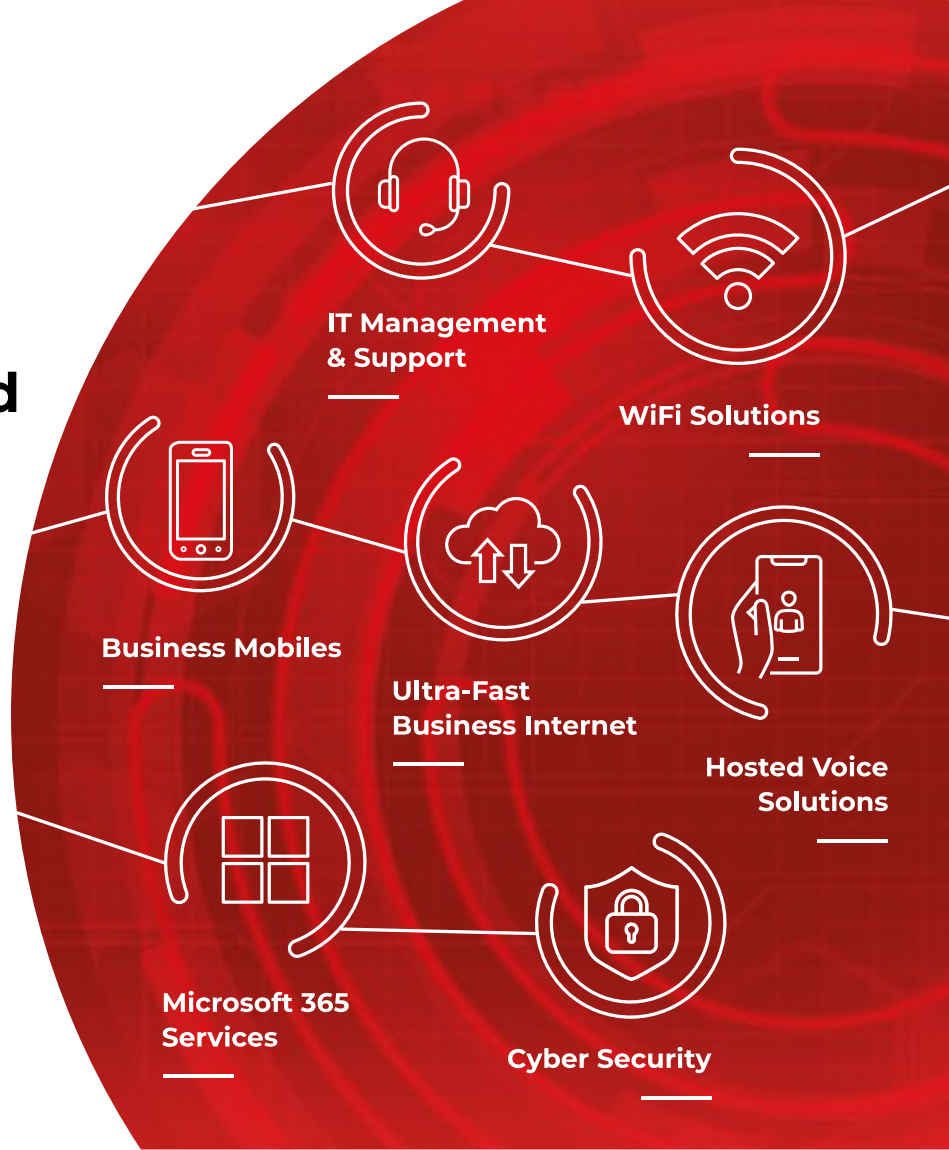


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Landmark Granite Noir largest to date

Aberdeen Performing Arts has celebrated a successful milestone event as visitors flocked to the city for Granite Noir X.

The 10th edition of Aberdeen’s internationally renowned crime writing festival came to a close in February as best-selling Canadian author Shari Lapena sat down with broadcaster Bryan Burnett for the festival’s closing show in the Lemon Tree.

Over 100 authors, speakers, broadcasters and performers participated in the landmark programme over the five-day festival, making it the largest Granite Noir to date.

Namaka Compliance awarded OCAS contract with Omega Subsea

Namaka Compliance has been awarded an Outsourced Competence Assurance Support (OCAS) contract with Norwegian-headquartered Omega Subsea for all its ROV and survey positions for up to 200 personnel.

The team at Namaka Compliance have been working closely with their Training and Competence Manager Gavin Innes to ensure that the Competence Management System (CMS) is implemented effectively against their organisational requirements.

This OCAS service incorporates the following:

- Development of processes and procedures
- Face to face and remote instructor led assessor and verifier training
- Implementation and use of ‘Athena’ online CMS.

This will ensure that Omega Subsea is able to demonstrate the competency of its personnel in real time.

the MEMBER MEET the MEMBER



Derek Donaldson,
Chief Executive Officer
Oceanscan Group

Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

Oceanscan's Group of companies provides reliable subsea, NDT, and survey equipment rental for the

energy sector, underpinned by round-the-clock technical support and uncompromising HSSEQ. Our equipment is delivered calibrated and ready to go, so you can mobilise with confidence and keep operations on schedule. As a member of the Venterra Group, we bring the scale, governance, and assurance to de-risk your project from inception to conclusion.

Who are your customers?

Energy operators and developers, EPCI / subsea contractors, survey and inspection firms, vessel owners, geotechnical contractors, and wind farm developers.

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

The biggest challenge we have right now is to modernise systems and legacy practices while harmonising

processes across the group, without compromising service levels in a highly competitive, price-sensitive market.

Opportunity: Backed by the Venterra Group, we've made significant investments across Oceanscan's equipment fleet, giving clients access to the latest, fully calibrated hardware that reduces risk and delivers consistently high-quality results.

What is your word of advice for fellow Chamber members?

Engage early, bring key suppliers into your planning earlier than you think you need them.

Define success as outcomes, quality, reliability rather than day rates or unit costs. Working together we can reduce rework, shorten lead times, and increase project success.



Mike MacDonald,
Founding Director
AKR Fitness

Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

As we age, losing energy and strength can make everyday life feel harder.

At AKR, our personal training is delivered in a supportive, guided environment, empowering you to feel

fit, strong, and energised, so you can keep doing the things you love.

Who are your customers?

Professionals and adults aged 40+ who want long-term health, strength, and energy in a welcoming, non-intimidating environment.

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

Balancing growth with excellence.

Our focus is on depth, not duplication, by refining our flagship site into a truly world-class, 250-member facility.

What is your word of advice for fellow Chamber members?

Focus on consistent, meaningful improvement.

Excellence isn't built overnight, but by small, deliberate actions repeated over time.

What is the best thing about being a Chamber member?

Connections.

The Chamber creates opportunities to build relationships, share ideas, and learn from others shaping the future of the North-east.

MEMBER MEET *the* ME



Euan McLean,
*Commercial Sales and Business
Development Manager*
Dales Marine Services

Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

With facilities across four major Scottish ports, Dales Marine Services has over 30 years'

experience in delivering specialist dry dock, steelwork, ship repair and mobilisation solutions for the offshore and energy industries. We deliver tailored engineering services with a focus on quality, reliability, and cost-efficient project delivery.

Who are your customers?

We work with a loyal customer base that spans companies focused on the domestic market through to multinational operators with global assets. Clients include leading names in the marine, offshore energy, renewables, aquaculture, defence, and commercial sectors, all relying on our expertise to keep assets operational and projects on schedule.

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

Attracting and retaining skilled talent is one of our biggest challenges, particularly in experience-driven roles like dockmasters. At the same time, it is a major opportunity. We invest in training, apprenticeships and career development, so that we can inspire the next generation and secure the long-term sustainability of our industry.

What is your word of advice for fellow Chamber members?

Make full use of your Chamber benefits to grow your network and raise awareness of your brand. Building strong connections will not only open doors for collaboration but also help with one of today's biggest challenges - recruitment. Showcasing your organisation through the Chamber can help attract the talent you need.



Jan Blazusiak,
Assistant General Manager
Costco Aberdeen

Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

At Costco Aberdeen, we're committed to providing our members with the best value and quality in every shopping trip. From bulk groceries to exclusive member-only products, we ensure our customers have access to a wide range of high-quality items

at unbeatable prices. Our friendly staff is dedicated to delivering exceptional service, making every visit a convenient and enjoyable experience.

Who are your customers?

The customers of Costco Aberdeen typically include families, small business owners, individuals, health-conscious consumers, event planners and budget-conscious shoppers. These diverse customer groups appreciate the variety, quality, and savings that Costco provides.

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

The biggest challenge is supply chain disruptions. Like many retailers, Costco may face ongoing supply chain issues, which can affect product availability and pricing.

The biggest opportunity is the expansion of e-commerce. With the growing trend toward online shopping, Costco has the opportunity to enhance its e-commerce platform. By improving online services and delivery options,

Costco can attract more customers who prefer shopping from home, thereby increasing sales and expanding its market reach.

What is your word of advice for fellow Chamber members?

Embrace collaboration and networking. Take full advantage of the resources and connections available through the Chamber. Engaging with other members can lead to valuable partnerships, innovative ideas, and shared best practices. Attend events, participate in discussions, and don't hesitate to reach out to fellow members for support or collaboration.

What is the best thing about being a Chamber member?

Being a member of AGCC offers several benefits, including networking opportunities, events and workshops, access to business advice, increased exposure and market insights.

Access to a diverse community of businesses and professionals, facilitating valuable connections and collaborations. Overall, membership can enhance business growth and community engagement in the Aberdeen and Grampian areas.

Aberdeen Science Centre expands virtual reality experiences with new funding

Aberdeen Science Centre is expanding its virtual reality (VR) offering with a new workshop and birthday party experience.

The launch of VR experiences at the centre in 2025 allowed visitors to explore new digital worlds, encounter dinosaurs, travel through time and even shrink to journey inside the human body.

Following the success of the VR headsets, the centre is now broadening its use of the technology, supported by funding from Mermaid Subsea Services UK and ETZ Ltd.

Last year, Aberdeen Science Centre made nearly 40 ClassVR headsets available at the centre and community events, engaging more than 6,500 children and families from across the North-east of Scotland and beyond.

Funding helped introduce the technology to the centre's diverse programmes and ensured staff were fully trained to use it effectively.

Renewed support from Mermaid Subsea and ETZ Ltd will allow Aberdeen Science Centre to enhance its VR offering and introduce four new VR experiences throughout the year focusing on exploring ocean life, journeying through different animals' habitats, discovering more about famous historic moments and learning about geography and geology.

Steph McCann, Head of Fundraising at Aberdeen Science Centre, said: "We are proud to launch the second year of our VR experience at Aberdeen Science Centre, as we grow the digital offering for our visitors.

"Last year, the VR headsets greatly enhanced learning and discovery both at the centre and in community settings, letting visitors explore the ocean, travel to the moon and encounter creatures from the distant past.

"We are incredibly grateful to Mermaid Subsea Services UK and ETZ Ltd for their support, which allows us to expand our VR programme and continue creating fun, memorable experiences for children and families."



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Boskalis Subsea Services secures multi-million pound contract with Shell

Boskalis Subsea Services has won a major offshore decommissioning contract with Shell U.K. Limited, marking the first decommissioning-specific project the company will deliver for the operator.

Boskalis Subsea Services will undertake the removal of subsea infrastructure and associated remediation across a number of assets.

The works will be executed across more than 100 vessel days utilising the CSV Boka Northern Ocean.

The scope includes site surveys, removal and recovery of concrete mattresses, grout bags, pipelines,

umbilicals, structures, remediation of piles, as well as targeted debris recovery activities, and the recovery of umbilical.

Stuart Cameron, Managing Director at Boskalis Subsea Services, said: "This award represents an important milestone for Boskalis, as our first decommissioning-specific project for Shell UK.

"We are extremely pleased to have been selected for this scope and look forward to applying our offshore execution expertise, subsea capability and strong safety focus to deliver the project safely and efficiently."

iO IT Services announces new business mobile phones partnership with EE

iO IT Services is pleased to announce a new partnership with EE to provide business mobile phone solutions to organisations across the UK.

Through this partnership, iO IT Services will offer EE's business mobile plans, devices, and connectivity as part of its expanding portfolio of managed IT and communications services. The collaboration strengthens iO's ability to deliver reliable, high-performance mobile connectivity while giving customers greater choice across the UK's major networks.

By adding EE to its portfolio alongside existing partnerships with O2 and Vodafone, iO IT Services is now ideally positioned to help businesses select the mobile network that best fits their needs. This multi-network approach enables iO to provide optimal contract flexibility, stronger signal coverage based on location, and the most cost-effective options for each organisation.

The new service will allow businesses to source and manage their mobile phones through a single trusted provider. Clients will benefit from simplified billing, expert support, and seamless integration with existing IT systems and services delivered by iO IT Services.

"Our partnership with EE further strengthens the options available to our clients," said Nick Pickering, a Director at iO. "Every business has different requirements when it comes to mobile connectivity. By working with EE alongside our other network partners, we can ensure our customers receive the right balance of coverage, flexibility, and value."

The partnership also gives customers access to the latest smartphones, flexible business tariffs, and advanced mobile features designed to support modern hybrid working environments. Combined with iO IT Services' expertise in IT support, cybersecurity, and cloud solutions, the offering helps businesses streamline technology management while keeping teams connected wherever they work.

Business mobile services from iO IT Services powered by EE are available from April 1 to both new and existing customers.



David McCreedy of iO IT Services (left) with Business Development Manager Allan Smith outside the company's offices following the announcement of iO's new business mobile partnership with EE.



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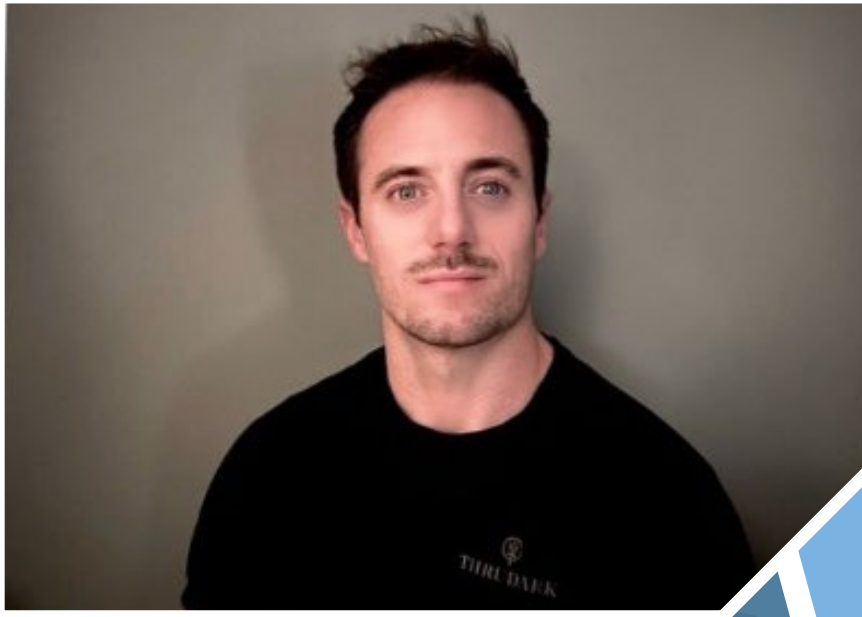


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BUSINESS LESSONS I'VE LEARNED



Tom Marsh,
Subsurface Technical Manager
Rock Flow Dynamics (RFD)

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

My influences come in chapters. Growing up as a twin taught me the constant push-and-pull of competition, a mindset strengthened by the outdoors, where mountain biking and climbing built resilience. Mentors at SLB later pushed me to think bigger, lead teams and communicate. Klopp's philosophy as a Liverpool fan also shaped me: get the defence right, get everyone running, the rest follows. That mentality carried into my leap to Rock Flow Dynamics, a young, adventurous company determined to make noise, where a director believed I could help drive that change with him. That trust expanded my skill set beyond anything I imagined and continues to push me forward.

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

Nothing beats being thrown onto a rig in the Australian outback with a hard hat, a radio and a vague instruction to "crack on." No classroom prepares you for drillers, deadlines, dust storms or 4 am starts. It taught me more about leadership, pressure and problem-solving than any workshop. My CrossFit reinforced the same

pillars: mechanics, consistency, intensity. In business at Rock Flow Dynamics, that means mastering fundamentals, executing reliably and then scaling impact across multi-domain workflows. It's how we evolve tNavigator and how I build teams: give juniors real responsibility, let them fail safely and create space to grow

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

Simplicity, high energy and the willingness to get stuck in will take you further than polished theory. Get the basics right: understand the problem, deliver reliably and back it with effort. Many chase bells and whistles before mastering fundamentals. I hire for strengths, echoing Branson's belief that you should bring in people smarter than you and trust them. At RFD we lean into what we do best and build around the rest, making tNavigator fast, adaptable and human-centred. There are no shortcuts: show up, stay humble, adapt and, when needed, let coffee and momentum carry you.

What's been your proudest career achievement to date?

I've had several chapters I'm proud of. Moving to Australia alone, completing a tough Masters, joining one of the world's biggest oil and gas service companies, then taking the leap to a smaller competitor to

help build a geology division almost from scratch. But my real pride is where I am now, helping drive tNavigator's evolution from a high-speed simulator to a true multi-domain platform used across CCUS, geothermal, mining and oil and gas. Seeing prospects say "oh wow, we can do that too" is the reward: product, people and purpose aligning. And seeing our teams fired up, thinking big and pushing boundaries - that's the legacy that matters to me.

What was your first job?

Toys R Us, guarding the Batman aisle and pushing trolleys before graduating to IKEA.

Who or what inspires you most?

CrossFit athletes, watching people push beyond comfort zones reminds me what dedication and discipline look like.

What word or phrase in business-speak exasperates you?

"Industry standard." It's often code for "we've always done it this way," and that's exactly how innovation dies.

How do you relax?

A brutal CrossFit session, a round of golf, or switching off with my amazing girlfriend.

Game-changing Dax Group helping guide businesses through AI revolution

By Danny McKay

The rapid evolution of AI will be “bigger than the internet” for civilisation – and businesses now have opportunities like never before to harness technology to get ahead.

That’s the message computer scientist Colin Dawson wants to get across, and his company – digital transformation consultancy Dax Group – has the knowledge and the tools to help businesses see what is possible and achieve it.

Throughout his career, Colin has enjoyed building software for all manner of companies, but is now relishing the opportunity to do it for his own firm.

He said: “All the things I’ve wanted to do in my career, all the things I’ve wanted to build, you can build them so fast and so beautifully now with AI. I’m just glued to my PC the whole time. It’s incredible.

“I’ve always classed myself as an in-trepreneur. I’m always building for other people, innovating and creating new things, but always doing it for someone else.

“Doing it for myself now is a big change, but I love it.”

For years, businesses have operated using “off-the-shelf” software and programmes – but with the advancement of technology it’s now possible, and is even cheaper to build tailor-made software.

Colin said: “A lot of companies use a lot of different digital technologies – SAP for finance, Maximo for asset tracking – all these different softwares across the organisation. But does it actually make the business any better? Do they save money? Do they actually improve?

‘It’s all about helping companies succeed in the modern era’

“From what I’ve seen over the last five to 10 years, companies follow a ‘see problem, fix problem’

mentality, buying this system and that system and they end up with this really varied assortment of tools that don’t really bring value to the organisation.

“What I tend to do is advise senior leaders in business how to effectively set up a digital strategy for success – choosing the right tools, short-term investments, long-term investments, what you build yourself, what their unique selling point is. Really architecting out how they can make digital technology succeed for their business.

“More and more, that leads into building solutions for these companies, which is where our Radax platform comes in to rapidly develop software for them.”

Radax is Dax Group’s groundbreaking new platform that harnesses AI to accelerate application delivery.

It deploys directly into a client’s existing cloud environment, taking organisations from concept to production-grade applications in under six weeks without the need to hire specialist in-house development teams.

‘People look at Tesco as a supermarket, but Tesco is a data company’

That represents a 75% reduction in development time.



Colin Dawson

dax
group

Colin said: "It's all about helping companies succeed in the modern era - putting digital at the forefront.

"If you want to remain competitive, and you want to build a business that people want to work in, then digitally astute businesses statistically outperform their peers time and time again.

"The example I always use is Tesco. People look at Tesco as a supermarket, but Tesco is a data company.

"We're quite passionate about trying to grow the North-east of Scotland to be more of a digital epicenter in the world and start growing the skills that are needed locally."

"Tesco released the Clubcard 15 or 20 years ago now and the reason they did that was to acquire the user's data and then use that data to reorganise their shop layout.

"If you look at consumer data, the two most commonly bought-together items are bread and milk. If you go into any supermarket now you'll notice that the bread and milk are at opposite ends of the shop. That is by design.

"More and more companies and businesses are becoming data-led. If you want to be competitive in the modern world then you have to be digitally astute. There's too much opportunity to miss if you're not working in that realm.

"This is one of the reasons I founded Dax Group. With artificial intelligence just changing the game completely, companies have to be ready for this transition.

"This is bigger than the internet.

People don't realise it but this is a significant transformation in us as a civilisation with 80% of white-collar jobs predicted to be gone in the next five years.

'That's a massive transition and most companies haven't woken up to that fact yet'

"That's massive, so companies need to take this seriously. There are opportunities and there are risks. They need the right guidance and that's where we come in."

A sea change moment in the world of technology has now been reached, Colin says, where businesses are no longer restricted by having to rely on one-size-fits-all software, but are able to create purpose-built systems that run better and are more economically viable.

"Back in the 90s, more companies built software, they built their own solutions, but for the past 20 or 30 years companies have bought software as a service," Colin continued.

"Nine times out of 10, these SaaS products don't fit your business particularly well. Now, they can build for a cost that's cheaper than buying.

"You can build tools that are specific to your organisation that are better than you can buy off the shelf for a similar or cheaper price.

"That's a massive transition and most companies haven't woken up to that fact yet. I can foresee that by the end of 2026 and the start of 2027, companies are going to start to ramp up building in-house, bringing in consultants rather than buying SaaS products.

"That's the market we're trying to fill, supporting companies as they go through that transition."

Colin said the technology is "evolving so fast" that it's creating "new realms of innovation that didn't exist before".

'Passionate about trying to grow the North-east of Scotland'

Dax Group was only founded in June 2024, but secured £1.2million in contract wins within its first year. Despite the apparent success, Colin is keeping his feet firmly on the ground.

He said: "It doesn't feel like it's a success yet. It feels like we're at the beginning of a really exciting journey. It doesn't quite feel real.

"Over the first year we've created a really good foundation for what the company could be in the future.

"I really believe that in the North-east of Scotland we have to start thinking a bit more about the future.

"I know times are tough and that companies are pulling jobs and "trying to be leaner" but if they invest cleverly in digital technology they'll be able to operate within finer margins and unlock other commercial opportunities.

"But they need to be intelligent about it. The way they've operated for the past 20 years hasn't worked, the way they've approached digitalisation hasn't worked, they need to think differently and that's where we come in to help.

"Digitalisation and digital transformation isn't necessarily about saving money, but it can help you make more money and operate within finer margins if you take the right transformation approach.

"We're quite passionate about trying to grow the North-east of Scotland to be more of a digital epicenter in the world and start growing the skills that are needed locally."



Not being replaced just yet: The human role in an AI research world

Artificial intelligence is already changing how organisations work with information. It can process vast amounts of data quickly, summarise patterns and generate answers in seconds. For researchers, that capability is increasingly useful.

But the value of research has never been about answers alone. It begins with the right questions.

A good researcher spends as much time framing and refining the question as analysing the data.

That process draws on context, stakeholder priorities and a clear understanding of how the findings will ultimately be used. AI can generate responses, but it is far less reliable at deciding which questions really matter.

Judgement also remains central. Data rarely arrives neatly packaged with a clear conclusion.

Researchers interpret ambiguity, weigh conflicting signals and identify what is meaningful, what is uncertain and what simply cannot be claimed from the evidence available. Those judgements carry professional accountability in a way that automated outputs do not.

There are also important considerations around bias, ethics and consent. AI systems reflect the data and prompts they are given. They do not naturally ask whether a line of enquiry is appropriate, who may be excluded from the data or how findings could be misinterpreted or misused.

Researchers are trained to think carefully about sampling bias, confidentiality and informed consent, and to ensure that evidence is gathered and applied responsibly.

Another critical skill is recognising when not to trust the data. AI will often fill gaps confidently (hallucinate is the term, but basically, it will lie to you!), even when the underlying evidence is weak or incomplete.

Researchers are used to spotting poor response rates, badly framed questions or misaligned methods, and to pushing back when the data simply does not support a strong conclusion.

Context matters too. Most AI models are trained on large volumes of global, generalised data.

Researchers bring an understanding of place — the local economy, sector dynamics, institutional relationships and practical constraints that shape how people respond and what solutions are realistic. AI cannot gather true, timely, primary data for your specific business or market, it works purely with secondary published sources and often at national level.

Insight also depends on engagement. Research is not just a technical exercise. It involves building relationships, facilitating conversations and listening carefully to what stakeholders say — and sometimes what they do not. That process helps ensure people feel heard and makes them more likely to trust and act on the findings.

Ultimately, research only creates value when it leads to action. AI can suggest recommendations, but it does not sit with the trade-offs organisations face. Researchers help teams move from interesting insight to practical decisions, prioritising actions and shaping recommendations that reflect budgets, timelines and organisational appetite for change.

Where AI is already proving valuable is in supporting this work.

It can accelerate tasks such as transcription, initial coding and early-stage summaries. It can help draft surveys or discussion guides that researchers then refine.

It can also produce quick visualisations that researchers can test and challenge against the underlying evidence.

The future is therefore unlikely to be AI instead of researchers. More realistically, it is AI alongside researchers — speeding up the mechanics of analysis while people remain responsible for the parts that matter most: asking the right questions, applying judgement and ensuring that evidence is used carefully, responsibly and in the real world.

Thankfully that remains the case, for now at least!



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

sarah.mccoll@agcc.co.uk

Driving Digital Transformation with Data, Automation & AI



Robin Parkinson,
Managing Director of
Evolve, talks about the
company's journey, its
culture and the people
behind the business.

Q1. What is Evolve and what problems does it solve?

We are a digital transformation business enabling organisations to unlock value through data, automation, IT support, and modern workplace technologies. We support clients in sectors such as energy, facilities management, business services and financial services.

For companies still relying on highly manual processes – spreadsheets, duplicated effort and disconnected systems – we streamline and automate workflows, removing time-consuming manual tasks and allowing teams to focus on higher-value work.

Q2. Tell us your journey from the beginning and how you got into tech.

My journey into technology wasn't a straight line. Born in Yorkshire, I moved between London and Aberdeen growing up, influenced by a family background in oil and gas.

School wasn't always a natural fit, but college proved to be a turning point, completing an HND in Communications with a strong interest in graphic design and journalism.

Early design work for a computer business quickly evolved into building

machines from scratch and working within technical teams. That hands-on exposure sparked a love of learning and problem-solving – a foundation that would later shape Evolve.

Q3. Did you always plan to run your own business?

Not at all. Running a business was never the original goal. It was more a case of seeing opportunities to do things better than they were being done elsewhere.

After years of relatively autonomous roles, the real challenge began with entrepreneurship – making difficult decisions daily and taking responsibility for outcomes. A leap of faith into contracting with a friend marked the start, driven by resilience and a willingness to take calculated risks.

Q4. What makes the Evolve team and culture stand out?

The team is one of Evolve's biggest strengths. With people from all over the world, the company is a licensed visa sponsor and has built a truly diverse, enterprise-aware workforce, many with major oil and gas backgrounds.

We operate as a matrix organisation, where leadership is collaborative and vision is driven by both customers and employees. Flexible, hybrid working is central to the culture, with teams based across the UK including Cambridge, Luton and Aberdeen.

Q5. How is Evolve innovating with AI and automation?

Automation has been part of our DNA for years, from process automation using

Microsoft tools that replace manual spreadsheet work, to intelligent software "robots" that handle repetitive tasks.

More recently, the focus has shifted to AI agents and advanced chat solutions. This led to the creation of NXXX – a highly focused, private AI assistant designed around specific business needs, such as HR functions. Unlike generic AI tools, NXXX can run securely on a client's own network, offline if required, even without internet access.

With growing concern around data privacy, our approach offers safe, controlled AI that delivers fast insights, 'question and answer' access to company knowledge and powerful summarisation across internal documents. It specifically doesn't use any large vendor APIs or tokenisation to ensure data privacy.

Q6. What's next for Evolve – and what advice would you give aspiring leaders?

The future is full of possibility. We aim to become more multinational while remaining flexible in how and where teams work. Many things once thought impossible in tech are now achievable, and the company is growing and adapting alongside its customers' needs.

For aspiring leaders, the advice is simple: go for it but manage your risk. Technology moves fast, and dreams transform. Most importantly, lead with care and compassion, listen to those around you, and remember that great leadership is never dogmatic – it's human.



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WORDS OF ADVICE



Andrew Robins,
CEO
EnerQuip

Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

EnerQuip designs and manufactures high-performance torque machines and associated products used around the world to assemble, maintain and disassemble tubular equipment. Our focus is on safety, precision, automation and reliability - real engineering solutions built on decades of hands-on industry experience and knowledge.

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

I try to lead by getting out of the way! My job is to empower, not micromanage. Teams need autonomy to own outcomes and have the confidence to innovate.

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

Moving from 'doing' to 'leading' was the biggest shift for me. I overcame it by trying to stay connected to every part of the business and understanding the real challenges people face day-to-day, some of which I faced in my previous roles. This enabled me to help to clear the way for others to follow.

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

We want people to bring their ideas and have the confidence to share them. We really value initiative and curiosity amongst our team because our people have been central to our success throughout the past 10 years. If one of the team sees a better way, we want them to tell us. Everyone at EnerQuip has a voice. The best, and often simplest, improvements come from those closest to the work and their knowledge elevates everything we do.



Jill Archibald,
Client Engagement Director
Spectrum Service Solutions

Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Never accept "that'll do". Whether it's service, relationships or personal goals, aiming higher makes a real difference.

That mindset has helped me challenge poor standards and always look for better ways of working. In my job, I focus on helping clients achieve their goals, so this mindset has been really useful to me.

New weight loss programme to help offshore workers meet the November 2026 weight cap

Healthoutfit has launched Fit2Fly, a digital weight management platform built specifically for the offshore workforce.

Accessible from any device at fit2fly.vip, the 24-week programme gives every subscriber a dedicated Wellness Coach, body composition tracking (including 3D body scans for those based in or travelling through Aberdeen), and practical tools designed around the realities of offshore life, whether they're on the rig or at home between rotations.

The launch comes at a critical time. Offshore Energies UK (OEUK) has set a clear deadline: from November 1 2026, any worker weighing more than 124kg clothed will not be permitted to travel offshore and will not receive a valid medical certificate.

OEUK estimates around 5,000 offshore workers may be affected to varying degrees. The transition phase is already underway, with reduced-duration medical certificates being issued to those near or above the limit.

"Fit2Fly isn't an off-the-shelf solution, it's been built from the ground up by our team, drawing on years of hands-on experience in workplace wellness," says Georgie Howden, Wellbeing & Lifestyle Manager at Healthoutfit.

"What makes it work is that every bit of personalisation comes not from an algorithm, but from a real Wellness Coach who genuinely knows their stuff, whether that's building someone's exercise programme or reviewing their nutrition.

"We've built Fit2Fly around the specific challenges offshore workers face every day, from eating in the galley to staying active on a platform. This isn't about deprivation, it's about education, support, and building habits that last. The November deadline is real, and we want people to meet it feeling better than ever."

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MOTOR MOUTH

When Chamber members Porsche Centre Aberdeen offered me the opportunity to test drive the latest model of the Cayenne, I jumped at the chance. Not being a technical 'expert' in the world of cars, I was unsure what to expect, but the team at Porsche Centre took time to explain the car's features and were friendly and hospitable throughout. The centre itself is a welcoming environment and well designed, making you feel comfortable and treated to the standards you would expect from a prestige brand like Porsche.

Onto the car. From the moment you sit in the driver's seat it is clear, even to a non-car-fanatic like myself, that every little detail has been carefully considered and refined to a high, luxurious standard. It took me little time to personalise the technology to myself - from simple connection to my devices to driving position and performance options.

Turning on the car first time produced the famous Porsche roar, powered by the 3.0 litre 6-cylinder engine capable of reaching a top speed of 163 mph, and 0-62 mph in a punchy 4.7 seconds. As a 'data person' I found these numbers

PORSCHE CAYENNE E-HYBRID, BLACK EDITION

By Jason Stewart,
Commercial Director,
Aberdeen & Grampian
Chamber of Commerce



impressive but the real quality is in the smoothness of the drive. The ergonomic design and positioning of the seating, steering wheel and levers combined with the adaptive air suspension and speed sensitive power steering really puts you at ease when behind a vehicle wielding such understated power.

Another benefit of the car is the range of the hybrid engine, with 50 miles on a full charge providing a fuel-efficient way to get around the city on smaller commutes without requiring a trip to the petrol station. The boot space is also a generous 627 litres allowing for those longer trips.

My job at Scotland's largest Chamber of Commerce involves a lot of travel across North-east Scotland and having the Cayenne E-hybrid to support my trips was a joy. During the test drive I visited Chamber Premier Partner Aberdeen Football Club at Pittodrie Stadium (where the car did not look out of place even for a professional footballer), before stopping for lunch at Chamber member The Chester Hotel - delicious!



Whether driving in busy city commutes or on the open motorway, the Cayenne really elevates your driving experience, and I thoroughly enjoyed my time with it. A question I have been asked since is around the price for such a respectable vehicle, and although the Porsche brand is not the cheapest on the market, the quality really makes it feel worth the investment. Further, the helpful team at Porsche informed me of their tax-efficient salary

sacrifice offers which companies across the region are taking advantage of, and can make prestige vehicles like the Cayenne within easier reach for working professionals.

Overall, I would thoroughly recommend talking to the team at Porsche Centre Aberdeen to consider the options available or organising a test drive, but be careful - you might just fall in love with your future car.



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Model used for illustrative purposes.

Cayenne Turbo (WLTP, preliminary value): Electrical consumption combined: 21.8 – 19.7 kWh/100 km; CO₂ emissions combined: 0 g/km; CO₂ class: G; Status 11/2025

BUSINESS LESSONS I'VE LEARNED



Daryl Mitchell,
Director
The Blind Mannie - Made to Measure Blinds

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

Probably working under several people when I spent my 14 years at Stagecoach.

I worked under various people all with different styles.

The latest one being Daniel Laird, who was the Commercial Director.

He took myself and a colleague under his wing when we had no commercial experience and only experience in operations, but it paid off due to the time and effort he put into us.

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

For me it was my PDP when I was at Stagecoach under Daniel.

He was my go-to whenever I needed to ask anything and it shaped me into the person I am today.

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

Be open, honest and transparent, people really value that.

What's been your proudest career achievement to date?

Steering the business in the direction it is going in at the moment has to be my proudest achievement.

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

I think with the North-east being such a wide but community-based city, we all like to support local which is truly great to see and we follow this ethos when we do business too.

What was your first job?

Apprentice Joiner.

Who or what inspires you most?

Family.

What word or phrase in business-speak exasperates you?

"Opportunities don't happen, you create them."

How do you relax?

Generally, I find taking down time really difficult as the mind is always in a world of its own, but activities with the family help that.

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

To have world peace.

QUICK-FIRE ROUND

Aberdeen-based AV One delivers future-ready collaboration solution

Aberdeen-based AV One Solutions has completed the design and installation of fully integrated audio-visual and collaboration spaces for global IT services partner Sword at its new office at The Hill of Rubislaw.

Following the consolidation of three Aberdeen locations into one central headquarters, Sword required a scalable, intuitive and future-ready AV solution to support seamless collaboration across meeting rooms, open-plan areas, breakout spaces and hybrid working environments.

As outlined in the newly published case study, AV One worked closely with Sword's project team to deliver a consistent meeting experience across Microsoft Teams, Cisco Webex and Zoom platforms.

The project included multiple meeting room configurations, a fully equipped boardroom with ceiling microphones and speakers, collaboration zones, townhall space, reception displays, Zoom pods with integrated booking panels and digital displays throughout the workspace.

Built on Cisco collaboration technology, the solution provides AI-enhanced video and audio performance, integrated Microsoft 365 room booking and centralised system management via Webex Control Hub giving Sword full visibility of room usage, occupancy and system performance.

The project was delivered on time and within budget, with future scalability built into every space to accommodate the company's continued growth.

Graeme McGuire, Managing Director at AV One Solutions, commented: "Projects like this are about more than installing technology. It's about creating environments that genuinely support the way people work. Sword's new workspace reflects their ambition and professionalism and we're proud to have played a part in bringing that vision to life."

The result is a modern, flexible workspace that enhances day-to-day collaboration, improves user experience and supports Sword's long-term business objectives.

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The real data risks hidden in your supply chain

How critical data held by your suppliers can make or break operational resilience.



Author: Grant Morrison and Gillian Cossey

Many organisations assume that data protection risks only apply to companies with large customer databases or complex digital systems.

In reality, almost every business relies on critical data sets that flow through a network of suppliers.

When this data becomes unavailable, inaccurate or is accessed without authority, operations can slow down or stop, sometimes with immediate consequences.

All companies need to understand their principal risks within their operations and supply chain, prior to understanding the level of assurance over the mitigating controls to manage those risks-including those operated by third parties.

Provision 29 of the UK Corporate Governance Code formalises this fundamental principle for premium listed companies.

This assessment is particularly necessary in high risk environments such as energy, oil and gas, and offshore operations.

These industries depend on accurate medical records, health and safety information, qualifications logs, maintenance schedules, equipment records, and operational documentation. If even one supplier responsible for this information experiences an outage or mishandles data, the impact can be felt immediately.

Operations may be forced to stop, maintenance may pause, and essential controls may not operate.

The challenge also applies to manufacturing, construction, logistics, engineering, utilities, and professional services which rely on supplier held data to maintain compliance, keep processes moving and support decision making.

Wherever operational continuity depends on accurate and accessible information, supply chain driven data protection risks follow.

Embedding data protection into your Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) Framework ensures that supplier held data is treated as part of your operational landscape, rather than a separate compliance activity.

It helps leaders understand where data sits, who controls it, how it's maintained and what would happen if it became unavailable.

Outsourcing does not remove your accountability, and you really need to understand the risks associated.

Good practice starts with clarity:

- Which suppliers process your data?
- Why do they process it?
- How is it protected and accessed?
- Could you operate safely if that data suddenly became unavailable?

In environments where safety, compliance and operational accuracy directly affect people and business continuity, these are fundamental questions.

A supplier outage or unauthorised access to operational or personnel data at the wrong moment can turn a manageable situation into a major incident.

The best time to prepare is well ahead of that moment, when organisations can design frameworks, impact contracts, and agree behaviours, and controls.

By embedding data protection into the supply chain, organisations ensure regulatory compliance, strengthen operational resilience, reduce disruption, and avoid unnecessary drama when calm clarity matters most.

Strong data protection is not just admin work – it's operational stability and keeps people safe, whether on an offshore installation, a factory floor, a logistics hub or a professional office. Getting these foundations right is essential.

At RSM, our clients value our human first and collaborative approach, helping you understand the data risks that matter to your operation and supporting you to address them in a clear and practical way.

If you would like to discuss further, please do not hesitate to contact gillian.cossey@rsmuk.com or grant.morrison@rsmuk.com



Viper Innovations unveils refreshed brand and new website to support global growth

Viper innovations, a global leader in intelligent electrical integrity solutions for industrial and subsea systems, has announced a refreshed brand identity and the launch of its new website, reflecting the company's growth, diversification, and commitment to delivering advanced technology with real-world insight.

The refreshed brand positions Viper Innovations to support broader markets, while reinforcing its leadership within the subsea sector. It is designed to provide a flexible platform for innovation, future technology development, and the expansion of solutions across multiple industries.

A key element of the refresh is the introduction of the company's new brand essence: "intelligence installed". This reflects Viper Innovations' commitment to delivering solutions that are both sophisticated and effortless, ensuring customers can act with confidence and anticipate risks before they arise.

"This brand refresh is about evolving Viper Innovations for the future," said Edward Davies, Managing Director at Viper Innovations.

"While our look is refreshed, our commitment to our customers and our core Subsea expertise remains unchanged. This evolution strengthens our foundation, supporting growth into new markets without disrupting the trusted solutions our clients rely on."

"Intelligence installed reflects how we embed intelligence into every solution we deliver," added Leanne Cook, Head of Marketing at Viper Innovations.

"Our refreshed identity gives us a platform to showcase innovative thinking in intelligent ways, turning complex challenges into effortless solutions. It's about helping our customers act with confidence, stay ahead of risks, and see Viper not just as problem solvers, but as trusted partners for the future."



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At Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce, we offer courses to equip those even with limited digital skills with the strategic knowledge they need to help their organisation capitalise on the online opportunity.

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In this hands-on half-day boot camp, you'll learn the core principles of organic visibility - writing thumb-stopping updates, following a simple posting cadence, warming up new connections, enlisting colleagues to share your best work, and measuring the first signs of pipeline - all without touching paid ads or premium tools.

ADVANCED LINKEDIN FOR BUSINESS GROWTH

This fast-paced half-day masterclass dives deep into the latest feed signals, advanced content architecture, direct message-to-meeting workflows, micro-funnels that capture first-party data while you sleep, and a lean attribution model that proves exactly how much pipeline your posts drive, no ads, no paid LinkedIn Sales Navigator.

GET FOUND IN GOOGLE AI & CHAT GPT

This fast-moving, beginner-friendly workshop demystifies the new rules and shows you how to make your company content "findable" and quotable by today's AI systems. You'll leave knowing the core differences among SEO, AEO, GEO and LLM-SEO, plus the simple changes that help AI cite your pages, drive qualified traffic and protect your brand voice, without a technical overhaul.



find out more



ABOUT THE TRAINER: VICTORIA VYALIKOVA

Victoria Vyalikova is the founder and CEO of BrandHouzz, a digital marketing agency based in Aberdeen, focused on B2B growth marketing. With 20 years of experience and a proven track record delivering campaigns in complex industries including energy, technology, healthcare, and industrial manufacturing, Victoria helps organisations turn digital marketing into a growth engine, not a guessing game.

Now in its 11th year, BrandHouzz works with ambitious teams across Scotland and beyond, applying the latest best practices in paid and organic campaigns to drive measurable impact.

Whether it's building visibility in new markets or improving lead conversion, Victoria brings clarity, strategic direction, and deep sector insight to the table. Her training style is practical, accessible, and designed to help professionals take real steps forward - whatever their starting point.

“Victoria is so good. It’s really clear she is a professional and expert in this field. I loved her presentation, but she was interested to listen to all of us and giving us specific advice.

“She then followed up with further suggestions with things we had said earlier in the day. I took a lot from it and have already made changes to how I work with social media.”



Get in touch with the Chamber training team at
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“I was satisfied that everything I hoped for did feature in the training session.”





Michelle Wheat
Nursery Manager
Robert Gordon's College

In partnership with



of that partnership is incredibly rewarding. At Robert Gordon's College Nursery, our close-knit community, strong sense of belonging and access to excellent facilities, particularly our outdoor spaces, make those partnerships even

setting from there.

What does the future look like for you?

Bright and exciting! No two days are ever the same, which keeps the role engaging, dynamic and full of opportunities to continue learning and growing.

Describe your early career path.

After completing my Master of Arts Degree at the University of Aberdeen, I relocated to the Far East, where I secured a teaching position at a local primary school in Brunei Darussalam.

How did you arrive in your current industry?

While living in Hong Kong, I was asked to support a colleague as she set up an International Kindergarten. I had no previous Early Years experience but researched theorists and play-based learning before embarking on this new and exciting project. While visiting other nurseries, I began to see the importance of Early Years, as parents entrusted practitioners with their child's first formal learning experiences. These early experiences led me to complete a Bachelor of Arts degree in Childhood Practice at the University of Dundee and opened up a career pathway in a nursery management role.

What's the best thing about your job?

Working in partnership with our nursery families. I believe children thrive when there is a strong, trusting relationship between home and nursery, and being part

more meaningful. Every family brings unique values, cultures, experiences and aspirations, and by really listening to parents and carers, sharing in milestones, and supporting children through transitions and challenges, we build open communication and mutual respect. This creates a strong sense of shared purpose and helps each child flourish.

What has been your biggest career challenge to date?

When working at a different nursery during the pandemic, I managed a nursery team while working from home, ensuring the provision continued despite constant changes and uncertainty.

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

Your career may span for more than 40 years, so choose wisely and only stay in your role if you genuinely love what you do. Passion and purpose makes every day worthwhile.

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

I have a passion for the outdoors and, if I could, I would spend the entire day in the nursery garden, while still somehow managing the

How do you unwind in your time off?

Yoga, walking and travel - anything that allows me to relax, recharge and enjoy the outdoors.

What did you want to be when you were little?

As a youngster, I wanted to become a primary teacher, which reflects the lifelong passion for working with children that I still have today.

What was your first job?

When I was 16 years old, I worked in a shoe shop on Union Street, where I developed early customer service skills and learned the importance of communication and teamwork.

Data-driven cleaning

Investment in technology is helping deliver greater efficiency and unrivalled user satisfaction



spectrum

Cleaning and FM



Cleaning and waste management are not activities that most people associate with technological advances or real-time data collection. However, many people are surprised by the level of detail and adoption of smart technology, and by the smart processes that go into proper workplace cleaning.

Spectrum invests in innovative technologies to make us more efficient, but there's much more to it than simply enabling us to do our job more effectively; smart technology enables us to maximise your budget, delivering more services without additional cost, while at the same time delivering a better experience for your workforce.

We integrate robotic cleaning technology with human expertise to enhance cleaning efficiency. Robotic cleaning enhances efficiency and consistency by handling large, repetitive tasks, allowing teams to focus on detailed work while improving productivity, cleaning standards and overall service quality.

Real-time evidence-based reporting enables us to create and constantly refine bespoke cleaning plans. For Spectrum, gone are the days of assessing cleaning requirements solely based on headcount and square footage; we have supplemented this with cloud-based technology that monitors usage of your facilities, ensuring that busy areas are cleaned more frequently than low-use areas. Doing this results in greater user satisfaction and allows us to

optimise our operations by ensuring we have the right number of staff working in the proper locations at the times you need them.

...many people are surprised by the level of detail and adoption of smart technology, and by the smart processes that go into proper workplace cleaning.

Our technology is also alert-driven; for example, if a toilet is unusually busy, our cleaning staff will be alerted to the higher-than-normal usage, or if hand towel stock is running low. So, you need not be concerned when your building is suddenly busier than normal. We've removed the guesswork with smart monitors that keep our staff up to date on where they are needed and when consumable replenishment is required.

Our goal is to maintain exceptional hygiene standards at all times, and that begins by delivering them during peak usage times throughout the working day. We can shift cleaning regimes in a building based on what the data is telling us about how service delivery demands.

Using smart technology also enables us to deliver comprehensive reporting on service delivery, customer satisfaction, cleaning audit results, stock usage and much more. Our data-driven solutions are not only resulting in increased productivity and better service delivery, but also removing the guesswork from our personnel, leaving them time to focus on delivering their expert human touch and friendly engagement with your people.



If you'd like to talk to us about our data-driven approach contact Spectrum's Client Engagement Director, **Jill Archibald**, at jill@spectrumservicesolutions.com.



spectrum

Telephone: 07775 426 394 Email: jill@spectrumservicesolutions.com

spectrumservicesolutions.com



Allister Thomas, Hamish Penman and Geoff Aberdein

True North Advisors

True North Advisors has announced a series of senior promotions and a new appointment as the fast-growing communications, marketing and public affairs agency continues to expand its offering.



Developing the Young Workforce North East

Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) North East has welcomed several new members to its board, strengthening its representation and expertise across key sectors.



Alan Dean

Johnston Carmichael has strengthened its tax advisory team with the appointment Alex Dean as Private Client Tax Director who specialises in complex tax planning for individuals, business owners, property owners, trusts and estates.



Amy Young

Raeburn Christie Clark & Wallace is pleased to announce the appointment of Amy Young to the firm's Commercial Property team, strengthening the firm's depth and capability across Scotland's commercial real estate market.



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Hardies Chartered Surveyors

Hardies Chartered Surveyors is celebrating the achievements of its magnificent seven newly qualified chartered surveyors who have successfully passed their Assessment of Professional Competence (APC).



Markus McArdle

Wonder Grip®, a leading global glove manufacturer delivering high-performance hand protection, has appointed Markus McArdle to the UK team as Business Development Manager.



Ean Paul

Zenith Energy has appointed Ean Paul as Wells Team Leader/Drilling Superintendent, reinforcing the company's continued investment in expanding its wells capability with highly experienced personnel as it enters the new year.



Kat Sim

After celebrating its 10th year in business in 2025, Bethan Customs Consultancy continues to strengthen its expertise by promoting Kat Sim to the role of Operations Lead.



Carole Tomlinson

Anderson Strathern has announced the appointment of Carole Tomlinson as its new Chair as the firm celebrates its 325th year in business in Scotland.



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Kieran Morton

The Nestrans Board has appointed Kieran Morton as its newest non-councillor board member, following approval from Scottish Ministers.



Michael Loszak

Scot-Tech Fire & Security (STFS), part of the Converged Solutions Group, has appointed Michael Loszak as its new Commercial Manager, marking an exciting new chapter for the company.



Ross Wright

Award-winning EPC firm Katoni Engineering has strengthened its offshore construction capability with the appointment of Ross Wright as Offshore Construction Manager.



Scott Douglas

Blaze Manufacturing Solutions Ltd has appointed Scott Douglas as its new Business Development Manager, further strengthening the company's leadership team.



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Neil Hay

UK top 50 law firm Brodies LLP has added to its market-leading corporate crime practice with the appointment of new Partner Neil Hay.



Ross Boyd

Coterie, located within The Ferryhill House Hotel has strengthened its kitchen with the appointment of a new Head Chef, Ross Boyd who will lead the team to further enhance the dining experience.



Susanne McMenemy

Befriend a Child has appointed Susanne McMenemy as the charity's new Head of Operations. Susanne brings a wealth of experience to the role, having supported children, young people and families across the third sector.



Tom Mackenzie

Tom Mackenzie has stepped into the role of Marketing Manager at Mackie's of Scotland, progressing from Digital Marketing Executive as the brand continues its national growth.

Scotland's longest-standing marketing agency marks 90 years of reinvention



Aberdeen-based creative marketing and events agency Mearns & Gill is celebrating 90 years in business, marking nine decades of continuous reinvention, growth and creativity as Scotland's longest-standing marketing agency.

Founded on Valentine's Day in 1936 by James and Agnes Mearns, the business began life as Mearns Publicity at a time when advertising was physically typeset by hand, and campaigns were built with ink, paper and hot metal. Ninety years on, the agency has evolved into a fully integrated creative and digital marketing business, delivering strategic, creative and digital services to clients across the UK and beyond.

The agency's journey mirrors the transformation of the communications industry itself – from print-led advertising and press relations through to today's digital-first landscape of data, content, performance marketing and brand strategy. That evolution has underpinned a period of sustained commercial success, with Mearns & Gill recording consecutive record turnovers for the past three years and strong growth following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Following the close of its 2025 financial year last month, the agency is on track to report turnover of approximately £3.3million for the year – one of the highest in its 90-year history.

Today, Mearns & Gill employs a team of 26 and has been based in its own building on Carden Place for the past 60 years, a rare constant in a sector defined by change. The business also retains a unique link to its origins, with founder James Mearns' grandson, Alan Mearns, continuing to work with the agency as a consultant.

The company's early beginnings were made possible through £500 loans from two prominent Aberdeen figures of the time – architect and entrepreneur T Scott Sutherland, and coal and shipping businessman Lex Davidson – an investment that helped lay the foundations for a business that has now spanned nearly a century.

Mike Wilson, Managing Director of Mearns & Gill, who acquired the business in 2016 and is also marking 10 years at the helm, says: "Reaching 90 years is an extraordinary milestone, particularly in an industry that has changed as dramatically as ours has. From manual typesetting to the digital, data-driven world we operate in today, the pace of change has been relentless – but the ability to stay ahead of the curve, adapt and evolve has always been central to Mearns & Gill's longevity.

"That willingness to embrace change, alongside recruiting experts at the top of their fields to form the team we have today, has enabled us to continue delivering value for our clients, decade after decade. One of our team members, Dick Mutch, has been with us for over four decades and is still supporting some of the same retained clients today."

Mike concludes: "Celebrating a record year, with one of our strongest turnovers to date and a growing team, makes this anniversary even more meaningful. It's a testament to the people who have shaped the business over nine decades, the trust of our clients – some of whom have remained with us for over forty years, and the culture of creativity and resilience that continues to drive us forward."

Alan Mearns, grandson of the founders, third generation and current consultant to the business, adds: "My grandparents founded Mearns Publicity with a clear belief in the power of good communication, and it's remarkable to see how that principle has endured while the tools and techniques have changed beyond recognition. Seeing the business thrive 90 years on, still independent, still ambitious, and still based in Aberdeen, is incredibly special. The business has remained a part of our family and has passed through three generations, with my father being in charge from 1965 to 1991 and then me from 1991 to 2016. I joined the business in 1978 and so am approaching 50 years of continuous service to the company. Also, like my grandparents before me, I was supported by my wife Tania in the business, during her 30 years of service to the company.

"The archive material we still have – the original share certificates, log books and early records – tells a fascinating story of how far the company has come, and I know James and Agnes would be immensely proud of what Mearns & Gill has become today."

As it marks its 90th anniversary, Mearns & Gill is looking firmly to the future, building on its recent momentum with continued investment in people, digital capability and creative excellence, while remaining grounded in the values that have sustained the business since 1936.

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