

JULY/AUGUST 2025 | HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM

BUSINESS BULLETIN

Three keys to unlock full potential of booming tourism trade

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Chief sales officer pours efforts into growing customer base with sports venue deals.

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New golf course a 'game-changer for economy'



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Grampian
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Stay longer, spend more, leave happier...

The North-east is where Scottish tourism has capacity to grow both in volume and value.

By Chris Foy, chief executive of VisitAberdeenshire

The economic impact of the region's visitor economy was £1.27billion in 2024 having grown by a colossal 35% since 2019. That means more heads on beds, backsides on seats, and footfall throughout the North-east. Tourism also means jobs with the sector directly employing over 11,400 people in 2024.

Of course, there is nothing new about tourism in Aberdeenshire. Queen Victoria was an early trend-setter in the 19th century, and countless others have followed since to quietly enjoy their own 'dear paradise'. But what we have seen in the past decade - despite the devastating effect of lockdowns - has been nothing short of a tourism renaissance as visitors from these shores and beyond have discovered the delights of the North-east from mountain to city to sea.

When asked to select key words and phrases that they felt most described Aberdeen, and Aberdeenshire respectively, the majority of respondents to VisitAberdeenshire's UK consumer survey plumped for 'traditional', 'rich in heritage', and 'a distinct culture', along with 'beautiful' and 'uncrowded'. Anecdotally, overseas visitors speak of Aberdeen being a clean city, simple to navigate on foot, and of a region that is easy to access and to get around. A nod perhaps to recent investment in infrastructure and the public realm, and of course to the simple fact that we are no more than one stop from the world.

This is encouraging stuff. But within the headlines, there lies the odd red flag. The costs of doing business remain a challenge for many in the sector. From employer costs to Covid loan repayments, the bottom line is under pressure. And whilst visitor numbers increased by nearly 17% from 2023 to 2024, associated expenditure lagged behind with a 2% increase after inflation was accounted for. People are travelling here in greater numbers, but they are spending less when they do so.

This trend is not unique to the North-east, however, this corner of Scotland has the bedrock on which

initiatives to secure greater visitor spending can be built: Quality experiences; year-round headroom for growth; talented, entrepreneurial people from Sandend to St Cyrus and from Aberdeen to Alford; and, yes, an award-winning destination organisation to drive demand and support local business.

So, what will shift the financial dial? In simple terms, more visitors who stay longer, spend more, and of course, leave happier. Three themes come to the fore:

Attract higher value business

Seems obvious. In practical terms this means putting our resources into developing higher spend markets. As David Jackson from VisitScotland points out elsewhere in this publication, international visitors to Scotland spend nearly four times as much as domestic visitors. The returns can be even higher for specialist travel such as golf, mountain biking or for a corporate incentive visit where the average spend is over £2,000 per person. Among the greatest revenues come from conference delegates. In 2024 the North-east hosted an estimated £178million of conference business, drawn by the world class P&J Live, the work of our Aberdeen Convention Bureau, academic expertise and our attractive accommodation stock. This makes Aberdeen a desirable option in a highly competitive market.



2 Encourage longer stays

So long as there is capacity, longer stays can drive up occupancy, and increase spend per visit. With around 2,500 square miles of diverse landscapes, year-round experiences, major events like Tall Ships and even a sightseeing bus to expand horizons, there are good reasons for our visitors to go a little further and stay a little longer. Identifying and profiling prospective visitors with the highest propensity to travel will ensure that our marketing budgets can be as effective as possible, and attract brand partners to work with us who share the same vision, and customers.

3 Enhance the experience

Investment in training, facilities and creative thinking can make existing experiences attractive to the demands of growing markets. For example, the huge opportunity from an increasingly older demographic in the UK that - in many cases - has both time and money. Likewise, meeting the needs of disabled travellers to gain a share of the multi-billion 'purple pound' each year. A warm North-east welcome can position our region as a bastion of inclusive tourism where even more visitors leave happier.

VisitAberdeenshire will meet these challenges in the year ahead through campaigns, bids and initiatives like the business Game Changer and our sustainable tourism toolkit. Our work would not be possible without the vision and investment from Opportunity North East, Aberdeenshire Council and Aberdeen City Council as well as supporters like Peterson Energy Logistics who sponsor our cruise welcome programme. If you would like to be part of a North-east success story please do get in touch.

**E: info@visitabdn.com
T: 01224 900490**



Our premier partners

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

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

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

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



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Wild Goose to take flight in the heart of Aberdeen

This summer, Union Terrace Gardens will welcome Wild Goose, an exciting new addition set to become a vibrant hub for locals and visitors.

Nestled in the final pavilion within the recently redeveloped gardens, 'Wild Goose' will embody a harmonious blend of refinement and contemporary flair.

Offering high-quality brunch that you might see in cities like Glasgow or London, the new venue in the heart of Aberdeen is set to deliver a dining experience that competes at the highest level and will also cater for the corporate market.

The new hospitality destination will include a restaurant on the upper floor, a bar and food offering downstairs, as well as an event space within the former Victorian toilets.

Stuart Ross, founder of Grub Fresh Food, the Aberdeen-based catering company and the man behind the new venture, said: "As part of a vision to reimagine how city spaces are used for business and pleasure, our hope is that Wild Goose will become a hub for curated experiences that showcase the very best of the North-east.

"Our ambition is to draw people in with distinctive B2B offerings, positioning Wild Goose as an ideal base for forward-thinking companies looking to make an impression."

A new chapter for corporate Aberdeen

With Offshore Europe 2025 on the horizon, Wild Goose is extending an invitation to companies to explore its one-of-a-kind venue for entertaining clients, holding relaxed meetings, or hosting team gatherings with a twist. From networking brunches and tasting sessions to private receptions and supplier showcases, Wild Goose provides a striking backdrop that's anything but ordinary.

Set in a central city location just a short walk from Union Street, the venue combines modern architecture and interiors with unexpected features - most notably its restored Victorian public toilets, repurposed as an immersive experiential space for gin and rum tastings, coffee cuppings, and local product demonstrations.

Wild Goose is curating exclusive experience packages that spotlight local talent and flavour in collaboration with North-east food

and drink producers. Corporate guests will be able to choose from carefully crafted catering options including 'Taste of the Shire' canopies, grazing tables and meet-the-maker tasting sessions with local suppliers.

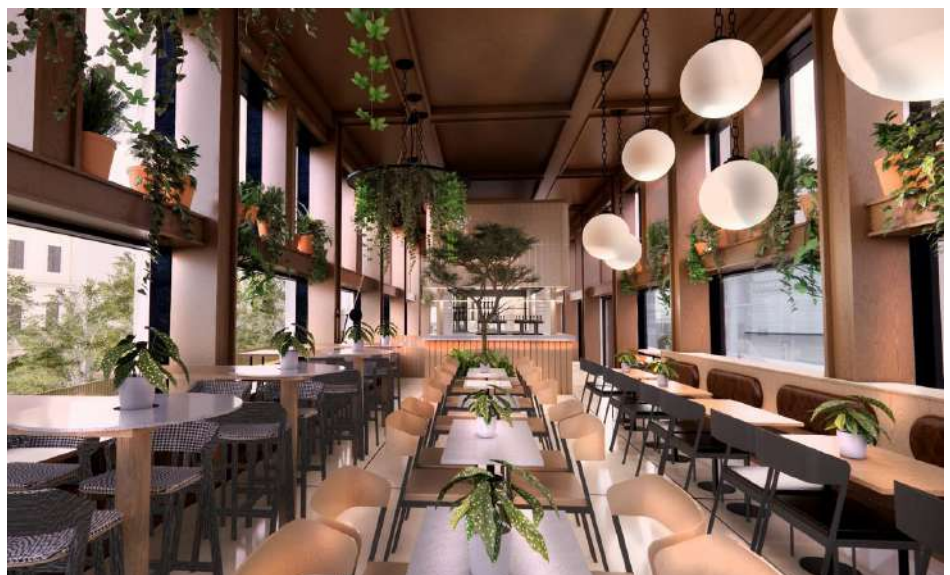
The venue is designed for flexibility, intimacy and impact - ideal for corporate bookings, especially during key industry events.

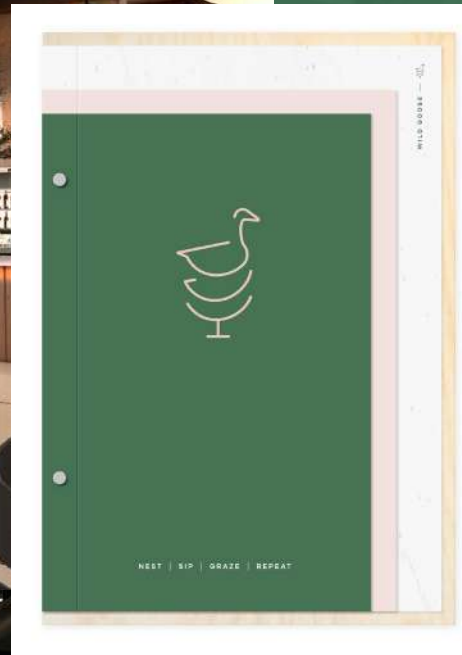
Whether you're looking to impress stakeholders, host a product launch, or simply gather your team in an inspiring setting, Wild Goose offers something distinctly different.

Entice, engage and experience

For businesses keen to support and connect with the city's emerging hospitality scene while engaging clients in a truly memorable way, this venue will set the tone for a new kind of corporate hospitality.

Wild Goose is taking private and corporate enquiries, including pre-bookings for Offshore Europe 2025. To request a venue tour or discuss bespoke packages and availability, email corporate@wild-goose.co.uk





Stuart Ross



The Granite City at its sparkling best

By Rebecca Henderson

Sporting her snazzy bright orange Aberdeen Adventurer sunglasses, the Chamber's very own Rebecca Henderson climbs aboard the open-top bus to join tourists from around the world on the hit tour of the city.

In its first eight weeks since the Aberdeen Adventurer took its first trip, over 3,000 people hopped on board to explore the city from the best seats in town. With such hype behind it, I decided it was time I hopped on myself.

I'll admit, I'm not usually the bus type. But with a free afternoon, blue skies and an itch to see Aberdeen beyond my usual haunts, I decided to play tourist in my own city.

I was joined by my Chamber chum Amy, as well as Millie and Gavin from Our Union Street to help capture our journey. As we waited on Broad Street, the bright orange bus turned the corner and a wave of passengers poured off the top deck. I knew we were in for a treat.

"You'll have the best time," one passenger said as she rocked her orange shades and departed the bus.

Living the Aber-dream from the top deck

The four of us hopped on, grabbed our earphones, slid on our sunglasses, and climbed to the top deck - ready to see Aberdeen in all its glory.

And honestly? It delivered.

"There's no other city quite like it," one passenger whispered behind me, and I couldn't help but agree.

As we cruised through Aberdeen, I realised how much history I pass every day without noticing. There's the Music Hall, built in 1822, where everyone from Led Zepplin to David Bowie once stood. There's Old Aberdeen, which is nestled just a few minutes from the city centre and of course Pittodrie Stadium - home to the Dandy Dons.

The iconic ground has seen over a century of passion and unforgettable football moments, and of course is the home stadium of the Scottish

Cup champions - a triumph which saw 100,000 fans venture into the city centre to celebrate the team's historic win.

Just outside the stadium stands the statue of Sir Alex Ferguson, the legendary manager who led Aberdeen to glory domestically and in Europe in the 80s.

As the bus passes by, you can't help but feel a sense of pride.

And you can see everything on this journey.

One of the highlights was the windy sweep down to the beach. It felt like a postcard come to life and it's right on our doorstep. Just a few minutes later, we were passing Footdee, or "Fittie" to the locals. The hidden fishing village of brightly painted cottages is tucked away like a secret only Aberdonians know about.

What do passengers think of the Granite City?

Behind me were a pair of Canadians from Vancouver who, as it turned out, were en route to Shetland.

"We are visiting my grandparents who are buried in Shetland and

Image credit: KelmanKuts

Aberdeen is our first stop on the way.

"The bus is the best way for my father and I to see the city, and it's really convenient.

"It's a beautiful place and we've used hop-on hop-off buses before, so we thought why not!"

As the bus stopped at Fittie, we even gave them some recommendations as they hopped off.

A tourist in my own city

I've lived in Aberdeen by entire life, but I'd never really seen it like this. And I learned even more about Aberdeen's hidden gems thanks to the multilingual commentary which was recorded by Zara Louise Kennedy.

Zara said it's "been great" seeing the Adventurer come to life.

"Seeing how excited everyone on the creative team was about bringing this to life really made me want to create something that's not just fun for tourists, but also engaging and accessible for the people of Aberdeen.

"City bus tours can actually be such a great way for locals to learn more about where they're from, so I really wanted to do that justice, while still learning loads myself along the way."

Zara has learned a lot about Scottish history as she's also the voice of the new Big Bus Tours in Edinburgh and the Stirling Sightseer, but there were a few things about Aberdeen that surprised her.

"I was honestly really surprised by how far back a lot of Aberdeen's famous landmarks go," she continued.

"The Brig O'Balgownie dates all the way back to the 1300s, and the site of St Machar's Cathedral has been occupied since as early as 580! In today's high-tech world, it's easy to forget just how much history places like Scotland hold, so it's been amazing to look back and learn more about where it all started.

"I also had no idea there were over 30 different Aberdeens around the world, which I thought was such a fun fact. Scotland's own being, of course, 'the silver city with the golden sands'.

"I think my favourite part of the whole process was honestly just experiencing the tour itself. Getting to sit on the bus, listen to the narration, and see all the places I'd talked about, plus watching how excited other people were to see the bus in action, really brought everything full circle for me."

There was a real mix of passengers on board, including locals who, like us, were keen to see Aberdeen from a different perspective.

One of them said: "The bus is good for locals like us to appreciate what we have, and I think we should be encouraging people to use it.

"You see the city from a different angle and you're learning about things you didn't know.

"It's a great addition to the city and it's great for tourists as well."

Why you should give the Aberdeen Adventurer a go?

Would I recommend it? Absolutely. Whether you're a visitor or a local like me who thinks they've seen it all, the Aberdeen Adventurer proves there's always more to discover.

Tickets can be bought on the bus from the driver or as a mobile ticket in the app (just search 'Xplore Dundee' in your app store).

The tour bus is a partnership between Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce, VisitAberdeenshire, Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeen Inspired and McGills Xplore.

The Granite City is set to host tens of thousands of visitors this year with The Tall Ships and Offshore Europe and the Aberdeen Adventurer is the perfect option for corporate days out.

Find out more about the Aberdeen Adventurer, including ticket prices and stops, at www.xploredundee.com/aberdeen-adventurer



Granite City's world-class street art festival Nuart Aberdeen to return for 2026

Dates have been announced for the dazzling return of Nuart Aberdeen – the Granite City's world-class street art festival.

Globally-renowned artists will have the cityscape as a blank canvas from Thursday, April 23, to Sunday, April 26, next year, it was announced by Aberdeen Inspired, who stage the event in partnership with Aberdeen City Council.

"We are so excited to announce that Nuart Aberdeen will be coming back with fresh dates and a fresh look, springing into glorious life next April," said Adrian Watson, chief executive of Aberdeen Inspired.

"With the council's generous support we will once again see the Granite City become a vibrant hub of activity, as walls and spaces are transformed into stunning works of art, large and small.

"And Nuart isn't just for one weekend – it leaves a lasting legacy imprinted on the fabric of Aberdeen itself. No wonder it has been hailed as among the top six street art festivals in the world."

For the past few years Nuart Aberdeen has been held in June. For its next outing, organisers of the festival – delivered by Reed Projects – paused planning until funding for the event from the council's Cultural Investment Fund was approved at the Budget in March.

With the focus and excitement around The Tall Ships Races Aberdeen this summer, it was decided to push Nuart Aberdeen back to April.

Adrian said: "Given Nuart Aberdeen is all about transformation and bringing life and colour to the city we felt there could be no better time for its return than in spring."

Councillor Martin Greig, culture spokesperson for Aberdeen City Council, said: "We are delighted to be able to welcome Nuart back to the city thanks to funding from the Council's Cultural Investment Fund. Once again we can look forward to the cityscape being transformed into a canvas for imaginative street art.

"Nuart, Spectra, the Tall Ships and other festivals are lined up as activities for everyone in the city to enjoy. These cultural activities help to maintain Aberdeen's reputation as a high-quality destination for international events."

Aberdeen Inspired is hoping the next Nuart will reach the same dizzy heights as the previous one which attracted thousands of people into the city centre as iconic pieces were created, including Hera's stunning large-scale work on the side of Union Point, towering over Aberdeen Harbour.

Fans of Nuart needn't wait until next year to savour and enjoy the massive murals and intimate pieces. Visitors can still enjoy discovering the works with walking tours happening every Sunday until September. There is also an online map to help people create their own walking tour.

You can find out more on the Aberdeen Inspired website.



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the MEMBER MEET the



Adam Demus,
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- Financial and Government Institutions
- Technology and Telecommunications

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

We're tackling supply chain disruptions, freight rate volatility, and sustainability head-on. Through innovation, technology, and a flexible logistics network, Aramex is turning these challenges into opportunities, providing resilient, cost-effective solutions for global businesses.

What is your word of advice for fellow Chamber members?

Book shipments early to avoid delays and rising costs - especially in peak seasons. Optimise your freight spend by exploring consolidation and alternative routes. And partner with a trusted logistics provider to navigate today's challenges efficiently.

What is the best thing about being a Chamber member?

Being a Chamber member provides invaluable networking opportunities, enabling us to connect with other businesses, exchange ideas, and stay informed about the latest trends and challenges. The support and collaboration within the Chamber are essential for growth and staying competitive in a dynamic business environment.



Barry McAllister,
Manpower Manager,
Semco Maritime Ltd

Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

Semco Maritime is a global engineering and contracting company with approximately 2,000 employees.

Our Aberdeen division is a 'Siemens Solutions Partner' specialising in electrical, instrumentation, control systems and automation solutions.

We also provide reliable in-house, ad hoc manpower services for both onshore and offshore energy projects.

Who are your customers?

We serve a wide range of customers throughout the energy industry, from large operators and vessel owners to tier 1 service companies.

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

The transition from traditional energy sources to renewable alternatives presents a challenging but exciting opportunity for Semco Maritime.

With deep roots in conventional energy and renewables, expanding and building on our offerings such as offshore wind and clean energy technologies will help us to align with our goal of achieving a low-carbon energy future.

What is your word of advice for fellow Chamber members?

Take advantage of the opportunities and resources that the Chamber offers, such as the ability to connect with other like-minded local businesses and the various platforms available to showcase your company's capabilities.

What is the best thing about being a Chamber member?

The networking events hosted by the Chamber are excellent, and I would highly recommend them to everyone.

MEMBER MEET *the* ME



Corry Sutherland,
Business Development Manager,
Spectis Robotics

Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

Spectis Robotics specialises in the sale, rental, design and manufacture of high-quality remote inspection solutions. We offer a wide range of underwater ROVs, robotic crawlers, lights and standalone camera systems, for remote visual

inspections, or operational support in extreme environments. Spectis Robotics has partnerships with Dekra Visatec, Deep Trekker, The Machine Lab and Endo Control.

Who are your customers?

We help businesses inspect hard-to-reach or hazardous places—from underwater structures in ports to nuclear sites and offshore wind farms. Our customers in oil and gas, renewables, construction and search and rescue rely on our mini ROVs, crawlers and cameras to work safely. Based in Aberdeen, we support critical UK industries nationwide.

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

Times are tight for nearly every sector. Rising costs, shaky demand, and high interest rates are squeezing margins. Businesses that adapt quickly, cutting waste without sacrificing quality, will weather the storm. It's tough just now, but smart

moves now could set the stage for recovery when conditions ease.

What is your word of advice for fellow Chamber members?

Focus on relationships. In tough times, strong connections with customers, suppliers, and other local businesses make all the difference. Support each other, share insights, and look for ways to collaborate rather than compete. Aberdeen's resilience has always come from its community - embrace it.

What is the best thing about being a Chamber member?

The best part is being part of a tight-knit business community that genuinely wants to see each other succeed. Whether it's sharing advice, making introductions, or just having a sounding board, the Chamber connects you to people who get it. It's practical support, not just networking, and that makes all the difference.



David Alaita,
Director,
LeadRyde

Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

LeadRyde provides taxi services with a user-friendly app offering on-demand and pre-booked taxis. LeadRyde app connects passengers to licensed drivers instantly, providing real-time tracking and cashless

payments. The App provides upfront fare estimates and anonymised in-app communication between drivers and passengers. LeadRyde redefines convenience in transportation across Aberdeen and Shire.

Who are your customers?

LeadRyde serves individuals seeking efficient airport transfers, professionals requiring reliable corporate transportation, individuals needing ease with daily commutes and night out pleasure and businesses/individuals desiring prompt parcel deliveries. Our clientele values convenience, punctuality, and seamless service, all accessible through our user-friendly mobile app.

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

LeadRyde faces a major challenge in driver shortages, thus affecting our service availability and reliability.

As a result, LeadRyde has launched its Taxi School to train drivers with the new SKT recently approved by the City Council. With more drivers accessing training in the coming months, LeadRyde hopes to attract drivers with better commission rates and flexible schedules.

What is your word of advice for fellow Chamber members?

There are lots of hurdles to tackle when starting a business. With dedication and commitment to the strategic goal and objectives of your company, there will be success on the horizon. Having gone through this, I encourage members to use the LeadRyde App, for convenient booking and travel experience. The pre-booking feature is fantastic for planning your journey ahead.

New study reveals that beef, lamb, milk and eggs are most vulnerable to lab-grown competition

A new study by The James Hutton Institute and Norway's Ruralis Institute for Rural and Regional Research has shown that beef, lamb, milk and eggs are more vulnerable to market competition from lab-grown alternatives than chicken and pork.

The study, which was funded by the Research Council of Norway and is believed to be the first of its kind, was designed to explore the socio-economic consequences of cultivated (lab-grown) proteins and a carbon tax being introduced to the market. Lab-grown proteins are claimed to offer greenhouse gas reductions of up to 97% when compared to conventional products. However, in many countries, support payments to the livestock sector make it difficult for these alternatives to compete on price.

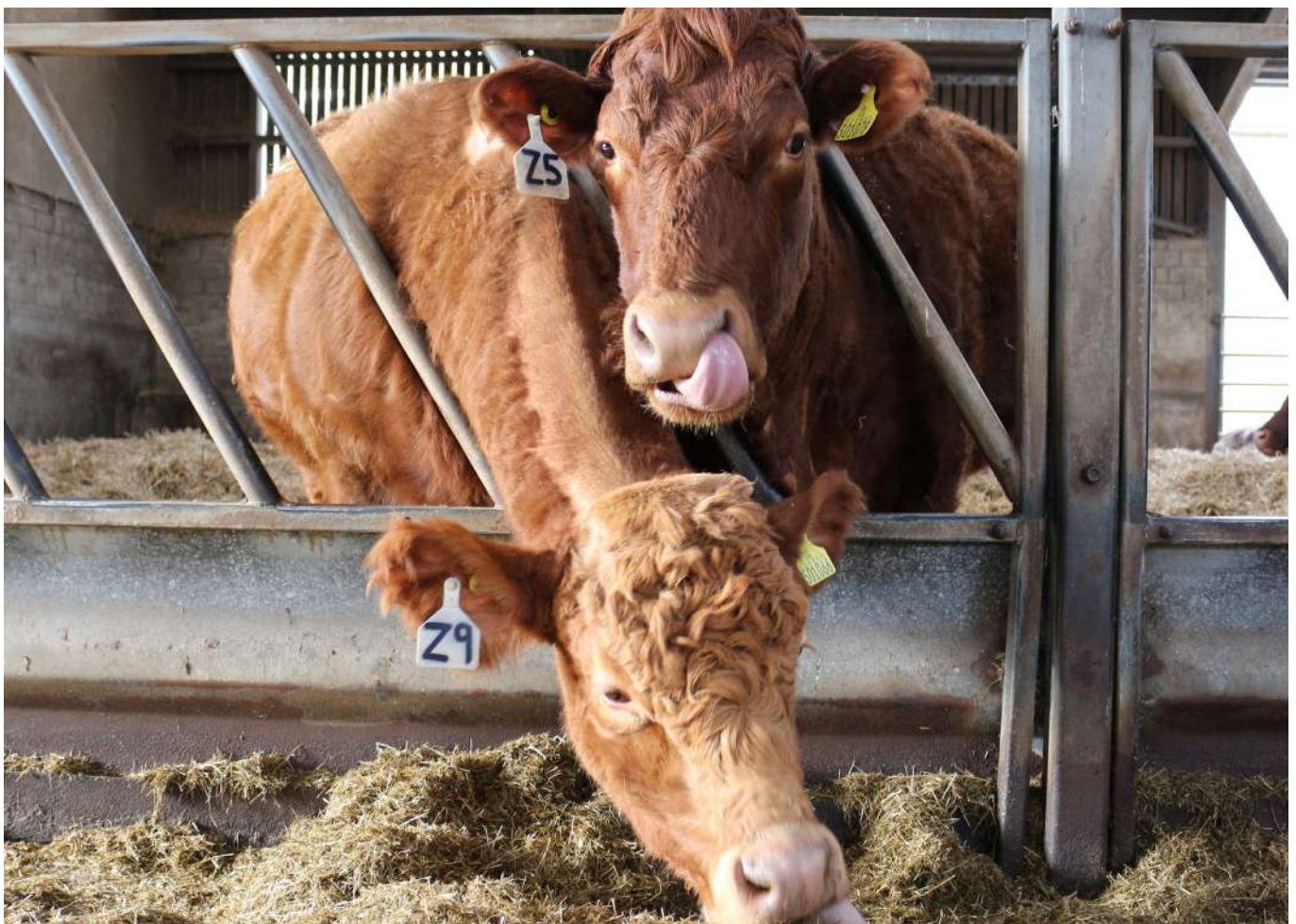
Focusing on Norway, researchers modelled two scenarios – one where a carbon tax is introduced and one where it is not – to measure the impact of lab-grown alternatives on both the food industry and emissions.

They found that conventional beef, lamb, milk, and egg production were more likely to lose their market share to lab-grown proteins than pork and chicken production, regardless of a carbon tax.

With the tax implemented, the loss of market share was much more rapid and dramatic, due to the increased cost. In comparison, pork and chicken, which produce much lower emissions, proved more resilient. It was assumed – based on related research within the project – that consumers would be willing, up to a certain market share, to treat cultivated and conventional proteins as broadly interchangeable, with price being the main factor influencing their choice.

Dr Nick Roxburgh, a Social Systems Simulation Modeller at the Hutton, said: “While there are still plenty of uncertainties here – such as whether technologies will ever improve to the point where cultivated proteins are commercially viable – this study suggests that sheep and cattle rearing could be most vulnerable to competition, especially if a carbon tax is introduced. We would expect this to be true in the UK as well as in Norway.

“Given the potential for disruption, it will be important to plan carefully for the possible impacts of cultivated proteins on livestock farming and rural livelihoods.”



Diversity Bridge SCIO celebrates graduation of Youth Leadership Development Program

Diversity Bridge SCIO proudly announces the successful graduation of Cohort 1 of its Youth Leadership Development Program, a milestone that highlights the charity's commitment to empowering the next generation of change-makers and community leaders.

This inaugural cohort consisted of young people aged 16 to 25, who completed a comprehensive program combining skill-building workshops, e-learning modules, and hands-on community engagement.

The initiative was designed to equip participants with practical leadership experience, critical thinking skills, and the tools to drive inclusion and equity in their communities.

ModuSpec awarded Black Sea drillship reactivation project

Rig intake and inspection specialist ModuSpec has secured a contract to support an existing client, representing an estimated £250,000 of revenue.

The award will see multi-staged support provided during the intake process of a 6th generation deepwater drillship in the Black Sea.

The drillship will be engaged by an international oil company in a c.250 day contract commencing later in 2025 after completing a 5-yearly equipment recertification period in South-East Asia.

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Why we all benefit from turning the Blue Toon green

Peterhead has long played a critical role in Scotland's economy. Now, it stands on the threshold of an even greater contribution, powering the UK's future as a clean energy superpower.

A new economic study published last month projects that more than £1billion of investment could flow into Peterhead and the surrounding area over the next decade, creating 8,000 high-value jobs and generating more than £600million in local income.

This isn't a pipe dream, it's a tangible pipeline – from offshore wind to green hydrogen to carbon capture and storage (CCS).

At the heart of that opportunity is the Acorn project – which has just secured a major breakthrough: a £200million commitment from the UK Government, announced as part of the Spending Review, to accelerate its delivery.

That funding will allow Acorn to move towards final investment decision and unlock billions more in private sector backing. It also gives long-overdue momentum to a project which has sat on the drawing board for years – despite being ideally located next to key North Sea infrastructure.

Acorn is more than a technical solution. It is an engine of industrial renewal. The project is expected to support up to 15,000 jobs at its construction peak and safeguard around 18,000 jobs in the North Sea supply chain that might otherwise be lost as we transition away from fossil fuels. It will also help decarbonise major emitters at Grangemouth and across Scotland's industrial heartlands, providing the infrastructure backbone for a just transition.

This matters. Because the energy transition isn't just about cutting emissions – it's about building a new economy.

Peterhead is exceptionally well-placed to play a leading role. As the Vision document released by the Peterhead Energy Transition Forum last month makes clear, this coastal town has the infrastructure, the workforce, and the will to lead the charge.

It has a port capable of supporting offshore renewables, a supply chain already pivoting to low-carbon technologies, and a culture of collaboration between industry, government and academia.

Projects across the region are forecast to deliver an additional £71million in gross value added (GVA) every year once fully operational, supporting over 800 jobs annually. These are high-quality roles – engineering, digital, technical – rooted in place and purpose.

But this is not guaranteed. Realising Peterhead's potential will require coordinated action: investment in infrastructure, faster planning and consenting processes, workforce upskilling, and – crucially – a national narrative that understands the North-east of Scotland is not a problem to be solved, but a solution to be unlocked.

Because if Peterhead succeeds, the UK succeeds.

Energy security, economic growth, and climate action are not competing priorities – they are interdependent. And Peterhead sits at the intersection of all three. With proximity to North Sea assets, existing transmission infrastructure, and a community steeped in energy expertise, the town can become a

global showcase for how coastal, industrial communities can thrive in a net zero world.

The stakes could not be higher.


The UK's ambition to become a clean energy superpower depends on projects like Acorn – and places like Peterhead. The recent funding announcement gives us the strongest signal yet that government understands this. Now we need to build on it with urgency.

We need to finish the job. That means getting spades in the ground. It means converting commitments into contracts, and plans into paycheques. It means empowering Peterhead not just to adapt to the energy transition – but to shape it.

Let's give this proud, hard-working town the backing it deserves.



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

A tall, white cylindrical lighthouse with a black lantern room and a white gallery stands on a rocky island. A white metal bridge extends from the lighthouse across the water to a rocky shore. The water is a deep blue, and the rocks are dark and jagged. The sky is not visible.

This isn't a pipe dream, it's a tangible pipeline – from offshore wind to green hydrogen to carbon capture and storage (CCS).



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Adventure tourism drives growth in North-east Scotland's thriving £1.3billion visitor economy

North-east Scotland is witnessing a remarkable transformation in its visitor economy driven by the growth of adventure tourism.

Significant investments and targeted support are unlocking the region's potential, positioning it as a premier destination for adventure seekers.

With its breathtaking natural assets - from mountains to stunning coastline - and a burgeoning network of over 100 adventure tourism businesses, the region aims to create up to 500 new jobs and attract an additional £120million in visitor spending by 2030.

Over the past five years, the North East Adventure Tourism (NEAT) project has invested £3.2million of public and private sector funding into the region, resulting in iconic infrastructure, increased participation, and a surge in visitor numbers. This investment has upskilled individuals within the sector and established a strong international reputation for North-east Scotland as a go-to adventure hub. Of this investment, more than £2million was secured by Opportunity North East (ONE) from the Scottish Government's Just Transition Fund.

Launched in 2019, NEAT is spearheaded by ONE in collaboration with key partners, including businesses in the sector, Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland, Aberdeenshire Council, VisitAberdeenshire, and the Cairngorm National Park Authority. Together, they are revolutionising the adventure tourism experience in the region.

Notable projects backed by NEAT include the creation of multi-award-winning mountain bike trails and essential amenities at Tarland Trails' Pittenderich site, which drew in a staggering 40,000 users in under a year. The Huntly Development Trust has made significant strides with a newly established cycle pump track and water sports facilities at Greenmyres Adventures. Transition Extreme on Aberdeen's vibrant beachfront has enhanced its offerings with a state-of-the-art pump track, high ropes course, new café, and improved outdoor spaces.

The NEAT investment goes beyond infrastructure. A £160,000 training fund empowered 90 individuals and supported 30 local businesses. Additionally, grant funding has enabled accommodation providers to upgrade facilities for adventure tourists and launched exciting new events. Last year alone, over 75,000 visitors explored NEAT-supported facilities, and NEAT-sponsored events have generated nearly £500,000 in visitor spend.

Events and marketing campaigns have significantly elevated the region's profile in both UK and international markets, reaching adventure enthusiasts across mainland Europe and North America. Notably, Aberdeenshire was crowned the best destination for the third consecutive year at the prestigious 2024 Scottish Mountain Bike Awards.

Jennifer Caw MBE, CEO of ONE and chair of the NEAT steering group, emphasises the initiative's success: "The region's ambition is to be a world-class adventure tourism destination with iconic attractions and experiences.

"We've made great progress in five years, working with the sector and partners. The region's profile is at an all-time high, and we are attracting tens of thousands of visitors, who stay longer and spend more.

"We've achieved this by working with businesses to help them understand their customers and provide the attractions, services and products that resonate with adventure seekers.

"We have created a really impactful delivery model in NEAT and aim to sustain momentum. Targeted action and investment, achieved with relatively modest sums, have delivered significant economic impact. There's more to do and ONE continues making the case for funding and resources to realise the adventure tourism ambition and grow the visitor economy."





PITTODRIE HOUSE
ABERDEENSHIRE

Escape to the country for your next team event

Nestled at the foot of Bennachie in rural Aberdeenshire, Macdonald Pittodrie House provides the perfect backdrop for an away day meeting or business conference with a difference.

One of the north-east's most historic venues, the hotel's picturesque setting within 300 acres of estate land makes it a popular choice for corporate events and team-building exercises, which are all available for private hire.

The hotel can accommodate up to 100 delegates and personalises the design of each event that it hosts, including tailoring menus to suit individuals' specific dietary requirements and incorporating creative touches.

Macdonald Pittodrie House proudly showcases Aberdeenshire's larder and the hotel is committed to offering the finest locally-sourced produce and fresh ingredients – with bespoke options available for everything from private dining in various stylish rooms to corporate BBQ packages, suitable for up to 5,000 people.

Alongside more traditional conference and meeting facilities, Macdonald Pittodrie House offers an array of outdoor activities surrounded by breathtaking natural scenery.

The hotel's dedicated team works in partnership with clients to understand exactly what they are looking to achieve from their event. By fully utilising the venue and ample outdoor space, they ensure that delegates have a positive and memorable experience from start to finish.



Contact our events team:

T: 01467 622437

E: events@pittodrie-house.co.uk

W: www.macdonaldhotels.co.uk/pittodrie-house

Series of new events marks corporate milestone with new collaboration



Pictured at the inaugural Shire Connections event at Macdonald Pittodrie House, from left, are: Julie Hutchison (Macdonald Pittodrie House), Diane Paterson (Macdonald Pittodrie House and Macdonald Norwood Hall), Provost of Aberdeenshire Judy Whyte, Brett Jackson (Granite PR) and Keith Bell (Enterprising Aberdeenshire).

A leading Aberdeen-based PR and events company has joined forces with one of the country's premier names in hospitality to celebrate a corporate milestone by announcing a series of new sessions.

To mark the 35th anniversary of Macdonald Hotels & Resorts' and the company's Aberdeenshire roots, Granite PR has uplevelled its portfolio by adding a trio of new networking options which will take place at two historic North-east properties.

With Macdonald Norwood Hall Hotel to host free Business Builder Dinners and monthly Granite Growth Breakfast sessions, Macdonald Pittodrie House Hotel will be the setting for frequent Shire Connections lunchtime discussions which all aim to bring businesses together for networking, connecting and knowledge sharing opportunities.

Speaking at the inaugural Shire Connections lunch, Provost of Aberdeenshire Judy Whyte said: "In the past six months alone, our economic development team has supported more than 180 businesses and distributed more than £240,000 in funding to help them start, grow and thrive.

"If we all work together to create a stronger business network, we'll do what all great businesses do –

understand needs; solve problems; build trust and deliver value through products and services that help to make Aberdeenshire an even better place to live, visit and work in."

Granite PR Founder and managing director Brett Jackson added: "Our events are renowned for creating opportunities for learning and discussion, and the addition of these new possibilities for businesses to come together is a natural extension of that long-standing reputation.

"By offering these gatherings free of charge, we hope to make them accessible to as many business representatives as possible and we look forward to facilitating generous provision for networking and discussion in the months ahead."

Macdonald Hotels & Resorts' regional managing Director Ivan Franssen added: "Our company has a long and proud history in the local hospitality sector, and we are delighted to be helping to open up important platforms for businesses to engage with each other in two such beautiful settings."

To find out more about the Granite Growth Breakfasts, Business Builder Dinners or Shire Connections, email events@granitepr.co.uk

Helping tourism sector seize international visitor opportunities

David Jackson,
Regional Director,
VisitScotland Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire



As the cost of living crisis continues to impact UK residents' spending, VisitScotland is working with tourism businesses in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire to highlight the importance of attracting visitors from key global markets.

According to the International Passenger Survey (IPS), over 2022 and 2023, there were approximately 400,000 international visits to Aberdeen, spanning 3.9 million nights and with a total spend of £251.4million.

Over the same period for Grampian, there were approximately 500,000 international visits, spanning 4.8 million nights and with a total spend of £329.8million.

On average, an international visitor to Scotland in 2023 spent £901.02 per visit, compared to £257.87 by a domestic visitor.

Our research shows that more than half of international visitors plan and book travel through an intermediary - such as a tour operator or travel agent - so encouraging tourism businesses to internationalise is vital to enable them to capitalise on this lucrative market.

As an economic growth agency, one of VisitScotland's strategic priorities is market development. Our work with travel intermediaries allows us to provide insight which helps businesses create the products we know visitors want.

An example of this is VisitScotland Connect, recently held at P&J Live in Aberdeen, which provided a targeted platform for trade-ready Scottish businesses - including accommodation, experiences and attractions - to connect with domestic and international tour operators and travel agents.

Around 30 businesses from Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire met face-to-face and showcased their products and experiences to over 270 global tour operators, travel advisors and Destination Management Companies (DMCs).

Our new online business support programme also helps tourism businesses gain important insights and advice.

Tourism is a growth sector in Scotland's economy, with one in 11 businesses in Scotland being in tourism. In the North-east, the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) recognises tourism as one

of the region's priority sectors, with significant potential to drive job creation, support economic diversification and drive inclusive growth. The RES, alongside the Destination Aberdeen & Aberdeenshire Tourism Strategy, sets out ambitious growth targets for the sector with visitors staying longer, exploring further and spending more.

At VisitScotland, we recognise the benefits that international visitors bring and we play a pivotal role in equipping tourism businesses with the skills and knowledge they need to grow, internationalise, and deliver world-class visitor and event experiences, while remaining competitive in the face of industry challenges.





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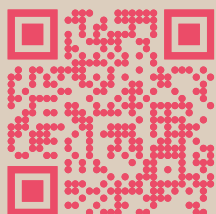
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BrewDog targets Lords as brewer celebrates 18 years not out

By Danny McKay

Aberdeenshire craft beer colossus BrewDog is eyeing up stadium deals – including home of cricket Lords – as it aims to bowl over new craft beer fans.

Just 18 years on from the firm's humble beginnings in a garden in Fraserburgh, the drinks giant is a sought-after partner for sporting arenas across the country, pouring pints for 80,000 people at a Sam Fender gig at the London Stadium.

Stuart Harrison, chief sales officer at BrewDog, said founders James Watt and Martin Dickie had planned to do "something different" from the outset.

He said: "They thought there was a need in the market for better quality beer and, to this day, that's something we hold ourselves accountable for.

"The mission hasn't changed – it's still to make people as passionate about great beer as we are.

"When you have that sole goal it does make decision-making a lot easier.

"We'll think 'oh, could we do this?' and we'll decide 'anyone could do that, that's not the right thing for BrewDog'.

"The journey was very much craft revolution.

Stuart said market data showed 80% of the population still drink lager rather than craft beer.

He said BrewDog had tried to venture into the lager market a few times but "failed quite miserably" – until it came out with Lost Lager which is going "from strength to strength".

Stuart went on: "We're now diversified into other categories but what is really helping us – and is the strategy we're using now – is that 30% of people who drink Lost Lager have never drunk craft before, ever. And they then go on to buy craft products.

"So we over-engineer and make an exceptionally good lager product but still charge it at reasonable prices to get people in, because we know that as soon as people try that they then translate to craft and the penetration of craft comes through."

Even with its huge growth and success, BrewDog has retained a relatively simplified management structure, preventing long waits for various department and board-level sign off.

Stuart explained: "We're big enough to have a seat at the table, but we're still agile enough to go 'shall we have a go?'.

"We're not going to the board in the States for sign off, we're not going through eight layers of management writing board reports. We get round the table with three or four of us and say 'right, this is what I think we can deliver, should we go and do it?'."

That kind of freedom is exactly what enabled the team at BrewDog to embark on an exciting new venture – partnerships with sporting stadia.

Stuart said: "Our repeat purchase rate is brilliant. The obstacle and challenge we have is craft beer is still just 6% of the market and some people do still think that craft beer is a funky green slime in a can that is not for them.

"We have that barrier to break down.

"It was a deliberate strategy to go into on-trade outlets.

"We have found the on-trade, outside of our bars, quite challenging.

"If we can get people trying out-of-home, if they've had a great experience at an event



out-of-home drinking BrewDog, we have a better chance of converting them when they're doing the weekly shop.

"We need to choose our venues carefully, we don't just want to scattergun everything we can get, so we went to have a look at some multi-purpose stadiums.

"Lords was our first one we got into a conversation on, and Carlsberg had been there for 18 years so that was a huge decision for those guys to come to us and they just wanted a fresh approach.

"They loved the ideas and what we would do for the fans. We've taken over like a mezzanine terrace bar called the 22 Yard Tap, it's got 16 taps of craft beer, the biggest craft beer offering in sport.

"It's absolutely brilliant.

"That gets leaked and all of a sudden the phone just started ringing. And then we get into the London Stadium.

"West Ham have 50,000 season ticket holders and a 62,500 capacity, but that stadium is also used for music, athletics, baseball."

Despite its now global success, it has never felt like BrewDog has forgotten its roots, with its Ellon brewery still very much "home" and acting as a huge draw for tourists and craft fans worldwide.

Exemplifying this, Stuart said: "We were in Aberdeen a few weeks ago and we'd gone out for a beer, me, our quality director, production director and logistics director.

"This guy comes in with his wife, he had a BrewDog scarf on, and rucksack on with BrewDog pin badges all over it.

"We got chatting to him and he said he was a huge fan and had been to 60 odd BrewDog bars around the world.

"It's a bit too much information but he was like 'look, I've got BrewDog boxers on!'.

"We've built a following, we've built almost a club. Heineken can't do that; Coors Light can't do that.

This is special."

Stuart said they chatted with the couple, who had come up from Kent, and said they were going to visit the Ellon brewery but only for lunch as they couldn't get a tour and were "gutted".

So Stuart and the team invited the couple along and took them into the lab and showed them around the production facility and gave them the full behind-the-scenes tour.

He said: "That's what it means to us.

"Of course we want to be as big as we possibly can, but we firmly believe you do that by supporting people who support you.

"That's the best example I can give of what people still mean to us.

"North-east Scotland always has been and will remain the focal part of BrewDog, which I think is great."

Graham Gilmore, London Stadium CEO, left, with BrewDog CEO James Taylor.



Stuart Harrison, chief sales officer, BrewDog

BUSINESS LESSONS I'VE LEARNED



Andrew Bruce,
Director,
NEREC Ltd

Who has been the biggest influence on your career?

I've been lucky to work with a few great managers who gave me the space to grow, backed my decisions, and challenged me to improve. One in particular taught me the value of relationships over transactions — a lesson that's stuck with me. I've carried that forward into every role: focus on people, build trust, and deliver consistently.

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

The most valuable development has come from speaking with experienced business owners — listening to their stories, learning from their mistakes, and seeing how they approach challenges. Those real-world insights have been more impactful than any formal training. It's a reminder that surrounding yourself with the right people can be the biggest driver of growth.

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

The biggest lesson I've learned is the importance of building strong, genuine relationships. Whether it's with colleagues, clients, or partners — people want to work with those they trust. Success often comes down to how well you communicate, follow through, and support others. Being reliable and

easy to work with can open more doors than any sales pitch.

What's been your proudest career achievement to date?

Building a strong, supportive team and creating a workplace culture that people genuinely enjoy being part of has been my proudest achievement. Seeing team members grow in confidence, support each other, and take pride in their work makes it all worthwhile. Culture isn't just a buzzword — it's what drives everything forward.

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

The variety of industries here is incredible — from energy and engineering to hospitality, retail, and agriculture. That diversity creates a great environment for collaboration and learning. You're always meeting people doing something completely different, which keeps things interesting and opens up unique opportunities to work together.

What was your first job?

My first job was as a mechanic in Aboyne — hands-on, oily, and a great way to learn how things work.

Who or what inspires you most?

My family — they keep me grounded, motivated, and remind me why I do what I do.

What word or phrase in business-speak exasperates you?

"Is that the best price you can do?" — usually before they've even heard what's included!

How do you relax?

Taking a me day and fully shutting off the laptop — sometimes you just need to disconnect to recharge.

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

Changing the stigma around young business owners — age shouldn't define credibility or capability.

QUICK-FIRE ROUND



NORWOOD HALL
ABERDEEN

Award-winning service in the heart of the city

Bring your next event to life with the support of Macdonald Norwood Hall's dedicated team of event professionals.

Aberdeen's country house in the city, the award-winning hotel has a proud history of delivering exceptional events, meetings and conferences to the north-east business community.

With the purpose-built Balmoral Conference Centre nestled within the hotel grounds and complimentary parking, the facilities can cater for between 10 and 200 delegates in a range of elegant meeting and function rooms within close proximity to the city centre.

Each space is designed to work for a variety of events, while specialist event and conference professionals will support you to accommodate any specific requests. The larger suites can be configured into boardroom, theatre, classroom or cabaret style depending on your requirements, while up to 12 syndicate rooms are available for smaller, private meetings.

Located within seven acres of gardens and woodlands on the grounds of the 15th century Pitfodels Castle, Macdonald Norwood Hall can also host a wide range of corporate entertainment – including annual dinner dances, award evenings, themed nights and gala dinners.

The hotel is committed to offering the finest locally-sourced produce and fresh ingredients – with bespoke options available for everything from private dining in various stylish rooms to corporate BBQ packages.

The menu for each event – from corporate BBQ packages to private dining – can be tailor-made to suit individual tastes or preferences while retaining an emphasis on quality food and drink.



Photo credit: By Rhea



Contact our events team:

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E: info@norwood-hall.co.uk

W: www.macdonaldhotels.co.uk/norwood-hall

The Tall Ships Races 2025 – full line-up

The Granite City is set to become Party City when the Tall Ships Races Aberdeen 2025 arrive, with the festival programme revealing a four-day maritime spectacular.

A visitor map and berthing map for the event also give a real flavour of the scale, range and excitement of what's happening with almost 50 beautiful vessels pulling into Port of Aberdeen's North Harbour from **July 19 to July 22.**

That includes free live music across three stages all day every day; a feast of street food stalls; a plethora of quayside bars; a STEM Discovery Zone; a military village; plus other attractions and offerings throughout the city centre.

Emma Wadee, Aberdeen City Council's Tall Ships project manager, said: "We know how much the people of Aberdeen love to party – we saw that during the Dons' Scottish Cup victory parade. We hope people will turn out in their thousands again to enjoy everything on offer at The Tall Ships Races and help turn the Granite City into Party City from morning to night."

Europe's busiest host port

Aberdeen has been confirmed as the busiest host port for The Tall Ships Races 2025. Visitors will be treated to a dramatic forest of masts as vessels from Oman, Uruguay, Peru and across Europe and the UK fill the harbour. Many of the ships will be open for free, unticketed access during the event, offering a rare chance to explore these incredible vessels and meet the international crews.

Free live music, all day every day

The Peterson Seabase Main Stage and Transit Stage will come to life with a vibrant line-up of live music, from Scottish trad to jazz, Afrobeat, hip hop, and Latin soul.

Family fun

Designed with fun for all ages, the Family Zone at Blaikie's Quay features a giant sandpit, Ferris wheel, and children's entertainment. The Discovery Zone brings science, nature and history to life with hands-on activities from Aberdeen Science Centre, Macduff Marine Aquarium, Techfest and more.

Accessible for all

Accessibility is central to The Tall Ships Races Aberdeen 2025. A comprehensive accessibility plan is in place for the event, including sensory spaces, BSL tours, and changing places facilities.

Street food, six bars and shopping

Foodies can sample flavours from across the region with more than 60 street food stalls and six bars celebrating the best of local produce. Local favourites like Smoke & Soul, Seafood Bothy, and Glen Garioch will be joined by a vibrant outdoor market on the quayside featuring 60 traders and rotating charity stalls, curated by Charlie House.

After dark

As the sun sets, the festival continues. The Transit Stage and street food market on Regent Quay stay open until 11pm on July 19 and 21, with evening performances from Ross T Graham, David Angus, and Elphen. Codona's pop-up funfair on King Street offers rides, live street acts and stalls until late, while the Peterson Seabase yard transforms into one of Scotland's largest outdoor music venues for four nights of Quayside Concerts.

Getting to the event

Tall Ships organisers are encouraging everyone to go green and take public transport, walk, or cycle to the event. First Aberdeen are on deck with the event's

organisers in a campaign that will see 25,000 free Adult Day Tickets available and a 50% discount for all customers on a range of tickets during the event. Park and ride service can be booked in advance, and a Tall Ships cycle park will be located in front of the entrance to the Townhouse on Queen Street.

Plan your visit today

Whether you're coming for the ships, the shows, or the street food, Aberdeen is ready to welcome the world. Start planning your Tall Ships Races adventure today at tallshipsaberdeen.com

Adrian Watson, chief executive of Aberdeen Inspired, said: "We are anticipating some 400,000 visits over the four days the Tall Ships are here, with crowds enjoying not just the forest of masts at the harbour but also the fantastic quayside offering from live music to food stalls, local producers to pop-up bars.

"The Tall Ships will have an impact that reaches right across the city with so many events and activities, not least the spectacular crew parade through the city centre on the Sunday and the thrilling display of the Red Arrows which can be viewed from the beach front on the Monday.

"It goes without saying the Tall Ships and the visitors this event will attract stands to have a major impact on the local economy. Here at Aberdeen Inspired we are working hard with local businesses advising on how best to make the most of this armada of opportunity."

18 JUL FRIDAY

19 JUL SATURDAY

20 JUL SUNDAY

21 JUL MONDAY

22 JUL TUESDAY

ON THE QUAYSIDE

All Fleet arrival - quayside closed to the public day

PETERSON SEABASE
- MAIN STAGE

1830 SOLD OUT - Quayside Concert - Deacon
- Blue, Brooke Coombe and Little Kicks
2330

IN THE CITY

1000 Monsters of the Deep @ Aberdeen
- Art Gallery
1700

18 JUL FRIDAY

19 JUL SATURDAY

20 JUL SUNDAY

21 JUL MONDAY

22 JUL TUESDAY

ON THE QUAYSIDE

0900 Ribbon cutting and formal opening
0900 Event open
-
2000
2000 Evening quayside entertainment (bars, street food, live music)
2300
0900 Curated on the Quayside market
-
2000
1100 Get onboard the Tall Ships!
-
1600

PETERSON SEABASE
- MAIN STAGE

0930 SC&T Youth Ensemble
1015 Meams Singers
1120 Aberghatas
1145 Grand Opening for The Tall Ships Races Aberdeen 2025
1245 Laura Harrington & Friends
1410 Frank Thomson Dance Band Duo
1510 Ellie Beaton Trio
1600- Closed
1830
1830 Quayside Concert - Ministry of Sound Classical, Paul Oakenfold and Look Busy Collective
-
2500 Closed

TRANSIT STAGE

1045 Nuna (Solo)
1245 The Riverlife Band & Guests (Eri-Efe, Moya, AY Bangz)
1420 Jackill
1535 Aberdeen City Music Jazz Ensemble
1705 Gerry Jablonski Band
1820 The Funky Red Pandas
1930 Quayside entertainment with Ross Graham, bars and street food
2300

FAMILY STAGE

0930 Zumba for Families with Mailei
1030 Pauline Cordiner - Storyteller
1130 Zumba for Families with Mailei
1245 Pauline Cordiner - Storyteller
1345 Pauline Cordiner - Storyteller
1445 Inverted Aberdeen - Ground-based Partner Acrobatics
1530 ENDS

IN THE CITY

0900 Discovery Zone @ Castlegate
-
1800
0900 Codonas Funtair @ King Street (West North Street to Castle Street)
-
2300
0900 Military Village @ Union Terrace Gardens
-
1700
1900 Captain's Dinner (private event) @ Music Hall
-
1000 Monsters of the Deep @ Aberdeen Art Gallery
1700

18 JUL FRIDAY

19 JUL SATURDAY

20 JUL SUNDAY

21 JUL MONDAY

22 JUL TUESDAY

ON THE QUAYSIDE

Event Main quayside open
open
0900 Curated on the Quayside market
-
2000
1000 Get onboard the Tall Ships!
-
1600

PETERSON SEABASE
- MAIN STAGE

0930 Aberdeen City Council Music Service Ensemble
1100 Polish-Scottish Song Group
1215 The Paddy Buchanan Band
1345 Tripple
1515 Fell Line
1700 Crew Prizegiving
1830 Quayside Concert - Tide Lines and Calum Bowie
2300 Close

TRANSIT STAGE

0945 Evvie & The Jazz Sailors
1115 Los Acousticos Bandidos
1245 Alilee & Nathan Somevi
1345 Melodie & The Chilliers
1515 Nathan Somevi Band
1600 Close
1900 Crew Party (private event)

FAMILY STAGE

0930 Zumba for Families with Mailei
1030 Jackie Ross and Sheena Blackhall
1130 Zumba for Families with Mailei
1230 Jackie Ross and Sheena Blackhall
1330 Jackie Ross and Sheena Blackhall
1430 TBC
1530 ENDS

IN THE CITY

0900 Discovery Zone @ Castlegate
-
1800
0900 Codonas Funtair @ King Street (West North Street to Castle Street)
-
2300
0900 Military Village @ Union Terrace Gardens
-
1700
1600 Crew Parade - Union Terrace, Rosemount, Broad St, Regent Quay
0900 Crew Sports @ Aberdeen Sports Village
-
1230
1000 Monsters of the Deep @ Aberdeen Art Gallery
1700

18 JUL FRIDAY

19 JUL SATURDAY

20 JUL SUNDAY

21 JUL MONDAY

22 JUL TUESDAY

ON THE QUAYSIDE

0900 Event open
-
2000
0900 Regent Quayside street food market and bars
-
2300
0900 Curated on the Quayside market
-
2000
1000 Get onboard the Tall Ships!
-
1600

PETERSON SEABASE
- MAIN STAGE

0930 Albacapella
1040 Madame Tsunami Duo
1210 ACE Voices
1340 Iona Fyfe
1510 Arthur Coates & Kerron Cottrell
1600 Closed
-
1830
1830 Quayside Concert - Kaiser Chiefs, Glasvegas and The Copollos
-
2300 Closed

TRANSIT STAGE

0945 Guarana Street Drummers
1115 Gentlemen of Jazz
1245 Mothers and Wares
1415 Chef & Guest
1550 Matthew Kilner Electric Band
1705 Granite City Blues Band
1820 Titans
1930 Quayside entertainment with David Angus and Elphen, bars and street food
2300

FAMILY STAGE

0930 Aarna Sharma - Bollywood Dance + Plus Workshop
1030 Lilian Ross - Storyteller
1130 Aarna Sharma - Bollywood Dance + Plus Workshop
1230 Lilian Ross - Storyteller
1330 Lilian Ross - Storyteller
1430 TBC
1530 ENDS

IN THE CITY

0900 Discovery Zone @ Castlegate
-
1800
0900 Codonas Funtair @ King Street (from West North Street to Castle Street)
-
2300
0900 Military Village @ Union Terrace Gardens
-
1700
1500 Captain's Briefing (private event) @ Town House
1700
1000 Monsters of the Deep @ Aberdeen Art Gallery
1700
1730 Grand Finale - Red Arrows display @ Beach Esplanade

18 JUL FRIDAY

19 JUL SATURDAY

20 JUL SUNDAY

21 JUL MONDAY

22 JUL TUESDAY

ON THE QUAYSIDE

0900 Event open
-
1500
0900 Curated on the Quayside market
-
1500
1000 Undocking & Parade of Sail (quayside and beach esplanade)
-
1500

PETERSON SEABASE
- MAIN STAGE

0930 Aberdeen Chorus of Sweet Adelines
1045 The Country Quines
1200 Aberdeen Strathspey and Reel Society
1245 Closed

TRANSIT STAGE

0945 The Richard Bailey Trio
1115 Jingo
1200 Closed

IN THE CITY

0915 Discovery Zone @ Castlegate
-
1530
0900 Codonas Funtair @ King Street (from West North Street to Castle Street)
-
1530
0900 Military Village @ Union Terrace Gardens
-
1700
1000 Undocking & Parade of Sail (quayside and beach esplanade)
1500
1000 Monsters of the Deep @ Aberdeen Art Gallery
1700

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Mattioli Woods merges with Kingswood to create £25billion wealth group

Wealth management companies Mattioli Woods and Kingswood Group have unveiled a merger, creating a new £25billion UK wealth management group.

Pollen Street Capital, which owns both firms, said it will bring enhanced capabilities across wealth planning, investment management, and client service.

This deal - which is subject to the Financial Conduct Authority's approval - will create a new group to serve more than 25,000 clients, and the combined organisation has more than 40 offices in the UK, including Queen's Terrace in Aberdeen.

Ian Mattioli, CEO and founder of Mattioli Woods Group, said: "Our stated long-term ambition is to become a national wealth management firm with £60billion in assets and up to 300 advisers. Combining with Kingswood is a transformational moment and sees us accelerate our journey to achieve these goals.

"This deal brings together two highly complementary businesses with a shared commitment to putting clients

first and delivering long-term value. We've admired Kingswood's growth and reputation for some time.

"Together, we are creating a stronger, more dynamic business that is well-positioned for the future - for our clients and our people."

Peter Coleman, CEO of Kingswood Group, added: "The combined business will accelerate our journey towards achieving our vision of having the scale to deliver a best-in-class wealth management service to our clients.

"This is supported by our market leading DFM and IBOSS brands. I am excited to combine with Mattioli Woods, who have a strong reputation of delivering broader services including group benefits and deep expertise in specialist pensions."

The deal includes Aberdeen-founded private equity business Maven Capital Partners, which was acquired by Mattioli Woods in 2021, and has a stake in a number of North-east companies.

Fun, farce, suspense and drama in new season of shows announced for His Majesty's Theatre and the Music Hall

A spectacular and much-anticipated return for Alan Cumming and Forbes Masson's hit show *The High Life* leads the way in an electrifying new line up of blockbuster shows and performers headed for Aberdeen's His Majesty's Theatre and the Music Hall as the new Aberdeen Performing Arts Autumn brochure is unveiled.

Amongst the highlights are Tony and Olivier Award winning musical *Operation Mincemeat*, ultimate feel-good romcom *Legally Blonde the Musical*, and the intoxicating tale of *The Talented Mr Ripley*.

Dance fans will be thrilled by the captivating *Nutcracker* in Havana, along with Scottish Ballet's stunning production of *Starstruck*, while a new production of *Hamlet* will add some gravitas and prestige to the new season.

In this retelling of Shakespeare, performers with Down's syndrome take centre stage, sharing their own stories alongside the classic text.

Comedic titans Daniel Sloss and Connor Burns are the latest big names to join the ranks of the Aberdeen Comedy Festival, alongside previously announced Chris McCausland, Bridget Christie and Rory Bremner amongst a host of other comedy favourites.

The High Life, a National Theatre of Scotland and Dundee Rep Theatre production in association with Aberdeen

Performing Arts and Capital Theatres, will embark on a tour of just four venues in Spring 2026, landing at His Majesty's Theatre from Tuesday, April 14 to Saturday, April 18.

Aberdeen Performing Arts director of programming, Ben Torrie said: "The inimitable Alan Cumming and Forbes Masson will be making a welcome return to Aberdeen with a brand new revival of the 90s cult classic *The High Life*.

Since airing in the 90s it has continued to hold a place in the hearts of audiences who appreciate the show's unique and joyful humour.

"So it's high time the show made its much-anticipated return with brand new material and original songs, ready to charm fans old and new!"

Ben continues: "We're passionate about bringing a wide range of shows and performers to our stages, and we're always striving to bring the best entertainment to Aberdeen.

"Our new season announcement reflects that with the hilarious caper *Operation Mincemeat* alongside stunningly beautiful productions such as *Nutcracker* in Havana and the gripping story of *The Talented Mr Ripley* all heading for HMT, while this new production of *Hamlet* will be a powerfully moving and thought-provoking rethink of Shakespeare's masterpiece."

Loganair's sustainability fund spans woodland trust to hospice recipients

A hospice, a woodland trust, and a sustainability-focused education centre are among the community projects and small organisations set to benefit from the latest round of support from Loganair's GreenSkies Community Fund.

The UK's leading regional airline has announced this year's recipients of the GreenSkies Community Fund, an initiative that supports charities, community groups, and small businesses in reaching their sustainability goals.

This year's winning projects include:

Murtle Garden, Aberdeen: awarded £5,000 to install a new polytunnel in its walled garden, providing 50 young people with learning disabilities access to a year-round growing and learning environment.

Shed the Light, Derry: awarded £5,000 to install a solar generator at Creggan Country Park's Nature Hub, supporting renewable energy workshops and hands-on environmental education for local schools and community groups.

Winchester Hospice, Hampshire: awarded £5,000 for purchasing an e-bike and bike parking to enable sustainable, low-emission palliative home care and encourage staff and visitors to cycle.

Gifford Community Woodland, East Lothian: awarded £3,180 to plant 420 native trees to restore woodland damaged by ash disease and enhance biodiversity.

Uigshader Living Forest Project, Portree: awarded £4,185 to purchase battery-powered tools for low-impact peatland restoration, reducing fossil fuel use in the removal of non-native tree species.



Still Spirit and The Coffee Apothecary launch collaboration to celebrate Scottish produce

Two local Aberdeenshire businesses, The Coffee Apothecary and Still Spirit, have joined forces in their first collaboration combining the highest quality coffee beans with a 12-year-old blended whisky, bringing together the much-loved flavour combination to deliver a unique limited edition whisky and coffee offering.

Udny-based whisky retailer, Still Spirit provided an empty cask from its latest whisky bottling to neighbouring

business, The Coffee Apothecary, to use as a vessel for resting its coffee beans.

The beans were turned daily to ensure the coffee was perfectly infused with a delicious kick of whisky character blending the warmth of the whisky, featuring notes of brown sugar, cinnamon, vanilla and orchard fruits, with the depth and character of high-quality Columbian coffee.



WORDS OF ADVICE



Fiona Reeks,
VP-Human Resources,
Unique Group

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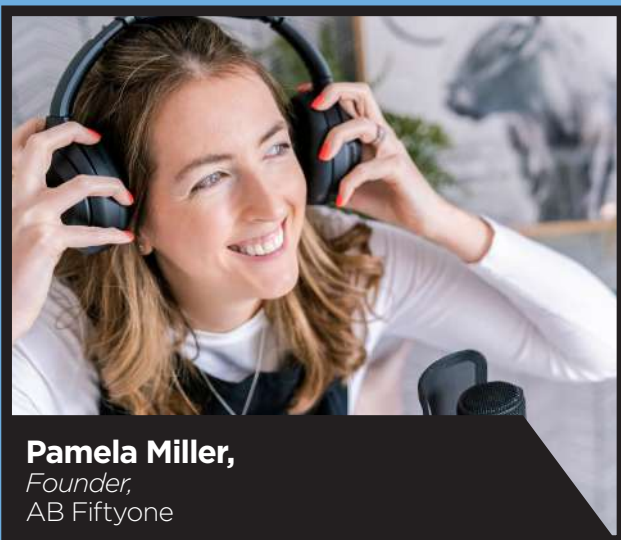
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Tell us about your management style and how it has worked for you.

My management style is hands-on and values-led, grounded in trust, fairness, and respect. I balance strategic focus with empathy, never asking my team to do anything I wouldn't do myself. With cultural awareness and integrity, I look to do the right thing - fostering inclusive, high-performing environments where people and performance thrive.

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

I came back into the workplace after being mum for six years and, as I had retrained, I was starting from scratch. It was tough seeing others being promoted ahead of me. But instead of letting it derail me, I focused on learning, stayed patient, and took opportunities as they came. That steady approach helped me build confidence, navigate cultural differences, and eventually get recognised for what I bring to the table.



Pamela Miller,
Founder,
AB Fiftyone

Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

AB Fiftyone is a digital-first marketing agency. We help energy and tech/SaaS companies scale through lead generation and growth marketing. Mixing creativity with data, we deliver brand, content, and performance strategies that drive awareness, engagement, and measurable results.

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

We like to empower our team and believe that both clients and people thrive when we lead with trust, creativity and clarity.

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

In marketing we're often juggling multi-channel executions with tight deadlines. But we work hard to constantly refine our processes, embrace smart tools and build a strong team around us hit those deadlines and deliver strong results.

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

Learn to trust your gut. Everyone's path is different and you should focus on your own lane. Also, don't compare your chapter one to someone else's chapter twelve.

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

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BY KEVIN DALGLEISH

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Stunning new course comes up Trumps for North-east

By Danny McKay

Eight-time European Tour Order of Merit winner Colin 'Monty' Montgomerie has tipped the new course at Trump International Links to be "as good if not better" than the original 18 holes.

Monty, who revealed he was the first person to hit a ball on the new course when it was still in development last year, said the stunning new course would attract visitors from around the world and could even host the Ryder Cup.

During a media day at the jaw-droppingly beautiful site, the press were given a private tour of the new course, which was expected to open to the public around August.

Whizzing round in a golf buggy and stopping occasionally to appreciate the staggering scenery and intricate, challenging nature of the course, each hole seemed to get better and better.

Both Monty and executive vice president of Trump International Scotland Sarah Malone highlighted the benefits of the new course to the local economy.

Sarah described having 36 holes as a "game-changer for the leisure, tourism and visitor economy", while Colin said you

"couldn't ask for any more" for the economy.

Monty told AGCC: "I think it's massive. You've got some July ahead of you because I believe the Tall Ships are coming as well. That's a massive event.

"Aberdeen's going to be busy in July, and you've got the Legends event followed by the DP World event.

"For the economy, you couldn't ask for any more than that. Hotel rooms will be going up in price!

"Look at the staff, not just in the club house but on the course, in MacLeod House - how wonderful is this for temporary and permanent employment in this area! It's absolutely superb.

"What's happened here with Trump International Links has been super for the local economy. The building of the new course, all the hiring of the equipment, all the stuff that has to be done, Absolutely superb."

Asked how the new course compares to other elite venues around the world, Monty said: "This is right up there. I'm not just

saying that because you're here and you're going to write about it, oh no, this is good. This is very good, and you're talking to someone who has played the best in the world. This is right up there, no doubt about it.

"I was actually the first person to hit a ball on it. Potentially, it's better than the so-called old course.

"The dunes are higher, the scenery overlooking the beach is better, and I think the course is as good if not better itself.

"If it's going to encourage American visitors, Korean, Japanese, Asian visitors, Australians, South Africans into this area, great!"

Asked if he could see major tournaments like the Open or Ryder Cup being held at Trump International Links, Colin said: "Oh God yes. Look at it! It's waiting for it!"

Sarah's enthusiasm for both courses was evident as she proudly led a tour round the stunning scenery.

She said: "The entire impetus for this site was to create a world class golf destination and we have established that with the old course.

"Having 36 extraordinary golf holes is a game-changer for the leisure, tourism and visitor economy in our sector.

"It will keep people here in the North-east of Scotland even longer.







"Tournaments draw the biggest and best names in golf. This year, staging the Legends Tour followed right on its heels, back-to-back, with the DP World Tour Scottish Championship, that's almost unprecedented and is testament to the strength of our magnificent old course.

"That's going to bring lots and lots of new benefits to the region.

"Even now we're seeing people book the 36-hole experience, and as the word spreads that's going to generate a lot of business for hotels, restaurants, the city and the whole region."

Sarah made clear the scale of the ambition for the Balmedie site from the beginning.

She continued: "From the outset, we didn't make any secret of the fact we wanted to stage the biggest and best tournaments in the world on this site.

"Everything that we have done here is for championship play, although it's accessible and open to golfers of every level of ability. We're very confident that we can stage any scale of event here.

"We also have the regional infrastructure, the billions that have been invested in improving roads and transport. The thousands of hotel rooms that are available in the city.

"The North-east of Scotland deserves a major tournament to add to what we're already bringing to the region. There's a lot more to come.

"I'm in a very privileged position that the Trump family are heavily invested in this location.

"This is a long-term investment plan where money has not been an obstacle.

"My mandate is to build the world's best. To hire the best and deliver the best.

"We know that the land is exceptional, and it deserves the best in the business working on it. Money has not been a constraint, and you can see that with the quality of what we've built.

"There are other phases to come beyond the new course being completed and opened.

"We're very, very fortunate to have an investor of the magnitude of Trump in the North-east of Scotland and Scotland as a whole.

"There's just no other developer that has been so consistent and so good for golf.

"We're immensely proud of what we've achieved. We're looking forward to welcoming people, giving them a great experience and showcasing the best of Scotland.

"It's the beginning of a new era for us."

Staysure

PGA Seniors Championship

HOSTED BY

COLIN MONTGOMERIE

St



Penspen strengthens North-east commitment with new Aberdeen office as growth accelerates

International energy consultancy Penspen has underlined its long-term commitment to the North-east of Scotland by opening a new office in Aberdeen.

The move to Balmoral Business Park in Altens marks a major milestone in the company's regional growth and brings together the expertise of Penspen and C&I Engineering Solutions, which it acquired in October 2024.

The new office at Building One, three miles south of the city centre, provides a modern, well-connected base for more than 200 specialist engineers.

It supports Penspen's growing pipeline of energy security and energy transition projects, while also creating space for future expansion. From the new base, Penspen's team in the North-east will deliver several flagship projects, including:

- The detailed engineering scope for the HyNet CO₂ transportation pipeline in Liverpool Bay.
- Hydrogen gap analysis for the Trans Adriatic Pipeline, part of the EU's Southern Gas Corridor.

These projects reflect Penspen's dual focus on energy security and infrastructure repurposing to support

hydrogen and CO₂ integration - a strategic priority for many of its global clients.

Darren Bartlett, director of engineering and energy transition at Penspen, said: "Aberdeen is a critical hub for us - a region where we have deep roots and long-standing relationships with key clients. This move reflects both our history in the North-east and our ongoing commitment to its future.

"Bringing the Penspen and C&I Engineering Solutions teams together under one purpose-built roof will strengthen collaboration and further enhance the service we deliver to our clients."

The Altens site will also support delivery of Penspen's new training courses on repurposing infrastructure for hydrogen, as well as CO₂ capture and transmission - key areas of focus as the UK positions itself at the heart of the energy transition.

"This new base provides a sustainable and flexible working environment that supports innovation and growth. We're proud to be investing in Aberdeen at a time when high-quality engineering is vital to delivering secure, low-carbon energy systems," Bartlett added.



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MARCLIFFE

Marcliffe's multi-million pound makeover takes shape

Marcliffe, Aberdeen's only five-star hotel, shares an update on the progress of its multi-million-pound investment, including its striking centrepiece, a glass domed dining space set to redefine the hotel's culinary and social experience. The developments also include a new whisky and sports bar, enhancements to the hotel's outdoor facilities on the south lawn and the conversion of nine bedrooms into luxury suites.

Construction is underway on the dome, which will introduce a brasserie-style atmosphere offering expertly crafted menus and drinks all day in a relaxed yet stylish setting. Designed to stay true to the hotel's heritage while bringing fresh energy, it will offer guests a dynamic space to socialise. Marcliffe, along with their local contractors, expect the construction works to be completed in early 2026.

Sir Jim Milne CBE, Chairman of Balmoral Group and Marcliffe, said, "This is a significant step forward in our journey. From the outset, we've wanted this investment to reflect what matters most to our guests while enhancing our facilities and experiences. This new dining area will be a striking addition at the heart of the hotel, offering a space that provides a great atmosphere while retaining the warmth and elegance our guests know and love."

In addition to the new dining experience, the hotel has confirmed it has transformed the south lawn of the property. Previously used as a putting green, the area has been redeveloped to support outdoor functions including weddings, private events and seasonal gatherings. New features include a custom-built pergola and BBQ area, a dedicated cigar shack and a mobile bar.

“

This is a significant step forward in our journey. From the outset, we've wanted this investment to reflect what matters most to our guests while enhancing our facilities and experience.

— Sir Jim Milne CBE



Elevating the Marcliffe experience

Work has also begun to transform the former snooker room into a new whisky and sports bar within the main hotel building. The space will offer whisky tastings and live sports in a comfortable setting and private hire for small group events. It will blend traditional lounge features with a modern design and expand the hotel's options for guests and local visitors.

Kellie Rixon, general manager at Marcliffe added, "We're lucky to have such a special setting at Marcliffe and the south lawn now gives us an outdoor space that really makes the most of it. The new whisky and sports bar will bring something different - a warm and luxurious space with a touch of Scottish character where guests can watch live sports or relax and enjoy a dram in comfort."

Room upgrades are also progressing with nine bedrooms on the south side of the hotel being converted into luxury suites. These suites will include larger layouts, updated interiors, improved air conditioning and enhanced in-room features that reflects the guest feedback and needs laid out in the #MyMarcliffe survey.

Scottish distiller turns to science amid historic dry spell

Whisky is ‘the water of life’ but in one of the driest starts to a year seen in Scotland, distillers are turning to researchers to improve access to the crucial water supplies for their unique products.

Scientists from the University of Aberdeen are leading a project funded by Chivas Brothers, the Pernod Ricard business dedicated to Scotch whisky and maker of Ballantine’s, to develop innovative nature-based solutions that could help to mitigate water scarcity but also slow down water run-off following rapid downpours.

The issue has been brought into sharp focus in recent weeks with the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) issuing country-wide alerts for low water levels. The dry soil a long dry spell leaves in its wake can repel water rather than letting it soak in as damp soil would, meaning it is harder to hold water when and where it is most needed.

In areas like Speyside – home to half Scotland’s malt distillers – ensuring a continuous water supply, both now and in the future, is essential as temporary closures can cost the industry millions of pounds.

Chivas Brothers is funding new research led by the University of Aberdeen and working with the James Hutton Institute, following a successful project in 2022 which focused on The Glenlivet distillery.

There the team demonstrated the benefits of a series of small leaky dams installed in channels to slow water flow by holding the water in that location in temporary mini reservoirs. This allows it to soak into the subsurface so that more water is available at times when it is needed.

The new research will broaden the

geographic scope of the project across Speyside and explore a wider range of possible nature-based solutions for water management.

Project lead Dr Josie Geris, a lecturer in hydrology at the University of Aberdeen, said the techniques they are investigating, including soil and vegetation management, could bring benefits beyond the whisky industry as around three percent of people living in Scotland rely on vulnerable private water supplies.

“First, we will take a comprehensive look at data gathered from across Speyside and carry out detailed monitoring at The Glenlivet and two other distillery sites to develop understanding of how surface water and groundwater are connected, and how this varies across the different locations,” she added.

“This will help us to assess how resilient different water resources in Speyside are to drought and to understand what causes certain water resources to be more vulnerable whether it is driven by geology, land use or other issues.

“We will then use modelling to help future planning and our understanding of which nature-based solutions might work best where to mitigate water scarcity across the region.”

The research team, which also includes Dr Mark Wilkinson (James Hutton Institute), Dr Ronald Daalmans (Chivas Brothers) Dr Jean-Christophe Comte, and PhD student Jennifer Pirie (University of Aberdeen), will investigate a range of techniques at The Glenlivet, Glenburgie and Aberlour distilleries.

PhD student Jennifer Pirie, from the University of Aberdeen, said: “The techniques used successfully

at Glenlivet cannot be applied everywhere and so we are looking at a range of measures to improve water availability in different environments.

“What works best where will depend on local site characteristics, like the geology and soil properties, and so it is vital we build this understanding and knowledge.”

As well as drought conditions, the techniques the team will use could also help with flooding and are applicable to other environmental issues such as improvements to carbon storage, water quality and biodiversity.

Dr Mark Wilkinson, from the James Hutton Institute, said: “There is significant interest from diverse stakeholders for these ‘green solutions’ to environmental problems and the project is designed to share insights and to develop a toolkit of options for different environments and users.”

Dr Ronald Daalmans, from Chivas Brothers, said: “This important work will help inform the whisky sector on how it can adapt and mitigate the effects of climate change for this critical resource. It forms part of a wider programme, called The River Within, which aims to support river restoration and enhancement in North-East Scotland.”

In addition to supporting research projects, Chivas Brothers’ The River Within, a long-term programme in partnership with three Scottish river trusts – the Deveron, Bogie and Isla Rivers Charitable Trust, Findhorn, Nairn and Lossie Rivers Trust, and the Spey Catchment Initiative – aims to support the delivery of habitat restoration projects to ultimately preserve, protect and improve the health of Scotland’s rivers and waterways.



Why smart businesses don't skip the follow-up: Customer feedback

Business is busy, orders / bookings are good, your last event went well; high-fives all round! But how do you really know what your customers or clients are thinking? How do you ensure that complacency doesn't slip in, that you continue to push boundaries and grow in line with your customer and market needs and wants?

That's where customer feedback surveys come into their own — not just as a box-ticking exercise, but as a strategic tool for businesses who care about what comes next.

At the Chamber, we've been putting this into practice through our post-event and post-training five-star feedback surveys. Every attendee, whether they've just finished a leadership course or taken part in a packed networking event, receives a quick email inviting them to share their views. It's simple, timely and — crucially — effective. (Just check the review ratings, testimonials or sell-out events schedule).

We use a platform called Alchemer to power our surveys. It's more than just a way to ask questions, it's a robust research tool that enables us to provide you with a live, online dashboard where your feedback lands in real-time. Alternatively it can integrate with your current internal reporting, such as PowerBI, and integrate the feedback with your internal data for real insight depth. This enables you to spot trends, react to issues quickly and celebrate what's going well — all without waiting for a report to land.

This kind of immediate, independent insight can ensure your competitive edge.

Whether you're running events, selling services or simply want to understand how your customers experience your brand, using tools like Alchemer and maximising the application of your collected data means your feedback is an opportunity.

And let's be clear, these tools can be more than reactive, it's not just about identifying what needs fixing. Surveys like these give you quotes and data to share internally and externally — helping you boost morale, secure funding or shout about your successes on social media. The help you identify trends over time, changes in attitudes and behaviours and enable you to anticipate opportunities and capitalise on them.

Customer research doesn't need to be complex. In fact, the best insights often come from well-timed and simple well-designed surveys that meet your audience where they are — whether that's in their inbox after a training course or on their phone after an event.

Ok, in theory this all sounds sensible, but what are the impacts, how can this really help my business....Let's look at some example scenarios: A mid-sized hotel chain gathers post-stay feedback from guests - the real-time dashboard flags consistent comments about noise levels in one wing of the property. Because the feedback was arriving daily, the hotel team could act quickly — adjusting room allocations and updating in-room information. As a result, satisfaction scores in that section rose within weeks, and the hotel avoided a dip in public online reviews.

Or a leisure provider introduces a quarterly member pulse survey to understand how gym-goers felt about equipment, classes and customer service. The data shows high demand for more early morning classes — especially from working parents. By rebalancing the class schedule and tracking responses over time, the gym can actually increase member retention rates and positive referrals.

Or... (last one, promise)...an industry body running a multi-day annual conference uses daily evaluation surveys, emailed within hours of the final session, to gather feedback while the experience was still fresh. Using the live dashboard, they view delegate responses instantly and can respond to temperature issues in one room and lack of signage around break-out zones. Each day the event runs more smoothly, and supports high overall feedback and reviews, and increased early-bird bookings for next year.

So if you're not already gathering feedback after every key customer touchpoint, it might be time to start. And if you are... is your approach giving you what you really need?



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

samira.heshmatzadeh@agcc.co.uk

the MEMBER MEET the



Gordon Blair,
Business Development Manager,
ROSEN – Aberdeen

Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

Most people are familiar with ROSEN as a global provider of pipeline inspection services and data management, but in the UK we provide engineering consultancy services to operators in the UK and beyond. Specifically we have a team

of 180 engineers and consultants, many ex operator, split between our offices in Aberdeen and Newcastle focussing on design verification, materials, welding and corrosion, flow assurance and integrity management.

Who are your customers?

Predominately our customers are pipeline operators in the oil and gas space, gas transmission and distribution and liquid pipeline operators. ROSEN is actively involved in the future fuels space with our inhouse hydrogen team helping to define the standards for the industry while we are already involved in carbon capture projects at home and abroad.

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

A big part of our business involves data management and interrogation so AI will play a part and is already providing efficiencies. Transitioning to the renewables sector is ongoing

but we are comfortable of our space there. As long as there are pipelines, ROSEN will have work to do.

What is your word of advice for fellow Chamber members?

You have to carve out a space in the future Aberdeen and not worry too much about the old Aberdeen as it will remain for a long time yet. Get excited as change is stimulating and learn from fellow members through their future strategy.

What is the best thing about being a Chamber member?

The Chamber is all about bringing people together and allowing a breadth of information sharing in different industries across the region. There is always a vast knowledge in the room and to understand what others do and the challenges they face is a good thing when projected back into our business. The Chamber has great tools, opportunities to meet and share information along with great people who guide us to get the best out of the Chamber.



Simon Garrow,
Business Development Executive,
Thainstone Events

Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

Thainstone Events offers a diverse range of flexible event spaces to host indoor events for up to 1,000 – with quality catering and service provided by Harry Fraser Catering. We have a dedicated team on site to help curate

your event and meet any bespoke requirements.

Who are your customers?

We see all walks of life as our target demographic – with such varying spaces we could have a business breakfast in the morning in our Bothy Function Suite, a workshop in the afternoon in our Glen Garioch meeting room, and then a concert or party night for 500-1,000 people in the evening.

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

I think like many of our industry colleagues, rising costs impact all areas of our business. However, with such a blank canvass across the centre, we can be versatile and adapt our offering by working with our event partners to ensure we can still deliver cost effective events.

What is your word of advice for fellow Chamber members?

Memorable customer service is what can set you apart from the crowd, protecting existing and driving new business towards you. In a market so competitive – it is important to remember to remain consistent and true to your core values.

What is the best thing about being a Chamber member?

The best thing is the range of information and networks the Chamber can provide access to – it really provides you with an all-encompassing snapshot of what is going on throughout the area.

MEMBER MEET *the* ME



Graham Kelly,
Sales Executive,
Sport Aberdeen

Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

Sport Aberdeen is an award-winning charity committed to creating opportunities, inspiring people and changing lives through sport and physical activity.

It aims to provide **everyone** with the chance to get active, breaking down any barriers to participation.

With so many impactful community programmes and initiatives which are available to sponsor, please do get in touch!

Who are your customers?

So, most people in Aberdeen would assume its gym and swim with Sport Aberdeen, but actually it's so much more than that.

We've got ice skating, swimming, tennis, padel, golf, Active Schools activities, Active Lifestyles for older adults – you get the idea, there's something for everyone!

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

Making people in Aberdeen aware of all the incredible work that we do here. I think a lot of people still don't know that we're a charity, and some of the meaningful work we do goes unnoticed, so I'd like to showcase that more.

What is your word of advice for fellow Chamber members?

Even though society is more digitally connected now, I still believe it is better to meet in person. Connections and networks are strengthened by meeting people in person wherever possible.

What is the best thing about being a Chamber member?

The staff are always friendly and can help with making introductions. Our Relationship Manager always shares Sport Aberdeen's news online and with the companies they connect us with.



Stuart Robb,
Director,
Thistle Tavern Cards LTD (Trading as Thistle Tavern Games Hub)

Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

Thistle Tavern is Aberdeen's premier hub for tabletop gaming. We offer a vibrant space for TCGs, board games, and daily events, both in-store and online at thistletavern.com. We're building a community around the games we love.

Who are your customers?

Our customers are diverse: from seasoned TCG players and board game enthusiasts to casual gamers and collectors. We cater to anyone seeking a welcoming space to enjoy and explore the world of tabletop gaming.

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

Challenge: Balancing physical store experience with growing online demand.

Opportunity: Expanding our online presence and community engagement, reaching a wider audience and enhancing our event offerings.

What is your word of advice for fellow Chamber members?

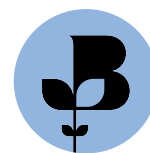
Build strong community connections. Leverage local networks and

collaborate with leaders within the community. Focus on providing exceptional customer experiences to foster loyalty and growth.

What is the best thing about being a Chamber member?

The Chamber's platform for sharing and receiving business updates has been invaluable. It keeps us informed and allows us to connect effectively with the local business landscape.

HOLYROOD SOURCES



Aberdeen &
Grampian
Chamber of
Commerce

SPECIAL



THE FUTURE OF ENERGY

This September, Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce and Shepherd and Wedderburn are bringing the energy debate centre stage... literally.

Join us at Offshore Europe for a special live recording of the Holyrood Sources podcast, in front of a 1,300-strong audience at the iconic Aberdeen Music Hall.

Hosted by Geoff Aberdein, Andy Maciver and Calum Macdonald - three insiders with experience at the highest levels of politics, government and media - this evening event will bring together senior political figures from

across the spectrum to debate the future of the energy sector in the energy capital of Europe.

Expect a no-holds-barred conversation on the policies, pressures and possibilities shaping the next chapter of energy - from the North Sea to net zero.

This is a must-attend moment for anyone serious about the politics of energy, the role of the North-east, and what comes next.

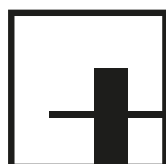
Political guests will be announced closer to the event.

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TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2
THE MUSIC HALL, ABERDEEN
7PM-9PM



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Northwood shows support for local charities with £7,500 donation

Three local charities have each received £2,500 from leading Aberdeen sales and lettings agency Northwood following a year of fundraising as part of its 15th anniversary in business.

Aberdeen Amateur Athletics Club (AAAC), Friends of ANCHOR and Forget Me Not Club each received a slice of the £7,500 raised by the team last year during an 18.6 mile walk from Northwood's newest office in Banchory to its oldest in Rosemount, as well as a fire walk at Elsie House in November.

The fundraising events were part of a year of 'giving back' by the Northwood staff to its local communities. Each month, they provided support to a range of different organisations throughout the region, offering practical hands-on help including sorting and clearing up, gardening, painting, and mock interviews for those looking to get back into employment.

ASCO awarded contract and opens new operating location in Mosjøen

ASCO, a leading logistics and materials management company, has been awarded a terminal handling contract with Alcoa in Mosjøen.

Alcoa is the world's eighth-largest producer of aluminium, and this agreement marks a significant milestone in ASCO's 30-year history in Norway, representing a further expansion of its services beyond the oil and gas sector. The new contract builds on ASCO's 17-year relationship with Alcoa in Farsund, where the company has gained valuable experience in terminal operations. Under the new agreement, ASCO will take over the Mosjøen terminal through a business transfer, expanding its operational footprint and scope of services.

Due to the scale and complexity of the contract, a broad range of capabilities will be required. ASCO is not only establishing operations in Mosjøen but also looking forward to building strong relationships with the local team and wider organisation.

'I'll see you at the Viking Ship'

A stunning new addition to the University of Aberdeen's Cruickshank Botanic Garden is offering visitors an additional peaceful place to gather their thoughts.

Now in place on the 'Beech Lawn', on the south-west corner towards the Rose Garden, is a striking new bench, which has been carved from fallen timber by world-renowned sculptor, Nigel Ross.

Adorned with the words 'memories', 'play', 'forever', 'outdoors' and 'learn'; as a living memorial, the bench has been thoughtfully designed to honour a special person, to whom it is dedicated.

Curator of the Cruickshank Botanic Garden, Mark Paterson, said: "I was approached by a family who wanted to further enhance CBG and at the same time provide a memorial to someone they loved and who loved the garden. Their idea was to commission Nigel Ross to design and make a bench in such a way that it would be appealing to children as well as being a commemorative, visual delight in CBG.

"Of course I was absolutely thrilled at the offer and have continued to be overwhelmed by the beauty of the bench, and what it symbolises. The words carved into the oak have been carefully chosen. I hope for all who sit on the bench, the location and words, combined, will conjure up different emotions and memories, leaving them feeling better for having been there."

Having been commissioned, Nigel set about creating and sculpting the bench from an oak tree that was blown down along the shore of Loch of Clunie in a winter 2023 storm. Appropriately, due to its shape, Mark and others

have started referring to the bench as the 'Viking Ship'.

Nigel commented: "Part of the remit for the bench was for it be attractive to children and it was carved with this in mind. I thought perhaps a viking boat would be perfect. I also wanted to capture the spirit of the oak tree and show off the grain the knots and exploit the tactile character of the oak.

"I had set aside the unusual curved limb from the Clunie Oak and was just waiting for the right opportunity to arise – the living memorial bench at the Cruickshank Botanic Gardens was absolutely the perfect commission for it. Oak is a durable timber and the bench should stand the test of time and will even get polished with use."

Mark added: "The bench, quite simply, looks phenomenal and it will do so all year round and indeed, in perpetuity. Whether set against the long shadows of wintertime or highlighted by dappled sunlight shining through the seasonal foliage of the surrounding trees. In addition to being a lovely piece of artistic work, the bench is practical and has become my favourite new meeting place – instead of an online Teams chat, I'll see you at the Viking Ship!"



BUSINESS LESSONS I'VE LEARNED



Gordon Paul,
Global Logistics Compliance Manager,
Proserv

Who has been the biggest influence on your career?

Whilst I haven't had a traditional mentor or single person guiding my career, I'd say that my family has been a major influence. Most of my career has been self-driven – built on motivation and a willingness to figure things out along the way. I've learned from challenges and experiences and pushed forward. My twin brother has been a major influence. We have always had a subdued sense of competition between us and that dynamic has pushed me to work harder and aim higher. My older sister has also played a quieter, but important role. Seeing how others manage their own paths definitely plays a part in shaping mindset and work ethic.

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

The most effective personal development I've undertaken wasn't a formal course – it was the process of learning to adapt my mindset and communication style as I moved from a warehouse environment into a global management role at our company headquarters. Early on, I was very reactive – loud, fast-paced, and aggressive, because that's what the environment demanded. But stepping into a corporate setting, I quickly realised the value of calm, strategic thinking and professional communication. Observing how experienced leaders and colleagues

conducted themselves in meetings taught me a lot. Over time, I trained myself to slow down, really listen, and respond thoughtfully. That personal shift – from reactive to reflective – has made me a far more effective leader and communicator.

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

One of the biggest lessons I've learned in business is that just because something has 'always been done that way' doesn't mean it's the right way. I've found that challenging long-standing habits – even when I'm the only one questioning them – can lead to real improvements. There have been times where I've realised that a common process was actually inefficient or outdated, and instead of just going along with it, I've chosen to do things the right way. That can be uncomfortable, especially when others have been doing it the same way for 20 years, but I've learned that approaching those moments with respect, patience, and a willingness to educate can lead to positive change – and earn respect in return.

What's been your proudest career achievement to date?

My proudest career achievement was being appointed as Warehouse and Logistics Manager at a large Proserv site, where I was tasked with building the stores, logistics and warehousing function from the ground up. There were no

robust processes in place, health and safety standards required improvement and quality control standards required attention. I had to build three warehouse teams across the site – hiring and managing roles from materials coordinators to forklift drivers. It was a massive challenge, with hundreds of deliveries a week, frequent crane lifts, long hours and a lot of moving parts. But in a short time, I turned things around, created structure and safety, and led a high-performing team that kept up with a heavy operational load. That experience really shaped how I handle workload today and proved to me what I'm capable of under pressure.

What was your first job?

Working at a go-karting company as a marshal, which is now the new bp headquarters in Dyce.

Who or what inspires you most?

Standing up for what you believe in and remaining true to your roots.

What word or phrase in business-speak exasperates you?

The phrases, "there are a lot of moving parts", and, "I don't have the numbers in front of me". Also, "that's above my paygrade".

How do you relax?

Sport, hill walking and beaches. The occasional punchbag session for those days that test your resolve.

A new horizon: Brimmond partners with Proserv to launch Middle East division

North-east Scotland based engineering specialists, Brimmond, are proud to announce the establishment of their new Middle East business division, with the launch of a branch subsidiary based in Dubai. Strategically located in the Dubai Multi Commodities Centre (DMCC), this expansion marks a significant milestone in Brimmond's international growth.

Brimmond is partnering with well-established controls technology company, Proserv, which had operational facilities across Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. The collaboration will combine Brimmond's engineering expertise with Proserv's strong regional presence to deliver enhanced support and solutions to customers throughout the Middle East.

Brimmond has mobilised equipment with a value in excess of £1m, along

with an extensive spares and support package, for rental across the UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Oman. The firm has designed and manufactured 4 new 93kW Diesel Hydraulic Pressure Units (HPUs) for the new division. They will also be shipping Zone 1 45kW Electric HPUs and Zone 2 Diesel HPUs, with the first units available for rental from July.

Underscoring their commitment to investing in the region, Brimmond have established a business and physical office in Dubai's DMCC free zone. Currently one member of staff will be employed from there, with plans to grow this team locally over the next 3 years. Brimmond's rental and technical teams in the UK will be closely involved in the roll-out of the new division, as will the company's directors.

Managing Director of Brimmond, Tom Murdoch said:

"Brimmond's reputation is built on the reliability and performance of its equipment, and this same standard

will be applied to the Middle East market. In the last calendar year alone, our rental fleet recorded 5,621 days of major equipment on hire, with only 16 days of unplanned downtime - delivering an exceptional uptime rate of 99.72%. This level of dependability ensures our clients can count on Brimmond's equipment to perform in even the most demanding environments."

Angus Rodger, Senior Vice President, Proserv said:

"We are thrilled to partner with Brimmond in this exciting new venture, bringing their innovative engineering solutions to the Middle East market. This collaboration reflects the strong, trusted relationship our two companies have built over nearly two decades. By combining Brimmond's exceptional manufacturing expertise with Proserv's deep regional knowledge and operational footprint, we are confident in our ability to deliver unrivalled value and support to customers across the region."

Brimmond:
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MOTOR MOUTH

CHARGING TOWARDS THE ELECTRIC VAN FUTURE

By Scott Maskame

I've always been intrigued by the prospect of owning an electric vehicle so when TrustFord Aberdeen and Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce offered me the opportunity to borrow one, I jumped at the chance.

At Maskame & Tait Ltd, we have a fleet of diesel vans and motors on the road, delivering reactive and project works for our commercial, public sector and housing clients across the North-east of Scotland.

Covering one of the most remote areas in Scotland for some jobs, the nature of our works means that we often attend call outs 24 hours a day, all year round and we need a fleet capable of this.

The main reason we have not pursued the EV route to date is primarily due to our own facilities. Having been a joinery workshop for almost 150 years, our yard was used by horses and carts long before we moved in and the space is simply not suitable for multiple vehicles and charging points.

Additionally, my family and I now live in an old granite town house near the town centre with no off-street parking which adds another layer of logistical considerations when looking at EV's.

The E-Transit Custom

I turned up at TrustFord's beautiful showroom at Craigshaw Crescent where the staff made me feel very welcome. We had a quick tour of the van and then took it out on the road with a full charge. The van itself is fantastic, spacious, comfortable and has the most futuristic user interface I have ever seen.

After a bit of a stuttering start, I soon got to grips with the difference in acceleration and enjoyed driving around the city with ease as I visited some of our sites across Aberdeen.

Once out on the open road, the cruise control made life even easier and ensured a smooth journey up to Peterhead.

Having made plans to head out on a road trip on the Saturday morning, I

topped up the charge using the public charger at Peterhead's Lido and caught up on emails while I waited. As is the nature of my job though, something came up and I had to abort the charge to visit a site.

Armed with a packed lunch and no set plans, we set off ready for our road trip, planning to grab some breakfast while we topped up the charge before leaving Peterhead.

While the infrastructure in this area isn't quite up to speed to make the most of it yet, I found that the van itself is an amazing motor in every way. For someone who has their own driveway and home-charging point or a business with a yard and your own charging point, this van would be a brilliant addition to your fleet as it is one of the best vans on the road.





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Aberdeen-based recruitment agency rebrands as FT Recruitment Group to reflect business growth and broader services

One of Aberdeen's leading specialist recruitment firms, FinTech Recruitment Solutions, is excited to announce a major rebrand to FT Recruitment Group.

This change marks a significant milestone in the company's journey, as it expands its service offering beyond its established expertise in IT and finance recruitment to now include a broader range of corporate solutions.

Since being founded in 2021, the company has built a strong reputation for connecting top talent with leading businesses predominantly in the IT and Finance sectors. The rebrand to FT Recruitment Group reflects not only the company's sustained growth but also its evolution into a more diverse and dynamic recruitment partner.

Tidy Green Clean: Strong growth and innovation in early 2025

Tidy Green Clean (TGC) is proud to share the remarkable progress made over the start of 2025.

During this time, the company experienced a significant boost in revenue, highlighting the strength of its team, the quality of services, and the trust built across a variety of industries.

Thanks to this dedication and the ongoing support of its clients, TGC secured an impressive £1.4million in new revenue from sectors including entertainment, hospitality, oil and gas, and training. This robust growth demonstrates the impact the company continues to make, not only in the local community but on a national scale.

In addition to its ongoing business in Aberdeen, TGC's presence in cities like Glasgow and Edinburgh has been vital to the recent surge in revenue. This strategic expansion enables the company to serve clients in industries such as entertainment and hospitality, which are critical to the local economy.

NESCol achieves CIPD Platinum Centre status

North East Scotland College (NESCol) has been recognised as a CIPD Platinum Centre, highlighting its commitment to delivering excellence in Human Resources (HR) and Learning & Development (L&D) education.

Platinum Centre status acknowledges the College's exceptional quality in meeting the CIPD's professional education and assessment standards. It also reflects high levels of learner satisfaction.

The Chartered Institute for Personnel Development (CIPD) is the professional body for all people professions, with over 160,000 members globally. NESCol has been a CIPD-approved study centre for over 15 years, and has been delivering the Foundation Certificate in People Practice since 2022.

Iain Cocker, business development manager, NESCol, said: "We are delighted to be a CIPD Platinum Centre. This achievement demonstrates NESCol's dedication to providing the highest quality of education and support for our learners.

"CIPD qualifications are recognised worldwide by employers, and there is a growing demand for professionals with these credentials.

"Over the past three years, we have supported 58 learners to achieve their Foundation Certificate in People Practice. Looking ahead to 2026, we are excited to expand our CIPD offering to meet the needs of our learners and the industry."

The Foundation Certificate in People Practice is aimed at new entrants to the people profession and those in support roles looking to take the next step in their careers. The course provides learners with a solid understanding of HR and L&D and is broadly comparable to SCQF Level 6.

From February next year, NESCol will also deliver the Associate Diploma in People Management, broadly comparable to SCQF Level 9. This advanced qualification is suited to HR professionals who are ready to build on their expertise and move into a more senior role.

For more information or to enrol on a CIPD course at NESCol, please contact cipd@nescol.ac.uk



Vallourec Oil & Gas UK opens doors on new premises

Consolidating its commitment to the North Sea, Vallourec Oil & Gas UK (VOGUK), a subsidiary of Vallourec, leader in premium seamless tubular solutions and provider of OCTG connections and services, has announced an office move to enhance the support provided to customers in the UK and Norway.

Moving from its premises in Bridge of Don, VOGUK will now be situated in the Prime Four Business Park, known as a hot spot for energy service activity. By being closer to customers and fellow service providers, VOGUK will now be based within the heart of the industry.

As the North Sea branch of Vallourec, VOGUK will use its new office space to secure opportunities to better serve customers within the oil and gas sector, alongside new energy markets.

Wood secures c.\$100million of awards to reduce gas flaring in Iraq

Wood, a global leader in consulting and engineering, has been awarded a series of decarbonisation contracts with a value of c.\$100million for flare gas reduction and carbon efficiency project solutions across the largest oil fields in Iraq.

Wood will deliver brownfield engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) and modifications solutions to enhance operational efficiency and minimise environmental impacts, in support of Iraq's commitment to reduce gas flaring by 78% by the end of 2025.

Wood has a decades-long track record of providing decarbonisation solutions for major operators in Iraq and has implemented the country's largest flare gas reduction programme to date.

OEG secures framework agreement to support oil major in North America

OEG, a leading energy solutions provider, has secured a three-year contract with an international oil major.

Balfour+Manson appointed official legal partner of Aberdeen FC

Aberdeen Football Club is delighted to announce a new partnership with leading Scottish law firm Balfour+Manson, who will become the club's official legal partner.

The collaboration marks a significant milestone for both organisations, uniting two recognisable pillars of the North-east community through a shared commitment to excellence and innovation.

The legal firm has a distinguished track record since its inception in 1888, combining traditional values with a modern, progressive approach and this partnership with the Dons will work to enhance Balfour+Manson's profile in the region and foster a stronger connection with the club's loyal supporters.

Robertson completes £29million CLT school for Aberdeen City Council

Aberdeen City Council has taken ownership of its new £29million New Riverbank School, built using a cross laminated timber (CLT) frame, following successful delivery by Robertson Construction Eastern.

The 6,784m² (73,000ft²), three-stream school provides a high-quality learning environment for up to 651 primary-age pupils, alongside early learning and nursery provision for up to 60 children. Facilities include a gym hall, dance studio, dining hall, staff and administration areas, and student support spaces.

Robertson led the construction phase of the two-storey school including the design, engineering and build of the frame structure using primarily CLT*. The use of CLT delivered a 2,510 tCO₂e (tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent) reduction in embodied carbon, placing the project as a sector-leading example of low-carbon design. The school has a draft Energy Performance Rating of A.

Under the terms of the agreement, which includes optional extensions for up to five years, OEG will supply logistics equipment for the organisation's operations in North America.

This partnership underscores OEG's commitment to operational excellence and ability to support across the energy lifecycle.

Summer adventures and hidden treasures: Geocaching holidays at Cairngorm Lodges

Cairngorm Lodges, based near Logie Coldstone in Aberdeenshire, is offering families a new way to explore the outdoors this summer, using its woodland trails and surrounding landscapes as a base for geocaching adventures.

The dog friendly self-catering retreat, located in a peaceful Scots pine forest on the edge of the Cairngorms National Park, has seen growing interest from guests looking to take part in geocaching - an outdoor activity that uses GPS coordinates to find hidden containers, known as caches.

With a network of tracks running through the woods between Cairngorm Lodges and its off-grid sister site, Cairngorm Bothies, families are finding the setting ideal for digital detox holidays with a twist. The estate's quiet trails allow guests of all ages to combine walks with treasure hunting, adding excitement and a sense of purpose to time spent outdoors.

Appetite for Business strengthens role in offshore wind supply chain with F4OR selection

Appetite for Business has been selected to join the prestigious Fit 4 Offshore Renewables (F4OR) programme for North-east Scotland, an initiative delivered by the Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) Catapult and funded by the Energy Transition Zone (ETZ Ltd).

Designed to help UK companies enter and grow within the offshore renewable energy sector, the F4OR programme offers structured support to strengthen business capabilities and align with industry expectations.

Appetite for Business joins the North-east Scotland cohort alongside 11 other forward-thinking companies.

The selection highlights the company's growing reputation as a digital transformation partner within the energy industry.



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Stuart Paul,
*Senior Piping Supervisor,
GS Hydro (Piping Division)*

Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

GS-Hydro is the original provider of non-welded piping systems for industries with high demand on quality. The leak-free piping solutions are preferred especially in the offshore, marine and land-based industries such as pulp and paper or steel industries. The reliability and numerous advantages of GS systems can be utilised

in numerous high and low pressure applications with media such as water, oil, air, gas and mud.

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

I have adopted styles and approach from previous peers but have also tried to treat employees as I would expect to be treated myself, and find you get greater respect if you ask them about availability in traveling to project locations rather than forcing it on them, and also don't force them to do any job that your not willing to do yourself.

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

Perception in earlier days that I wasn't up to some of the tasks involved with being a supervisor and doing surveys etc and that there were better more qualified folk available but by being given the opportunity proved that I was up to the task and it's just grown from there.

What is the best bit of business or life advice you have ever received?

Try not to let everything get on top of you during the busy times and relax when you can though sometimes easier said than done.



Jonathan Smith,
*Partner,
The Alternative Board North East Scotland*

Give us the elevator pitch for your business.

TAB helps business leaders implement their strategic ambitions faster. We do this by bringing peer decision-makers together in small groups to support and challenge one another, backed up by one-to-one executive coaching. TAB further enables it through in-house senior management workshops and HI-MAP training for managers and supervisors.

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

I asked a team this recently. They said I am collaborative, facilitative, inclusive: drawing on different people's skills and experiences to get the greatest value from the team; methodical – developing a process that works and applying it; and direct when needed. The team like it and are performing strongly.

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

The huge tractor blockade of Stanlow Refinery in the year 2000 fuel protest was a big barrier on the way to work! Aside from that, the biggest barrier is absence of alignment. Whether I develop it through detailed stakeholder mapping or simple dialogue, I find that, once everyone's aligned on goals, be that as customer, supplier, colleague, or something else, everything works more smoothly.



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Aviemore was the perfect location for our international Ocean Energy conference in 2024. Super accessible location from the UK and Europe, our delegates were able to stay on-site, which made the conference and exhibition easy to access and gave the event a great community feel. The team, led by Clare, was truly fantastic, they were helpful and ready to help both before and during the event. It was our best rated event to date!

Yamila Conill

Head of marketing and membership
Ocean Energy Europe

Clare and her team were a dream to work with. Nothing was too much trouble, and she was able to introduce us to other businesses that she had already worked with and could recommend. It was new territory for the festival, never having held our event outside of a distillery before so having the support whenever we needed it was invaluable.

Angela McOwan

Festival co-ordinator
Spirit of Speyside Whisky Festival

With a history spanning nearly 60 years, Macdonald Aviemoire Resort has built an enviable reputation for delivering conferences and corporate events for UK and international business travellers.

Set in the heart of the Cairngorms, the resort's exceptional facilities and versatility to host everything from large-scale international conferences and association events to private meetings and dinners for local businesses set it apart.

As the largest residential conference facility in Scotland – with over 400 bedrooms on-site - the 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.

Macdonald Aviemoire Resort offers a state-of-the-art conference centre and versatile event spaces for hosting meetings, exhibitions and product launches, while providing guests with professional hotel-level service from the moment they arrive.

This includes a 650-seat auditorium and the 1,000m² Osprey Arena, capable of holding up to 1,150 delegates. Meanwhile, 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 or open-air gatherings.

The Highland facility – available for exclusive use for the largest conferences and 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. Food and drink are key to the success of any event and, with a choice of restaurants onsite, bespoke dining options can be offered to clients that showcase Scottish produce at its finest.

In consultation with the resort's executive chef, carefully curated fine dining menus can be created for any event - from a gala dinner for hundreds of guests to an intimate gathering with a tailor-made tasting menu to enhance your event.



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Contact our events team

T: 01479 815195

E: specialevents.aviemoire@macdonald-hotels.co.uk

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The Marcliffe rebrand elevating North-east hospitality



With a multimillion-pound rebrand underway, Aberdeen's only five-star hotel is entering a new era. The Marcliffe has earned worldwide renown for its hospitality and after more than three decades as a family-run establishment, the beloved Victorian manor is evolving.

Under the ownership of the Balmoral Group, The Marcliffe is undergoing an ambitious rebrand designed to preserve its legacy while propelling it to the forefront of modern Scottish hospitality.

Since opening its doors in 1993, The Marcliffe has stood as an institution in the North-east of Scotland. For decades, the Spence family cultivated its reputation for old-world elegance, with tartan carpets and a loyal clientele of celebrities, politicians and royals.

Now, Balmoral Group, an Aberdeen-based engineering firm led by Sir Jim Milne, has acquired

the estate. And as a lifelong admirer of the iconic hotel, Sir Jim isn't seeking to reinvent The Marcliffe but rather evolve it.

#MyMarcliffe survey

In 2024, Balmoral began the rebranding process with an extensive public engagement campaign. Through the #MyMarcliffe initiative, over 2,400 people shared their ideas, memories, and hopes for the hotel's future.

The message was clear. Retain the hotel's warmth, intimacy, and history, while updating its amenities and broadening its appeal to a new generation of guests.

One of the most significant updates is the construction of a glass-domed brasserie at the heart of the estate. This new indoor-outdoor venue will feature a central bar, comfortable seating, and all-season climate control, offering guests a

stylish space to dine and unwind all year round.

The dome not only enhances the guest experience but also strengthens The Marcliffe's appeal for events and weddings - a key component of Scotland's hospitality and tourism sector.

Sir Jim described the structure as "adding a completely new dimension to the Marcliffe experience, offering a unique space for Aberdeen, where guests and visitors can dine, celebrate and experience something truly special".

Scotland's tourism sector has seen a growing demand for stays that offer authenticity and tradition. And with Aberdeen increasingly seen as a gateway to the Highlands, whisky trails, and the North-east coast, The Marcliffe's elevated offering will play a crucial role in regional tourism.

Despite the changes, The Marcliffe's soul remains intact. Staff members,

many of whom have served for decades, remain the beating heart of the hotel. Their knowledge and professionalism continue to define the guest experience.

In January 2025, The Marcliffe temporarily closed to focus on staff training and systems with the former Macdonald Hotels brand director, Kellie Rixon MBE, joining as interim general manager.

Since then, the hotel has invested heavily in its digital footprint with a redesigned website, a fresh logo and modern refurbishments. As part of the renovations, The Marcliffe will also introduce a new luxury bridal suite, providing an exclusive space for wedding celebrations. At the same time, the move forms part of the hotel's broader strategy to establish itself as a world-class hotel that blends Scottish heritage with modern luxury.

Sustainability is also at the forefront of The Marcliffe as it sources 80% of its ingredients locally. This commitment extends to using local beef, fish, and seafood, and even sourcing local honey for breakfast.

Award-winning hospitality

And the industry is taking notice. Earlier this year, the consumer watchdog Which? awarded The Marcliffe its first five-star rating in seven years, praising its blend of luxury, value, and genuine Scottish hospitality.

The industry experts, who do not reveal their identity to their hosts, have reviewed hundreds of hotels up and down the country, but were blown away by the iconic Aberdeen hotel, saying "every minute feels special".

So much so they felt compelled to give the Marcliffe full marks.

The Which? inspectors noted: "From the moment you climb the sweeping drive of this Victorian manor house on the outskirts of Aberdeen, to the waistcoated staff who swing open the doors and usher you into a reception warmed by a blazing fire, every minute at the Marcliffe feels special.

"There is no bling, no gold wallpaper or cocktail-snapping influencers, not even a hot tub in the small spa. The tartan carpets, high tea in the drawing room and impeccable service feel almost old-fashioned. But it's this elegance that appeals and keeps minor royals – who can't fit into nearby Balmoral – coming back."

The food also stood out to the reviewers, who noted dishes were "exquisitely presented and taste excellent", while also praising the "sort of breakfast buffet Willy Wonka would dream up."

They were also impressed by the staff, commenting: "Staff are exceptional. Able to answer any question you ask about the food, they're smartly dressed but make sure dining here still feels comfortable and relaxed."

The inspectors concluded that the value was what set The Marcliffe apart from competitors.

They said: "It's the value that makes this the best UK hotel we've stayed at in the UK in the past seven years. To be so completely swept off your feet for less than £200 (including breakfast) makes The Marcliffe remarkable."



Charity passes £1million funding mark for community health projects

NHS Grampian Charity has awarded more than £230,000 to community-led health and wellbeing projects through the latest round of its Community Grants Programme, bringing the total awarded through the programme to £1.1million since its launch in 2020.

A total of 29 charities and community organisations have received funding through the latest round of the programme, which provides grants to support health and wellbeing initiatives in communities across Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and Moray.

Projects receiving support include therapeutic workshops, practical skills classes, peer-support initiatives, sensory facilities, toys and play equipment, and much more.

Lisa Duthie, NHS Grampian Charity Lead, says: “We received an incredible number of applications for this year’s Community Grants Programme and are delighted to be supporting 30 organisations across Grampian.

“These projects aim to improve the health and wellbeing of people in our communities through activities focusing on healthy eating, exercise, mental health peer-support, education, and much more.”

AberNecessities are one of the charity’s to have received a grant this year. The Aberdeen-based charity provides disadvantaged families with the essential and basic necessities that no child should go without. From nappies and formula milk to toys and warm winter coats, AberNecessities support children from birth to 18 years, to help give them the best start possible.

Danielle Fletcher-Horn, founder of AberNecessities, says: “AberNecessities are incredibly grateful to receive funding to purchase beds alongside our ‘snug as a bug’ bags for 43 local children.

“Not only will these ensure children have a safe and appropriate place to sleep, but they gift children the opportunity to learn, play and thrive the following day. We thank NHS Grampian Charity for sharing our belief and vision that no child should go without sweet dreams.”



Deeside Timberframe unveils multimillion-pound investment to scale delivery of sustainable housing



Deeside Timberframe, a leading supplier of offsite manufactured timber frame solutions, is making a bold statement in the UK construction sector with a multimillion-pound strategic investment programme.

The investment supports the company’s continued growth and commitment to innovation and sustainability, while aligning with the UK Government’s target to build 1.5 million new homes over the next five years.

As part of its expansion, Deeside Timberframe has opened a new office in Warrington, marking a significant step in the company’s strategic growth across England. The move reinforces its long-term commitment to supporting developers, housing associations, and contractors throughout the UK. The new base allows the business to strengthen client relationships, provide more responsive support, and meet growing demand for sustainable, energy-efficient timber frame solutions.

The broader investment programme focuses on increasing manufacturing capacity, improving production efficiency, and embedding sustainable practices across operations. These improvements are designed to directly benefit customers through shorter lead times, increased factory output, and even greater consistency in quality and service.

A key component includes a 5,500-square-foot factory extension at Deeside Timberframe’s Throsk manufacturing facility. Designed to accommodate a new automated wall production line, the expansion significantly boosts productivity and enables faster, more efficient delivery of timber frame systems. In line with the company’s Net Zero strategy, the site now benefits from a 108kW solar panel installation, generating 90,000 kWh annually - enough to supply more than one third of the facility’s energy needs.

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Pinsent Masons
Burness Paull

Training in numbers...

85%

of employees intend to stay with a business long-term if training is provided and growth plans implemented.

90%

'go the extra mile' when training is offered.

AI skills are now highly valued with significant employer investment and employees with this skill set commanded higher salaries in their job search. Microsoft 365 training in the UK is in great demand, driven by the increasing adoption of AI tools, hybrid working and the need for digital upskilling with a reported

52%

year on year growth.

Learn more about the savings to your business with our Office 365 beginners' masterclass (agcc.co.uk/training).

Source: Great Place to Work 2024 report and trends

Chamber summer training camp

This summer, choose the Chamber to learn and develop the skills you need to do better business.

Chamber members tell us that developing and retaining key staff remains a top priority, and that's why we are pleased to offer an exceptional training offering designed to upskill and retain your workforce.

We offer over 40 courses in areas such as management, finance, human resources, finance digital marketing and more. Across all courses, on average, Chamber members rank our training at 4.9 out of 5.

Many Chamber members are already realising the benefit of training their teams – so why not use this summer to get ahead and gain the edge at www.agcc.co.uk/training today?

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Business Finance Skills – Make informed finance decisions, understand profit margins, cashflow, budgets and ROI.

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Train the Trainer – Support your colleagues with your own in-house support and subject matter expert which further supports a learning culture.

MEET THE TRAINER – WILLIE MACCOLL

Willie is an Organisational Development Consultant with extensive experience gained from working across a range of businesses and organisations in different sectors.

Aside from holding many operational roles throughout his career, Willie has worked for more than 25 years at a strategic level, in the UK and across Europe, and in 2022, he received the top honour at the national CHeRries awards in recognition of his contribution to businesses across Scotland

As a Consultant, Willie works with organisations ranging from SMEs to larger organisations, the biggest being 18,000 people.

His current portfolio of clients includes start-ups as well as global companies, which are still following growth and development plans. The sectors Willie has in-depth experience in are energy, construction, manufacturing and processing, food and drink, hospitality, education, and care as well as public and third sectors.



NEW courses launching in 2025...

Keep an eye on the Chamber Morning Bulletin and Business Bulletin for details of new professional training courses launching



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**Alan Smith**

J+S Subsea has promoted Alan Smith to the position of technical sales manager, a move that marks an exciting chapter both for Alan and for the business as it continues to grow, innovate, and deliver client-focused solutions in the subsea sector. With a strong technical foundation and a hands-on approach, Alan has played a vital role in supporting internal operations, project delivery, and client engagements.

**Ryan Lumsden**

Rovtech has appointed Ryan Lumsden as general manager, in a move that signals a new chapter of international growth for the harsh environment robotics specialist. With over 25 years' experience across many of the world's leading ROV manufacturers, Lumsden is one of the most respected figures in the global underwater technology sector.

**Greg McDaniel and Donald Martin**

Apache has appointed two key senior leadership positions in the UK to lead North Sea late life operations. In April, Greg McDaniel was appointed senior vice president, international assets, and will manage UK operations and Donald Martin joined the company as vice president, decommissioning with over 20 years of portfolio experience.

**Dr. Neelam Zia**

IntrospeXion has appointed Dr. Neelam Zia as consultant psychologist. This strategic move marks a new chapter in the company's expansion, strengthening its position as a bold, science-led force in workforce wellbeing and performance improvement.

**Richard Baron**

Signal is excited to welcome Richard Baron to its growing team. Richard brings over 15 years of experience as a filmmaker, photographer, and certified drone pilot and his expertise spans the entire production process across multiple sectors.

**Andy King**

Ashtead Technology has appointed Andy King as QHSE director. Andy will oversee the group's QHSE strategy, ensuring the highest standards of safety, compliance, quality and operational excellence across all international operations.



Dr Kerry Waylen

The James Hutton Institute has appointed Dr Kerry Waylen as the International Land Use Study Centre (ILUSC) deputy director. Her new role will see her serving as part of the leadership team for the ILUSC, an innovation centre which focuses on enabling just transition in land use and promoting high-impact land-based science.



Chris Sawyer and Gillian Harrington

Multinational law firm Pinsent Masons has announced two Partner appointments which significantly strengthen its Aberdeen office. Energy sector specialist Chris Sawyer has joined the firm's corporate team while former Burness Paull director Gillian Harrington joins as a partner to lead the Granite City-based employment team.



Boskalis

Six graduates from the Boskalis Subsea Services Graduate Programme have successfully completed their placements and progressed into permanent roles within the organisation. To mark their achievements, the graduates attended a celebration where they were presented with certificates by senior leadership.



Nick Green

Wonder Grip® has welcomed Nick Green as the new corporate account manager, a testament to the brand's ambitious growth and continued investment in talent. Nick brings over 30 years of sales experience to his new role at the company.



Jennifer Hall

Integrity HSE has appointed Jennifer Hall to head of business development, marking a significant step in the company's ongoing evolution and strategic direction. She will join the senior leadership team and take responsibility for driving business growth, client engagement, and long-term development initiatives



Mark Parry

Aberdeen-based oil and gas operator Anasuria Operating Company (AOC) is proud to announce the permanent appointment of Mark Parry as offshore installation manager (OIM) on the Anasuria FPSO.



Paul Finch

Nestrans, the Regional Transport Partnership for the North-east of Scotland, has appointed Mr Paul Finch as the new partnership director. He has an extensive career of almost 30 years in transport planning and strategy, working on a wide range of projects.



From left, Naeema Joji, Lisa Macpherson-Fletcher, Robbie Simpson and Ciaran Fines

RSM UK

Leading audit, tax and consulting firm RSM UK has made several key hires in its Aberdeen office to support the firm's regional and national growth ambitions. The latest hires include Robbie Simpson as audit director, Ciaran Fines as assistant tax manager, Naeema Joji as assistant audit manager, and Lisa Macpherson-Fletcher as tax partner.



Vicky Wood and Lauren Wragg

ZynQ 360, a global provider of asset visualisation software and data capture services, has announced the promotions of two team members: Vicky Wood to office manager and Lauren Wragg to marketing manager.


Aine Mishra

Aine Mishra has joined TauRx Pharmaceuticals to take up the newly created role of head of strategic development after spending more than 15 years in international engineering, strategy and transformation, and has a strong track record of delivering practical, growth-focused solutions.


Neil McGregor

Children's charity The Archie Foundation has appointed Neil McGregor as its business development and fundraising manager for the Highlands, helping to raise awareness of its vital work across the North of Scotland.


Sol Taylor

Bon Accord Care has appointed Sol Taylor as its new interim finance and commercial director. Sol brings in extensive experience in financial leadership from his previous roles as head of finance and brings audit and governance expertise.


Shannon Lafferty

Shannon Lafferty has been promoted from sales coordinator to business development manager at Dron & Dickson. Her industry knowledge, dedication, and commitment to company values have made her a valued member of the team.


Boryana Chobanova

Marketing powerhouse Prospect 13 has further strengthened its communications team with the promotion of Boryana Chobanova to creative content specialist. In her new role, Boryana will continue to craft high quality content across Prospect 13's diverse range of client channels.



Managing director Lisa Ironside


Chris Mathieson

The HR Department Aberdeenshire has announced that Chris Mathieson has joined the team as its new HR consultant. Chris brings over 20 years of experience working in the not-for-profit sector, including over 15 years in leadership roles.

Rhian Morgan of Acumen Financial Planning wins top Women in Finance Award

Rhian Morgan, a director at Acumen Financial Planning is delighted to be awarded the 'Best Female Financial Advisor' at the BWS Women in Finance Awards 2025.

The awards celebrated the achievements of women driving Scotland's finance industry. By recognising leaders across sectors like corporate finance, fintech, and accounting, the awards highlight Scotland's role in global finance and promote gender diversity in traditionally male-dominated fields.



Hardies enters new era with refocused growth strategy for Scotland

In a move underscoring its strategic plan to consolidate growth through local activity, Hardies Property & Construction Consultants is to refocus its efforts on exploiting its unique potential throughout Scotland.

The shift marks the start of a new era for the firm as it parts ways with Head of business development Danny McArthur, who has been with the practice for some 26 years.

The move comes a year after Shepherd Chartered Surveyors' senior partner Ian Fergusson assumed leadership at sister firm Hardies with the aim of maximising the potential for growth inherent within the two firms' combined strength and full-service offering.

Commenting on his career change, McArthur said: "I've enjoyed my many years with the firm and wish everyone all the best for the future. And I'm excited about the new opportunity I'm embarking on."

Fergusson said: "We thank Danny for the dedication he has shown to colleagues and clients alike over the course of his successful career to date and wish him well for the next chapter in his career."

The executive board at Hardies, added: "We wish Danny all the best in his new career path and while his departure represents a new era for Hardies, it signals a strategic refocus of our efforts on growing our business in those local markets where we have long-established extensive expertise and experience."

Shepherd and Hardies form a national practice unrivalled in its delivery network of surveying services throughout Scotland. Combined, the firms now have 41 offices across the UK.

Aberdeen student raises over £12,000 with Mount Kilimanjaro climb



A senior school student from Robert Gordon's College has raised more than £12,000 for local children's charity Charlie House by climbing Mount Kilimanjaro.

The challenge marked a special milestone as Ailie McIntosh celebrated her 14th birthday during the seven-day trek.

Ailie embarked on the climb alongside her dad Craig, reaching the 5,895 metre peak of the world's tallest free-standing mountain. The pair's original fundraising target was £5,000. However, thanks to overwhelming support from friends, family and classmates, they more than doubled their goal.

"To raise over £12,000 for a great local cause is just incredible. We're so grateful to everyone who supported us," said Ailie.



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