

JULY/AUGUST 2026 | HOSPITALITY & TOURISM

# BUSINESS BULLETIN

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Aberdeen &  
Grampian  
Chamber of  
Commerce

# 26

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# Domestic producers being forced to walk on eggshells

## There is a growing contradiction at the heart of UK economic policy.

In two of the country's most strategically important sectors – food production and energy production – domestic businesses are being asked to shoulder ever greater regulatory and financial burdens while competing against imports produced under significantly different standards.

The sectors may appear very different, but the underlying challenge is remarkably similar.

In recent months, Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce has heard concerns from food producers about proposals to ban egg production from caged systems.

Many farmers accept the direction of travel on animal welfare and have already invested heavily in alternative production methods.

Their concern is not with higher standards.

It is with the prospect of being required to meet those standards while imported products are not.

If UK producers face higher costs as a result of regulatory change, but overseas producers continue to access the market under lower-cost production systems, the result is predictable: imports rise, domestic production falls, and investment moves elsewhere.

The consequence is not better outcomes. It is simply the outsourcing of production.

That argument should sound familiar.

Across the North Sea energy sector, businesses have been making precisely the same point for several years.

The UK has some of the world's highest environmental and operational standards for oil and gas production.

Yet policy decisions have increasingly made domestic production less competitive while the country continues to import oil and gas from overseas producers operating under different regulatory regimes.

The result is that Britain consumes the energy regardless – but more of it is imported.

The same principle applies to food.

If policymakers make domestic egg production less viable without applying equivalent requirements to imports,

Britain will not suddenly stop consuming eggs.

Retailers and manufacturers will source more products from abroad.

Domestic jobs, investment and economic activity will be lost, while overall production simply shifts elsewhere.

In both food and energy, the debate should not be framed as a choice between high standards and economic growth.

Britain can and should pursue ambitious standards.

However, those standards must be accompanied by policies that preserve competitiveness and recognise the realities of global markets.

Food security and energy security are ultimately about resilience.

They are about maintaining the capacity to produce essential goods at home rather than

becoming increasingly dependent on international supply chains that are beyond our control.

Recent years have demonstrated how quickly global shocks can disrupt those supply chains.

Whether it is war in Europe, geopolitical instability, trade disputes or inflationary pressures, nations that retain strong domestic production capabilities are invariably more resilient than those that do not.

That is why government must take a joined-up view of competitiveness.

If ministers believe higher welfare standards are right for British agriculture, they should ensure imported products meet equivalent standards.

If policymakers want a secure energy transition, they should recognise the value of maintaining domestic production while alternative technologies scale up.

The lesson is the same in both cases.

A country cannot regulate its way to greater security if the end result is simply importing more of what it once produced itself.

Food security and energy security are not separate debates.

They are fundamentally the same challenge - how to achieve high standards, economic prosperity and national resilience without exporting jobs and production overseas.

  
Russell Borthwick  
Chief Executive



# OUR PREMIER PARTNERS

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

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

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

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



# Welcome to the Chamber



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Alba Bagpipes provides professional Scottish entertainment for weddings, corporate events, and functions, including pipers, drummers, Highland dancers, and interactive team-building experiences for companies and visiting clients.

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MACDONALD  
AVIEMORE

# Creating memorable event experiences that break from the norm



“The team were friendly, helpful and accommodating in the lead up and during delivery. The quality of the food and drink, and the service, was very good too. The conference centre is well-placed with a hotel directly next door for any delegates who wish to stay on-site. The grounds are also lovely and lend themselves to a lunchtime or post-event walk to clear the head after a busy day – we took our guests on a short stroll between conference and dinner which was well received.”

**Carol Anne Grady**  
Prosper Scotland

“Our recent conference was a resounding success, bringing together around 140 community members for engaging speakers, meaningful workshops and valuable networking. The entire day was flawless, a huge credit to the venue hosts and their dedicated team whose exceptional service made all the difference. We are incredibly fortunate to have a facility such as this on our doorstep in the Cairngorms National Park and I am looking forward to planning future events with them.”

**Craig Mills**  
Cairngorm Business Partnership

Located in the heart of the Cairngorms, lies a picturesque landscape featuring lochside paths, forest trails and scenic mountain ranges where thousands of corporate delegates descend each year to escape the hustle and bustle of the city.

Celebrating its 60th anniversary in 2026, Macdonald Aviemore Resort has built an enviable reputation for delivering meetings and team events for UK and international business travellers with a difference.

The resort's exceptional facilities, award-winning service and versatility to host everything from large-scale international conferences and association events to private meetings and dinners for local businesses set it apart.

Gareth Bevan, Managing Director, said: "We are proud to offer far more than a venue; we provide a complete destination experience. Our team is dedicated to delivering exceptional events of every scale, underpinned by outstanding hospitality, flexible facilities and a genuine sense of place."

Central to the resort's facilities are the 1,000m<sup>2</sup> Osprey Arena, capable of holding up to 1,150 delegates, and the 650-seater auditorium.

Not just another conference venue, the resort's extensive grounds provide opportunities to host outdoor events where marquees and tents can be set up to create a memorable setting for networking receptions, product launches or open-air gatherings.

As the largest residential conference facility in Scotland – with more than 400 bedrooms on-site - Macdonald Aviemore Resort can host multi-day events with all delegates staying, meeting and dining in one central location that is easily accessible by road, rail and air.

Food and drink are critical to the success of any event. Working closely with the resort's executive chef, fine dining menus can be created for any event - from a gala dinner for hundreds of guests to an intimate gathering with a personalised tasting menu to enhance your event.

The Highland facility – available for exclusive use for the largest events – also features three four-star hotels, 18 woodland lodges, a championship golf course, three restaurants, a cinema, and luxury retail at Spey Valley Shopping.

"We have just completed our fourth consecutive year of hosting the SPAR Scotland Tradeshaw at Macdonald Aviemore Resort, and once again the experience has been outstanding. The resort team is brilliant to work with, professional, supportive, and always willing to go the extra mile to help us deliver Scotland's largest tradeshaw.

"With over 750 delegates attending, and a build period of more than two weeks, this is a complex event to deliver. The resort team makes it feel effortless, and their commitment ensures everything runs smoothly from start to finish."

**Eleanor Whitby**  
Red Pepper Events



**Contact our events team**

E: [specialevents.aviemore@macdonald-hotels.co.uk](mailto:specialevents.aviemore@macdonald-hotels.co.uk)

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# WRC organisers accelerate preparations as drivers already heading north to recce region

By Danny McKay

Organisers behind Rally Scotland 2027 in the North-east have provided an update as preparations accelerate ahead of the hotly anticipated event.

The team at Motorsport UK, is racing to confirm routes and dates for the World Rally Championship coming to Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.

Discussions are ongoing with potential commercial partners about how they can get involved in the event, while organisers are also exploring how best to utilise the fantastic facilities at P&J Live, which will be the Rally Scotland HQ and base for competing teams.

But even while the event is very much still in the planning stages, big names in the sport are already preparing, with drivers signing up for the Grampian Rally event in order to familiarise themselves with the region and the sort of terrain they can expect in 2027.

Colin Clark, Commercial and Events Director at Motorsport UK, said: “We are on track and working hard on preparations for next autumn’s rally. There are many different areas moving forward at the same time.

“We are growing the team, bringing in more people to support project management and the sporting side of the event. We are also scaling up across event delivery, sporting, operations and commercial.

“We are looking closely at forests and potential routes for the competitive sections of the rally, as well as how best to use the space available at P&J Live.

“We are talking to prospective commercial partners about how they might get involved, and to Aberdeen-based businesses about how they can use the event to support their business and marketing objectives.

“We are also speaking to media outlets to tell the rally story, and working with local authorities so they can prepare for the event.”

Meanwhile, the World Rally Championship leader Elfyn Evans signed up to take on the Grampian Forest Rally in August.

The Toyota driver was reportedly to be joined by M-Sport’s fellow WRC stars Jon Armstrong and Romet Jürgenson, with drivers keen to familiarise themselves with the sort of terrain they can expect for the WRC next year.

While participants are already heading to the North-east, Rally Scotland organisers are keen to ensure the event really comes to life in the city.

Clark said: “We are working with the city on plans for the start, fan zones and other activity that can help make Rally Scotland feel like a major event for the whole region.

“The next major announcement will be the confirmed dates of the rally. For that, we need to wait for the FIA, world motorsport’s governing body, to finalise the calendar.

“For now, we can say it will take place in autumn, a classic calendar slot for Rally GB. That gives businesses across the region a strong opportunity to extend the tourism season, fill hotels and bring more visitors to the north-east outside the traditional peak period.”



## Aldi and Fierce Beer mark 10-year partnership with two million beers sold

Aldi Scotland is celebrating a decade of partnership with Aberdeen craft brewery Fierce Beer, one of its longest-standing craft beer suppliers.

Over the past 10 years the duo have put more than two million beers into the hands of Scottish shoppers since the relationship began in 2016.

Fierce was still in its first year of trading when Aldi Scotland became its debut retail customer, welcoming the brewery into its inaugural Scottish Beer Festival.

In the decade since, the partnership has flourished, with the supermarket stocking over 50 different Fierce beers ranging from IPAs, lagers, stouts, and sours to low and no-alcohol options, and a run of collaboration brews under the 'Fierce and Friends' banner that brought together breweries from across the UK.

Founded in Aberdeen with bars in both Aberdeen and Edinburgh, Fierce Beer produces an award-winning range of vegan and gluten-free beers across its core and seasonal lines, making craft beer accessible to a wide range of drinkers.

The brewery has built a reputation for innovation, responding quickly to shifting consumer tastes and bringing new styles to a mainstream audience.



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# the MEMBER MEET the M



**Iain McIntosh,**  
External Sales Manager – Grampian,  
Moray & Tayside  
MacGregor Industrial Supplies

## Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

With 17 specialist divisions, MacGregor Industrial Supplies provides supply solutions across PPE,

hygiene, catering, engineering, tools, workwear, construction and more.

We combine local knowledge, industry expertise and strong supplier partnerships to help businesses operate safely, efficiently and sustainably, backed by a service-led, relationship-driven approach.

## Who are your customers?

We support a broad range of customers including hotels and hospitality businesses, care homes, farms, manufacturers, local SMEs and public sector organisations.

Through Scotland Excel, APUC and TUCO frameworks, we also work with organisations across Scotland, delivering dependable supply, tailored solutions and knowledgeable, hands-on service.

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

Increasing expectations around value, compliance and sustainability continue to shape customer decision-making. Our opportunity lies in responding with smarter, more efficient supply solutions, strengthening framework partnerships and supporting customers through competitive pricing, reliable products and a consultative, service-driven approach.

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

Invest time in building strong local relationships, stay adaptable, and focus on delivering genuine value. Understanding your customers' challenges builds trust, creates long-term partnerships and helps businesses grow within a connected and collaborative local community.



**Jennifer Campbell,**  
Office Manager  
Subsea Commercial Services Limited

## Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

At SCS, we specialise in providing robust, harsh-environment proven underwater and surface technology solutions. These are widely used for subsea inspection, environmental monitoring, marine asset tracking,

command and recovery operations and nuclear energy monitoring, ensuring safety, accuracy, and operational efficiency.

## Who are your customers?

Our customers span a wide range of industries, including offshore energy, nuclear energy, ocean sciences and aquaculture. SCS has a proven track record of helping both domestic and international clients achieve their commercial and operational objectives. We understand the unique challenges and opportunities facing businesses operating in harsh and remote marine environments.

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

The ever-changing economic outlook across the region means that many customers are working with tighter budgets. SCS are taking this opportunity to invest in key product lines and expand our rental pool.

This allows us to work with our clients on a case-by-case basis to provide the most economical solutions for their requirements without compromising on the quality of the products and services supplied.

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

No-one is an expert in all things but engaging and collaborating with others in a constructive and meaningful way can generate results which outperform expectations.

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

The Chamber offers excellent opportunities to connect with a diverse network of businesses across a range of sectors. Being part of this network increases visibility across the region and gives the potential to collaborate on innovative projects and share insights with fellow members.

# MEMBER MEET *the* ME



**Jamie Murphy,**  
*Managing Director*  
Namaka Compliance

## Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

Namaka Compliance provides support to companies in the energy sector by helping their personnel prove and establish their competency.

This is achieved through our Outsourced Competence Assurance Support (OCAS) Service.

## Who are your customers?

We provide services to a wide array of companies in the energy sector, from large corporations to small businesses, spread across numerous countries worldwide.

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

Our primary obstacle is aiding organisations in understanding the concept of 'competence'.

Our greatest opportunity lies in collaborating with global clients who need Competence Management Systems (CMS) implemented.

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

Utilise the advantages of AGCC public relations to their benefit.

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

The greatest advantage of Chamber membership is the exposure it provides among other members.



**Kristi Louise Thompson,**  
*Business Development Executive*  
The DRG - Café Andaluz and Amarone

## Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

The DRG is a family-owned restaurant group operating Café Andaluz and Amarone in Aberdeen. We focus on high-quality produce and great hospitality. Having run both venues for over ten years, we're proud to be part of the city's vibrant dining scene.

## So, who is your typical customer?

That's the beauty of our restaurants – they truly are for everyone. Amarone is a favourite for business lunches, team outings, date nights and weekend brunches.

Café Andaluz is ideal for any occasion, offering relaxed, social dining with Spanish tapas perfect for sharing or celebrating.

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

The economic climate is challenging, with diners more mindful of spending.

We've particularly seen a shift in lunchtime dining.

But this creates opportunities, our lunch offers and Restaurant Rewards loyalty programme give guests more value and reasons to dine out.

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

Reclaim your lunch break!

We encourage our team to step away from their desks and connect with colleagues or clients over lunch.

The best ideas don't always happen in the boardroom.

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

I love being part of such a close-knit local community.

Aberdonians are incredibly supportive and generous with advice.

I've enjoyed meeting new people through the Chamber and discovering new ways to get involved in Aberdeen's business community.

## That's a wrap: Caledonian Sleeper pays tribute to hit TV show Outlander

Caledonian Sleeper, one of the world's most iconic rail services, has unveiled a striking new look to a number of its coaches in celebration of Sony Pictures Television's hit global franchise "Outlander".

The visual takeover, which marks "Outlander's" deep connection to Scotland, aims to inspire fans of the show to come visit the filming locations for themselves. It follows on from this month's series finale and launches just in time for World Outlander Day on June 1.

Caledonian Sleeper's first-ever visual activation showcases some of "Outlander's" most iconic moments that were filmed in Scotland and are loved by audiences around the world. "Outlander" will embark on a fresh adventure, transporting guests from London and Birmingham to the lowlands and highlands of Scotland. Scottish actor Sam Heughan, who played 18th-century warrior Jamie Fraser, was at London Euston to unveil the train, created in collaboration with national tourism and events organisation, VisitScotland, and Sony Pictures Television. The wrap celebrates the legacy of the globally acclaimed series and invites guests to discover the landscapes, castles and filming locations from the series.

Caledonian Sleeper's collaboration aims to inspire audiences from across the UK and overseas to explore the landscapes at the heart of "Outlander", with the unique overnight train service connecting guests directly from London and Birmingham to Scotland – home of "Outlander".



## Inspirational Meetings at...

### Searching for a meeting venue with real character?

Set on the picturesque banks of the River Dee, Banchory Lodge offers an inspiring alternative to the standard corporate space — where focus comes naturally and ideas flow as freely as the river itself.

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# Hospitality sector reaps benefits of Aberdeen EAGE conference success

By Danny McKay

## June saw the Granite City taken over by more than 6,000 geoscientists and engineers as the EAGE conference came to town.

Hosted at P&J Live, the major European Association of Geoscientists and Engineers (EAGE) event brought with it a massive lift to the Aberdeen economy and hospitality sector.

The city almost completely sold out of hotel rooms, while bars, restaurants and taxis also recorded a roaring trade.

Chris Foy, Chief Executive of VisitAberdeenshire, said: "Hosting the EAGE conference has delivered a significant boost for Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. Throughout the event, we saw exceptionally strong demand across our accommodation sector, with many hotels reporting very high occupancy levels and some reaching full capacity during peak nights.

"The city was noticeably busier, with delegates filling hotels, restaurants, taxis, and local attractions, creating a vibrant atmosphere and generating valuable economic impact for businesses across the region.

"Events of this scale showcase the region's ability to host major international conferences and

reinforce our reputation as a leading destination for the global energy industry.

"Beyond the immediate economic benefits, EAGE has provided an important platform to highlight the region's expertise, infrastructure, and hospitality to thousands of visitors from around the world."

John Underhill, Professor in Geoscience and Energy Transition at the University of Aberdeen, commented: "It was a major coup for the city to attract an international conference and exhibition of such scale.

"Many local stakeholders ranging from the AGCC, City Council, the P&J Live team and University of Aberdeen leaned in to support and deliver the event.

"The meeting provided a very welcome boost and massive financial injection to local businesses.

"The conference content was rich and there was a real sense of energy and activity on display throughout.

"The strong local partnerships forged in bringing the annual convention to the city are now working together to try and bring future EAGE events to town."

Russell Borthwick, Chief Executive at Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce, also welcomed the boost the event brought to the city.

He said: "The huge success of hosting the EAGE conference and the 'no room at the inn' signs up at our hotels provide a perfect example of why attracting major business and leisure/spectator events to this region is already a key part of our tourism strategy, the value of which has doubled in the last decade."

Steve Daun, Head of Sales, Associations, Legends Global, said: "EAGE Annual 2026 has been an outstanding success for P&J Live, Aberdeen and the wider region. To welcome more than 6,000 participants, 200 exhibitors and a programme of more than 1,400 presentations demonstrate the scale of what was delivered and the strength of the partnership behind it.

"This was a truly global event, and P&J Live provided the platform for a complex, multi-layered programme that combined conference sessions, exhibition activity, technical content, networking, education and offsite experiences. It is exactly the kind of large-scale international event the venue was built to host."



# SUPPORTING STAFF MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING WITH ABERDEEN SPORTS VILLAGE

## WORKING TOGETHER

Employee wellbeing is no longer just a workplace benefit it is essential to building a healthy, productive and engaged workforce. Modern workplaces are increasingly recognising the importance of supporting both physical and mental wellbeing to reduce stress, prevent burnout and improve overall staff morale.

At Aberdeen Sports Village (ASV), we provide organisations with flexible opportunities to help employees step away from daily pressures, recharge and reconnect through movement, recovery, education and shared experiences. Whether it's a dedicated wellbeing day, regular fitness sessions or an offsite team experience, ASV offers a supportive environment where staff can prioritise their health and wellbeing.

Investing in employee wellbeing can help organisations improve productivity, reduce absence, strengthen workplace culture and support staff retention – while demonstrating a genuine commitment to people.



## MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

Supporting mental wellbeing in the workplace is essential for helping employees manage stress, improve resilience and maintain a healthy worklife balance. Providing staff with opportunities to pause, reset and learn practical wellbeing techniques can have a lasting positive impact both inside and outside of work.

ASV offers a range of wellbeing focused sessions including:

- Breathing Workshops
- Wellness & Healthy Habits Seminars
- Nutrition Seminars
- Yoga
- Qi Gong
- Body Balance

These sessions help employees develop tools to manage stress, improve focus and support emotional wellbeing through mindfulness, movement and recovery.



## FITNESS, MOVEMENT & RECOVERY

Regular physical activity plays a major role in improving mental health, energy levels and overall wellbeing. Exercise has been proven to reduce stress, boost mood and increase productivity while helping employees feel healthier and more confident.

ASV provides inclusive fitness opportunities suitable for all abilities, including:

- Group Fitness Classes
- Reformer & Pilates style sessions
- Studio Cycling
- Strength & Conditioning
- Metabolic Conditioning
- HYROX Training
- Recovery & Sports Massage

Sessions can be tailored to suit different fitness levels and schedules, helping employees build healthier habits in a supportive and motivating environment.

## TEAM TIME & OFFSITE EXPERIENCES BUILT AROUND YOU

Taking teams out of the usual workplace environment can encourage stronger relationships, better communication and improved collaboration. Dedicated time away from desks allows employees to reconnect, reset and engage with colleagues in a more positive and relaxed setting.

ASV is committed to providing flexible, tailored and inclusive corporate wellbeing support. We can work with organisations to develop bespoke offsite wellbeing days, incorporating a range of activities and experiences from the options outlined above and below to best suit your team and business needs.

- Offsite Team Meetings
- Team Bonding Activities
- Sport Sessions & Group Challenges
- Breakout & Reflection Time
- Meeting Rooms & Catering Options

Also, activities such as pickleball, badminton, table tennis and group fitness sessions create opportunities for shared experiences that strengthen team culture and employee engagement.

Aswell as this we can also provide corporate membership packages and onsite health checks.

## POSITIVE ENERGY

Whether your goal is improving morale, supporting mental health, increasing activity levels or creating a healthier workplace culture, ASV can help create a package that works for your people.

By investing in staff wellbeing through ASV, organisations are not simply offering a benefit they are investing in healthier, happier and more resilient teams.

**CONTACT **LISA VASS**  
HEALTH AND WELLBEING  
MANAGER TO ARRANGE  
A TOUR AND CHAT.**

[lisa.vass@aberdeensportsvillage.com](mailto:lisa.vass@aberdeensportsvillage.com)

Aberdeen  
**Sports Village**



# A fresh start for our high streets is a cause we must all support

## It can sometimes feel difficult to find issues which unite Aberdonians.

Debates around the future of energy, transport, investment priorities and the direction of the city can often divide opinion. But there is one thing almost everyone agrees on: we all want to see Union Street and Aberdeen city centre returned to their former glory.

For generations, Union Street was the beating heart of the Granite City - a place filled with thriving businesses, bustling shops, busy cafes and restaurants, and a sense of confidence about Aberdeen's future.

Today, too many units sit empty. And while there are still fantastic independent operators and resilient businesses investing in the city centre, the reality is that bringing vacant premises back into use remains far too difficult.

That is why The Press and Journal's campaign to reform Scotland's Fresh Start Relief scheme deserves widespread support.

The principle behind the relief is a good one. Businesses moving into long-term empty properties can receive 100% rates relief for the first year, helping ease the financial pressure of taking on a new premises.

But there is a major flaw in the system: properties must sit empty for at least six months before they qualify.

In practice, that requirement is creating unnecessary barriers to regeneration and slowing down the very activity the policy is designed to encourage.

A landlord who temporarily fills a vacant unit with a pop-up shop, seasonal retailer, community use or short-term tenant can effectively reset the clock on eligibility.

Incoming tenants can lose access to valuable relief. Landlords can be discouraged from activating empty premises at all.

The result is a system which unintentionally rewards prolonged vacancy rather than encouraging flexibility, creativity and continuous use.

At a time when every city and town centre in Scotland is fighting to attract visitors, entrepreneurs and investment, that simply does not make sense.

Removing the six-month void requirement would be a practical and cost-effective step which could make a real difference.

It would immediately create greater flexibility for landlords and businesses to experiment with pop-ups, meanwhile uses and short-term concepts without fear of financial penalty.

It would encourage more entrepreneurs to test ideas in physical locations. It would help bring activity, energy and vibrancy back to prominent empty units.

Most importantly, it would give businesses a much-needed cashflow boost during one of the most challenging trading environments in recent memory.

The cumulative pressure of inflation, rising energy costs, increased wage bills and wider economic uncertainty continues to squeeze businesses across every sector.

For many firms, the prospect of a one-year rates-free period could be the difference between taking on a property or walking away from it altogether.

This is not about asking government to solve every challenge facing our high streets. There is no single silver bullet for city centre regeneration.

But smart policy matters.

And when a policy designed to encourage occupancy is actively discouraging temporary use and flexibility, it is right to revisit it.

Union Street's future - and that of town centres across our region - will not be transformed by one intervention alone. It will require continued investment, ambition and collaboration between businesses, local authorities, government and communities.

But successful city centres are built on momentum. They thrive when empty spaces are filled, when entrepreneurs are encouraged to take risks, when people see activity returning and confidence beginning to grow.

Every pop-up, café, independent retailer and creative concept contributes to rebuilding the sense of energy and optimism that great city centres depend upon.

The Scottish Government now has an opportunity to embrace a simple, common-sense reform that would support businesses, help landlords activate vacant premises and accelerate regeneration efforts not only in Aberdeen, but in towns and cities across Scotland.

On an issue where Aberdonians are united, this is a chance to deliver meaningful action.



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

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# The P & J

YOUR VOICE OF THE NORTH

**Our high streets are struggling – but it doesn't have to stay this way. For the first time, The Press and Journal, The Courier and The Sunday Post are joining forces and calling on the Scottish Government to relax business rates rules to give our local traders the chance of a better future. It's time for a...**

## Fresh Start

THE COURIER  THE SUNDAY POST

SCOTLAND'S high streets were once the beating heart of our town and city centres – bustling shops, thriving bars and restaurants and offices jam-packed with workers.

Now the picture across the country is bleak and high street decline is one of the biggest concerns facing the country today.

For the first time, The Press and Journal, The Courier and The Sunday Post are joining forces to call for change.

Across the north and north-east, many high street traders have told The Press and Journal of the daily struggles they are

facing to survive – whether that be the rise of online shopping, a challenging post-Covid retail landscape or soaring tax burdens.

This is a situation mirrored across the country – and that is why DC Thomson's news brands are coming together to call for change.

We believe the Scottish Government has the power to breathe life back into our local economies and allow independent retailers to thrive once more – by relaxing business rates rules to make it easier to bring vacant retail properties back into use immediately.

The time to act is now.

**DC Thomson's news brands unite to launch campaign to help save our city and town centres – See Pages 2-5**

## Walk-in mental health support hub The Nook opens in Aberdeen

The Nook - a free, walk-in mental health support hub - opened its doors in Marischal Square in June, making quality, non-clinical mental health support easily available to people in Aberdeen and beyond.

Created and run by SAMH (Scottish Action for Mental Health), anyone will be able to drop in to The Nook for barrier-free mental health and wellbeing support, seven days a week.

There is no waiting list, no cost, and no need for a referral or appointment.

The Nook is designed to be flexible, so it offers a range of support options including one-to-one sessions with a practitioner, talking therapies and group events.

It will also be accompanied by an extensive outreach programme in surrounding communities, helping even more people to access support.

Eilidh Hunter, 22, from Alford, a mental health campaigner who sits on the SAMH Young People's Panel, said: "It can be really hard to seek help if you're struggling, and when you do you might face barriers like waiting lists and confusing systems. With The Nook, you can walk in when you feel ready and someone will be there to help you there and then.

"My friends and I talk about our wellbeing and how we're doing quite a lot, but I think people our age will really

benefit from having somewhere like that we can go to easily access proper support.

"There's so much information about mental health out there but actually this can be quite overwhelming and difficult to navigate. The Nook allows you to chat to someone face to face and you can even come in with friends or family. It also provides help to people supporting a loved one with poor mental health, which I think will be so important for people across the North-east."

Felicitas Fischer, The Nook's Service Manager, said: "The Nook is your place for mental health support. Our door is open seven days a week and you can drop in to suit you - there's no need to book and no waiting lists.

"Please come and see us if you are looking for support, going through a tough time, supporting someone else, or if you just have questions and are looking for information about mental health and wellbeing.

"When you pop in, you'll be greeted by a friendly face who can chat about the range of options we offer, so you can find what suits you best. Our door is open!"

The Nook will welcome visitors for walk-in support from 10am to 4pm daily, including weekends. Over time, there will be additional bookable activities and sessions taking place in the evenings.



From left, Eilidh Hunter, Felicitas Fischer and Alex Cumming

## FirstGroup posts 25% revenue lift to £1.7billion

FirstGroup has announced its results for the full year ending March 28 2026, revealing a 25% lift in adjusted revenue to £1.7billion.

The Aberdeen-headquartered transport giant reported growth in both its First Bus and First Rail divisions, although additional costs including associated with open access meant overall group adjusted operating profit came in marginally lower at £219.4million.

First Bus revenue alone was up 33% to £1.4billion, while the adjusted operating profit defied a £26million decrease in fare funding and lower passenger numbers to rise 7% to £102.8million.

Looking ahead, the company expects First Bus revenue to continue to grow to over £1.5billion.

First is actively participating in regional bus franchising opportunities and continues to evaluate a strong pipeline of bus and rail growth opportunities in line with its UK-focused growth strategy.

Commenting, Chief Executive Officer Graham Sutherland said: "Our strong performance in FY 2026 against significant headwinds has reinforced our track record for delivery and shareholder returns.

"Looking ahead, our focus on operational excellence and our diverse portfolio, robust asset base and cash generative businesses will enable continued growth and scope for further, material returns.

"As the UK bus and rail industries evolve over the coming years, we will continue to position the group as a leading UK transport company with the commitment, expertise, scale and financial strength to build active, long-term partnerships to create better transport services."



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# Beyond the vehicle: Redefining luxury travel in the North-east of Scotland

**Author:** Isabel Foy, Business Development Manager Tourism & Travel Trade, Luxe Scot



**At Luxe Scot, we are witnessing a significant shift in what defines luxury travel.**

**For today's affluent traveller, luxury is no longer rooted in material indulgence, but in the richness of experience.**

**Time, privacy, emotional resonance and meaningful connection have become the new currency.**

Experiential travel now sits at the heart of luxury.

For a growing number of our clients, a premium vehicle on its own is no longer the main attraction; it is simply the baseline.

Clients are seeking access to moments that feel special and truly exclusive - a personalised experience rather than an off-the-shelf itinerary.

We strongly believe that the North-east of Scotland is uniquely placed to deliver on this demand through its core tourism pillars of golf, food and drink, heritage and nature.

However, the difference lies in how these experiences are curated and delivered.

Our clients are increasingly looking for behind the scenes access, private encounters with locals and experiences delivered by insiders and experts.

While exclusivity remains a priority, our guests are also seeking authenticity.

Iconic luxury assets need to be complemented by access to the North-east's hidden layers: its people, its stories and its lesser known landscapes.

We could not deliver all of this without our trusted suppliers.

The relationships we build with our tourism partners on the ground are crucial in delivering outstanding experiences.

Only by working together we can elevate standard itineraries into exceptional journeys.

But our biggest assets are our drivers. In an industry defined by vehicles and routes, it is easy to assume that the true value of a chauffeur driven tour company lies in its fleet.

Sleek cars, polished itineraries and premium pricing all signal quality.

Yet beneath the surface of leather seats and curated journeys, the real differentiator is far more human: the driver.

A chauffeur is not simply taking a guest from A to B; they are the living representation of the brand.

For hours - or sometimes days - they share space with clients, shaping not only the journey but the emotional tone of the experience.

A well maintained vehicle may impress at first glance, but it is the driver's warmth, attentiveness and professionalism that linger in the memory long after the trip ends.

Beyond safety, the best drivers elevate a journey into something more meaningful.

They become storytellers, guides and problem solvers - offering local insight, adapting seamlessly to unexpected changes and anticipating needs before they are voiced.

In doing so, they transform a service into a personalised experience, one that cannot be easily replicated.

This is why, in a competitive market where vehicles can be purchased and itineraries copied, the driver remains the most valuable and least replicable asset.

Clients rarely remember the car, but they remember how they were made to feel - and, more often than not, they remember the person who made them feel that way.

For us, as a chauffeur driven tour company, the lesson is clear: invest in people as much as in product.

Because ultimately, it is not the vehicle that defines the journey, but the individual behind the wheel.

OPINION  
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# SCOTLAND



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**Gavin Ord**  
*Hotel Manager*  
The Aberdeen Dyce Hotel

### Describe your early career path.

I began my career in retail where I progressed steadily into a management role. This early experience gave me a strong grounding in customer service, leadership and day-to-day operations.

I later made a significant career change into nursing, where I spent many years developing professional discipline, resilience and people-focused skills. Nursing remained my career until 2025 and played a key role in shaping my approach to leadership, teamwork and care all of which continue to influence my work today.

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

In 2024, my partner and I, alongside two other business partners, purchased The Aberdeen Dyce Hotel. This marked a major shift into hospitality and business ownership. The opportunity allowed me to combine my management background with my passion for people, service and creating welcoming environments.

The transition felt natural, bringing together skills developed across retail, healthcare and leadership into one challenging and rewarding industry.

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

The best thing about my job is the variety. No two days are ever the same and I genuinely enjoy every aspect of the job. From guest interaction to team leadership and operational decision-making, the diversity keeps the role exciting and motivating.

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Hospitality is fast-paced, people-focused and constantly evolving which suits my personality perfectly and keeps me engaged every single day.

### Biggest career challenge or proudest achievement?

My proudest moment has been assisting taking the hotel from closure to where it is today. Seeing the transformation, the daily interest it now attracts and the positive feedback from guests and the community is incredibly rewarding.

The journey from purchase to reopening and growth required resilience, long hours and strong teamwork, making the progress achieved so far something I am extremely proud of.

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

I would tell my 18-year-old self that hospitality is a fantastic career choice with endless opportunities.

It offers clear progression, transferable skills and the chance to climb the ladder through hard work and commitment.

Hospitality can open doors to management, ownership and leadership roles while allowing you to work with people every day in a dynamic environment.

### What does the future look like for you?

The future is focused on continued growth and improvement.

My aim is to keep building the Hotel into a thriving, welcoming space for both guests and staff.

This includes strengthening the team, enhancing the guest experience and ensuring that the Hotel continues to develop as a successful and respected business in the community.

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# A little more conversation, a little less shouting please



**Author:** Gavin Roberts, Communications Manager, Spirit Energy

## Have we lost the ability to calmly debate the future of UK energy supply without shouting others down or insulting them?

In corporate communications, we help deliver business objectives. We start by making sure companies understand what they're trying to achieve and which audiences they need to engage.

Messaging comes next, examining risks and benefits as well as evidence to help audiences make sense of the objectives.

The messages are then delivered and, ideally, objectives are achieved.

That's a lot harder today. Well-articulated communication is too often trumped - no pun intended - by theatrics or volume.

Thoughtful debate gets replaced with anger and insults.

It's what happens every day in UK energy discussions.

Too often there's no debate, just arguing. Good or bad. Us or them. Oil and gas or renewables.

The winner is who shouts loudest and rather than debating counterviews, the goal is to silence them, so only one opinion gets airtime.

When we talk up the benefits of domestic production, a common, shouted response is "It won't take a penny off household bills".

But isn't energy produced from the North Sea better for the climate than imported energy? And what about jobs and skills retention? What about tax receipts from companies and individuals working in the sector? "Yeah, but it won't take a penny off household bills..."

Preying on fears and insecurities to win people over isn't new, but it's frustrating when crucial issues are reduced to soundbite solutions, ignoring points that don't conveniently suit agreed narratives.

And yes, I'm biased, but I believe the UK industry, the Chamber and OEUK are working hard to present all the facts, including those that challenge traditional energy companies to back their positions with hard data.

Everyone from operators, unions and trade organisations to NGOs, politicians and the public should be having tough, searching debates, not shouting down those with different views.

Most things can't and shouldn't be reduced to absolutes, particularly complex, multi-layered matters like energy supply.

And our views are rarely that different. The desired destination is roughly the same, we just don't agree how to get there.

It's in that space that we should be having the debate.

Resilience comes from a sustainable energy mix, recognising we need all forms for decades to come, and a fair fiscal regime that supports current and future investment.

Politicians say they understand North Sea hydrocarbons will be needed for a long time but they assume investors will continue to plough capital into an environment that discourages their investment.

Let's talk about this calmly.

Let's be ready to consider other perspectives, question our own views and for our positions to be challenged reasonably, respectfully.

And how about a healthy injection of reality?

Promising that the nirvana of low energy bills and uninterrupted, clean energy will arrive without massive upfront cost is fantasy.

The UK is currently designed to run on oil and gas, so the transition will take time and trillions of pounds of investment.

It is the goal, but it won't happen by next week.

Let's have a rational debate about the energy we have, what we need, where we get it from and how much the transition will cost.

More listening, less shouting.

OPINION  
OPINION

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GLEN TANAR

## North Sea investment could fuel one million holiday flights, analysis finds

The UK Government could fuel more than one million holiday flights by unlocking fresh investment in the North Sea, according to analysis.

Ministers faced an international backlash after introducing a waiver for Russian-linked diesel and jet fuel imports to ease supply concerns triggered by conflict in the Middle East.

The decision was met with widespread disbelief by Britain's domestic oil and gas sector, which could fill the gap but is being held back by punitive taxation and consenting delays.

Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce urged the Labour Government to prioritise domestic production over further imports, a move which could pump billions of pounds into the UK economy.

North Sea operators have told the UK Government they are prepared to invest £17.5 billion into new domestic oil and gas projects if ministers replace the current Energy Profits Levy (EPL) with a permanent Oil and Gas Price Mechanism (OGPM).

Industry body Offshore Energies UK said the package could unlock the equivalent of 1.1 billion barrels of oil and gas by 2030, which would help generate an extra 8.2 billion litres of jet fuel supply.

That would be enough to fuel roughly one million flights between the UK and popular Spanish holiday destinations such as Malaga, Alicante and Palma.

The extra production could also provide enough petrol and diesel to fuel 20 million British cars from now until the end of the decade.

Russell Borthwick, Chief Executive at Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce, said: "The North Sea still has the ability to support jobs, strengthen energy security and supply the fuels modern life depends on, from petrol and diesel to jet fuel for international travel. Yet billions of pounds of investment remain stuck on the sidelines at the very moment the world is being reminded how fragile global energy markets really are.

"The answer is not to punish domestic producers with a tax regime that deters investment. The UK Government should work with industry, not against it, by moving from the current Energy Profits Levy to a permanent Oil and Gas Price Mechanism which gives companies the confidence to invest while still protecting taxpayers when prices spike.

"It must also take the Energy Independence Bill back to the drawing board - no economy should willingly make itself more dependent on imported energy when it has the skills, infrastructure and natural resources to produce more at home."

Professor John Underhill, Director for Energy Transition at University of Aberdeen, said the Brent crude oil that is produced in the North Sea is particularly well suited to producing transport fuels including petrol, diesel and jet fuel.

Applying indicative Brent crude refinery yields to the projected production suggests around 4.7% could become jet fuel - equivalent to approximately 8.2 billion litres. Around 36% of the projected 1.1 billion barrels could be converted into petrol and 26% into diesel, equivalent to approximately 62.6 billion litres of petrol and 45.3 billion litres of diesel.





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## Aberdeen charity opens first inclusive outdoor sensory playpark

Children and young people in Aberdeen with sensory disorders now have a safe and welcoming space to play after Camphill School Aberdeen (CSA) opened the city's first free, publicly available outdoor sensory adventure and learning playpark.

The charity, which provides day and residential care to children and young adults with learning disabilities and complex additional support needs (ASN), has developed the park in response to a survey from parents, which found that the vast majority of the region's current playparks were unsuitable for their ASN children.

The new playpark located at CSA's Camphill Estate in Milltimber, has been delivered as part of a multi-million-pound fundraising campaign to expand its facilities.

It will initially be open to a number of charities and support groups, with a public booking platform being trialled later this year.

Designed around three key zones, sensory and creative play, communication and team building, and adventure and confidence, the park features a range of specialist

equipment and landscaping to activate multiple senses, including touch, sound, smell, balance and movement, helping children develop motor skills, spatial awareness, communication skills and self-confidence while enjoying the therapeutic benefits of outdoor play.

Colum Pooler, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Camphill School Aberdeen, said: "Every child deserves the opportunity to play, explore and connect with others, yet for many young people with sensory disorders, accessing traditional play spaces can be difficult.

"This sensory playpark has been created to remove those barriers and provide a welcoming environment where children and young people can build confidence, develop new skills and simply enjoy being children."

## Global acquires Pier Solutions and launches Global Modular



Left to right, Doug Gibb, Jordan Ferguson, Ryan Milne (Global Modular) and Gordon Farmer.

Global, the leading Scottish-based energy and infrastructure group, has announced the launch of Global Modular, following the acquisition of Aberdeen-based Pier Solutions.

The investment marks a strategic first step in Global's ambition to develop a fully integrated, end-to-end service offering for the energy sector, responding directly to client demand for more efficient, coordinated and scalable project delivery models.

Pier Solutions' 20-strong team will transfer into Global Modular, with the business expected to grow to a headcount of 100 within 12 months, creating up to 80 new roles as demand accelerates.

Global Modular has been established to address a growing market opportunity for standardised and engineered modular solutions, particularly within transmission-critical infrastructure and wider EPC (Engineering, Procurement & Construction) programmes across the energy and utilities sectors.

Global Modular will be based at Pier's two current sites, in Kintore and Inverurie.

The main facility in Inverurie spans 44,000 ft<sup>2</sup> and features integrated corporate and engineering offices, along with a modern workshop equipped with overhead lifting cranes capable of managing the delivery of a wide range of modules and custom structures.

The creation of Global Modular reflects Global's continued investment-led approach, shaped by close engagement with clients and a clear understanding of the challenges facing major energy projects, including delivery bottlenecks, fragmented supply chains and programme delays.

By bringing modular design, manufacture and delivery into the group, Global is strengthening its ability to provide connected solutions across the full project lifecycle — from early-stage consultancy, planning and design through to manufacture, transport, installation and ongoing support.

Through its existing customer delivery, Global is already delivering in the modular space through front-end consultancy and design businesses, Apollo and Arthian, as well as working with various operators on solutions for transmission infrastructure.

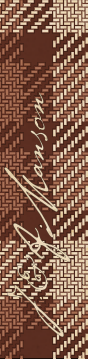
Global Modular builds on that foundation, enabling the Group to offer greater certainty, speed and efficiency for complex projects.

Gordon Farmer, Board Director, Global, commented: "This investment reflects Global's long-term commitment to building capability that genuinely supports our clients.

"We have listened closely to the market and to the challenges facing major energy projects — and the message is clear: clients want joined-up, end-to-end solutions delivered by partners they trust.

"Global Modular is a critical first step in developing that capability.

"By combining modular solutions with the strength of our wider Group — including consultancy, logistics, construction and delivery — we are positioning Global at the centre of the energy transition, supporting a more efficient and sustainable future for Scotland and the wider UK."

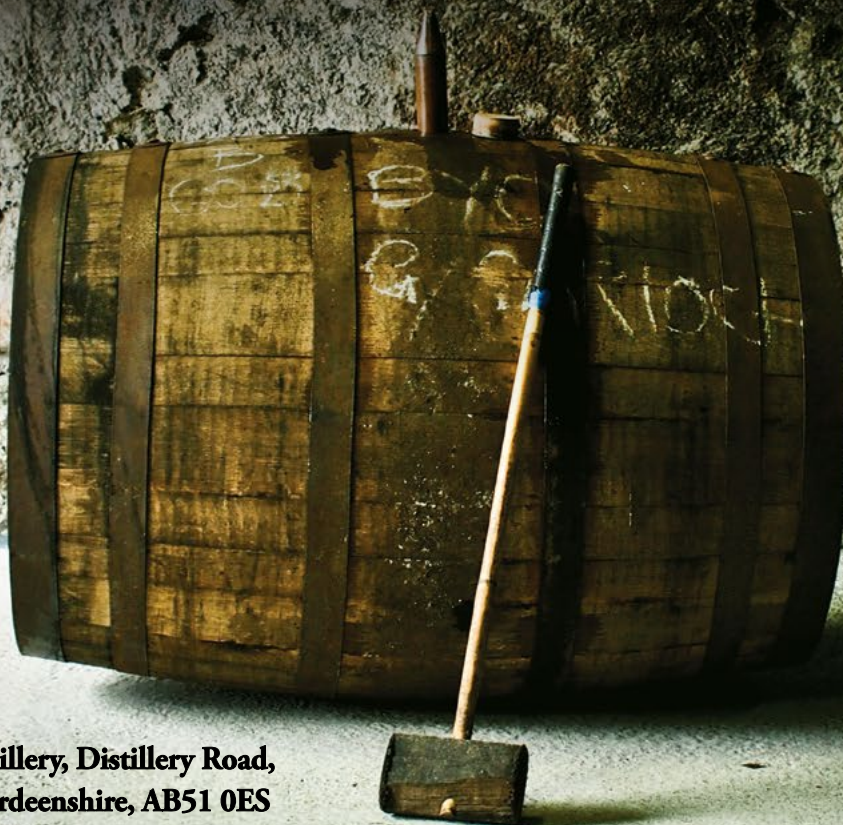


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# Why international trade is essential to the future of UK manufacturing

By David Hunter

**In today's interconnected economy, international trade is no longer an optional pathway for UK manufacturers, it is a strategic imperative. As leaders operating in a global marketplace, we must view export growth not simply as a revenue opportunity, but as a core driver of resilience, innovation, and long-term competitiveness.**

Trading internationally offers significant opportunities. A global customer base enables UK manufacturers to diversify revenue streams beyond domestic demand, reducing exposure to local economic fluctuations. Access to overseas and emerging markets presents strong growth potential where demand for high-quality, engineered products remains robust.

British manufacturing continues to be associated with quality, reliability, and technical expertise, providing a valuable brand advantage in international markets.

Global engagement also drives innovation. Working with customers in different international markets pushes manufacturers to continually improve product design, manufacturing processes and service delivery to meet different operational, safety and regulatory requirements.

Strategic partnerships with distributors, suppliers, and customers can accelerate knowledge transfer, open new channels for collaboration and strengthening competitive positioning.

This could not be more relevant to OEG. As a global business headquartered in the UK, supporting customers across international energy markets,

we see both the opportunities and complexities of global trade every day.

A recent project delivered from the UK saw OEG design and manufacture dedicated containerised ROV control and workshop modules for a drillship operating globally.

The project required compliance with multiple international standards, including DNV, ABS and SOLAS/IMO, as well as A60 fire rating requirements.

Our projects and engineering teams worked closely with the customer to design and deliver custom-built, stackable modules that met the operational demands of daily ROV activity offshore. The modules incorporated safety monitoring systems, integrated fire and gas detection, pressurisation, emergency shutdown systems, Zone 2 suitable electrical equipment, air conditioning and customer-specific workspace requirements.

Crucially, OEG also managed the certification and documentation process, drawing on

established relationships with certification bodies and extensive experience in international compliance.

The successful delivery of the project led to further module orders, demonstrating the trust created when technical capability, regulatory knowledge and reliable execution come together.

This is where international trade becomes a practical growth driver.

It enables UK manufacturers like OEG to apply engineering expertise, project delivery experience and supply chain partnerships to support customers wherever they operate.

Our wider global footprint, including large-scale project delivery in markets such as



David Hunter

Australia or Norway, further reinforces the importance of combining UK-led expertise with local and regional capability.

However, these opportunities come with challenges. Regulatory compliance, differing standards, certification requirements and customs processes all demand expertise, planning and robust internal controls.

The post-Brexit trading landscape has added further administrative complexity for UK businesses working with EU markets, increasing the importance of accurate documentation, early planning and strong commercial discipline.

Logistics and supply chain management also remain critical. Global disruption, from geopolitical tensions to shipping delays, can affect delivery timelines and customer confidence.

A resilient supply chain, supported by diversified sourcing, strong supplier relationships and contingency planning, is essential to maintaining reliability in international trade.

For UK manufacturers, the opportunity is clear.

Those that invest in export capability, technical excellence and international partnerships will be best placed to compete.

At OEG, our experience shows that international trade is not just about reaching new markets; it is about building resilience, strengthening customer trust and demonstrating the value of British-led engineering on a global stage.

***David Hunter is Operations Director for OEG's Cargo Logistics division, overseeing custom fabrication and modular projects for customers globally from OEG's custom modules facility in Kintore, Aberdeenshire.***





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**Katrina Wardrop**  
General Manager  
Macdonald Norwood Hall



*"Norwood is a truly special place where we are all passionate about what we do to ensure that guests want to return time and time again. The team is always looking at ways to elevate the experience we provide whether that's private dining, the rooms and accommodation offered or bespoke requests."*

*"Our award-winning events professionals work tirelessly to provide the best possible experience for all our customers, while removing the stress involved in trying to manage those large-scale or complex events where it's vital to leave the right impression."*



Photo credit: By Rhea



**Contact our events team:**

T: 01224 868951

E: [info@norwood-hall.co.uk](mailto:info@norwood-hall.co.uk)

W: [www.macdonaldhotels.co.uk/norwood-hall](http://www.macdonaldhotels.co.uk/norwood-hall)

## City hotel unlocking the door to global business opportunities

Thousands of businesspeople have passed through the doors of Macdonald Norwood Hall to unlock new growth opportunities as part of the hotel's continued partnership with events and public relations specialist Granite PR.

The two Aberdeen-based businesses have worked together since 2011 with the relationship continuing to evolve through the provision of a diverse number of networking events and industry conferences, covering topics such as energy, tourism and artificial intelligence.

Over the past decade, the hotel has played host to more than 40 internationally-focused 'gateway' events, highlighting business links and opportunities for firms in areas of economic and cultural significance, including Houston, Norway, and Western Australia.

In June, Granite PR held the latest instalment of its Aberdeen-Norway Gateway with 150 delegates in attendance for a two-course lunch and a series of expert presentations and market updates. Meanwhile, September will see the return of the Aberdeen-Guyana Gateway to highlight new business opportunities in one of the world's fastest growing economies.

Aberdeen's country house in the city, Macdonald Norwood Hall has allowed Granite PR to expand its well-established portfolio of networking events by hosting several, more intimate events for local businesses and entrepreneurs over the past 18 months.

This has included a series of free-to-attend Business Builder Dinners and Granite Growth Breakfast sessions which have seen more than 200 business representatives engage with these new networking, connecting and knowledge-sharing opportunities.

Brett Jackson, Founder and Managing Director of Granite PR, said: "We have always found the service provided by staff at Macdonald Norwood Hall to be first-class, whether that's the food and drink served, the event spaces themselves or the team's ability to manage professional events from concept to delivery.

"Our partnership continues to be strengthened with even more events being added to the calendar which allow local businesses and individuals the platform to expand their networks, share insights and develop lasting relationships."

Located a short distance from the city centre, Macdonald Norwood Hall has a strong reputation for delivering events, meetings and conferences to businesses and organisations of all sizes.

Katrina Wardrop, General Manager at Macdonald Norwood Hall, added: "We're proud to play our part in supporting the North-east business community and, along with our friends at Granite PR, provide a welcoming place for people from the surrounding area and visitors from all around the world to come together, share ideas and develop new opportunities and partnerships, while enjoying the warm hospitality and all that the region has to offer."

For more information on Granite PR's lineup of events and to secure your place, please contact [events@granitepr.co.uk](mailto:events@granitepr.co.uk) or visit [www.granitepr.co.uk](http://www.granitepr.co.uk).





**Jack Borg-Delaney**

*Audit Partner & Head of Scotland  
Acumon Scotland*

### Describe your early career path.

I began my career on a school leaver programme at a mid-sized independent accountancy practice, starting a week before my 18th birthday. I had always known I wanted to work in accountancy and chose to earn and learn rather than go to university. I completed my AAT before progressing to ACCA, becoming fully qualified by the age of 23 with a number of years practical experience behind me. Studying at college on Saturdays and Sundays after a full working week while friends were enjoying university life wasn't always easy, but it gave me a strong work ethic and a great foundation for my career.

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

I've effectively always been in the industry, having started straight from school. I've always enjoyed working with numbers and solving problems, so accountancy felt like a natural fit from the outset. As my career developed, I gravitated towards audit because of the variety it offers. No two businesses are the same, and the role provides the opportunity to understand how different organisations operate while helping strengthen their reporting, governance and controls. That combination of technical challenge, variety and working closely with businesses is what has kept me in the profession.

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

The best part of my job is the businesses we work with and the opportunity to understand how they operate. No two days are ever the same, and every client brings different challenges and insights.

## In partnership with



I've also been fortunate to travel and meet incredibly talented people from across the world through my work. Just as importantly, I work with fantastic teams internally and learn a huge amount from the people around me. That combination of variety, interesting businesses and great colleagues is what makes the role so rewarding.

### What has been your proudest achievement?

I'm proud of the career I've built, particularly having started through a school leaver route, but equally proud of being able to do that while raising a young family. The profession can be demanding, and like many working parents I'm constantly trying to balance career ambitions with being present for my children. Being able to progress professionally while still making time for the moments that matter at home is something I value hugely.

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

If I could give my 18-year-old self advice, it would be to have a little more confidence and not worry so much about having everything figured out. Careers rarely follow a straight line, and many of the best opportunities come from being open to new experiences. I'd also remind myself to enjoy the journey, work hard, but make time for the people and moments outside of work that really matter.

### What does the future look like for you?

One thing that might surprise people about audit is how much you need to understand the businesses you're working with. To be a good auditor, you have to get to grips with how each part of an organisation operates, not just the numbers. That often means getting out into the business itself. Over the years I've visited quarries and watched controlled explosions, toured manufacturing facilities and seen processes most people would never normally experience. That behind-the-scenes access is one of the most interesting parts of the job and gives real context to the financial information we review.

## Next generation shines at Light the Blue 2026

Aberdeen Performing Arts' festival for and by young people, Light the Blue has been hailed a triumph as the curtain came down on 13 incredible days of performances, exhibitions, theatre, art and workshops across Aberdeen in June.

This year's Light the Blue asked participants and audiences "What's your story?" in a theme throughout the festival that explored 'looking forward and looking back', with more than 1,000 young people and professional artists, 40 schools and audiences in excess of 5,500 all getting involved in the festivities.

Free or low cost performances, workshops, backstage tours, networking events and interactive exhibitions gave more opportunities than ever to find new and exciting ways to engage with the arts.

Light the Blue Creative Producer Jordan Blackwood said: "Our theme for Light the Blue this year has been focussed on looking forward and looking back, inviting artists and audiences to explore their own stories for joy, inspiration and hope as well as sharing dreams for the future.

"The result has been even more special than we could have hoped for, sparking so many unforgettable moments

throughout the festival and it has been an absolute privilege to see it all come together.

"We are so grateful to all of the amazing organisations, groups and individuals who gave so much of their time and energy into making this such an incredible, fun and joyful festival."



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Accountants &  
Business Advisers

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## Pulling power of Tall Ships fuelled the growth of North-east tourism during 2025

Analysis of tourism data from 2025 has highlighted the power of major events to support the North-east visitor economy as the Tall Ships festival and cruise arrivals contributed towards a bumper July for the region.

Latest figures from independent research conducted by Global Tourism Solutions (GTS) using the Scottish Tourism Economic Activity Monitor (STEAM) model show double digit year-on-year increases in day visits throughout the region during the summer period, crowned by a phenomenal 188% increase into Aberdeen City in July.

This outcome was fuelled by the collective effort of city and regional partners to secure, and then deliver the Tall Ships festival, and by an increased number of cruise arrivals.

In addition to a bumper July, three out of the four quarters recorded day visitor growth, underlining the importance of year-round festivals and events in driving sustained day visitor demand. The region also welcomed more than 3.6 million staying visitors in 2025, maintaining the strong levels of demand seen in 2024.

Information was gathered from occupancy data and visitor attractions data, as well as intelligence from festival and event organisers, venues and transport providers to produce an aggregated overview of activity in the region in the last year.

Chris Foy, CEO, VisitAberdeenshire, said: "With increasing pressures on household budgets in the UK and in key source markets, it is encouraging that the North-east held its ground in a highly competitive market last year.

"While the growth in days trips demonstrates the importance of major events, the lion's share of the economic impact continues to be driven by overnight visits which account for 80% of the £1.375billion total.

"The ambition remains to grow the visitor economy through initiatives that will drive longer stays and greater spend across the region. Looking ahead to next year, and beyond, the arrival of WRC Rally Scotland will provide a further catalyst for growth."

Commenting, Jennifer Crow MBE, Chief Executive of Opportunity North East (ONE), said: "These figures highlight the growing strength and value of the North-east visitor economy. Tourism is a key economic opportunity for the North-east, supporting jobs, attracting investment and helping diversify the regional economy.

"The region is a compelling proposition for UK and international visitors - from adventure tourism and outdoor experiences to internationally recognised events, food and drink, heritage and culture - all set within a world-class natural environment.

"Major events such as the Tall Ships, NEXO Championships and the upcoming WRC Rally Scotland create opportunities to attract new audiences and encourage longer stays, while the continued growth of adventure tourism highlights the strength of the region's year-round appeal."

Julie Wood, Chief Officer for City Development and Regeneration at Aberdeen City Council, said: "This growth underlines the impact of sustained investment and strong partnership working in positioning Aberdeen as a destination of choice.

"Aberdeen City Council is investing significantly in the city's future - through the £200million City Centre and Beach Masterplan and by securing major events such as the Tall Ships and, from next year, the World Rally Championship."



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\*Terms and conditions apply.



## Hilton and Aloft by Marriott Aberdeen TECA wins RBH Commercial Team of the Year

The commercial sales team at Hilton Aberdeen TECA and Aloft by Marriott Aberdeen TECA has been named Commercial Team of the Year at the 2026 RBH Commercial Conference held at the newly refurbished The Met Hotel Leeds.

The award recognises the team's outstanding contribution to the business over the past year, highlighting their commercial success, collaboration and commitment to delivering results across both hotels.

Competing against teams from across RBH's UK hotel portfolio, the team was recognised for its strong performance in driving business to the hotels, building relationships with clients and partners, and supporting the continued success of the TECA complex.

Mark Langham, General Manager of Hilton Aberdeen TECA and Aloft by Marriott Aberdeen TECA, said: "I am incredibly proud of the team and everything they have achieved. Their dedication, passion and commitment to our customers and colleagues' shines through every day. This award is a fantastic recognition of the hard work they put in and is thoroughly deserved."

The team works across both Hilton and Aloft by Marriott, supporting a wide range of business including conferences, exhibitions, corporate travel, meetings, events and group accommodation. Working closely with the team at P&J Live, they play a key role in attracting and supporting major events, helping to showcase Aberdeen and the TECA complex as a leading destination for business and leisure visitors.

The award follows another successful year for the hotels and reinforces their position as leading venues within the North-east of Scotland's hospitality and events sector.



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## 2026 North East Scotland Food and Drink Award winners announced

The winners of the 2026 North East Scotland Food & Drink Awards have been announced, celebrating outstanding product quality, innovation and commercial success across the North-east food and drink sector.

The awards recognise excellence from primary producers to manufacturers and brand-builders and are delivered by Opportunity North East (ONE) in partnership with Aberdeenshire Council, and this year with Marks & Spencer as headline retail partner.

### 2026 winners

**Best Food Product (Small Business):** Vanilla Labs, for their Vanilla Pods — recognised for quality, potency and a compelling provenance story. Vanilla Labs is the first tenant at ONE SeedPod.

**Best Food Product (Large Business):** Joseph Robertson, for their Haddock Kiev — exceptional taste and faultless quality, backed by an impressive route to retail.

**Best Drink Product (Established Business):** Brew Toon, for Tanfield Export — quality, approachable drinking style and strong heritage links; a beer that continues to win fans well beyond the north east.

**Best Drink Product (Young Business):** Balmaud Distillery, for Balmaud Gin — a new Turriff distillery praised for a standout story, clean taste and packaging.

**Innovative Impact (joint winners):** Vanilla Labs — innovation built into every part of the business; and The Bread Guys Bakery — clean ingredients without compromising quality, plus standout social impact through apprenticeships passing the craft to a new generation.

**Innovation in Agriculture (joint winners):** Balmaud Distillery — a bold transformation, expanding farming operations into a distillery to maximise value; and A Melvin Henderson — effective use of equipment and automation across potato picking, processing and packing.

Stanley Morrice MBE, Vice Chair of Opportunity North East and Chair of the Food, Drink & Agriculture Board, said: “Congratulations to this year’s North East Scotland Food & Drink Awards winners and finalists.

The number and quality of entries made for an incredibly competitive awards process and underlined the strength, ambition and innovation right across the sector.

“The food and drink sector is a huge part of the North-east economy, employing around 22,000 people, generating £2.4billion annually and producing 20% of Scotland’s food and drink output.

From businesses rooted in farming and fishing to manufacturers, brands and exporters taking North-east products to markets around the world, there is an enormous amount to celebrate.

These awards are a chance to recognise the people and businesses continuing to raise the bar for the industry year after year.”

Jennifer Crow MBE, Chief Executive of Opportunity North East (ONE), said: “The talent, energy and ambition across the region’s food and drink sector is incredible, and these awards are a brilliant showcase for the people and businesses driving it forward.”

Councillor Judy Whyte, Provost of Aberdeenshire, said: “It gives me immense pleasure to celebrate the outstanding achievements of this year’s winners of the North East Scotland Food and Drink Awards.

“These awards shine a spotlight on the remarkable innovation, quality and ambition being demonstrated by producers across our region.

“My warmest congratulations go to each and every winner - you are true ambassadors for the North-east and exemplify the excellence which defines Scotland’s food and drink sector.”



# App-solutely fantastic: Aberdeen city centre right in your pocket

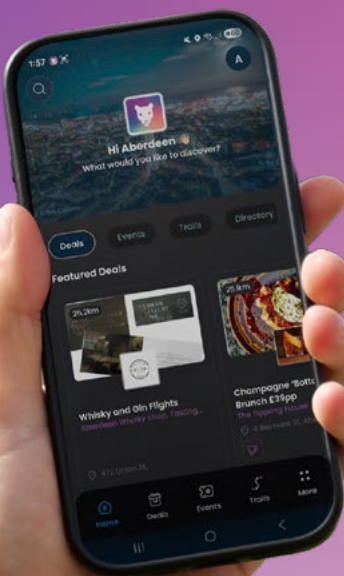
From hidden gems and foodie favourites to city centre events and exclusive offers, a new app is helping people rediscover Aberdeen and showcase the city like never before.

By Rebecca Henderson

## How well do you really know Aberdeen?

It's a question I found myself asking after downloading the new Our Aberdeen app.

Like many people who live and work in the city, I like to think I know my way around. I know where to grab a coffee, where to meet friends for dinner and which routes to take through the city centre. Yet within minutes of opening the app, I was discovering events I hadn't heard about and businesses I had never visited.



What started as a quick browse quickly turned into a reminder of just how much Aberdeen has to offer.

And that's exactly the point.

Launched by Our Union Street in May, the free app has been designed to showcase Aberdeen "like never before", bringing together attractions, hospitality venues, retailers, events, walking trails and exclusive offers in one easy-to-use platform.

## A city worth discovering

The app is the latest initiative from Our Union Street, a community-led organisation established to support Aberdeen city centre and encourage more people to spend time there.

Since its creation, the organisation has championed a range of projects designed to boost footfall, support local businesses and promote the city as a vibrant place to live, work and visit.

From seasonal events and family activities to marketing campaigns and business initiatives, the focus has been to showcase the best of Aberdeen and encourage people to rediscover what's on their doorstep.

The launch of the app is the result of months of work behind the scenes from the Our Union Street team. Among those helping bring the project to life are Amy Innes and Finlay Hendry, familiar faces to many through the organisation's 'Word on the Street' podcast.

Today's visitors don't arrive armed with guidebooks and maps. Instead, they turn to their smartphones. Decisions about where to eat, what to do and where to spend time are increasingly made in real time, often influenced by digital recommendations and social media content.

## More than a directory

What immediately stood out to me while using the app was how much thought had gone into creating something that feels more like a curated guide.

What struck me was the variety. One minute I was reading about a local event, the next I was discovering a restaurant offer. It offered a fresh perspective on a city that can sometimes be easy to take for granted.

Then came an unexpected coincidence.

The day after downloading the app, I went for brunch at The Craftsman. While deciding what to order I decided to check the app and noticed the popular venue was featured and offering a promotion. It was a perfect example of the app's purpose.

What I also enjoyed about the app is there's a strong emphasis on local voices. Among the contributors is Aberdeen food blogger Julia Bryce, whose recommendations shine

a spotlight on some of the city's best places to eat and drink. That inclusion feels particularly relevant.

Social media has transformed the way people discover destinations. A recommendation from a trusted local voice can often carry more influence than a traditional advertising campaign. Increasingly, people want authentic experiences and genuine recommendations.

The app embraces that shift by showcasing Aberdeen through the people who know it best. As I scrolled through the various listings and recommendations, I found myself building a mental list of places I wanted to visit.

Some were businesses I had walked past countless times without ever stepping inside. Others were events and experiences I simply hadn't known existed. It was a reminder that even lifelong Aberdonians can still uncover something new.

For hospitality operators, that kind of visibility can make a real difference. In a city centre filled with independent businesses competing for attention, the ability to showcase offers and experiences directly to potential customers is a valuable tool.

It also reinforced something else.

Even those of us who live and work in Aberdeen don't always know what's happening on our own doorstep. That could prove to be one of the platform's greatest strengths.

### Backed by investment

The launch also comes at an important time for Aberdeen city centre.

In recent years, significant efforts have been made to strengthen the city's appeal, from public improvements and new attractions to a growing programme of events and festivals.

Those efforts received a further boost when Our Union Street secured an additional £600,000 in Scottish Government funding to support projects aimed at increasing footfall and driving economic activity in the city centre.

The investment reflects confidence in Aberdeen's future and recognises the importance of creating a thriving city centre that benefits businesses, residents and visitors.

The app forms part of that wider vision. While it may be digital, its purpose is firmly rooted in the real world by attracting people into the city, supporting local enterprises and encouraging visitors to spend

more time exploring everything Aberdeen has to offer.

### A platform for growth

One of the app's greatest strengths is that it isn't aimed solely at tourists.

Residents are just as important.

Many of us fall into familiar routines, frequenting the same venues and following the same routes through the city. Yet Aberdeen is constantly evolving.

The region already has a growing hospitality scene, independent retailers, cultural attractions, major events, stunning outdoor spaces and passionate business owners who continue to invest in the city.

What the Our Aberdeen app does is bring those elements together.

The app may live on a smartphone, but its success will ultimately be measured in busier coffee shops, fuller restaurants and thriving businesses.

And if my own experience is anything to go by, there are plenty of discoveries still waiting to be made.

Download the app from here:



Finlay Hendry

Amy-Leigh Innes



# Aberdeen businesses fly the flag for boosting the city by choosing local

Local support for businesses in Aberdeen has never been needed more, according to a city business leader.

Aberdeen Inspired Chief Executive Adrian Watson highlighted the critical difference that choosing local makes ahead of Scotland Loves Local Week which took place in June.

With national pride riding high ahead of the World Cup in the USA, enterprises and organisations in the city and across the country encouraged people to celebrate local pride as well - helping to protect businesses, jobs and building a stronger future for their community.

Adrian Watson said: "Every time someone chooses to spend with a local business, they are making an investment in Aberdeen's future.

"Scotland Loves Local Week is a timely reminder that the decisions we make every day about where we shop, eat and socialise really do matter.

"As a BID, we do not work in isolation and collaboration is key. We have worked collaboratively with our 600 businesses and partners to deliver for the city, whether

it's through the Nuart Aberdeen Festival, Aberdeen Restaurant Week, bringing the world-renowned Tall Ships to Aberdeen, or delivering the UK's most successful gift card scheme through the Aberdeen Gift Card, which brings millions of pounds into bricks and mortar businesses in the city centre.

"We know that these are challenging times for our high streets, and we continue to collaborate on issues, for example repurposing vacant buildings, to ensure that our city can thrive.

"Aberdeen has an incredible range of independent businesses alongside national retailers, hospitality and attractions. By thinking local first, residents and visitors alike can play a vital role in helping businesses to thrive and ensure a sustainable future for the city."



Waterstones Aberdeen branch manager Wayne Thomson, Kris Krawczyk from Superdry Aberdeen, Jamie Coutts from Sostrene Green and Aberdeen Inspired CEO Adrian Watson flying the flag for Aberdeen businesses outside Bon Accord Shopping Centre



  
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# INTRODUCING...



# THE Lifestyle

## SECTION

You might have noticed a new style of article featured in our May Business Bulletin, when Team Chamber headed out to get the inside track on high-end fashion retailer LoLo+Co, test drove an Eskuta from exclusive supplier north of the border Sport Aberdeen and Eskuta Scotland, and reviewed the breathtaking luxury getaways at Cairngorm Bothies and Cairngorm Lodges.

Our regular Motor Mouth feature, which sees business leaders take exciting luxury cars out for a spin over the weekend and write down their thoughts, has proved to be one of the most popular parts of our magazine.

So we've decided to expand the concept.

Each month, Chamber staff and prominent Members will check out some of the very best our fantastic region has to offer.

The best spots in town for a business lunch, where to take your most important clients for evening drinks, exciting corporate day out trips, travelling in style, luxury getaways, and looking your best with the latest fashion must-haves. We'll cover it all and bring you honest reviews from people you can trust.

Interested in featuring your business in the Lifestyle section of the Business Bulletin?

Email [bulletin@agcc.co.uk](mailto:bulletin@agcc.co.uk) or speak to your relationship manager to find out how you can.



# GLEN TANAR ESTATE – A NATURAL CORPORATE RETREAT BRIMMING WITH CHARACTER

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

When I was asked to visit Chamber member Glen Tanar Estate for a tour of the grounds I was not sure what to expect or how it would tie-in to corporate entertaining but decided to jump in the car and take a look around.

Less than an hour's drive from Aberdeen City Centre, the 25,000-acre Estate is nestled in the beautiful Royal Deeside and within the Cairngorms National Park. What really strikes you from the moment you arrive is the stunning natural landscape and quiet beauty of it all.

I met Claire Bruce MBE, fourth generation of the Bruce family stewards, who took pride in showing me around and explaining the estate's history, features and what guests, both local and from further afield, like to do when visiting.

When it comes to corporate entertaining, be it for staff or clients, it is important to create the right environment suitable for creative thinking, team building and, when the work day is over, relaxation and enjoyment.

Glen Tanar Estate meets that brief perfectly.

The estate has all the typical modern conveniences you would expect including board room, conference facilities, superfast Wi-Fi and accommodation and catering facilities. However, what really stands out is what you can do outside of your meetings.

To expand, I was given a tour of historic Victorian Ballroom, where guests can enjoy locally-sourced food, entertainment and dancing after a hard day's work – all in front of the roaring fire under the chandeliers in a room steeped with history and splendour.

What about the day after? With plentiful free electric vehicle parking on-site and a series of architecturally impressive private cottages, guests will often book multi-day retreats for team building, strengthening client relationships or taking time away from the desk to work on corporate strategies.

There are plenty of activities for the outdoor types including rainbow trout fishing, hiking Mount Keen (Scotland's most easterly Munro), offroad driving, mountain biking and wildlife watching.

On the wildlife front, guests can visit "The Lookout", a peaceful and secluded wildlife hide – a thoughtfully repurposed property – offering viewing and exclusive photography sessions to see the likes of owls, pine martens, badgers and even the occasional Scottish wildcat. These options present an excellent way to really get to know your colleagues and clients during a corporate retreat.

The estate is well-known for its appearances in movies and television. The film adaptation of Lewis Grassie Gibbon's classic *Sunset Song* and the hit Netflix show *Love is Blind UK* are just a couple to feature its impressive grounds and it's not hard to see why. With its diverse landscapes and dramatic scenery, Glen Tanar also provides the perfect backdrop for leading brands such as Ford and INEOS, who have chosen the Estate for vehicle launches and location shoots.

Asking about investment in the estate, Claire proudly explained their commitment to sustainability – from the management of a significant area of Caledonian pine forest, including one of the largest remaining remnants in Scotland, to producing over 10,000 tonnes of timber annually, which is used in construction and for biomass energy to power the estate and a local whisky distillery.

Sustainability underpins every estate management decision made by the team.

In addition, the team have invested to refurbish properties with low-carbon approaches including air source heat pumps, solar panels and natural insulation materials.

When asked about her stewardship of the estate, Claire said: "At Glen Tanar, we're fortunate to care for an extraordinary place. Our role is to ensure it remains a thriving estate, welcoming visitors, supporting local businesses and communities, and creating memorable experiences while safeguarding it for future generations."

I left the estate feeling we are very fortunate to have such stunning options for corporate entertaining right on our doorstep in North-east Scotland and already considering my next visit to the sprawling estate stretches from the River Dee all the way to Mount Keen.

I would encourage any Chamber members looking for a memorable company retreat to visit [www.glentanar.co.uk](http://www.glentanar.co.uk) or call **013398 86451** to organise your own tour and see it for yourself.



# Time to get behind our award-winning local airport

By Danny McKay

**The Latvian capital of Riga became the latest addition to Aberdeen International Airport's direct route options when it relaunched for summer at the beginning of June.**

It may be often overlooked even by locals in favour of larger airports in Edinburgh and Glasgow, but Aberdeen now boasts direct routes to Faro, Krakow, Alicante, Majorca, Dalaman, Dublin and Riga – on top of domestic options.

I went to check out the latest new route and remind myself what a jewel we have in Aberdeen International Airport – the Northern Star Business Awards' Business of the Year.

Nevermind a daft early-morning start to drive down to Edinburgh – or, worse, shelling out for a hotel – myself and my partner Gillian had just a 20-minute drive from the city centre out to airport where we stopped in the Short Stay Carpark.

Just yards from the terminal, it cost £64.25 to park from Saturday to Tuesday, far cheaper than petrol down to the Central Belt and a hotel for the night.

Despite a glitch with online check-in, it was only a short queue to check-in in person at the airport and we were through security in under five minutes with zero issues.

We'd booked the Afternoon Tea package at the stunning Northern Lights Lounge, so headed straight there past the other bar, café and shop options.

The lounge itself felt like an exclusive, luxury club with prosecco on arrival and a mouth-watering cake stand heaving with a variety of sandwiches and sweet treats presented to us as soon as we sat down.

On top of that, we also had a buffet, salad bar, snacks, soft drinks and a bar at our disposal, all included in the £47.50 price.

The food and drink in the Northern Lights Lounge is all locally sourced and showcases what our wonderful region has to offer.

The airBaltic flight to Riga only takes around two and a half hours, and it's then just a short Bolt or bus ride into the city centre.

The city's got plenty to offer, from beautiful architecture, cobbled streets and green spaces to the lively nightlife with bustling bars and restaurants – all very reasonably priced.

There's plenty to soak up from a cultural perspective too with tours, museums, statues, artworks and galleries.

It was also gorgeous sunshine and around 25 degrees during our stay.

Normally, when flying in to Edinburgh or Glasgow, landing would just mark half-time in the journey, with a long drive back up the road to the Granite City.

So, let me tell you, what a difference it makes to get through passport control after a long day and be back in Aberdeen already, with your car right there ready for a 20-minute drive home.

We've got an absolutely superb asset here in Aberdeen International Airport, bringing no end of benefit to our region. The more we use it, the bigger it gets and the more routes it will attract, so let's get behind our local airport!





# It's as easy as **ABZ**

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Airport**

# MOTOR MOUTH

**“I can’t quite make up my mind whether I should be wearing denim shorts, cowboy boots and a Stetson like an extra from Landman, or a Schöffel gilet and Fairfax & Favour boots as if we’re heading off to film an episode of Landward.”**

That was my wife’s opening observation when we traded our electric MG4 and Tesla for a KGM Musso EV double cab pick-up for the weekend.

The wardrobe dilemma was understandable. Pick-ups have always occupied a curious space somewhere between working vehicle and lifestyle statement. The Musso EV is no exception, although it perhaps leans a little more towards the latter than I expected.

A Saturday morning coffee run beckoned. I was keen to take it somewhere suitably rugged and adventurous, but genuine off-roading opportunities are surprisingly thin on the ground in Aberdeen’s West End. Instead, we settled for the next best thing: speed bumps tackled with considerably more enthusiasm than normal, followed by a run out to Udhay to see whether the range claims stood up to scrutiny.

To be fair, it would have struggled not to outperform our MG4. The MG’s relationship with battery range is tenuous to say the least ...

Before we even get into how the Musso drives, it wins one category hands down: customer service.

Having recently experienced both Tesla’s complete absence of customer

## KGM MUSSO EV DOUBLE CAB PICK-UP REVIEW

By Stephen Gow, General Manager at The Chester Hotel, with occasional interruptions from Beverley Tricker

service and MG’s somewhat indifferent (let’s face it downright unhelpful) approach to aftersales, it was genuinely refreshing to discover a manufacturer that still appears to understand the concept. Human beings answer phones. Dealers seem interested in helping. It’s remarkable how unusual and refreshing that feels in 2026.

As for the vehicle itself, first impressions are positive. The cabin is a world away from the utilitarian working trucks of old. The interior feels modern, comfortable and surprisingly premium. There are plenty of screens, heaps of technology and enough creature comforts to make long journeys perfectly pleasant.

On the road, the first thing you notice is that it doesn’t drive like a traditional diesel pick-up.

Electric torque suits a truck remarkably well. Acceleration is smooth and pretty immediate. There is none of the hesitation, turbo lag or gearbox hunting that often accompanies larger commercial vehicles. It’s not sports-car (or Tesla) fast, but it feels more than brisk enough, particularly given its size.

The ride quality also deserves mention. Pick-ups have traditionally been known for bouncing their occupants around when unladen, but the Musso feels considerably more composed than expected.



It absorbs potholes, rough surfaces and those Aberdeen roads that appear to have been shelled overnight with a degree of ease.

This is a vehicle designed to carry, tow and work, and it does so while feeling reassuringly planted and stable. Visibility is excellent, and despite its considerable dimensions, it never felt (too) intimidating on narrower rural roads.

The elevated driving position also taps into something that clearly appeals to many buyers. You sit above the traffic, looking down on the world rather than peering through it. Whether that's practical or psychological, I'm not entirely sure, but it's undeniably satisfying. (By this time, Beverley was considering going full Landman and wanted the window down and a set of long hair extensions.)

Range anxiety? Less than expected. Throughout our weekend of mixed driving, the battery percentage seemed to fall at a far more sensible rate than we're used to with the plummeting MG. The Musso appears to understand that if it says you have range remaining, you might actually want to use it.

Of course, no vehicle is perfect. It's large, and anyone moving from a hatchback will need a few days to recalibrate their parking skills.

Beverley spent much of the weekend asking whether I was genuinely fitting into spaces or simply creating new ones.

But as a package, it's difficult not to be impressed.

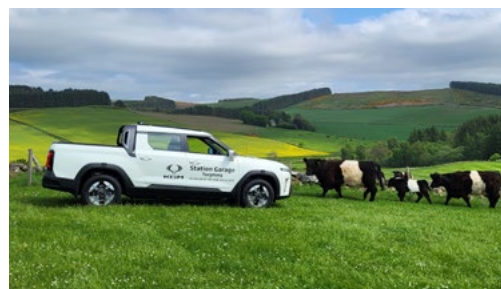
At roughly similar money to some electric family cars (MG, we mean you), you're getting an enormous amount of vehicle. A genuine double cab. A substantial load bed. Strong towing credentials. Plenty of technology. A comfortable interior. And enough presence to make even the most mundane supermarket trip feel vaguely adventurous.

The real surprise is that it doesn't feel like a compromise.

Historically, owning a pick-up often meant accepting agricultural road manners in return for practicality. The Musso EV largely avoids that trade-off. It delivers the practicality people need while driving much more like a modern SUV than a commercial vehicle.

By the end of the weekend, Beverley still hadn't decided between the cowboy boots, the Fairfax & Favours or green wellies.

The Musso, meanwhile, seemed perfectly comfortable with any.



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# Inside Chop Bar & Grill's biggest menu refresh in eight years

By Rebecca Henderson

**There are some places in Aberdeen that you've always meant to visit but somehow never quite get around to. For me, Chop Bar & Grill was one of them.**

Despite walking past the restaurant countless times over the years, I had never actually stepped through the doors. So, when the invitation arrived to attend the launch event and sample some of the new dishes, my colleague Bethany and I were more than happy to accept.

As a seasoned Chop visitor, Bethany assured me it was worth the hype, and as someone who had never visited before, I was excited to see what all the fuss was about.

Located within the Sandman Signature Hotel in Aberdeen City Centre, Chop has always felt like a destination in its own right, rather than simply a hotel restaurant.

The contemporary interior strikes a balance between stylish and welcoming, with warm lighting, sleek décor and an atmosphere suited to everything from date night and family celebrations to after work drinks.

The launch evening drew a lively crowd as guests mingled over cocktails and canapés while chefs showcased the new menu at live cooking stations, allowing diners to see the dishes come together before sampling them.

The centrepiece of the evening was undoubtedly the steak station, where guests could try a selection of cuts including ribeye, sirloin and fillet. The smoked ribeye was particularly memorable, packed with a rich, smoky flavour that elevated my favourite cut. The fillet, meanwhile, was everything you would expect from the tender premium cut, while the sirloin offered a leaner but equally flavourful alternative.

One of the most intriguing additions to the menu was the redefine flank – a plant-based steak created using 3D-printed technology. Surprisingly, it delivered an impressive texture and depth of flavour, proving that innovation and sustainability can sit comfortably alongside classic steakhouse favourites.

Beyond the grill, the menu showcased a variety of dishes.

The seared king scallops, served with a velvety pea purée and fragrant yuzu citrus, were beautifully balanced and packed with flavour.

A tomato and whipped feta bruschetta offered a lighter option, while the chicken and mushroom rigatoni, coated in a rich Madeira cream sauce delivered pure comfort food.

One of the standout side dishes was the crispy truffle mashed potatoes. Creamy, indulgent and topped with bacon bits, crème fraîche and cheddar, they offered the perfect accompaniment to the steak dishes.

Onto dessert, the white chocolate brownie, served with whipped cream was satisfyingly rich and sweet without being overpowering, while Scottish influences continued to shine through elsewhere on the menu with offerings such as haggis bon bons and a cranachan-inspired cheesecake.

As Bethany kindly offered to be the designated driver for the evening, I was able to sample some of the drinks menu too.

Guests were welcomed with a glass of prosecco before enjoying a selection of cocktails including a refreshing Hugo Spritz, a Spicy Margarita and an Espresso Martini.

Chop's menu refresh is a welcome addition to the city.

It combines familiar flavours with contemporary twists while embracing new food trends without losing sight of its steakhouse roots. It's no wonder why the venue has become such a popular spot in Aberdeen's dining scene.

Whether you're a regular looking to try something new or a first time visitor like me, there's plenty on the menu worth ordering.

After an evening of good food and great cocktails, it's safe to say Chop has earned a spot on my list of places to return to.

## Scarf launches new strategy to create a fairer and greener Scotland

Scarf has launched its new 2026–29 strategy, setting out an ambitious vision to tackle fuel poverty, improve energy efficiency, and support Scotland's transition to a low-carbon future.

Building on 40 years of frontline experience, the strategy outlines how the charity will expand support for households, strengthen partnerships, influence policy, and

invest in digital services to increase its reach and impact across Scotland.

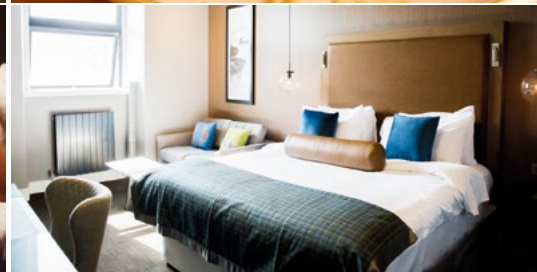
The strategy comes at a time when fuel poverty continues to affect households across the country, with Scarf committed to helping more people access practical support, improve the energy efficiency of their homes, and reduce energy costs.

## Apache marks 50 years of production from the Beryl Field

Apache North Sea is celebrating 50 years of production from the Beryl Field, marking a major milestone for one of the North Sea's most pioneering and enduring offshore assets.

Since first oil flowed from Beryl Alpha on 11 June 1976, the field has played a significant role in helping meet the U.K.'s energy needs, supporting jobs, driving economic value and helping shape the development of the North Sea industry.

Discovered in 1972, the Beryl Field, located approximately 100 miles east of Shetland, quickly established itself as a landmark development. In 1973, the decision was made to build the world's first concrete deepwater production platform, Beryl Alpha, a groundbreaking engineering achievement that helped redefine offshore energy development. Under the stewardship of Mobil North Sea and later ExxonMobil, Beryl became one of the North Sea's most significant and enduring offshore developments.



## Enjoy a Getaway to Sandman Signature Aberdeen Hotel & Spa

Located in one of Aberdeen's most historic buildings, in the heart of the Granite City, lies Sandman Signature Aberdeen Hotel & Spa. With 218 beautifully appointed guest rooms including Executive bedrooms, studios and two-bedroom suites, there's truly something to suit your needs.

Hotel facilities include our Signature Spa, plus state-of-the-art meeting and conference facilities, a grand ballroom and a fully equipped fitness room. Alongside parking options, free high-speed Internet and our on-site restaurant, Chop Grill & Bar.

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# Before AI, businesses need visibility to empower supply chain resilience

**Author:** Jaye Deighton, Global Head of ICT and Innovation, Peterson Energies



**AI has quickly become one of the most talked-about topics in business. Across boardrooms, organisations are exploring how AI can improve efficiency, enhance decision-making, and create competitive advantage.**

Yet before fully committing to AI, organisations should first consider two fundamental questions - do they truly understand their own operations, and do they truly understand the quality of their data? Put simply, are they visibility-enabled before attempting to become AI-enabled?

Visibility is the foundation that makes AI valuable. Without a clear understanding of operations and trusted information, even the most advanced AI tools will struggle to deliver meaningful results.

A personal example highlights the principle. For a period of time, I regularly visited a local supermarket and noticed they were frequently out of almond croissants, which may or may not be a personal favourite of mine. Whenever they did have them available, the self-service checkout offered no option to select an almond croissant. Staff would simply advise customers to process the item as a regular croissant because both products were priced the same. On the surface, it seemed like a minor issue. In reality, it created a significant blind spot.

Every time an almond croissant was recorded as a regular croissant, the supermarket lost valuable information about customer demand. Their systems consistently understated sales of almond croissants, leading to inaccurate ordering decisions and continued stock shortages.

What appeared to be a supply issue was actually an information issue - a challenge many organisations encounter every day.

Operational workarounds, disconnected systems, duplicated records, spreadsheet-based processes, and critical information stored in email inboxes rather than central platforms all reduce visibility. Individually, these issues may seem insignificant. Collectively, they create an incomplete picture of what is really happening across a business.

This matters because information has value. If someone walked out of a business carrying a bag filled with cash every day, it would trigger immediate concern. Yet organisations often allow value to leak away through poor-quality data, fragmented processes, and limited visibility without fully appreciating the impact on performance and decision-making.

As businesses increasingly look to adopt AI, these challenges become even more important. AI is a powerful tool, but it cannot create certainty from unreliable information. In many ways, AI amplifies the environment in which it operates. If data is incomplete or inconsistent, the outputs will reflect those weaknesses. If information is accurate, accessible, and trusted, AI can unlock significant efficiencies and insights.

The businesses that stand to benefit most from AI will not necessarily be those making the largest technology investments, but those with the clearest understanding of their operations and the greatest visibility across their activities. This is particularly relevant in industries such as energy, where operational complexity continues to increase and decisions often need to be made quickly and with confidence.

Visibility across assets, activities, and information flows is no longer simply an operational advantage; it is a strategic necessity.

At Peterson Energies, we have not only invested capital in creating and managing a market-leading software solution, we have also invested significant time and energy throughout all levels of our organisation to understand how we align data and operations to create better and more effective working days, more efficient operations, and enhanced strategic and operational decision-making. Since 2012, our Lighthouse software suite has been developed alongside operational experts who use it every day and has supported the movement of more than 10 million tonnes of cargo. By bringing critical operational information together within a single platform, Lighthouse allows Peterson, and our customers, to gain greater visibility across complex supply chains, improve operational performance, and make decisions with greater confidence.

That is why digital transformation should be viewed as more than a technology initiative. At its heart, it is about creating visibility and ensuring organisations have a trusted, connected view of their operations, enabling them to identify trends earlier, improve coordination, strengthen resilience, and make better-informed decisions.

Before businesses can become AI-enabled, they must first become visibility-enabled. In an increasingly complex and data-driven world, the ability to access, trust, and act upon accurate information may prove to be one of the most important competitive advantages an organisation can possess.



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**Laura McNaughton**  
*Product Development Manager*  
OPITO

### Describe your early career path.

Early on, I focused on learning as much as I could. That naturally led me into learning and development and education roles, where I enjoyed helping people build confidence and capability. Over time, I became more interested in how learning is designed and delivered at scale, how standards, tools, and frameworks make good practice consistent. That curiosity is what took me into product development, where I can combine education, stakeholder engagement, and continuous improvement to create solutions that support people to do their roles effectively and safely.

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

I've worked across multiple sectors. I tend to focus on the role itself and the skills I can bring, because I find that most experience is transferable. Moving between industries and sectors can be a real advantage, new perspectives often strengthen teams and help organisations see problems differently. I have rejoined the energy sector in my current role, and it felt like a natural fit: it's a global, highly collaborative environment where high standards really matter. Joining OPITO brought together my background in learning and development with my interest in building frameworks and products that support educational development.

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

The people. I get to meet and collaborate with colleagues and stakeholders across a huge range of functions, sectors, and regions, and I'm always learning from their expertise and perspectives.

## In partnership with



That variety keeps the work interesting, and it means we can bring the best ideas together to improve what we do.

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

My biggest recurring challenge has been deciding what to focus on next in my own development. I'm naturally curious, so I've sometimes tried to learn everything at once and ended up overstretched. The lesson has been to pause, reflect on what will add the most value right now, and remember that "not now" doesn't mean "not ever".

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

Keep learning, it's the most reliable route to success. Even when things don't go to plan, the reflection, and lessons you take from it will prepare you better for what comes next.

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

I want to keep learning, and the best way, for me, is helping others learn. That means building strong standards that enable our global network of centres to support learners to develop the knowledge and skills they need to do their roles safely and with confidence.

### What does the future look like for you?

People are often surprised by how broad OPITO's product range is. Our standards and global qualification frameworks span a wide mix of topics and regions.

Before I joined, I mostly associated OPITO with BOSIET and MIST (two of our best-known products), but there's so much more, from Heli frameworks to decarbonisation qualifications and everything in between. That variety means my days can look very different depending on the topic and who we're meeting with to discuss or develop.

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## DeepOcean awarded Foinaven contract

Global ocean services provider DeepOcean has entered into an agreement to support bp in the decommissioning and recycling of subsea equipment at the operator's Foinaven field, West of Shetland, UK.

Under the contract, DeepOcean will remove 10 flexible process risers and three dynamic subsea umbilicals from the former Foinaven FPSO (Floating Production, Storage, and Offloading) location.

In addition, DeepOcean will recover a static umbilical. Various amounts of buoyancy, riser protection, clamps, and other appurtenance associated with each riser will also be removed during recovery operations.

DeepOcean will provide engineering, project management and offshore execution for the project that will be managed and executed by DeepOcean's Aberdeen-based operations in the UK.

The offshore scope will be carried out using a high-specification subsea construction vessel operated by DeepOcean.



## Integrity QHSE recognised under the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme

Aberdeen-based Integrity QHSE has been awarded Silver status under the UK Government's Defence Employer Recognition Scheme, recognising its commitment to supporting members of the Armed Forces community.

The Queens Road-headquartered QHSE consultancy was among 331 organisations across the UK to receive the accolade this year.

The company said many of its experienced health, safety, quality and environmental professionals come from military backgrounds, bringing values such as discipline, service and resilience to the business.

## We Too! and Codona's mark year of growing impact

We Too! and Codona's are marking a successful year of partnership that continues to expand inclusive opportunities for children and young people with disabilities across the North-east of Scotland.

Over the last year, Codona's has contributed more than £12,000 to support the work of Aberdeen charity We Too!, helping families access welcoming and supportive experiences that many previously felt were out of reach through sensory or communication needs or physical access requirements.



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# the MEMBER MEET the M



**Dr Louise Henderson,**  
*Managing Director*  
Bon Accord Care

## Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

We deliver innovative support that helps to drive transformation and growth of health and social care services across Aberdeen City,

combining expertise with a passion for making a difference in the lives of those we support, their families, our staff and our partners through positive impact.

## Who are your customers?

People we support are residents in Aberdeen City, and we link closely with forward-thinking local partners across the health and social care sector to help them achieve their goals.

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

Our biggest challenge is adapting to rapid market changes.

As demand for support and the complexity of care both increase, and funding for health and social

care becomes more limited, this presents an opportunity to lead with agility and set new standards in our sector.

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

Embrace collaboration—sharing knowledge and building strong integrated networks can unlock unexpected opportunities and drive collective success.

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

The best part is connecting with like-minded professionals and sharing resources that support both personal and organisational growth.



**Brian Barbour,**  
*Director*  
Storage Den

## Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

Storage Den is essentially an extension of our customers' homes or businesses. By using remote management and automation technology we provide indoor and drive up self storage that not only provides the highest level of security but also focuses on convenience and accessibility.

Shareable app access between 5am - 11pm, 7 days a week allows us to provide a service many 'manned' facilities cannot. We also have made the booking process as easy as buying something on Amazon where you can rent a unit within a couple of minutes online.

## Who are your customers?

Around a third of our customers are businesses of varying sizes and types.

This can range from property services, trades, events, professional services and oil and gas all through to e-commerce.

Most businesses tend to benefit from self storage as it provides a cost effective way to get more space for stock or tools.

For our domestic customers, we have everything from house movers, decluttering, death and divorce. Over the holiday periods we get fairly busy with students either who live abroad or are needing somewhere to store their possessions in-between flat moves.

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

Awareness of self storage continues to be one of the biggest challenges, the lack of it or misconceptions about it.

The industry is changing massively, there is a lot of modernisation and utilisation of technology and Storage Den always strives to be at the forefront.

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

If you are starting a business, document the journey and post it. People prefer personable authentic stories over generic company branding.

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

For me it has been the networking events.

I love meeting with other business owners and making connections, especially when over time they become customers.

# MEMBER MEET *the* ME



**Andrew Bruce,**  
*Managing Director*  
NEREC Ltd

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

NEREC provides specialist exterior and industrial cleaning services across the North-east, from gutter and cladding cleaning to tank, plant, and internal deep cleans.

We help organisations protect assets, improve safety, and maintain standards through planned, professional cleaning delivered safely, reliably, and with minimal disruption.

## **Who are your customers?**

We work with commercial and industrial clients, facility managers, factoring companies, local authorities, and energy-sector businesses, alongside domestic customers who need professional exterior cleaning and maintenance support.

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

As demand grows, our challenge is reaching and developing new staff who want long-term careers in a hands-on industry.

The opportunity is building and training a skilled local team, creating jobs while strengthening our ability to support clients across the region.

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

Consistency is key.

Showing up regularly, delivering what you promise, and staying visible builds trust over time and creates opportunities you might not see straight away.

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

The connections.

The Chamber opens doors to relationships, collaboration, and conversations that simply wouldn't happen otherwise, especially for growing local businesses.



**Derek Crombie,**  
*Managing Director*  
Geoactive

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

Geoactive empowers energy professionals with advanced interpretation and analytics software, delivering smarter insights for subsurface evaluation. Our innovative tools streamline workflows, enhance accuracy, and integrate seamlessly, helping clients make confident

decisions that drive efficiency and maximise value across exploration, development, and production.

## **Who are your customers?**

Geoactive serves energy professionals, including geoscientists, petrophysicists, and reservoir engineers, working in oil and gas operators, service companies, and consultancies, helping them interpret subsurface data, optimise workflows, and make informed decisions across exploration, development, and production.

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

The energy sector's digital transformation and sustainability drive present both challenges and opportunities. Geoactive can lead by delivering AI-driven analytics, automation, and cloud-based solutions for hydrocarbons and emerging energy sources. Expanding into carbon storage, geothermal, and renewables positions us as the trusted partner for smarter decisions and future-ready workflows.

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

Embrace digital transformation and adaptability. Invest in technology that streamlines operations and enhances customer experience. Build strong partnerships within the Chamber to share insights and collaborate on growth opportunities. Stay ahead by diversifying offerings, focusing on sustainability, and leveraging data-driven decision-making to remain competitive in a rapidly changing market.

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

The best thing about being a Chamber member is the sense of community and collaboration. It opens doors to valuable networking, shared knowledge, and partnerships that help businesses grow. It's about connecting with like-minded professionals, amplifying your voice, and accessing resources that drive success.



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The hotel works closely with a number of local, specialist companies that will handle all the details of your team-building event to ensure a memorable and stress-free experience.

Further underlining Macdonald Pittodrie House's reputation as a venue of choice is the range of gourmet private dining options available. The historic venue proudly showcases Aberdeenshire's larder and remains committed to offering the finest locally-sourced produce and fresh ingredients from renowned suppliers such as John Ross Jr. and Macsween.

For more traditional conference and meeting facilities, Macdonald Pittodrie House can accommodate up to 100 delegates indoors. The team personalises the design of each event that it hosts by incorporating creative touches wherever possible.



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W: [www.macdonaldhotels.co.uk/pittodrie-house](http://www.macdonaldhotels.co.uk/pittodrie-house)

# Leadership in hospitality: Navigating change and leading forward

**Author:** Anurag Rai, Leadership Expert, Organisational Psychologist & Founder, AMHWAL Academy



**In hospitality, your customer experience will only ever be as strong as your employee experience.**

The hospitality sector has always been fast-paced, people-driven, and demanding. However, the post-COVID landscape has reshaped the industry in ways that require a new approach to leadership.

Having spent over a decade in hospitality, I have seen the resilience of this sector firsthand. But the challenges leaders face today are deeper, more complex, and more interconnected than ever before.

One of the most pressing issues is talent shortage and retention. Many professionals left the industry during the pandemic and did not return.

Those who remain are often stretched, leading to burnout and disengagement.

I have experienced operations running with minimal staffing, where leaders are constantly firefighting just to maintain service standards.

At the same time, employee expectations have shifted. Today's workforce seeks purpose, growth, flexibility, and wellbeing.

The traditional culture of long hours and high pressure is no longer sustainable and often pushes people away.

Rising operational costs have added further pressure. Leaders are expected to maintain high standards while managing tighter budgets.

This creates a difficult balance between delivering commercial results and supporting team wellbeing.

Customer expectations have also evolved. Guests are no longer satisfied with good service alone.

They expect personalised, memorable experiences, and consistency. In a world of online reviews, even a single poor experience can impact reputation.

Amid all this, leadership fatigue is becoming increasingly common. Many leaders are carrying the weight of staff shortages, operational demands, and future uncertainty. This often goes unnoticed but has a significant impact on performance and decision-making.

These challenges highlight a fundamental shift.

Leadership in hospitality is no longer just about managing operations. It is about leading people.

To navigate the current and future landscape, leaders must evolve. Five ways leaders can overcome current and future challenges.

1. Leadership must be developed at every level. Supervisors and team leaders shape employees' daily experience and have the greatest

influence on culture. When people are forced to work hard, it creates stress. When they want to work hard, it's called passion.

2. Leaders need to move from managing tasks to understanding people. When individuals feel valued and supported, performance improves naturally.
3. Creating psychological safety is critical. Teams must feel comfortable speaking up, learning from mistakes, and supporting one another, especially in high-pressure environments.
4. Retention needs as much focus as recruitment. Simple actions such as recognition, development opportunities, and regular check-ins can significantly reduce turnover.
5. Leaders must balance kindness with candour.

Clear expectations are essential, but how they are communicated determines whether teams feel motivated or disengaged.

Hospitality has always been about people serving people. The future of the sector will not be defined solely by products or pricing, but by the quality of leadership.

Find out more about Anurag's work and AMHWAL Academy by visiting [www.amhwal.com](http://www.amhwal.com)

# WORDS OF ADVICE



**Natalie Shand,**  
Commercial Manager, Goldstar Services Ltd

## Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

Goldstar is an award-winning provider of cleaning and maintenance services to the commercial and domestic sectors across the North-east of Scotland. We're an Aberdeen based, family-run business that has served our region since 1980. Our commercial division is proud to serve many of Scotland's major house builders.

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

My management style is very laid back. I'm firm but fair. It's all about the team and I would never ask any of the staff to do something that I wouldn't do myself. That helps build relationships, trust and respect between me and our teams.

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

The hardest barrier to overcome has been to build our reputation as an integral part of a successful site team. Construction cleaning hasn't always been valued in this way. I've worked hard to build relationships to ensure people appreciate that construction cleaning is a vital part of a successful construction project. We are often the last people in a new build before handover, so our clients rely on us to deliver immaculate service to ensure their clients are totally happy. Our service reflects their reputation as well as our own, and that's a big responsibility. Seeing the Goldstar team on site, working together, in strong client partnerships, has changed the perception of construction cleaning and the role we play in a business's success.

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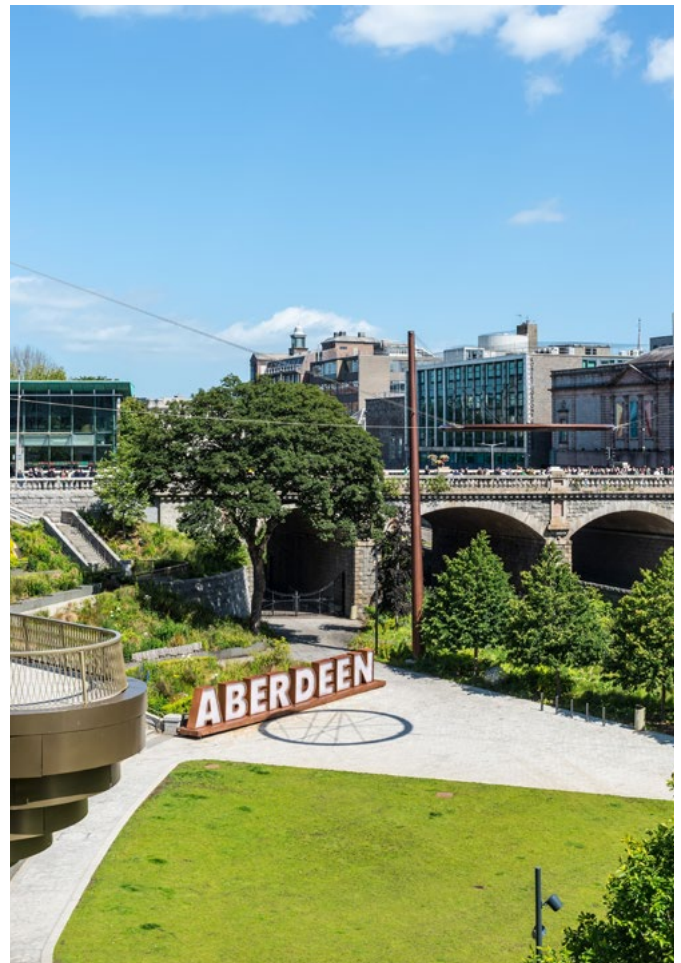
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## Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire chosen to host major travel media event in 2027



Media Getaway - the annual travel PR event that brings travel media from across the UK & Ireland together with PR representatives of travel brands from all over the world - will be hosted in and around Aberdeen in June 2027.

The successful bid was led by the Aberdeen Convention Bureau, a division of VisitAberdeenshire, and supported by VisitScotland.

Announcing the destination, Howard Salinger, MD Travel Connection Group, said: "Travel media events in the UK tend to be centred around the South East of England, particularly in London, as that's where most of the big media titles are based.

"However, we set up Media Getaway in 2022 to show that these events can take place anywhere in the UK, and through hosting them we can bring people to parts of the UK they may never have visited before.

"Over the six years we've been hosting this event, every one of our host destinations has benefitted from having the event in their city, or region, and we hope that Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire will see a similar reaction after hosting the 2027 event, with lots of media coverage produced after their visit."

Chris Foy, CEO at VisitAberdeenshire, commented: "I am delighted that Travel Connection Group has chosen to bring Media Getaway to the Granite City in June 2027. Delegates can look forward to experiencing Aberdonian hospitality, and finding inspiration for stories in a region that boasts all the ingredients of a classic Scottish getaway combined with contemporary culture in a modern, uncrowded city."

Neil Brownlee, Head of Business Events for VisitScotland, said: "It is fantastic news to see Media Getaway, a key date in the calendar for UK travel media, returning to Scotland next year, this time in Aberdeen.

"Business events like this help showcase Scotland's credentials in universally important and relevant sectors, such as media, while at the same time attracting influential delegates who support the visitor economy by staying, dining and shopping in the cities they visit.

"We know delegates can expect the first-class hospitality and visitor experience that Scotland and the North-east is famous for when they come to Aberdeen next year."



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**Matt Pullinger**  
*Operations Director*  
Northwood North East

### Describe your early career path.

It's a funny story really, as I fell into this line of work by accident. While at university, I started a small part time cleaning business to support myself through my studies. I began taking on more jobs, including window cleaning for residential and commercial properties across the North-east. I genuinely enjoyed it - being outdoors, meeting all sorts of people and doing work that felt rewarding. I also worked part time with some friends and one day, a customer mentioned that he and his wife were opening a new estate and lettings agency in Rosemount and needed a window cleaner.

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

After meeting Steven and Laura, who were the new owners of Northwood, I quoted for the job and started cleaning the windows at their Rosemount office. We got chatting about the plans for the business and potential for growth in the North-east market and the staff they were looking for. Two interviews later, I sold my business to my father-in-law who had just been made redundant from Inverurie paper mill and started my career as a Lettings Negotiator at Northwood.

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

The best part of my job is meeting new people and hearing about how they acquired their property, their journey so far and how best we can help them. Working in the property industry is never dull - no two days are ever alike - and this for me is a real highlight. I also get to enjoy being in and out of the office, visiting interesting properties across the beautiful North-east.

## In partnership with



### What has been your biggest career challenge or proudest achievement?

There have been many things over my 17-year career but one of the main highlights has been the opening of our two Aberdeenshire offices; the first opened in Inverurie in 2021 and the second on Banchory High Street in 2024.

Growing up in Peterculter and living now with our family in Inch, it's amazing to see how the business has gone from strength to strength serving the communities I grew up and live in.

When I think back to our very first small office on Rosemount Place and what we have achieved, I feel very proud.

Learning to trust that I'm in this role for a reason has been a big personal milestone.

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

With any job you do, whether volunteering, paper round, hotel work or your eventual chosen career, each role will play a vital part in training you for success, so stick at it!

### What does the future look like for you?

The past 17 years have been an amazing journey during which the team and I have endured some very challenging times such as the pandemic, and some incredible highs.

Property is an industry that never sits still, which is what makes it so interesting.

I'll carry on supporting the team and our clients as the business continues to grow and thrive in what is, in my opinion, one of the greatest places to live and work in the world.

The future to me looks very exciting!

# Beyond visitor numbers: What tourism data tells us about regional growth



**Tourism is often measured in visitor numbers, hotel occupancy and headline spend. But for Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, its value runs much deeper. Hospitality and tourism are not simply lifestyle sectors; they are critical contributors to economic resilience, city centre vitality, business confidence and the wider perception of the North-east as a place to live, work, invest and visit.**

Understanding that impact properly requires more than counting footfall.

It requires evidence. In an environment where both public and private investment must be carefully justified, data-led decision-making has become essential. Knowing how visitors behave, where they spend, what drives return visits and how events influence local businesses allows better decisions to be made, not just for tourism strategy, but for wider regional growth.

For almost a decade, Aberdeen's Christmas Village has provided a valuable example of how events can support the local economy. Long-term evaluation builds a clearer picture of how the event influences hospitality businesses, city centre trading and the visitor experience during one of the most important commercial periods of the year.

Visitor surveys, business feedback and economic impact analysis allow stakeholders to move beyond assumptions: which days drive the strongest spend? How far are visitors travelling? Are local businesses seeing meaningful uplift? Are people more likely to return to the city centre after attending?

The same principle applies to major flagship events such as the Tall Ships Races Aberdeen 2025. Events of this scale benefit not only hospitality businesses but retail, transport, food and drink suppliers, cultural venues and the wider city centre ecosystem.

There is also the less visible, but equally important, effect on place perception, how residents feel about their city and how external audiences view Aberdeen as a destination.

Capturing that impact through data ensures legacy planning is based on measurable outcomes rather than anecdotal success.

Looking ahead, opportunities such as Rally Scotland and the return of the FIA World Rally Championship from 2027 further highlight tourism's economic potential for the North-east. Events of this calibre bring international visibility, visitor spend and long-term destination value, reinforcing why the sector should be viewed as a core part of regional growth strategy.

This matters because hospitality and tourism are deeply connected to wider economic diversification. In 2024 alone, tourism generated an estimated £1.27billion in economic impact across Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, supporting more than 11,400 full-time equivalent jobs and attracting almost 3.7 million staying visitors to the region (VisitAberdeenshire, 2025)<sup>1</sup>.

Beyond direct visitor spend, the sector supports SMEs, sustains employment across urban and rural communities, strengthens local supply chains and helps make the region more attractive to talent, investment and inward business activity.

It also complements the North-east's traditional strengths. A strong visitor economy supports conference tourism, business travel and international reputation — all of which matter for sectors like energy, technology, medicine and professional services.

With the region's visitor economy projected to grow further, hospitality and tourism should be seen not as separate from economic development, but as an increasingly important part of it (VisitAberdeenshire, 2025)<sup>2</sup>.

Good research helps us understand not only what visitors contribute today, but where future opportunities lie. It helps identify gaps, improve experiences and support stronger investment decisions.

Most importantly, it ensures that growth is planned, measured and sustainable.

As major events and destination-led initiatives continue to grow across the North-east, the ability to capture meaningful insight and evaluate economic impact will become increasingly important for businesses, organisers and policymakers alike. From visitor behaviour and spend analysis to stakeholder perception and legacy measurement, robust research plays a vital role in shaping future success.

The question is no longer whether hospitality and tourism matter to the North-east economy as they clearly do.

The real opportunity lies in understanding how to maximise that value through better insight, stronger evidence and long-term thinking.

Because in a competitive visitor economy, success is not measured simply by how many people come, but by the lasting economic impact they leave behind.

1. VisitAberdeenshire (2025) Value of Tourism in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire 2024. Available at: [industry.visitabdn.com/home/research-and-insights/industry-insights/value-of-tourism-in-aberdeen-and-aberdeenshire/2024/](https://industry.visitabdn.com/home/research-and-insights/industry-insights/value-of-tourism-in-aberdeen-and-aberdeenshire/2024/)

2. VisitAberdeenshire (2025) Our Activity & Impact. Available at: [industry.visitabdn.com/our-activity-impact/](https://industry.visitabdn.com/our-activity-impact/)



**Samira Heshmatzadeh**, Senior Research Executive, Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce

[samira.heshmatzadeh@agcc.co.uk](mailto:samira.heshmatzadeh@agcc.co.uk)



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## Discover Aberdeenshire this summer – and help protect what makes it special

Visitors are being warmly invited to experience the very best of Aberdeenshire this summer, from its dramatic coastline and golden beaches to its rolling countryside, charming towns and attractions.

With longer days and unforgettable scenery, the region remains one of Scotland's top destinations, offering something for everyone, whether it's coastal walks, castle trails, wildlife spotting or simply relaxing in one of the many welcoming communities.

At the same time, Aberdeenshire Council and its partners are encouraging everyone to continue the overwhelmingly positive trend of responsible tourism, while reminding visitors that a small minority of behaviours continue to have a significant impact on local communities and the environment.

Alan Wood, Director of the council's Environment and Infrastructure Services, said: "We are proud to welcome visitors from near and far to enjoy everything Aberdeenshire has to offer from our stunning beaches and breathtaking countryside to the warm hospitality of our communities.

"The vast majority of those who visit treat our area with respect and we'd like to say a sincere thank you for helping to keep Aberdeenshire a safe, clean and enjoyable place for everyone."

Calling on people to clear up after themselves while enjoying the region's spectacular scenery, Mr Wood added: "By working together, everyone can help ensure Aberdeenshire remains a place of natural beauty, vibrant communities and unforgettable experiences."



# WORDS OF ADVICE



**Lesley Lindsay,**  
*Projects Manager, Scotia Homes Ltd*

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

For over 30 years, Scotia has been committed to building high-quality homes across Scotland, with a clear purpose: to enrich lives through the homes and communities we create. We don't just build houses, we create places where people feel a sense of belonging. Every decision we make is guided by a focus on quality, thoughtful design, and well-chosen locations, with our customers firmly at the centre. Integrity underpins everything we do. We believe in doing what's right, not what's easy, and leading with care, for our people, our customers, and the communities we serve. By working in close partnership with homeowners, we aim to create

lasting value and shape a better future for generations to come.

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

My management style is grounded in fairness, openness, and strong communication. I believe the best results come from creating an environment where people feel respected, supported, and confident to contribute their ideas. I place real importance on listening and ensuring individuals feel heard and valued. At the same time, I recognise the need for clarity and decisiveness. In fast-paced environments, providing clear direction and making informed decisions helps maintain momentum and gives teams confidence.

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

One of the biggest barriers I faced early in my career was moving straight from university into a project management role. I had to quickly earn the respect of experienced colleagues, build my confidence, and learn on the job while taking on real responsibility. I tackled this by asking questions, learning from others, and taking ownership of my work. Over time, I grew more confident in making decisions and leading projects, and it taught me the importance of being proactive, adaptable, and willing to learn from those around you.



**Jill Williamson,**  
*Group HR Director,*  
STR

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

At STR, we help our partners gather critical marine data using our innovative subsea survey equipment and services. From the first call right through to project completion, our brilliant team goes above and beyond. With ambition, drive and a people-first culture, we're focused on being the best in our field.

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

My style is built on trust and open communication. Balancing structured check-ins with everyday conversations has helped me build strong relationships and clear expectations. It works because it gives people confidence to grow and take the lead, while knowing I'm there to guide and support their development.

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

The biggest challenge was transitioning from a large HR team to a standalone role, focusing on enhancing the employee experience. After joining STR, it was clear I'd entered a company that values a people-focused approach. This supportive environment enabled me to deliver impactful initiatives across the global business.

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

Life is what you make it. Work hard, step outside your comfort zone and opportunities appear. Real growth comes from embracing challenges and staying curious. That mindset has shaped my career, kept me learning after 20 years in HR, and made the journey more fulfilling and varied.

# AMUSE

BY KEVIN DALGLEISH

For those seeking the true Amuse dining experience, the restaurants acclaimed six course tasting menu offers a carefully curated journey through some of its finest creations.

Tasting Menu / 125

Sommelier Wine Pairing / 75

Fine Wine Pairing / 95



# Aberdeen's Opportunity: A city that leads the way on ending homelessness

**Author:** Jeanette Forbes OBE, Chair of NEON Aberdeen



**Aberdeen has always been a city defined by leadership, innovation and reinvention. From the granite that shapes our skyline to the sectors that power our economy, the North-east has never stood still. That same ambition is needed to tackle one of the most complex challenges facing our communities and our economy: homelessness.**

Homelessness is more than a social issue – it is an economic one. Giving young people the opportunity to work, learn or train is one of the most powerful tools we have to prevent homelessness and help them build their future.

When young people experience housing instability, their access to education, training and work is undermined at a critical point.

This is something I am, and have always been passionate about, and why I have joined Homewards to bring together business, public services and the voluntary sector to focus on early action and long-term system change, with employment as a central pillar.

*Homewards is The Royal Foundation of The Prince and Princess of Wales's five year, programme demonstrating that homelessness can be prevented – making it rare, brief and unrepeated. Homewards is working in six locations across the UK, including Aberdeen, with the aim of each location being on a clear path towards preventing homelessness for good by 2028.*

It's important, as business leaders and employers, to consider if you would recognise the signs that your staff were close to experiencing homelessness. Have you made yourself available to your staff to come and talk about this issue?

## Why business leadership matters

In March, Homewards Aberdeen launched NEON, the New Employment Opportunities Network.

I am proud to chair NEON alongside businesses, training providers, charities and local authorities who share one clear aim: to support young people aged 16–24 into sustainable work to prevent homelessness.

NEON is not about short-term placements. It's about opening doors and making sure young people are supported once they walk through them.

For businesses, NEON will help unlock new talent, address skills shortages and improve retention rates for our city.

## Where Aberdeen can make a difference

Aberdeen's business community has a proud track record of innovation. Collaboration and long-term thinking are part of our DNA.

NEON builds on that strength, creating a shared platform where economic resilience and social impact go hand in hand.

Imagine a city where employers work together to identify skills gaps and create accessible

routes into those roles, supporting young people earlier alongside frontline services.

This is not a distant ambition. It is already taking shape when we hold our monthly meetings right here in our city.

Aberdeen is a city that sets the pace. With businesses stepping forward, we now have the opportunity to make a real difference for our young people, our workforce, and our local economy.

We are looking for new employers to join us and commit to hiring and supporting at-risk young people locally. We can find the support. Do you have the jobs?

From construction to hospitality, we all need dedicated employees who are loyal, driven and passionate about our businesses.

If you are a pioneering business leader who wants to unlock talent, strengthen your workforce, and play a meaningful role in preventing homelessness in Aberdeen, we would love to hear from you at [homewards@royalfoundation.com](mailto:homewards@royalfoundation.com)

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# DEVELOP YOUR PEOPLE. STRENGTHEN YOUR BUSINESS

In hospitality and tourism, people are your business. Every customer interaction, team handover and problem solved behind the scenes shapes the experience your guests remember.

According to Conference News\*, a 2026 UK hospitality training study found businesses lose approximately £55million annually through ineffective training and unresolved skills gaps. The report estimated that 2.8 million working hours are lost each year due to employees not becoming fully proficient in their roles.

For Scotland's hospitality and tourism sector, a lack of soft skills training can lead to lower customer satisfaction, increased workplace conflict, reduced productivity and higher staff turnover. Developing these skills is critical to delivering exceptional service and maintaining Scotland's reputation as a world-class destination.

Our practical, interactive courses help individuals and teams strengthen the skills that matter most, including:

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Participants gain practical tools they can apply immediately, helping them work more effectively, deliver better customer experiences and contribute to stronger business performance.

View all our management, leadership and professional development courses.



# MEET THE TRAINER: SUE WRIGHT

Sue began her international trade career over 30 years ago as a junior shipping clerk for an engineering and manufacturing company.

Inspired by her work, she quickly progressed and saw this as a career path, going on to study to post graduate level with The Institute of Export. She moved on after several years to take up a shipping manager role for an engineering company. The work involved project managing contracts of supply and delivery across the world and working with Letters of Credit for payment. There were multiple parties involved in the cross-trade movements, with Customs and HMRC compliance being paramount.

Some of this work involved Special Import Procedures, Import Licences and Controls of various items. In 2010, with this vast amount of knowledge, Sue started Exporter Services and delivers courses in various areas of International Trade.



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## Scottish manufacturers confident of growth despite market challenges, MHA survey finds

Scottish manufacturers are more confident about the year ahead than they were 12 months ago, with new research from MHA pointing to a sector that is continuing to invest despite rising operational pressures and an ongoing backdrop of global macro-economic uncertainty.

The 2026 MHA Manufacturing & Engineering Report shows that 85% senior executives surveyed in Scotland expect growth above 3% in the next 12 months, up from 75% in 2025 – despite citing ongoing conflicts in Iran and Ukraine, cyber security, tax increases and energy costs as hurdles. The UK and Ireland growth figure was 81%.

The Scottish findings are contained in a new survey by MHA, one of the country's leading accountancy and business advisory firms which has offices in Edinburgh and Aberdeen. The survey was completed by 1,000 UK and Ireland C-suite leaders.

While there was positivity from Scottish manufacturing leaders that 75% would grow by at least 3% to 5% in the next year – the highest across the UK – this was tempered by the fact that Scotland has the lowest figures for potentially growing the business by more than 6% to 10% in the next 12 months – a figure of 10%, compared to the UK-Ireland 25.2% result.

Manufacturing is one of the key sectors for Stuart MacPherson, Partner at MHA in Aberdeen. He said: “The Scottish results in respect of growth are interesting in that the region has the highest percentage of companies expecting growth across all regions, yet the lowest expectations in terms of higher growth.

“That suggests that there is underlying confidence among Scottish companies but with an understanding that the market remains difficult due to the various external factors that are impacting the UK and world economy such as geopolitical conflict in the Middle East.

“The MHA Report also highlights that cybersecurity is one of the biggest concerns among Scottish respondents, with regulation also featuring as a significant obstacle – ranking second in Scottish responses compared to sixth overall.

“Like other areas, Scottish firms see the apprenticeship programme as a key plank in meeting the skills gap, although actively recruiting staff also features highly – more so than other regions – suggesting there is a market of skilled staff available in Scotland.

“Overall, the report paints a cautiously optimistic picture for Scottish manufacturing as long as steps are taken to deal with the challenges.”



Stuart MacPherson, Partner at MHA in Aberdeen

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# MAKING WAVES

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Exhibition  
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**Adam Sharp**

Adam Sharp has joined Chorus as Head of Content, as the company expands its team to meet rising demand for its workforce training and compliance projects across safety-critical industries.



**Adam Shepherd**

FENNEX has announced the promotion of Adam Shepherd to Product Development Lead for FennexSafe™, marking another milestone in both Adam's progression and the continued evolution of the FennexSafe™ platform.



**Alexander "Fred" Stockton**

Aberdeen-headquartered DDK Positioning has appointed Alexander "Fred" Stockton to the role of Managing Director, as the company enters its second decade of trading poised for expansion.



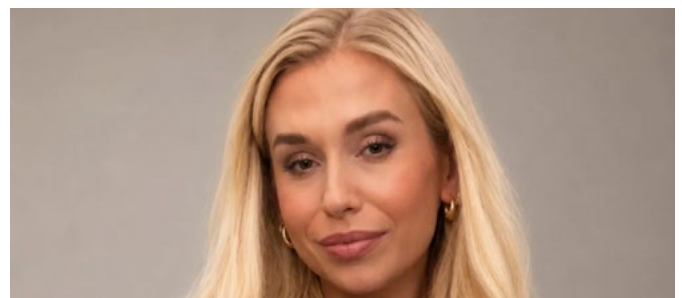
**Elspeth Macdonald**

The Scottish Fishermen's Federation (SFF) has announced that its Chief Executive, Elspeth Macdonald, will retire from the organisation in March 2027 after a distinguished career representing Scotland's fishing industry.



**Gary Anderson**

Odfjell Technology has appointed Gary Anderson as Base Manager for its Wallace warehouse facility. Gary started his career in the oil and gas industry, initially working as a mechanic within Tubular Running Services (TRS).



**Grace Longmuir**

To support the ongoing proliferation of key messaging and company updates across the global energy and Middle East travel markets, ATPI Energy has appointed Grace Longmuir as Head of Energy and Middle East Marketing.



Recruitment | Salary Benchmarking | Psychometric Assessment

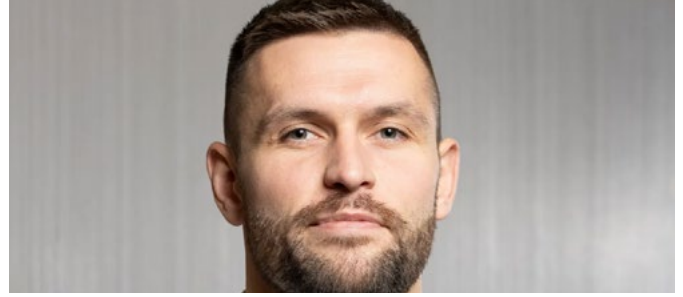
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### Gregor Duthie and Stephen Forsyth

Gilson Gray has promoted two senior lawyers to partner. Real estate specialist Gregor Duthie and litigator Stephen Forsyth have both stepped up from Legal Director to Partner.



### Kane Winton

Aurora Energy Services has appointed Kane Winton as Managing Director of Integrated Services. The specialist energy services firm has grown exponentially since opening its doors in 2022.



### Katie Johnston

KR Group has appointed Katie Johnston as Marketing and Communications Executive, leading marketing and communications activities across KR Group's portfolio of businesses.



### Kristen Rossvoll

Drummond Finance is delighted to announce the appointment of Kristen Rossvoll, one of the North-east's most experienced and highly regarded commercial banking professionals.



### Lesley Christie

Red Rooster Lifting has promoted Lesley Christie to Financial Director. The appointment marks 12 years of progression, contribution and leadership for Lesley within the company's finance function.



### Lisa Christie

DNV has appointed Lisa Christie as a new member of the Energy Systems Executive Leadership Team heading Marketing, Communication & Public Affairs (MCP), starting on September 7.



**Mia Arnott**

Integrity QHSE is delighted to welcome Mia Arnott to its team as a QHSE Coordinator. Mia joins at the perfect time as demand continues to grow for its award-winning QHSE consultancy services.



**Mike Ross**

Deepsea Technologies UK has welcomed Mike Ross as Project Engineer (Controls), based in Aberdeen, strengthening the company's technical capability and delivery expertise across subsea and offshore projects.



**Niall Young**

Petrasco has strengthened its UK commercial team with an internal promotion as the company positions itself for continued growth. Niall Young has been promoted to Client Solutions Manager.



**Nicola Fry**

Children's charity The Archie Foundation has appointed Nicola Fry as its new Chair, bringing extensive experience in governance, HSEQ and organisational transformation to the board of trustees.



**Professor Steve Petrie**

Nexos Group has appointed Professor Steve Petrie as Group Head of Business Development and Strategy. Steve joins with more than 25 years of leadership experience across the energy and construction industries.



**Professor Steve Olivier and Melanie Netherway**

The River Dee Trust conservation charity has appointed two leading professionals to its governing body - RGU's Principal Professor Steve Olivier, and Chartered Environmentalist Melanie Netherway.



Recruitment | Salary Benchmarking | Psychometric Assessment

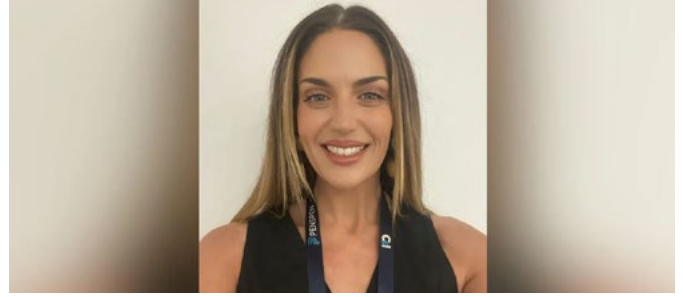
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### Saylee More

Raeburn Christie Clark & Wallace (Raeburns) has welcomed Saylee More as IT Manager, based at the firm's Albyn Place office. Saylee joins with a background in IT support, system administration and service management.



### Stephanie Fitzgerald

Penspen and C&I Engineering Solutions, a Penspen company, have welcomed Stephanie Fitzgerald as Regional Business Development Manager, supporting growth across Scotland's energy and industrial sectors.



### Steven Milne

Dax Group has appointed Steven Milne as Head of Customer Success. Steven will help ensure clients realise the full value and potential of Dax Group's portfolio of AI-native products and services.



### Steven Snowdon

Leading business and industry (B&I) contract caterer Lexington Catering has promoted Steven Snowdon to Culinary Director, strengthening its senior culinary leadership team as the business evolves.



### Stewart Milne

Former Aberdeen FC chairman Stewart Milne is stepping down from the club's board after more than three decades of service. He joined the board of directors on June 14, 1994, and became chairman four years later.



### Ted Hingley

Porsche Centre Aberdeen has announced the appointment of Ted Hingley as its new Business Development Manager, further strengthening the centre's commitment to supporting local businesses.

## Celebrating 25 years in hospitality: Julia Leitch marks career milestone at Aberdeen Hotels



This year, Julia Leitch, Cluster Sales and Events Office Manager at The Aberdeen Altens Hotel and The Aberdeen Dyce Hotel, is celebrating an impressive 25 years working in the hospitality industry.

Julia began her career with Marriott International shortly after completing her business degree and has since built extensive experience across a variety of commercial hospitality roles including corporate golf, marketing, proactive sales, and meetings and events.

Over the past two and a half decades, she has witnessed significant change across the industry, from evolving guest expectations and technological advances to major shifts within the Aberdeen market itself, while remaining passionate about delivering memorable guest experiences and building long-lasting client relationships.

Now leading the sales and events office function across both Aberdeen hotels, Julia has played a key role in navigating some of the most transformative periods in the businesses' recent history, including the acquisition and reopening of The Aberdeen Dyce Hotel and the transition of both properties into fully independent hotels earlier this year.

The move to independence has allowed the hotels greater agility and flexibility within the marketplace while retaining the experienced teams and customer relationships built over many years.

Julia said: "Hospitality has given me an incredibly rewarding career and I genuinely still love the industry as much today as when I first started. No two days are ever the same and I've been fortunate to work with fantastic colleagues, clients and guests throughout the years.

"I'm particularly proud of what we have achieved across both hotels during periods of change and growth, especially now we are operating both hotels as entirely independent. It's an exciting time for us and I'm grateful to be part of such a passionate and hardworking team."

Throughout her career, Julia has developed a reputation for building strong client relationships and delivering a personal, hands-on approach to meetings, events and group business.

Helen McLoughlin, Cluster Director of Sales, added: "Julia's commitment, professionalism and loyalty over the past 25 years have been exceptional. She brings a huge amount of knowledge and experience to both hotels and is highly respected by clients and colleagues alike.

"The hospitality industry can be incredibly fast-paced and demanding, so reaching 25 years is a fantastic achievement and one that deserves to be celebrated."



# A great retirement starts with a great plan

Retirement is yours to define, whether it's travel, personal growth or simply the freedom to do what you love. Start planning today.



Planning for the future calls for invaluable advice

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