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Welcome to the September issue of BUSINESS NOW

Visitors from over one hundred countries will soon arrive in Aberdeen for Offshore Europe 2015. Not only will this give local companies an opportunity to network with an international audience, but it will also allow our retailers, cafés, restaurants and bars to demonstrate just what a marvellous city Aberdeen is. Before attending, browse through our Offshore Europe Special section in the centre pages.

Our cover story in this edition tells the tale of the son of a Harris crofter, Donald Macdonald, who, with the help of his family, has created one of the country's leading independent hotel and resort giants.

We have some great features from industry leaders, who have their say on a number of topics, and, of course, all the latest news from the business, energy, financial, property and hospitality sectors.

We also congratulate those who were successful at the recent Elevator Awards, and once again applaud those who have gone above and beyond the call of duty to raise money for their chosen charities.

Join me as I drool over the luxurious Jaguar XJ and eagerly anticipate the start of the Rugby World Cup. Come on Scotland!!

Eric W Farquharson



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Jane Harvey, managing director of Akrugo – specialists in personnel mobilisation software, on the importance of sharing information to facilitate smooth and cost-effective mobilisation of an international workforce.



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Macdonald Hotels & Resorts Celebrates 25th Anniversary

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Photographs courtesy of Alan Peebles

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**OFFSHORE 29
EUROPE SPECIAL**

Special coverage of companies attending Offshore Europe 2015 at Aberdeen Exhibition & Conference Centre. Find out more about what is happening and who will be there.

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25 Years of Macdonald Hotels & Resorts

For many family businesses, the delicate balance of realising growth ambitions without compromising on the foundations of principles and roots can be a tricky one to strike.

International yet family run, forward-thinking yet traditional, 25-year-old Macdonald Hotels & Resorts is a textbook example that it is possible to hit that elusive mark and even out the scales – and create one of the country's leading independent hospitality concerns in the process.

The son of a Harris crofter with a deep-rooted sense of spirituality, faith and tradition, Donald Macdonald says his enrolment into the hospitality industry was a happy accident when, as an accountancy student, he took a summer job at Turnberry. There his boss, and a fellow islander, saw the depth of his people skills and talked him into exploring the sector further. Since then his career has grown to make him one of Scotland's most successful entrepreneurs, who is at the helm of the company as it celebrates a quarter of a century in business.

A protégé of the Stakis Hotels empire, Donald Macdonald founded Macdonald Hotels & Resorts with a band of associates and investors in 1990, ably supported by wife Christine, who remains active in the business. She is closely involved

Donald and Ruaridh Macdonald reflect on the company's past, present and future

in selecting interiors, including fabrics and materials, as well as heading up the company's significant charity fundraising work with daughter Marjorie.

The close ties he had forged with the North East during his tenure as an area manager for Stakis included looking after the former Royal Darroch from 1976, and these came to the fore when coincidence brought about the availability of Ardoe on the outskirts of Aberdeen and the Waterside at Peterhead – and a business was born. The two founding properties may no longer be part of the portfolio, but Ardoe's profits were seismically shifted from £100,000 per annum to £2.5 million during its time as part of the business.

In the last 25 years, Macdonald Hotels & Resorts has grown in many directions to become an international empire spanning 45 hotels across the UK and ten resorts in the UK, Spain and Portugal where the latest addition is a five-star destination.

Here in the North and North East, current properties include the award-winning

Norwood Hall Hotel in Aberdeen, Pittodrie House Hotel at Chapel of Garioch near Inverurie, the New Drumossie Hotel in Inverness and the Aviemore Highland Resort, which celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2016.

In 1996, the company was floated on the stock market, but seven years later came a management buyout to the tune of £620 million making the deal one of the largest in Scottish corporate history. Chairman Donald Macdonald stepped into the role of chief executive following the departure of David Guile in 2014.

There is no doubt that the exponential growth of the company is nothing short of remarkable and is fuelled by Donald Macdonald's sharp business mind married with his modesty and humility, which consistently heaps praise on those around him.

"None of it has been planned really," says Donald Macdonald humbly. "In my experience, the plan you start out with is often not the plan you end up with and, for us, the plan has usually ended up being much better in reality.

"In Aviemore, for example, we took on a location which had had its ups and downs, so we really had our work cut out – plus the fact that, much to the frustration for us and three previous owners before us, getting all the planning approvals took 12 years

of negotiation and patience. The outcome, however, has been worth it all and we have a splendid resort which is continuing to blossom. It continues to improve and increase in profitability every year and is now on a better footing than ever before.

“From start to finish, inside and out, our business is about people. They are at the core and heart of our business and everything we do, because they are our customers and our staff and it is they who make the organisation tick.

“The importance of good people is something which I always found to be particularly evident in the North East, and my experience was and continues to be of people with high integrity and a strong work ethic, people who really have pride in and ownership of their work.”

His sentiments were echoed by son Ruaridh, who was appointed deputy chief executive in August last year after a decade with the company. He adds: “Good hospitality can’t be delivered without good people. The food, bedrooms and everything else can be right, but it is the attitude of our people that sets us apart – that and a genuine focus on

of the hugely popular Aviemore Highland Resort. After adding sales and marketing to his busy remit, Ruaridh was appointed deputy chief executive in August last year and now works side by side with his father in running the international concern, along with Donald’s trusted lieutenant of nearly 30 years, his finance director and deputy chairman, Gordon Fraser.

With one eye on the important lessons which can be learned from the past and his father’s vast experience, and the other on playing a pivotal role in steering the Macdonald Hotels & Resorts ship onward, Ruaridh firmly believes that an unshakable focus on quality remains central to driving future success – but, he says, the right people are essential at all levels to deliver the plan.

“Our business went through the worst post-World War Two recession the country has experienced in 2008 and, like others, we were suffering in a difficult market. However, that is changing and our focus is on maintaining a good geographic spread and helping assets which are on their way

needs throughout the journey, from when they arrive with us to when they depart. Here, trends are constantly changing, especially relating to food where there is a general shift away from formal dining to a more informal preference. For us, the eating experience may be changing but the quality is not, and we are sharpening things in this area by simplifying what is on the plate and letting excellent flavours speak for themselves.”

That ethos is backed up by a rolling programme of investment and, in the north region alone, millions have already been spent in recent times. To date, this has included the creation of eco-friendly, state-of-the-art staff accommodation at Pittodrie House Hotel, upgrading the kitchen at Norwood Hall Hotel, enhanced conference facilities at the New Drumossie Hotel, a new £1-million golf clubhouse, the refurbishment of three hotels in Aviemore at a cost of £5 million and the £650,000 creation of a state-of-the-art childcare centre. The cash injection does not stop there, and further substantial



“The importance of good people is something which I always found to be particularly evident in the North East, and my experience was and continues to be of people with high integrity and a strong work ethic, people who really have pride in and ownership of their work.”

quality from a brand which has integrity at home and overseas.”

Before joining the family business, Ruaridh – an agriculture and business studies/marketing graduate of Aberdeen University – was part of the Grampian Country Food Group graduate trainee programme, then moved into marketing at world famous water producer, Highland Spring. An industry change later took him into producing live events with a Central Belt-based firm before he joined Macdonald Hotels & Resorts in Aviemore in 2004. For the next two and a half years, Ruaridh was operations director and was closely involved in the opening

to realising their full potential. There is a lot to be said for the theory of what doesn’t kill us makes us stronger – and all the better at running the business.

“Trading conditions haven’t been helped by market confusion caused by budget brands creating segmentation in the last decade or so. We need to step out from that shadow, set ourselves apart and raise our profile by being quality driven and keeping our traditional values at the forefront of what we do. We want to look after our guests as if they are guests in someone’s own home.

“To do that, we need to truly understand what the customer wants and meet their

work is planned during the milestone 25th anniversary year, including £500,000 which will be spent on three new restaurants in Aviemore that will be completed in time for the busy festive season.

Ruaridh adds: “The industry has to change to survive and we have to evolve to survive. Things have come a long way since you had to write a letter to the hotel manager to book a room and our company will stay at the forefront of changing needs by investing in understanding the customer journey and delivering it to the best possible standard.”

Trojan Crates Invests in Expansion

£1-million investment by Trojan Crates leads to new jobs



Trojan Crates has invested £1 million in new premises close to Aberdeen Airport and additional state-of-the-art manufacturing equipment.

The firm, which has its headquarters at Aberdeen Harbour, has added the 10,000-square foot premises in Howe Moss Terrace, Dyce to increase its manufacturing capabilities in the north-east of Scotland. Up to 20 new jobs will be created as a result of the expansion.

Trojan Crates sales director, Craig Sim (pictured, left), says of the expansion: "Purchasing our new building in Dyce means we can increase our manufacturing, giving clients in the oil and gas, subsea and freight-forwarding industries an even more demand-driven response."

In addition to the new Dyce premises, Trojan Crates has also invested in four new CNC machines, making it the only firm in Aberdeen to have these state-of-the-art routing tables

that are capable of the precise cutting of CAD 2D- and 3D-designed foam inserts for protective cases. These foam inserts protect everything from sensitive electronics to deep-water housings, machinery, tools and parts.

Trojan Crates chairman, Alistair Paterson (pictured, centre, with Colin Middleton, production director, right), adds: "Our new capacity at Dyce and our investment in further new technology is part of our strategic growth plan for Trojan Crates. We aim to increase our turnover to £7 million by 2017. The expansion means we will be increasing our workforce from our current team of around 50 to over 70 in the next two years, with newly created posts in manufacturing, sales and administration."

New President Appointed at AGCC

Chief executive of social care organisation, Cornerstone, takes on role

Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce has appointed a new president at its annual general meeting. Edel Harris (pictured) was confirmed as president at the Chamber's AGM in June, as Alec Carstairs stands down having completed his two-year term.

Edel is chief executive of Cornerstone, one of Scotland's largest social care organisations, providing a wide range of health and social care services to people with disabilities and other support needs.

Speaking after her appointment, Edel said: "I feel very honoured to represent the business community of the north-east of Scotland in my new role as president.

"As someone who has lived and worked in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire for the last 26 years, I am passionate about the area. I am committed to supporting the Chamber and its

members to ensure the region remains a great place to live and work."

Two existing board members were confirmed as vice presidents of the board, and they were joined by four new elected board members. John Brebner, city director Aberdeen at Clydesdale Bank, and Peter Sharp, a consultant at Pinsent Masons LLP, are now serving as vice presidents.

Joining the board after having been elected by the membership are: Stephen Nicol, chief financial officer at Wood Group PSN; Judith Thorpe, co-owner and director at Thorpe Molloy Recruitment Limited; Jill Webster, director at Rubberatkins and, until recently, councillor and provost of Aberdeenshire Council; and Jennifer Young, chairman and partner at Ledingham Chalmers LLP.



New Global Deals for nSYS

New jobs are set to become available at a north-east software company after they recorded record figures in the first half of 2015. nSYS, the automated procurement and invoicing specialists, have won £250,000 of new business thanks to global deals across Europe and Australia.

They have secured contracts with Melbourne-based Forpoint Solutions that will see their consultants working on the provision of a professional services automation system for one of Australia's largest mining corporations. In the UK nSYS are implementing invoice automation for the manufacturing division of Alexander Dennis Ltd (ADL), UK's premier bus manufacturer, and for Aggreko, the global leader in power generation, nSYS are upgrading and extending, beyond the current 25 divisions, their worldwide invoice automation solution.

For Aggreko and ADL, nSYS are delivering intelligent business solutions by integrating purchase-to-pay and e-invoicing automation, with their client's ERP system. Their consultants identify opportunities to automate procurement and purchase invoice processes to deliver cost savings, visibility, control and compliance across their client's financial operations. The

Aberdeen e-commerce firm's flying start to 2015
results in job creation



work on behalf of Forpoint will see nSYS open their first Australian office in Sydney, creating several jobs in the process. The new partnership signed with international software company, OnGuard, provides credit control software bringing job opportunities in Aberdeen thanks to the new global deals.

Chief executive of nSYS and former pilot, Julian Keating (pictured), explains how significant these deals are for the company as they expand their global footprint: "Current economics and the impact of low oil prices have meant companies are looking to control costs and increase efficiency. Those who embrace change and invest in new technology will not only survive but thrive."

Wine Industry Recognition for Thistle Couriers

Aberdeen company claims magazine's
'Best Wine Courier' title for second time

Thistle Couriers on Greenwell Road, part of the UK's largest independent parcel network, APC Overnight, is celebrating after being named the number one courier by independent wine merchants nationwide for the second successive year.

Almost half of respondents to *The Wine Merchant* magazine's survey stated that they would recommend APC Overnight, as the company was singled out for its performance on meeting next day delivery targets - delivering stock on time and in full.

Speaking about the organisation's achievement, Ewan Ferguson, managing director at Thistle Couriers, said: "We're always working to provide the best possible delivery service for our local customers and understand the needs of businesses in certain sectors, such as food and drink. Being part of a national network means we can cover all parts of the country and, through knowing how important our customers' deliveries are to them, we maintain high levels of service.

"To be the most recommended wine courier is a fantastic achievement for us and we look forward to working with other local businesses to transport their produce or products across the country."




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Elevator Video Pitch Winner Unveiled

North-east businesswoman crowned 'pitch perfect' in Elevator competition

A north-east businesswoman is celebrating after being awarded £1000 in recognition of her pitching skills. Local entrepreneur Louise Chrystal, of Louise Chrystal – Hair, was crowned the winner of the Elevator Video Pitch competition, launched by Elevator and Business Gateway during North East Business Week in April.

Local entrepreneurs were invited to submit an 'elevator' pitch via video, explaining what makes their business, products, service or prospective business, special – in just 60 seconds.

Elevator received a high number of entries, and a panel of judges narrowed the entries down to just six. Members of the public were then invited to vote for their favourite pitch. 1,104 people voted, with 346 votes going to Louise.

Louise said: "I heard about 'pitch perfect' from my fantastic Business Gateway adviser, Debbie Moir. It was close to the submission date but she felt I could pull it off. I called in some help from colleagues and put together my video clip in a couple of days. It was great fun to do and I feel it really put across my vision."



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Top Business Award for Grant Keenan

North-east recycling firm's managing director claims top title in national business awards



The managing director of a leading Scottish organics recycling firm has been named as an Ernst and Young (EY) Scotland Entrepreneur of the Year 2015 in recognition of his services to business.

Grant Keenan (pictured), managing director of Keenan Recycling, based at New Deer in Aberdeenshire, was selected as one of Scotland's top entrepreneurs after beating strong competition from 25 regional finalists, to gain the prestigious accolade in the awards organised by the global accountancy firm.

Mr Keenan launched Keenan Recycling in 2001, when he saw a gap in the market for organic recycling in the North East. The company, which has tripled its commercial food waste customers to more than 1800 since the launch of the Waste (Scotland) Regulations, has significantly invested in its specialist fleet of lorries in the last year to strengthen its services.

Entrepreneur Mr Keenan is also a director of the Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce (AGCC) board, a board member of Elevator, and chairs the Organic Recycling Group Scotland, which is part of the Renewable Energy Association (REA).

Mark Harvey, EY Scotland senior partner, commented: "Judges were impressed by Grant's ambition, drive and impressive work ethic. Each year we are delighted to discover and learn about new innovative, dynamic businesses and we have an outstanding group of entrepreneurs representing Scotland and going forward to the UK finals. The quality, diversity and tenacity of our entrepreneurs, who are helping to make Scotland the most successful place it can be, are something to be proud of."

Mr Keenan said: "I am extremely proud to gain this prestigious title. Scotland has some of the country's top entrepreneurs and to be recognised in the awards is a huge honour."

Mr Keenan was one of eight Scottish finalists whose achievements were recognised at the ceremony. All the Scottish finalists will now represent Scotland at the EY UK Entrepreneur of the Year final in October, competing for UK titles and awards.

Relocation for Cadherent to Regenerated Riverside

Cadherent breathes new life into listed Aberdeen building

Aberdeen-based engineering, design and visualisation specialists, Cadherent Ltd, has announced its relocation and investment in the renovation of a category C-listed building, breathing new life into one of the city's oldest warehouses.

The 17,000-square foot premises, based on the city's North Esplanade West, have a rich history. Built in 1937 by John Bisset & Sons, the grand renaissance-style granite building was once known as the 'Caretaker's House', as well as formerly housing food manufacturer



Unilever and fizzy drinks firm Aberdeen Mineral Water Co. This is a tactical move for the company, relocating to an area of considerable regeneration for the oil and gas sector.

David Thomson, managing director of Cadherent Ltd (pictured, right, with Chris Reid, operations director), explains: "Since Cadherent's launch in 2006, the team has worked hard to establish the company as a leader in engineering, design and visualisation. Although market conditions are notably challenging, this is a strategic move for the company, which will see us enable future development in a central area of the city.

"Due to the nature of the city, we are predominantly oil-and-gas sector focussed and felt this is the perfect opportunity to increase our visibility directly within this marketplace. Having considered various options around the city, this building provided us with a unique opportunity to join an area of significant regeneration and investment from some of the world's leading oil-and-gas-based businesses, whilst also helping to restore a little piece of history."

David concludes: "We invested in a six-month renovation prior to our move this month, which included the treatment of the granite front and fit-out of the interior. We are also very interested in setting up some sort of community art project for the regeneration of the warehouse space, so there are some exciting things to come."

Caber Coffee Brews Up New HQ

Local company announces six-figure investment in Aberdeen headquarters



Aberdeen-based Caber Coffee has announced that it is investing a six-figure sum in extending its city centre headquarters.

In excess of £200,000 is being spent on increasing warehouse and storage space by 50% at the company's Holburn Street base. In addition, there will be the creation of a purpose-built, hi-tech coffee machine repair and service facility, and a dedicated training/demonstration room. Caber Coffee has employed the services of fellow Aberdeen company, Tinto Architecture, to help deliver the project.

The move is expected to lead to the creation of new jobs in the coming months as the company steps up to embrace its ongoing growth.

Commenting on the investment, Caber Coffee managing director, Findlay Leask (pictured), said: "We moved to our current premises in 1991 and the business has experienced considerable expansion since that time.

"We have outgrown the Holburn Street facility in its present form and look forward to the completion of our new, improved HQ which will enable us to continue the business's upward trend and correctly service the needs of our growing client base."

Where is everyone?

The crucial role of staff mobilisation

Jane Harvey, managing director of Akrugo, specialists in personnel mobilisation software



the business invests valuable time in micromanaging projects and a never-ending meeting schedule to discuss progress, which would be obvious if captured in one location and visible to the whole team.

However, challenging times are often the catalyst for innovation, and advances in digital technologies frequently offer an alternative approach to traditional operational methods. Jane Harvey, managing director of Akrugo Ltd, is one of those who has grasped the current climate, seeing it as an opportunity to get her message across: She wants to improve the efficiency of how the industry deploys its resources and reduce the associated standby costs.

She has witnessed, first-hand, how delays in mobilising personnel can seriously impact the delivery of a project. A haphazard approach to mobilisation can lead to confusion, dissatisfaction and increased costs. Jane has experienced situations where she has suddenly learned that the 'specialist' vendor she was about to mobilise requires new training or when survival/medical certification has resulted in seemingly 'flight ready' people waiting on standby. This adds costs for the contractor, client or the project deadline, or more often, all three. Visibility of such information would mean that delays could be avoided as the project manager could quickly and efficiently react to optimise the prevailing situation.

With a background including engineering, consultancy and project management for large service contractors, Jane has worked in the oil and gas industry for over 15 years and understands its inherent challenges, during good times and tough times. A significant part of this journey was mobilising teams to projects in the North Sea and remote locations such as southern Oman, Iraq and Kurdistan.

The skills and experiences she developed, addressing these challenges from different angles, have given Jane an unrivalled insight into the benefits a joined-up mobilisation solution could offer to companies operating in any environment, across the globe. The result? Jane established Akrugo™ to provide workforce management software, which allows companies to manage the 'mobilisation

readiness' of their resources, improving their operational efficiency and – crucially – reducing costs. It works by making sense of the tangled web of information required to mobilise personnel, encouraging collaboration between functions and increasing visibility across the business.

Whether in the North Sea or beyond, the industry is looking for cost savings and increased efficiencies, and to Jane it's clear that the practicalities of how, when and where staff is deployed are an important consideration in this exercise. Having experienced the contrary, she knows that pooling resources into one centralised location makes it clearer for all relevant personnel to understand who is available and who is genuinely 'flight ready'. Sharing of information across functions can still respect the required levels of privacy and confidentiality *and* utilise existing information sources.

As the price per barrel of oil continues to fluctuate, companies are forced to reduce their operational and capital spend. We often see cost-cutting measures address the short-term costs – headcount reductions, supplier rate cuts and the re-evaluation of projects – but fall short of addressing efficiencies in their core business processes. Companies who are bold enough to use this downturn as an opportunity

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“I've seen first-hand how this industry has changed over the years”

.....

to improve their operating efficiency and performance will carry these enhancements forward and reap the rewards when the market eventually recovers.

Jane knows what can go wrong, and she knows just how much money can be wasted through inefficient resource deployment. With Akrugo™, she's on a mission to deliver a step change in the way the industry undertakes this vital process. Rest assured, the results will be startling.

.....

One of the main challenges for modern industries – including, but not limited to, the energy sector – is the sharing of information. In a nutshell – we don't like it! And yet our reticence to share information can have a fundamental impact on the efficiency of everything we do.

As many of us in the oil and gas industry know, this is especially true when mobilising personnel offshore or overseas. The requirements are normally driven by the project planning department, yet the various elements of personnel records are often kept by numerous departments.

These include multiple layers: payroll information is the responsibility of the accounting department; validity of training certificates, visas and medical requirements belong to HR; flight logistics are often only known to the travel team. Information held on multiple spreadsheets or hard-copy personnel records often results in these departments working in isolation.

The position gets even more confused when operating with multiple and diverse external contractors. This can ultimately damage reputations in an already very competitive marketplace, which is focused on increasing efficiency and reducing costs. Consequently,

Second Intake for Business Accelerator Programme

New applicants bidding for place on world-class Business Accelerator Programme

Entrepreneurs from across the globe have been invited to claim their place on the second Business Accelerator Programme being hosted at the city's £1-million Centre for Entrepreneurship.

Following the success of the pilot Accelerator Programme, which was launched in March 2015, leading entrepreneurial business support agency, Elevator, is set to start the new programme on Monday 19 October.

Taking place at Elevator's state-of-the-art headquarters, situated in Aberdeen's Energy Park at the Bridge of Don, the unique Accelerator Programme is open to energy and technology start-ups and business teams seeking investment and who have ambition to propel their services to a global market place. Together they will undertake an intense 20-week entrepreneurial experience to drive their businesses onto a high growth curve to become investor ready or positioned to enter new markets.

Elevator staff, along with industry mentors, will work closely with the new intake of founders to support, inspire and challenge them throughout the process. The founders will spend time working on their business models, participating in workshops led by industry experts and attending keynote presentations from recognised entrepreneurs to broaden their skills and knowledge base.

To assist the learning process, the Centre for Entrepreneurship, which is the first of its kind in Scotland, boasts advanced technology, connecting it to 55 global Accelerator Programmes, allowing entrepreneurs to participate in events and access help and advice on a worldwide scale.

The centre is also home for employability programmes, community-driven projects, and a space where school, college and university students can learn about enterprise and entrepreneurship.

Primarily focussed on oil and gas, the first group of ten high-potential start-up businesses who completed the Elevator Accelerator, also included entrepreneurs from energy, technology, online retail, and health care.

Jim Cargill (pictured), chief executive officer of PlanSea Ltd, who formed part of the first cohort, said: "PlanSea was delighted to be selected as part of the first intake of founders on the Elevator Accelerator Programme. We have derived great value from our participation, providing an inspiring, challenging and educational platform upon which to develop our business. The Elevator facility is state-of-the-art, and one notable additional benefit we have enjoyed is the camaraderie and encouragement arising from working alongside other start-up companies who are all facing similar challenges and opportunities.

"If you are in the process of starting your own business or looking to scale your existing business, the programme is a great way of doing this."

Chief executive of Elevator, Professor Gary McEwan, said: "Elevator has a clear objective of assisting entrepreneurs in reaching their

goals, and part of its vision is to build a robust entrepreneurial culture in the city, maximising individual and collective economic and social success on a local, national, and global scale. In light of this, the Elevator Accelerator was established to offer entrepreneurs with the hunger to succeed unrivalled assistance in reaching their goals.

"The programme offers an 'Ivy League'-level education in entrepreneurship where we challenge entrepreneurs, their goals, their plans and their business ideas. Following the massive success of the first intake, we look forward to receiving applications from people with the drive and determination to form the second group of founders on the Accelerator Programme."

Applications closed on 21 August, and successful candidates will be invited to pitch in person to a team of judges at Elevator between Monday 7 and Friday 18 September.



Company Dividends – Tax Pain Ahead

For higher rate and additional rate taxpayers, there will be winners as well as losers



For many years, business owners have enjoyed the flexibility of extracting profits from their companies tax efficiently by taking dividends rather than additional salary. However the tax

breaks are set to come to an end in April next year with the reform of dividend tax, one of the biggest changes announced by the Chancellor in his Summer Budget.

The Changes

From 6 April 2016, the income tax rate on dividends will increase by 7.5% - a move which is expected to raise almost £7 billion of additional tax in the next five years. All dividends up to £5,000 will be exempt from tax, but the new measures mean that basic rate taxpayers receiving dividend income in excess of £5,000 will be worse off.

For higher rate and additional rate taxpayers, there will be winners as well as losers. A higher rate taxpayer will be worse off if their annual dividend income is in excess of £21,680, as will additional rate taxpayers if their dividend income exceeds £25,275.

What next?

Owner-managed businesses will be

disappointed that one of the key tax breaks they have enjoyed is being taken away. However opportunities still exist for tax planning:

Increasing the level of dividends paid ahead of the rate change – a tax saving of 7.5% on larger dividends can be very significant

Reviewing the profit extraction strategy – for example, charging interest on any loans made to the business may reduce overall taxes

Ensuring the tax-free dividend allowances and income tax bands are utilised each year

As ever, seeking advice early will give time for the impact of any planning to be fully considered and properly implemented.

For further information, please contact Catherine Maitland, tax assistant manager at Anderson Anderson & Brown LLP, Chartered Accountants, on 01224 625111 or catherine.maitland@aab.uk



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Mint Named Small Accountancy Firm Of Year

Firm adds to awards' collection



Mint Accounting, one of Scotland's fastest-growing cloud accounting consultants, has been named Small Accountancy Firm of the Year 2015 at the *Business Insider* and Aldermore Scottish Accountancy and Finance Awards, recently held at the Glasgow Hilton Hotel.

The company, which has offices in Dundee, Ayrshire and Aberdeen, surpassed stiff competition from Consilium's Glasgow office, Aberdeen-based Infinity Partnership and Stark Main & Co Ltd, which has offices in Edinburgh and Selkirk, to bring home the award for a second time.

Charlotte Gillett, commercial director for Mint Accounting, comments: "We are absolutely honoured to pick up this award, especially considering the competition we faced this year. To even qualify for this accolade, it takes a considerable dedication to innovation, driven leadership and a special commitment to the local community each year. We are in the privileged position to have won the same award in 2013 and been shortlisted last year, but to have won again this year is just amazing. This also comes in quick succession of our award for Scottish Accounting Partner of the Year at the UK 2015 Xero Awards in February, so we couldn't be happier.

"At Mint, we believe the secret to our success is taking a fresh approach to accountancy. During the past twelve months our business has continued to progress to offer our clients the best and most convenient accountancy services, including a concentrated effort on cloud-based accounting technology. We have become one of the first businesses in our area to really drive this forward due to its exceptional benefits, such as convenient accountancy control and increased visibility of important day-to-day financial activity."

STV chief financial officer, George Watt (left), presented the award to Allison Walker (centre), managing director, and Charlotte Gillett (right), commercial director, at the ceremony.

A²+B Success at Scottish Accountancy & Finance Awards

Tax team wins for second time

Anderson Anderson & Brown LLP (A²+B), one of Scotland's leading independent firms of chartered accountants, has retained the title of 'Tax Team of the Year', at the 2015 Scottish Accountancy & Finance Awards, with client service and innovative solutions being the focus of the award.

Graeme Allan, managing partner, commented: "We are delighted with this national recognition of the exceptional talent and innovation within our tax team, one of the largest and most diverse in Scotland. It is fantastic to see our firm's achievements being viewed positively by independent bodies, recognising that the efforts and successes of our experienced and committed team of individuals is contributing positively to our clients' business operations.

"It is particularly gratifying that we won against some of the strongest competitors in the country. Each year offers up different challenges and through their exceptional talent, experience and expertise our people continue to rise to the occasion and deliver results time and time again."

The firm has been successful in these awards in the past having been awarded 'Tax Team of the Year' at the 2014 awards, 'Accountancy Firm of the Year' in 2013, 'Best Small Firm' and 'Fastest Growing Firm' in 2009 and 'Best Team of the Year' (corporate finance) in 2010.

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Sandy Manson of Johnston Carmichael highlights need to know clients' industry well



An unstable market can have a domino-like effect on companies operating in the same region, which has been evident in the north-east of Scotland over the last eight months as a result of plummeting oil prices. From company revenue to the personal finances of employees, repercussions are being felt across the board. It is important, now more than ever, that companies and their employees ensure that they have a reliable team of financial advisers on hand to support them.

One of Scotland's leading firms of chartered accountants and business advisers, Johnston Carmichael, offers clients a comprehensive financial service under one roof, from audit to tax, to business and personal finance.

A partnership formed by Bill Johnston and John Carmichael in 1936 led to the formation of Johnston Carmichael. Some 79 years later, the firm has grown into the largest independent firm of chartered accountants and business advisers in Scotland. Following a strategic merger in 2012 with Aberdeen-based accountancy firm, Ritson Smith, Johnston Carmichael now ranks among the top 20 accountancy firms in the UK in terms of revenue. Today the firm has 11 offices located across Scotland with over 650 staff and partners, who offer a localised service to more than 14,000 clients.

Headed up by chief executive, Sandy Manson, Johnston Carmichael has built a reputation as a specialist in the fields of accountancy, tax and personal wealth, with extensive expertise in 13 niche sectors, including agriculture, fishing, food and drink, and oil and gas. Each specialist sector group and each of the firm's seven business lines, which include audit and assurance, tax and corporate finance, are headed up by a dedicated expert and supported by an experienced team.

Mr Manson commented: "We have a responsibility to our clients to immerse ourselves in the industries relevant to their businesses, to ensure we fully understand the challenges they face and to provide sound advice."

"We are a proactive firm, and participate in a number of industry-focused groups and forums. Through these networks we work with businesses in key sectors to understand concerns, lobby governments, highlight challenges and devise solutions to overcome these."

In addition to leading expertise within the Scottish market, Johnston Carmichael strengthened its international footprint when it became a member of the global network, PKF International. Johnston Carmichael is the

only Scottish representative in the network and membership has allowed it to offer its client base a greater level of support in achieving overseas growth.

Commenting on the PKF membership, Mr Manson said: "Our links through PKF have allowed us to offer increased international support and help our clients enter new markets, focusing on key issues such as international tax planning. As a result of being part of this global network, the Johnston Carmichael team make annual trade visits to Houston and the Middle East to further support our clients' overseas operations."

The firm's strong market position has been demonstrated by growth in financials and success in prestigious industry awards. With fee income of approximately £37 million, the firm has doubled in size in the last decade. In addition to growing the business in terms of revenue, service offering and client base, Johnston Carmichael has also expanded its team considerably.

Commenting on the firm's people development efforts, Mr Manson said: "Our reputation as one of Scotland's leading accountancy firms has allowed us to attract and retain the sharpest minds in the accountancy, as well as the tax and financial sectors, and this is evident from the number of leading professionals that we have working across the firm."

"Johnston Carmichael places huge importance on its people, and our initiatives are created with them in mind. We have put a number of pioneering training programmes in place, which enhance the skills and knowledge of new graduates, through to the most senior members of the team."

As a result of its high employee engagement, retention and motivational initiatives, Johnston Carmichael was named one of the Best 100 Companies to Work For in the UK by *The Sunday Times*.

The Johnston Carmichael leadership team believe that the responsibility of an employer must extend beyond the firm and the profession. They are therefore active in encouraging and supporting their people to engage in corporate social responsibility activities, where last year 84% of the team got involved. Over the last ten years the staff have raised over £450,000 for a range of charitable causes, giving back to the communities in which they live and work.

Socially Responsible Investing

By Jonathan Gibson, director of Wealth Services at A²+B Wealth, Chartered Financial Planners



Most of us are aware of the social and environmental impacts of our daily lives; we recycle, avoid buying products from certain companies and try to reduce our carbon footprint. However, how does this work when we invest?

Since the industrial revolution in the West, through to the current industrial and technical revolution in China and other emerging economies, we have done immeasurable harm to the planet and each other. We face risks such as energy price volatility, mass migration, the IS terrorist threat, climate change, water and food scarcity. Our challenges include our growing population; e.g. by 2050, it is expected the world will have an additional two billion people.

Despite many peoples' domestic attempts to 'do their bit' by recycling or reducing their carbon footprint, few consider how their investments can make a difference. Fortunately, things are changing as it is estimated, that \$1 out of every \$6 under professional management in the US (c. \$6.6 trillion) incorporates socially responsible investing.

Socially responsible investing, or SRI, is a catch-all term for investment strategies that focus on social or sustainability issues. Social

issues broadly relate to issues such as human rights, consumer protection and animal welfare. Sustainability is the sustainable use of resources for the world going forward, and tackling environmental concerns such as climate change.

So, how should investors sensibly integrate SRI investing into their own investment portfolios? It probably makes sense to incorporate a 'best-in-class', diversified SRI fund(s) into a traditional portfolio, accepting that not all asset classes lend themselves easily to SRI investing. Each investor who invests in an SRI fund is allocating capital towards better firms and away from worse firms from an environmental, social and corporate governance perspective. One thing though is that costs are likely to be slightly higher which, for some, may be a price worth paying.

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Former ADTI Senior Staff Join Exceed

Exceed and former senior members of ADTI partner for growth



Well management and performance improvement specialist Exceed has announced that it has joined forces with eight former members of senior staff from Applied Drilling Technology International (ADTI).

ADTI ceased trading in May 2015, following a decision to close the business made by the company's private equity owner, Sun European Partners. Resulting in the loss of 90 jobs, it also led to the decision by eight senior members from across the ADTI business to actively look at ways to continue to operate. Following discussions with Exceed, a new venture was formed with the intention of continuing to serve

former ADTI clients and the wider North Sea market.

This venture brings Exceed's total number of staff to 30 people, with a further 20 contractors working on projects both locally in the North Sea, as well as internationally on projects in Canada, West Africa and South East Asia. All of the new positions will be based at Exceed's existing headquarters in Aberdeen.

The former ADTI staff bring a broad range of capabilities and have joined Exceed as stakeholders through a newly formed subsidiary.

Al Brockie, head of wells management at Exceed (pictured, second right, with, from left to right, Calum MacDonald, John Anderson and Ian Mills), said: "There is a strong strategic fit between ADTI and Exceed, with both companies offering a range of wells management services in different markets.

"Traditionally, ADTI has had a strong presence in the North Sea, whereas the majority of Exceed's projects have been delivered internationally. This partnership not only

bolsters our global credentials and renews our focus on the North Sea, but also allows Exceed to evolve internal systems and processes that will result in significant benefits for clients.

"The move also sends an important message to the industry in a time when thousands of jobs are at risk across all sectors, and many talented professionals are being made redundant purely as a result of cost-saving measures. Companies which are still in a position to continue expansion plans should be making the most of this opportunity. The events following the closure of ADTI have been a prime example of how collaboration within the industry can secure jobs and livelihoods."

The new venture significantly expands Exceed's service offering to include well abandonment, production technology and petroleum engineering, and will allow the company to drive operations into several new markets. Depending on future contracts, there may also be the potential to take on further ex-members of ADTI staff.

3sun Group Recognised For International Success

Company's continued growth globally acknowledged by position in business league table

3sun Group, specialist provider of products and services to the global energy industry, has secured a Top 20 position on *The Sunday Times* HSBC International Track 200 league table, in acknowledgment of its continued global growth. *The Sunday Times* HSBC International Track 200 publishes an annual league table ranking Britain's private companies with the fastest-growing international sales compounded over a two-year period. Placed at 20th position, 3sun Group is a new entrant to the table due to an impressive 103% increase in international sales over the two years.

Global expansion has been a key focus for 3sun Group, growing rapidly over the past eight years to now employ more than 300 people across five divisions, earning a global reputation for resolving some of the key energy engineering challenges facing the energy sector.

Commenting on the achievement, 3sun Group CEO, Graham Hacon, said: "I'm delighted that we have been recognised for our sustained international growth. It's a huge accomplishment for 3sun Group to secure a position on the International Track 200 league table and testament to the hard work and

dedication of the entire team. "Our European expansion in Denmark attests to this dedication and we look forward to further enhancing and increasing our international footprint in key global regions, allowing us to advance our strategic growth plans."

The companies ranked in this year's league table will come together at a prestigious awards dinner on Tuesday 22 September at the Jumeirah Carlton Tower in London, which will celebrate the companies' significant international success.

Revolutionising Training Goal for imorph

Profile of Caroline Hughes, director of imorph, training and change specialists



Caroline's vision is simple. Based on her extensive experience, she believes that technical training can be designed and delivered better. Her goal is to revolutionise the way industry training and change management is conducted.

A qualified instrumentation and control engineer, before the days of imorph, Caroline worked as an engineer in both the oil and gas and manufacturing industries. Whilst working in manufacturing, Caroline made the move into training, which would become the focus of her career when she later returned to the oil and gas sector. Having worked offshore across most of the North Sea assets in both training and engineering capacities, Caroline gained invaluable knowledge and experience which shaped her approach to training design, delivery and change. It was her return to oil and gas that led to the lightbulb moment that would eventually result in the creation of imorph.

After only a few weeks in her new role, Caroline noticed a pattern. Whilst her delegates started the day with unprecedented reluctance and lack of enthusiasm for the course, they quickly became engaged, actively participated and were genuinely interested in the content. Caroline repeatedly received feedback from

delegates citing her courses were the best they had ever attended. She recognised this as an indicator that firstly, there was obvious training fatigue within the oil and gas industry, and secondly, she had tapped into a method of designing and delivering training that was not widely adopted by her peers.

As a result, in 2005, Caroline established imorph with the aim of "changing the face of technical training". Revolutionising the way training is developed, designed and delivered, with imorph Caroline has transformed the way training is perceived and conducted.

Recognising that ineffective training often arises from poor training design and a lack of understanding of the desired outcomes and objectives, Caroline develops training and change programmes that get to the heart of what they actually need to do – solutions that work. The oil and gas industry is historically plagued by the theory that there is no problem more training can't fix. You might imagine this to be the perfect scenario for Caroline as the director of a training provider. However, she is a strong believer in quality, not quantity, when it comes to training: Let's identify genuine training needs and do this training brilliantly.

In the industry's current circumstances, training budgets have been among the first to be slashed. Adopting more cost- and operational-efficient training and change solutions that enable you to do more with less is now not just an ideal but a necessity. Caroline has developed a number of programmes that help organisations and individuals do just that. This includes Activebrain – Caroline's approach to training and learning – which she has established as a stand-alone programme that enables companies to design and deliver effective, engaging training sessions that can be owned in-house and provide excellent returns on investment.

Since imorph's inception ten years ago, Caroline has found continuing success with her bespoke training solutions, designed specifically for each client's individual needs.

Her Brilliant! work management programme in particular has repeatedly delivered results for work management system deployments and upgrades, enhancing system capabilities, performance, user behaviours and consequent outputs. Establishing the Brilliant! programme throughout the oil and gas industry was the key focus for Caroline during the early years of imorph.

Caroline has utilised her Brilliant! and Activebrain expertise in the development of a comprehensive portfolio of training and change solutions. This includes an extension of the Brilliant! programme to include operational and strategic planning courses, as well as new offerings developed closely with subject matter experts: Cultivate – workshops designed to maximise the potential of teams, enabling them to work more effectively and efficiently together to achieve business objectives; and Safe, imorph's behavioural safety training and coaching programme.

In taking imorph's portfolio to the next level, Caroline continues her journey to raise the bar in oil and gas industry training. She works to fundamentally shift perceptions of what really good, effective training actually looks like. For Caroline, there is nothing more satisfying than

In taking imorph's portfolio to the next level

delivering outstanding results and return on investment for her clients – whether they be multinational organisations or individuals who want to enhance their skills and expertise.

Caroline does things differently. Find out just how those differences influence imorph's training and change management service by visiting the team at Offshore Europe 2015, stand 3A240.

Optimus Secures First Contract in New Sector

Safety first as Optimus Seventh Generation breaks into decommissioning sector

Optimus Seventh Generation, an Aberdeen-headquartered behavioural change consultancy, has strengthened its safety portfolio by securing its first decommissioning contract in a six-figure agreement with a major North Sea operator.

The four-month contract, which began in May this year, will see Optimus Seventh Generation supply induction training and back-to-back health and safety advisors to support the safe decommissioning of a floating production, storage and offloading vessel in the North Sea.

Mark Walker, client partner at Optimus Seventh Generation, said: "Having worked hard to develop our reputation as a major safety and behaviour consultancy to high-hazard

industries, the whole team is thrilled to secure our first decommissioning contract.

"Breaking into a new sector truly demonstrates that the company's growth plan is working, with decommissioning having always been a key target for us. The sector is full of opportunity in the current climate where collaboration is key between operators, the supply chain and, more pertinent than ever right now, specialist safety professionals."

Optimus Seventh Generation will provide training to all contractors through its Induction Plus™ programme. The four-hour induction is aimed at projects experiencing a large influx of new, often subcontracted, labour during decommissioning and construction projects

or shutdowns. It educates the attendees on the company's expectations with respect to compliance with the company's safety rules, alongside a motivational element to engage the project team with why compliance is important and how they can raise their awareness of the hazards specific to the asset.

Mr Walker continued: "Our project-support business works with clients to influence decision-making and behaviour to help deliver their project to plan and without harm to people, plant or production. Our Induction Plus™, when embedded by the presence of Optimus safety advisers, helps influence the decision-making of all involved, ensuring rules are being followed and incident-free projects are being delivered."

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Maxoil Solutions' Expertise in The Spotlight

Founder of company to co-chair SPE workshop in Galveston, Texas

The expertise of a global oil and gas consultancy is set to be shared with a US audience as some of the energy industry's vital challenges are tackled at a high profile event.

One of the founding directors of Maxoil Solutions has been confirmed as the co-chair of a key Society of Petroleum Engineers (SPE) technical session during a period in which the company's experience in maximising efficiency is in high demand.

Dr Wally Georgie (pictured), who founded the firm in Aberdeen in 2004 with Mel Dow, has been one of the driving forces behind the gathering in Galveston, Texas, from 28-30 October. Some of the innovations being pioneered by Maxoil's worldwide team will be showcased during the event, which is aimed at those in the non-conventional sector of the industry.

Dr Georgie will be co-chair of a focus on fluid characterisation and monitoring at the SPE's workshop on 'Flow Assurance Challenges in Shale and Tight Rock Developments'.

It follows another key SPE event that Maxoil participated in, with the firm attending the



Produced Water Handling and Management Symposium in Galveston in May. During the conference Chris Dilley, senior production chemist, presented on the topic of 'Creating an effective oil in water sampling and monitoring system'.

The session included an examination of best practice and the necessity of calibrating field equipment. The importance of sampling techniques was also examined in the presentation prepared in conjunction with Maxoil's senior production chemist, Juan Carlos Picott.

Chris Packham to Address E-Reps Forum

TV presenter to be key speaker at E-Reps environmental event

TV presenter and naturalist Chris Packham will be a key speaker at an industry-heralded environmental event in Aberdeen later this year.

Mr Packham, best known for presenting the *Really Wild Show* in the 1980s and BBC nature series *Springwatch*, will attend the E-Reps Forum on Wednesday, 7 October at the Thistle Aberdeen Airport Hotel.

Established in 2012, the E-Reps Forum is a leading exhibition and conference for environmental representatives from across the offshore oil and gas industry. Tickets for the day-long event in Dyce cost £80 plus VAT.

Chris Packham, broadcaster, naturalist, author and photographer, said: "I'll be offering my take

on the environment and encouraging people to become engaged in environmental issues.

"There's a need for everyone to understand what's required for wildlife to survive and thrive. I'm looking forward to attending the E-Reps Forum and finding out more about the energy sector as a whole."

This year's forum theme is 'Sustainability Through Efficiency'. The event will include an update on the new Offshore Safety Directive from a senior member of the Department of Energy & Climate Change.

For more information, please visit: www.erepsnetwork.com





A Diverse Service Offering Keeps Dales Marine Afloat

Ship repair solutions company offers almost three decades' experience to its clients globally

Servicing the repair and maintenance demands for the shipping, oil and gas, chemical and civil engineering industries, Dales Marine has built up a reputable status for its ability to provide precision engineering to tight deadlines. With roots dating back to 1987, Dales Marine has been supplying bespoke ship repair solutions for almost 30 years. Established in 1991 in Aberdeen as an offshoot from Dales Engineering, the company has been providing mechanical engineering, fabrication, steelwork and dry dock services to its clients internationally.

In 2014, the company expanded its service offering with the takeover of the Forth Group, where the business now owns six dry docks, and seven repair and conversion yards. Dales Marine is located across Scotland in Aberdeen, Leith, Montrose, Greenock, Grangemouth and Troon.

Today, as the oil and gas industry faces short-term business challenges and long-term uncertainty, the pressure for companies to reduce costs and differentiate their services from those of competitors has become a key focus.

However, despite the issues faced in today's climate, Dales Marine has maintained steady business productivity and

experienced strong levels of project turnover this year. Going from strength to strength, the company has serviced 54 dry dockings and completed over 800 ship repair, fabrication and mechanical jobs for major oil and gas companies since January.

Commenting on the current market conditions, contracts manager, Kevin Paterson, discusses the importance of adapting to the industry's needs.

He explains: "The offshore industry is a demanding environment that requires businesses to be transparent. In this climate, businesses are searching for solutions which can help their vessels get back operating in the quickest possible time but in the most cost-effective way. Maximising productivity and cost efficiency has never been so vital and Dales Marine knows first-hand the importance of this for its clients.

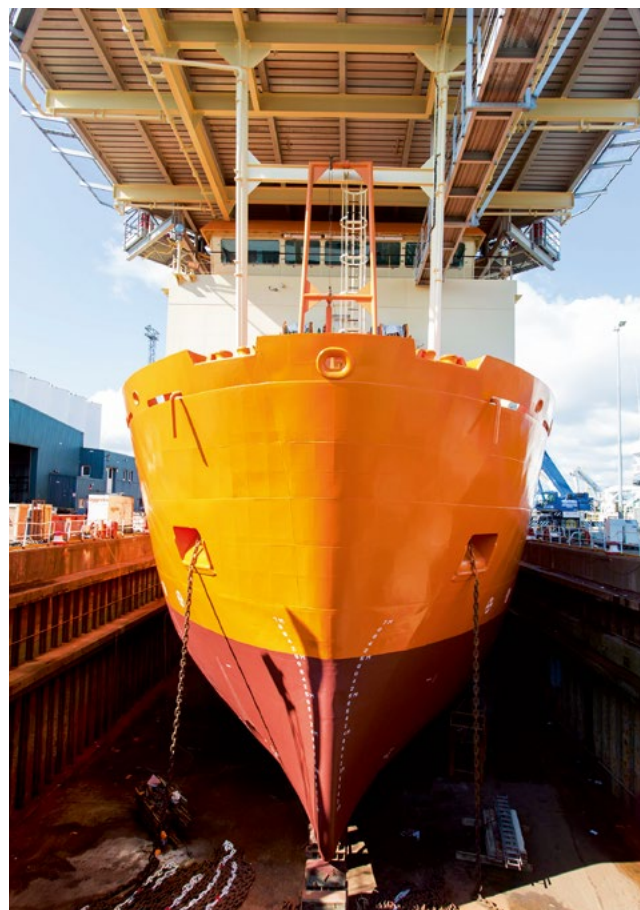
"Our success stems from our ability to focus on two key areas – providing value for money and fast project execution for our clients. Everything we do and provide revolves around ensuring these areas are met and because of this Dales Marine has reached some considerable achievements this year."

2015 has paved significant milestones for the company as it witnessed all of its docks full for the first time across Aberdeen, Leith, Grangemouth, Greenock and Troon. The firm experienced the first with vessels which were all owned by different offshore companies and ranged from servicing supply vessels to ferries. This was later followed by another significant achievement for the company as it docked one of the largest brigs built in Britain in over a century, the Stavros S Niarchos. Measuring at over 200 feet, the brig docked at Greenock, where Dales Marine carried out a range of scheduled repair and maintenance work. Dales Marine, which boasts one of the largest dry docks in Scotland, is also one of the few companies which can dock vessels over 100 metres in length in five out of its seven docks. This provides the unique offering of greater flexibility and a capability to cater for large and complex projects. Commenting on the company's success, Mr Paterson said: "These significant milestones are a strong reflection of our ability to provide complete engineering solutions for our customers. Since taking over the Forth Group in 2014, we have developed an impressive track record for fast turnaround. With six bases strategically located across Scotland, we are best placed for North Sea work and able to locate vessels to suit the requirements of our clients.

"Our locations are also partnered with our ability to provide a full range of ship repair and maintenance services from the fabrication of structural steelworks and pipe spools, to the engineering and fabrication of highly specialised structures and equipment in carbon steel, stainless steel and non-ferrous materials. Our experienced and qualified staff provides these services with around-the-clock cover, covering day and night, to ensure vessels are operating back at sea in the soonest possible time."

The firm currently employs a team of over 200 highly qualified fabrication welders, engineers and ship experts, with an additional 20 to 50 subcontractors. Dales Marine's certified technicians can encompass everything from routine maintenance checks to major overhauls, handling both scheduled and unscheduled repairs to ensure client's vessels can get back to sea with minimal effect to business timetables.

Looking forward, Dales Marine believes it is in a strong position to embrace the challenges of the oil and gas market, despite



"We are 100% committed to constantly improving the quality of our services"

unpredictable market conditions. As the business approaches its third decade serving the industry, the company has built strong foundations for more recent activity in repair and maintenance work internationally.

Mr Paterson concludes: "We believe that we are moving in the right direction and, through operating an excellent core of expertise and service flexibility, Dales Marine looks to move forward in good stead. Our aim is to enhance our customers' supply chain needs by advancing our services and our position as the preferred ship repair and maintenance provider in the North Sea.

"In a difficult climate it is important for us to support our clients with their daily operations and provide them with the solutions they need to run effectively. We are 100% committed to constantly improving the quality of our services for the benefit of our stakeholders and we continuously strive for new ways to expand. Looking to the future, our intent is to continue providing support to the requirements of our clients, whilst expanding our services further afield."

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Cutting-edge Technology Added at Hydro Group

Hydro Group expands its portfolio with £250,000 investment



Subsea cable and connector specialist Hydro Group has further strengthened its portfolio with the addition of a new state-of-the-art hydrostatic pressure vessel, following a £250,000 investment.

The 2.5 by 1.5-metre vessel has the capacity to pressure test large cable assemblies and equipment up to 2,200 psi, simulating depths of 5,000 feet below sea level.

Doug Whyte (pictured), managing director at Hydro Group, said: "The six-figure investment into this cutting-edge technology represents a significant addition to our current capabilities. The new pressure vessel offers a broader range of testing with a more accurate output, and helps further enhance the quality and scope of work we provide."

Housed in the company's Aberdeen headquarters, the equipment provides Hydro Group with the ability to design and pressure test complete cable assemblies built for

deepwater projects, particularly for the subsea and defence industry.

Mr Whyte continued: "Evolving our product offering and in-house expertise is paramount to supporting growing client demands. Our team has been trained to offer a complete testing facility and has the internal capability to provide a third-party testing service to the wider market."

"The new hydrostatic vessel has allowed Hydro Group staff the chance to enhance their knowledge and skill sets, while adding to our current products, representing significant growth potential for the company."

Further expanding its product offering and recent increases to capabilities has meant the creation of new jobs for Hydro Group. Staff numbers at the firm's Aberdeen base rose to over 100 for the first time this year and projected turnover for 2015 is predicted to rise by 12% to £9 million, thanks to increased development in new and existing markets.

Energy Ventures Supports the Next Generation

Private equity firm recognises business students' achievements



Two RGU scholars have been recognised for their expertise with the award of the Energy Ventures Prize.

Chris Porteous (pictured, left) and Stuart Cooper (right), who graduated with first class BA (Hons) degrees in International Business Management and Management respectively, were honoured by the leading private equity firm at a ceremony last month.

The Energy Ventures Prize, awarded to the Business School students producing the best theses, is part of a relationship between the firm and the university which stretches back to 2011. Other initiatives include the annual investment den workshop for MBA students, and support for the intern programme, as well as financial contributions through the prize.

This year's winners demonstrated their acumen. Chris examined the enablers and barriers to change during the introduction of a cloud-based system across two key locations within a multinational organisation. Stuart's thesis investigated the difference in success between RGU graduates who completed a BA (Hons) Management course and MA (Hons) Business Management course graduates from Aberdeen University, one year on.

The presentation was made by Karem Kobayashi (centre) of Energy Ventures, an RGU graduate who initially joined the firm on an internship two years ago as part of her MBA programme and went on to secure a permanent position.

The Power of Transferable Skills

Jim Davidson, CEO of Albacom, a Dundee-based high technology company

We all know about the importance of transferable skills. CVs and job interviews are full of them – and for good reason. Taking skills and lessons learned from one sector, and applying them in another more often than not results in innovation and change for the better.

Dundee-based Albacom is a company which absolutely understands and promotes this ethos. For over 30 years, the company has provided electrical components for the defence and aviation industry, where effective problem-solving, quality of output and reliability are critical.

However, since joining Albacom in early 2014, Jim Davidson's key objective has been to take the company's defining features, and use them to steer Albacom into the global oil and gas market. By drawing upon the company's existing skills and new in-house designed products, Albacom is offering the sector the kind of cost efficiencies that are becoming crucial to economic survival and success.



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 “I've seen first-hand how this industry has changed over the years”

Jim has developed and managed his own business since 2004, which started with the management buyout of Rolls Wood Group Surface Technologies Division. Re-branded to Advanced Coating Initiative Limited (ACI®), it successfully traded before acquisition in 2012. Now Jim is keen to return to the oil and gas sector.

“I've seen first-hand how this industry has changed over the years, and it's no secret that now is the time to be streamlining processes and minimising costs. Everything about Albacom fits that bill. Our key competency is an ability to design and manufacture the highest

quality technology – and that vital skill is what is so transferable across a variety of sectors. Add to that the longevity of our products and the significant cost efficiencies our clients experience, and that's exactly what the oil and gas market requires right now, and moving forward.

“In addition to the technical expertise, it's always been about the customer experience for me, and this remains so at Albacom. Understanding the market, and an appreciation that your contribution is part of a much larger puzzle is fundamental to a successful contract. Albacom's work with the Ministry of Defence is reflective of that; supplying the electrical components for something as highly specialised as a fighter jet requires a joined-up approach with the client and several other manufacturers.

“Albacom has always been valued for our ability to offer a flexible and bespoke solution within that context, which not only dovetails with other

elements of the project, but also has the ability to cope with the issues that inevitably arise in such situations. To me, the similarities between this and the oil and gas industry are obvious.

“The nature of defence and aeronautics means that the team at Albacom deals with large projects over a lengthy period of time. My experience of oil and gas tells me that there are vast synergies in the way in which contractors work in these industries and it is my responsibility to develop the team in that direction, widening our target markets, and bringing the staff on that journey with me.

“I'm here to ensure that Albacom continues to provide an optimum service to our existing clients, whilst entering new markets with the confidence and the clarity to showcase how our products and approach can offer a unique solution to our target industries in both good and challenging times.”

Specialist Pipeline Service Launched by Marsol

Marsol International launches emergency intertidal support capabilities

Marsol International Ltd has launched a specialist Emergency Pipeline Repair Service (EPRS) to safeguard shallow-water intertidal zones.

EPRS has been developed over the last six years to service all types of environmental situations and geotechnical configurations, to address the inherent challenge of accessing delicate areas not normally serviced from sea or shore.

Marsol International has worked with various partners to develop multi-purpose tools and equipment which offer functionality and versatility, resulting from the company's experience in developing specialist diver-operated equipment, capable of work in dry areas, the intertidal zone and subsea.

Mike Young, managing director of Marsol International, explains: "Marsol has a strong team of engineers who understand first-hand the real-life scenarios on a busy oil export hub. We have identified a need to offer an

emergency service to protect pipelines in shallow waters, and we have the skills and equipment to manage the challenges intertidal zones present, such as shifting sands and tides. Marsol has worked to develop sophisticated support assets such as Rhino Craft and Versadock – products that have been tried and tested in hostile and difficult environments.

"Should a pipeline require repair, time is of the essence. Safeguarding against environmental damage, minimising the impact on production and ultimately protecting company reputation is vital. EPRS offers an experienced team who can act fast. That said, we firmly believe that prevention is better than cure, so Marsol also offers a pre-emptive Pipeline Integrity Management service to ensure all bases are covered."

Due to various clients' requests for a turnkey solution, EPRS has been launched to best service the needs of a niche market in the

environmentally delicate intertidal zone. This requires a different, but complementary, skill set from subsea or deepwater pipeline repair. It will utilise the company's experienced offshore terminal and marine workforce to locate and stabilise the ground to access damaged pipelines in the intertidal zone, and to implement the requisite pipeline repair. Repair scenarios such as pipeline rupture, pin-hole leak, dents and buckles, internal and external pipeline pitting and problems due to corrosion are considered pipeline emergencies.

EPRS will be driven by the nature of the pipeline failure or damage, the pipeline size and specification, as well as the site location, and offers a complete range of specialised equipment required to work in intertidal zones, including multi-purpose amphibious units, amphibious excavators, modular trench shoring systems and all-terrain/amphibious personnel carriers.

NE Training Company's *Entente Cordiale*

ITCA Training shares expertise with French graduates

A leading Aberdeen-based apprenticeship-training firm is spreading the word about its work across the globe after playing host to a group of French welding engineering graduates.

ITCA Training welcomed 15 graduates from the École supérieure du soudage et de ses applications (ESSA), to its premises recently to share industry knowledge and expertise.

ITCA provides training for young employees from a range of companies across the North East. The students visited the company to learn about how welding training is performed in Scotland.

ITCA Training managing director, June Jones, said: "We were pleased to welcome the group of graduates from France to ITCA. When we are teaching hands-on skills, we usually only give demonstrations to small groups using the booths in the workshop, but because we had 15 students visiting, we had to set up extra equipment, including extractors which were kindly loaned to us by the ATR Group.

"I hope that the demonstrations gave the students a good insight into the techniques used in Scotland, and wish them every success in their future careers."



Impact Selector and Wireline Engineering Join Forces

Partnership brings together leaders in risk mitigation solutions for well evaluation and intervention operations



Impact Selector and Wireline Engineering have announced the companies are joining forces through a strategic transaction. The combination brings together industry leaders in the design, development and deployment of the most technically innovative products and solutions for mitigating risks during well evaluation and intervention operations. With locations in the United Kingdom, United States, Southeast Asia and the Middle East, the combined company is positioned to serve its global oil and gas industry customers in the most actively producing regions throughout the world. The senior management team of Wireline Engineering, including directors Alan Gordon, Alistair Inglis and Don Mitchell, are joining Impact Selector following its acquisition of Wireline Engineering.

David Lane, president and CEO of Impact Selector, said: "The combination of Wireline Engineering and Impact Selector perfectly aligns with our vision of being the most reliable and trusted provider of conveyance technology solutions that mitigate risk, enhance efficiencies and improve safety for customers working in the oil and gas industry worldwide. This new partnership of employees, products, services and locations further expands our capabilities to provide operating efficiencies and cost-saving solutions to our customers."

Alan Gordon, managing director of Wireline Engineering, said: "It is highly unusual when two companies come together for there to be such a complementary fit – both in terms of their current organisation and future strategy. I am convinced the combined business will allow us to add even more value to our customers and provide new opportunities for all our staff."

Todd Tomlin, partner of Turnbridge Capital, commented: "We feel very fortunate to be partnered with the expanding Impact Selector and Wireline Engineering teams. In December of last year, we had the opportunity to join with the managers and employees of Impact Selector in the recapitalisation of their company. Together our goals include further product line growth and geographic expansion. The combination with Wireline Engineering accelerates the pursuit of these strategies, and we are very excited about the product and market strengths now resident in the combined company."

Johnston Carmichael served as financial advisor to Wireline Engineering, and Pinsent Masons provided legal counsel. Burness Paull and Jones Day are legal counsel to Impact Selector. Turnbridge Capital and Amegy Bank provided additional funding in support of the transaction.

Joint Enterprise for Aqueos and Bibby Subsea

Aqueos Corporation and Bibby Subsea ROV, LLC form strategic alliance



Aqueos Corporation and Bibby Subsea ROV, LLC have entered into a strategic alliance to jointly market their combined services to pursue subsea-related projects in the Gulf of Mexico and other targeted regions.

Bibby Subsea, a provider of diving and diverless support vessels, manned diving, ROV and engineering services on a worldwide basis, and Aqueos Corporation, a provider of manned diving and other subsea services in the Gulf of Mexico, Pacific Coast and Central America, are pleased to announce the formation of a strategic alliance to jointly provide subsea services. The goal of this strategic alliance is to increase their respective market share and expand their global footprint in targeted offshore oil and gas markets.

Ted Roche, president and CEO of Aqueos Corporation, stated: "This is a great opportunity for two quality companies, who share the same core values of safety and operational excellence, to collaborate in order to provide more enhanced services to our valued customers."

Andrew Duncan, president and managing director of Bibby Subsea, commented: "We are delighted to have entered into an agreement with Aqueos as we share a common goal to ensure that we deliver efficiently, but most importantly, that we deliver our projects safely."

Inspiring Leaders for Future Generations

Eddie McCullough, director and senior partner at Optimus Seventh Generation, discusses the vital need for leadership in today's current economic climate



Now more than ever, we find ourselves in a period where leadership and its component parts are vital. The intense focus by a number of organisations to re-evaluate their cost base has left many in the industry feeling vulnerable and uncertain about the future. If we see one of the roles of leadership as creating a vision of the future, and to communicate that in a way that those within their organisation feel connected to that vision, we need our leaders to step up.

There is much to celebrate and look forward to within our industry. Leaders need to find the best way to deliver this in a consistent and authentic way to create the maximum levels of workforce engagement, delivering a safe and sustainable energy industry.

Over the last few months Optimus Seventh Generation has been supporting clients in some truly turbulent times, helping them to manage and lead their teams towards a more positive future.

I have been involved in some interesting conversations where individuals have identified themselves as one of the 'survivors' following organisational change. This is an intriguing use of language but not, in the context delivered, a

hugely positive one. It is however a weak signal, a warning sign within the culture, of where some people are, how they feel, and the need for leaders to inspire and motivate.

Running an Optimus Culture of Care® within this organisation allowed us to pick up on these weak signals. Having a diagnostic that focuses on decision making and behaviour, as well as practices, allowed us to design a leadership programme that gave leaders within the organisation the emotional intelligence (EQ) skills, followed by the support, to influence their followers while delivering the organisation's goals.

This years' Offshore Europe theme is 'How to Inspire the Next Generation', a valid and meaningful theme when you consider the potential of the industry and the young talent that we need to and want to attract. However, I think it is worth reflecting that based on the 'shock' the industry has experienced, there is as much of a need to inspire this generation and those still within the industry, as there is those to come.

Optimus has set out to deliver the future of our industry thinking completely differently to how we delivered the past. For this to be

successful, there is a need to create a culture that motivates as much discretionary effort from those in our organisations as possible. We know that discretionary effort is strongly linked to leadership, but more importantly the type of leadership that values persuasion over power.

During an interview, Dwight D Eisenhower stated that: "Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it."

As stated, this is an art as well as a skill. Leaders who do this best are those who are able to articulate 'why' we do what we do as well as 'what' we do in an authentic way to inspire individuals. More and more we see evidence to support that this takes as much, if not more, non-technical skills as technical.

If we are to take the industry successfully into the future, it will involve having leaders at all levels of organisations that have the skills

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This years' Offshore Europe theme is 'How to Inspire the Next Generation'

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and capabilities to lead, create followers and unlock the discretionary effort of our people. Leadership and workforce engagement are the cornerstones of what makes our industry successful. If we need to press the cultural reset button, it needs to be in a way that actively blends these two elements.

Optimus Seventh Generation is a behavioural safety consultancy that focuses on helping clients to implement positive and sustainable improvements through the application of Care. Since its formation in 2003, Optimus Seventh Generation has built a diverse portfolio of global customers, focusing on high-hazard industries both within the UK and internationally, with offices in Aberdeen and Perth, Australia.

An offshore oil rig is shown in the background, featuring a tall derrick, various pipes, and cranes, set against a clear blue sky and a calm sea.

Offshore Europe
8-11 September 2015

Spotlight on Offshore Europe 2015

From 8 to 11 September a global audience of industry leaders, experts, engineers and technical specialists will descend on Aberdeen's Exhibition and Conference Centre for Offshore Europe 2015. Hosted by the Society of Petroleum Engineers (SPE), the four-day event encourages the sharing of ideas and debating of issues in the oil and gas industry. It also allows exhibitors in the industry to do business face-to-face and network with an international audience with visitors from more than 100+ countries. The event continues to grow and in 2013 it was host to 1500 exhibitors and a total attendance of over 63,000.

The multi-faceted event reflects the oil and gas exploration and production industry's desire for continuous learning, showcasing the innovation, solutions and tools required to compete in an accelerating technology race in an increasingly complex business.

There will be a series of keynote sessions, technical sessions, topical lunches and breakfast briefings. Professor Brian Cox OBE will be joined by a host of leading international speakers for the 2015 opening plenary, 'How to Inspire the Next

Generation'. The choice of this year's theme empowers the industry to address both the technical and people challenges facing the industry today to secure future success. The key message throughout the four days will be that the industry is far from over and that it has a long and bright future, despite the current tough market conditions.

The keynote programme, chaired by Michael Engell-Jensen, executive director of the International Association of Oil & Gas Producers (IOGP), will feature 11 sessions focusing on the basic challenge of meeting energy demand while balancing concerns over climate change, security of supply and consumer affordability. Topics to be addressed include: health; the safety and security of people and assets; well intervention; financing investments; oil spill response; and inspiring the next generation to join the industry. Speakers will comprise a mix of senior representatives from international operating companies and contractors, as well as trade association representatives, government regulators and academia.

The technical program, chaired by Charles

Woodburn, chief executive officer, Expro, will feature more than 75 papers, demonstrating that the industry's engineering, manufacturing and technology excellence is set to assure a long-term sustainable future. Speakers drawn from all over the world will discuss topics such as asset and well integrity, maximising economic recovery, smarter field development, pipelines and risers, subsea processing, talent development, unconventional gas development, process safety, and decommissioning.

In the Deepwater Zone, the breakfast and lunch agenda, is an ambitious 'Inspire' programme aimed at the younger generation.

Visit www.offshore-europe.co.uk for further information and to register for this free-to-attend event.

The following pages reflect a small example of some of the locally based companies exhibiting at the event, some for the very first time.

All stand information correct at the time of going to press.

Show Marks New Chapter for MB Air Systems

Company has new purpose-built specialist engineering and training facility



For Dyce-based specialist MB Air Systems, this year's Offshore Europe exhibition marks the start of a new era for the firm.

The firm will be exhibiting at the event (stand: 1F111) with a fresh focus and an expanded offering after completing a move to a new £2.5-million base.

The purpose-built specialist engineering and training facility has enhanced the established service company's capabilities and provides fresh impetus to its business development activities in 2015.

Alongside the spotlight on its new home, the company will also use the event to exhibit its ATEX-certified Zone II air compressor and packaging capabilities, as well as its latest nitrogen generation equipment and its winch and hoist portfolio.

Steve Harkin (pictured), management board director of MB Air Systems, said: "The timing of Offshore Europe could not be better for us. We are settled into our new facilities and the exhibition gives us a fantastic opportunity to showcase our expansion.

"We have built our reputation on knowledge, experience and expertise. All of those qualities remain integral to the business but the new premises enable us to expand our range of products and services. Training and testing will be particular areas for growth in the months and years ahead, with a unique 150-tonne undercover test tower and adjoining training academy now part of our lifting provision.

"It is an exciting chapter in the history of MB Air Systems and we are looking forward to Offshore Europe as we set about promoting these developments to what is always a very receptive audience."

The company's 22 staff members are now based at the purpose-built premises on Wellheads Road in Dyce, situated on the site of the firm's previous workshop and yard. Totalling 13,500 square feet, the unit is home to office accommodation and a carefully planned workshop, designed with input from the expert engineering team.

A second unit on the site, which will total 13,000 square feet of floor space and is being

marketed for lease, is scheduled for completion in spring 2016.

MB Air Systems, which has an annual turnover of £21 million, has been operating from its Dyce base since 1991. After seeing an increase in demand for its specialist service and engineering solutions, the redevelopment of the site began in July last year.

The company has more than 40 years' experience providing specialist service and engineering solutions in the compressed air, industrial and offshore lifting, power tool, pneumatics and product finishing sectors. It services oil and gas clients from the base in Aberdeen and also has a network of engineering facilities throughout the UK. Since the management buyout of 2002, from Motherwell Bridge, the company's turnover almost trebled thanks to a robust business model and innovative approaches.

For further information, visit www.mbairstystems.co.uk

Denholm Oilfield Services Raise Awareness

Group represented by two of its companies at Offshore Europe



As part of the Denholm Oilfield Services group, Denholm Valvecare Ltd and Denholm MacNamee Ltd share a stand at Offshore Europe (OE) 2015, representing their parent company and promoting their individual services.

A trusted supplier of bespoke solutions for subsea, wellheads and process valves, Denholm Valvecare Ltd employs 90 staff and is headquartered in Altens, with offices in Lincoln and Great Yarmouth, plus Karabatan (Kazakhstan) and Abu Dhabi. The emphasis for this year's show is to raise awareness of their buckle pin relief valve and their latest global distribution relationships.

Peter Stewart, general manager in Aberdeen, is a veteran of OE, having first attended thirteen years ago. He says: "My goal for this year is to highlight to new and existing customers, that not only do we stock, source, install and maintain valves from all over the world, but that we are a manufacturer also."

He continues: "Two years ago we brokered a strategic partnership with Spanish manufacturer Ringo Válvulas, which gave us sole distribution rights to a complete suite of European-standard valves, effectively setting a new benchmark in quality and supply chain logistics. But crucially we have also developed our own additional patent. This year we are entering in to a strategic sole distributor partnership with Elfab Ltd, a rupture disc manufacturer who will use their 75 years of

experience and global network to promote the Elfab-branded Denholm buckle pin relief valve also. OE marks the start of our promotional campaigning."

Sister company Denholm MacNamee will showcase its customer-focused solutions to an industry where maximising efficiency remains top of the agenda.

Based in Inverurie, Denholm MacNamee Ltd is a leading provider of asset cleaning and decontamination solutions to the oil and gas, petrochemical, power generation and utilities industries and works closely with customers to provide bespoke, uncompromising solutions.

Like Denholm Valvecare Ltd, they focus highly on the importance of standards, which is reflected in the company holding various accreditations including FPAL, OHSAS18001 (safety), ISO9001 (quality) and ISO14001 (environmental). In addition, their radiation protection supervisors (RPS) ensure compliance in projects where LSA/NORM issues are present.

Key news for customers to take away is that, this year alone, the company had reported significant overseas growth in key international markets, a significant addition to its fleet of products in the form of another hydraulic dozer, and the first North Sea contract for its exclusive Zyme-Flow® Decon Technology.

Denholm Oilfield Services can be found at stand 1A70.

Event Stalwarts Launch New Product

Downhole Products bring advanced casing drilling centraliser to global market

Event stalwarts Downhole Products have attended every Offshore Europe since the company was founded in 1994 – and this year is set to be no exception.

The focus in 2015 will be on the launch of a significant addition to the suite of products and services in the form of CaseRunner™, the company's new advanced casing drilling centraliser.

CaseRunner™ was originally developed by Downhole Products' family team, Ian, Andy and Nathan Kirk, for the Norwegian market and, due to its successful application, it is now ready to be marketed globally. The system uses the latest technology and materials to maximise centralisation and minimise torque and vibration when casing drilling.

Downhole Products – a Sandvik company – is a global market leader in the design, manufacture and supply of casing and cementing accessories, and completion tools such as centralisers, reamer guide shoes, float equipment and cable protectors. The company's headquarters are near Aberdeen, Scotland and it operates bases in the Middle East, Azerbaijan, Asia and USA. To date, Downhole Products has been awarded two prestigious Queen's Awards – the UK's highest accolade for international business success.

Commenting on the company's participation in Offshore Europe 2015, Downhole Products' vice president, Mark Dundee, said: "The benefit for us in attending this event is primarily to keep our name at the forefront of the industry, both here in the UK and further afield.

"We look forward to sharing with delegates our new CaseRunner™ technology at a time when the need for cost-effective, proven solutions such as ours is high on the agenda."

Downhole Products will welcome visitors on stand 2B30.

For further information, visit www.downhole.org or email mail@downhole.co.uk

Offshore Medical Experts Available for Consultation

RS Occupational Health welcomes opportunity to share recent developments with visitors to OE



RS Occupational Health is delighted to return to Offshore Europe during another exciting year in the company's evolution.

The company is now owned by Houston-based DISA Global Solutions and deals with clients in sectors including oil and gas, commercial, engineering, manufacturing and the public sector. RS Occupational Health also holds the contract to administer the registration of all oil and gas doctors, worldwide, on behalf of Oil & Gas UK.

The organisation has expanded to operate from clinics in Inverness and Great Yarmouth, as well as in Aberdeen. Here, the offering took a major step forward recently with the opening of the £1.25-million, purpose-built, state-of-the-art medical centre which heralds a new era in remote care for the oil and gas industry.

Up to 17 new jobs may be created thanks to the 4,157-square-metre remote medical centre which is Aberdeen's first and only of this kind, and provides comprehensive topside and emergency response support to the offshore sector. It is fully equipped with cutting edge remote diagnostic technology and is fully staffed round the clock, 365 days a year with clinical personnel, all of whom are highly experienced in remote medicine, A & E or trauma and have a thorough understanding of the offshore industry. The new clinic is strategically located

at Dyce, less than five minutes from the heliports and airport, to ensure swift access to care for service users. It will work alongside the company's headquarters at Muirfield House in the city.

In addition, RS Occupational Health is pleased that two key members of staff have been appointed to head up the centre with Dr Olgha Asatiani (pictured, right), MD, Adv Dip Occ Med, leading the medical team in the role of director of remote medical care and Mhari Mitchell (left), BA (Hons), in the position of commercial manager.

Co-founder Fiona Willis said: "Our services are underpinned by an innovative data management system and reporting facility to ensure integrated case management from the first topside call through the medevac process to eventual return to work, and this further enhances our capabilities to provide top-class service to our growing number of clients.

"We are excited at the opportunity to share these recent developments with visitors to Offshore Europe. This is one of the most important events on the oil and gas calendar and the opportunities for networking and communicating cannot be underestimated. We look forward to welcoming visitors to stand 4B64."

Poll Examines Attitudes to Offshore Careers

Oil and gas poll set to give the next generation a voice

During Offshore Europe, a panel of leading international industry experts will discuss the preconceived perceptions that students and graduates have of a career in oil and gas, and how they differ from the experiences of those operating in the sector.

Hosted by the Society of Petroleum Engineers (SPE) Aberdeen Section's Young Professional Committee, the panel will take place during the final day of Offshore Europe, Friday 11 September, and aims to inspire the next generation to pursue a career in the oil and gas sector.

SPE president and director general of Statoil Mexico, Helge Hove Haldorsen, will lead the panel discussion alongside David White, president of water and carbon services at Schlumberger; Rod Christie, CEO of subsea systems and drilling at GE Oil & Gas; Shona Cormack, vice-principal and pro-vice chancellor of Robert Gordon University; and Bob Greenwood, partner and head of oil and gas practice at Odgers Berndtson.

Shankar Bhukya, SPE Aberdeen chairman, said: "The ever-changing nature of the oil and gas industry has been particularly palpable of late and it is important, more now than ever, that leading professionals come together to share with today's students and graduates their experiences of the industry and the vast opportunities available.

"The pre-event online poll, as well as the question-and-answer section of the panel discussion, offers delegates the chance to voice their opinions and have their concerns addressed by those who have already made their mark on the industry. Together, we can convey the message that the oil and gas industry is still thriving and should not be disregarded by the new generation."

SPE Aberdeen has developed an online poll to gather the opinions of students, graduates and young professionals. The results will be presented during the seminar and will form part of the discussion. To complete the poll, please visit www.surveymonkey.com/s/W99XVSB

First OE Event for Galvanizers Association

Support organisation marketing economic benefits to oil and gas industry

Galvanizers Association is the market development and technical support organisation for the hot dip galvanizing industry. As an authoritative source of information and free advice, the association offers a wide range of services to specifiers across all sectors from construction and infrastructure, as well as to the energy industry, enabling them to make informed decisions when selecting corrosion protection systems. This is their first time at Offshore Europe where they hope to reach a core technical audience and forge new links with the international trade press.

Over the past year Galvanizers Association has undertaken a specific marketing campaign aimed at communicating the economic benefits of galvanizing to the oil and gas sector, illustrating

how galvanizing saves money and secures assets for the longer term.

Iqbal Johal, marketing manager, acknowledges the size of the task: "Firstly the world of communication is changing so rapidly that it is a challenge to get your message to cut through the noise - so you have to be as creative and focused as possible. But secondly, if your message is about asking professionals to re-evaluate their specifications, then that adds another dimension of difficulty. In our busy world it can be a tall order asking people to stop and think about what they are doing and how decisions are made. Accepted practice may not always be the best way going forward and small changes can make a big difference, but change is always a challenge."

Results to date have been encouraging and delivered an awareness that the association is keen to grow. Having a presence at Offshore Europe is key to keeping up the momentum. Iqbal continues: "Being at the show means we can target our message precisely. There has always been a focus on print media and now digital campaigns feature heavily too, but face-to-face meeting and networking is still a hugely important part of the communication channel. This is why Offshore Europe is an excellent opportunity."

Members of Galvanizers Association from Scotland will join Iqbal over the four days of the show. They can be found at stand number 2E53. For more information, visit www.galvanizing.org.uk

ThinJack Marks 10th Anniversary at Offshore Europe

Return to OE also offers further showcase for company's PowerPad™ technology

Leading oil service company ThinJack Ltd is marking its tenth anniversary year with a return to Offshore Europe.

ThinJack Ltd is headquartered in Westhill and operates internationally from established bases worldwide. The company's milestone year has featured the launch of a significant addition to its suite of cost-saving services with particular focus on the decommissioning sector.

Following successful field projects, the company's PowerPad™ technology has already been showcased and warmly received at recent industry events with enquiries from around the world. It is anticipated that Offshore Europe will provide another important international platform to spread word further of this exciting development.

PowerPad™ is an ultra-thin system for holding open gaps and weighing heavy objects. It is based on patented technology which converts hydraulic pressure into significant forces through millimetric-thin steel membranes. PowerPad™ addresses two technical challenges particular to the growing decommissioning sector: the need to safely and productively cut through concrete assets; and,

with specialist software, to accurately weigh heavy individual modules prior to removal from the structure being decommissioned for disposal.

Traditionally, cutting through concrete legs or module bases has required a series of wedges,



levers and crane supports to prevent the diamond-wire band from becoming trapped once a significant portion of the item being worked on has been cut through. Moreover, freeing broken diamond-wire belts impacts negatively on

operational productivity. PowerPad™ is the first hydraulically inflatable steel pad available for supporting the height of the gap during a cutting operation.

Determining the overall weight and centre of gravity of modules weighing multi-K tonnes prior to heavy lift operations has previously involved calculating load from original CAD construction drawings or deploying load cells underneath the object being weighed. PowerPad™ can now facilitate easier and accurate weighing of any structure under which it is placed.

Commenting on the company's participation in this year's Offshore Europe, director Guy Bromby said: "Attending Offshore Europe has consistently been a beneficial exercise for us and we look forward once again to welcoming our international customers."

"The event provides an important opportunity for us to reinforce first-hand to delegates the benefits of our ThinJack® well flange separation and PowerPad™ services."

ThinJack will exhibit on stand 5A50.

Aiken Group Announces Significant Expansion

Company expands headquarters to deal with upturn in business



Aberdeen-based Aiken Group has announced a 9,000-square foot expansion of its headquarters to cope with an upturn in business in one of its key markets.

The additional workshop and warehouse space

has been acquired for use by the group's growing modular division, Modulink to allow expansion of its turnkey services for the provision of A-, H- and Blast-rated modular units for the UK and overseas markets.

In the past year alone, more than 100 units have been completed resulting in a 20% increase in the number of personnel working within the division.

The growth brings the division's workshop space to almost 30,000 square feet of Aiken Group's 40,000-square feet city premises, which lie in close proximity to Aberdeen Harbour.

The news of expansion coincides with Modulink's recent completion of its first ever A60, Zone II DNV 2.7-2 Control and Workshop Modules. Conforming

to these latest industry standards, the 20-foot-by-eight-foot modules are also DNV2.7-1, Gas Group IIB, T3 and IEC-Ex compliant and operational within temperatures of -20 to +40 °C.

Commenting on the ongoing growth of Modulink, proposals director Eric Scott said: "These two modules represent a company first, and we are delighted that both projects have arisen thanks to repeat business from existing customers."

Aiken Group will exhibit at the 2015 SPE Offshore Europe Conference & Exhibition at Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre, 8-11 September. The company will be present on stand 3D80.

ROCOL Demonstrates Efficacy of Biogen Wireshield

Take advantage of technical expertise offered by ROCOL team



Offshore vessel operators seeking to enhance the service life of wire ropes and umbilicals, whilst complying with the new US VGP requirements, will be able to access the technical expertise of UK lubricant manufacturer ROCOL® at Offshore Europe 2015.

Exhibiting on stand 1C46 at the show,

ROCOL will be demonstrating why its recently Ecolabel-licensed Biogen Wireshield wire rope lubricant offers an effective solution as stricter environmental standards combine with ever greater operational performance requirements.

Biogen Wireshield is an environmentally acceptable lubricant (EAL) designed specifically for the demanding offshore and marine conditions in which wire ropes and umbilicals are used.

As a certified EAL, Biogen Wireshield is minimally toxic, biodegradable and non-bio accumulative. The lubricant's pseudoplastic rheology means that shear or agitation causes a reduction in dynamic viscosity, which allows maximum penetration into umbilicals and

wire ropes, as well as increasing pumpability during application to minimise blockages. Corrosion resistance is assured, with zero galvanic reaction after 1,000 h in salt spray testing and Biogen Wireshield also offers shear stability in the presence of salt water, with little degradation in testing. Furthermore, recent independent testing has shown the operational temperature range of the grease is between -50°C and 180°C, ensuring consistent performance in Arctic conditions and on Active Heave Compensation applications.

Visitors to the ROCOL stand at Offshore Europe will be able to take advantage of ROCOL's technical advice from the company's four-strong team in attendance during the show.

Honour for Patience and Buchan's Ashley Simpson

Law Society of Scotland recognises associate's child law expertise

Ashley Simpson (pictured), an associate at award-winning firm Patience and Buchan, has received accreditation as a child law specialist from the Law Society of Scotland. The success recognises Ashley's extensive experience in cases involving the welfare of children.

There are currently only 28 accredited child law specialists in Scotland, with four in the Aberdeen area – including Ashley and her colleague Lorna Buchan. Ashley is also expected to apply for accreditation as a family law specialist later this year.

Ashley said: "I'm delighted to have received this highly respected accreditation. Clearly, it's an important credential to have when dealing

with clients and providing them with the best possible level of service.

"In order to achieve the child law accreditation, which lasts for five years, I was required to be qualified as a lawyer for a minimum of seven years and carrying out specialist work for a minimum of three years. This involved undertaking high quality work, including complex and unusual child law cases, which proved to be challenging.

"The firm has been hugely supportive in helping me achieve my goals to date, while the knowledge and expertise possessed by the business, in particular partners, Iain and Lorna, has been of major benefit to me personally."



Costly to Ignore New Pension Rules

SBP warns business owners to follow auto enrolment rules or face penalties

A leading north-east accountancy firm is warning business owners to take heed of auto-enrolment rules or face substantial penalties. SBP Accountants and Business Advisers, which has offices in Aberdeen, Peterhead, Fraserburgh and Banff, has issued the caution almost three years after the legislation was introduced, due to people still choosing to ignore the regulations.

By 2018 every company in the UK, regardless of size, will have to offer employees access to a workplace pension scheme. A major component of this is the automatic enrolment system whereby employees are automatically entered into a pension scheme and have to personally opt out if they do not wish to make contributions.

SBP managing director, John Hannah (pictured), said that many people are continuing to ignore the rules regarding pension schemes for employees, which can have serious consequences. Penalties align with the size of a firm, and employers with between five and 49 employees can expect to pay £500 for each day of non-compliance.

Mr Hannah said: "Although people are becoming more aware of auto enrolment, there are worrying levels of complacency, with bosses choosing to bury their head in the sand. Failing to comply by the staging date, which is determined by the number of employees a firm has, can have severe consequences with employers facing hefty fines for not signing staff up in time."



Evoke IT Are Celebrating Success

Increase in staff, contracts and services as company progresses



Local company Evoke IT are well under way to making their first £1 million in under four years of business. It is an incredible success story, which has seen team numbers double in the past year to 18 employees, with ambitions to have 22 by the conclusion of 2015.

The increase in team numbers instigated a move to their prestigious premises in Carden Place, Aberdeen. With a strong client base in the oil and gas and construction industries – such as the Stewart Milne Group; Technip; Bilfinger Salamis; and ConocoPhillips – they remain the only Microsoft SharePoint Gold Partners in the north-east of Scotland.

A new support service launched in autumn 2014 has been a triumph with 20 support contracts, an annual value of £250,000 in place, and ambitions to have 28 by the end of

this year. An infrastructure service launched in April 2015 completed their cloud offering.

Ongoing success means a continuous increase in staffing levels. Evoke IT have appointed Gary Smith (pictured) to the newly created role of business development manager with a focus on increasing sales and awareness of the company. Gary will assist with the ongoing growth of the company's customer base in oil and gas, construction, financial and many more arenas, bringing eight years' experience in sales-driven roles and building high-profile client relationships.

With such a driven business, what will their fifth birthday bring?

Evoke IT will be exhibiting this year at Offshore Europe 2015, and welcome you to visit them to find out more at Stand 5A80.



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Land Reform Bill: Implications for Scottish Land and Property

Comments attributable to Jonathan Henson, Savills' head of rural in Scotland

The Land Reform Bill, published in the Scottish Parliament recently, is a punctuation point in landownership history, with the proposed bill being a starting point for further reforms. It establishes a land commission whose remit is to deliver an ambitious land reform agenda. However it is clear that its ultimate goal is the redistribution of land and property across Scotland, with the aim of achieving a 'fairer society'.

The provisions within the bill that seek to establish an absolute right to buy for sustainable development for community bodies are a material change to property owning rights that have existed in the UK for many generations. Whilst the news headlines focuses on the impact on rural land, the reality is that these provisions apply to all types of Scottish land and property, both urban and rural, applying equally to brownfield land in inner cities and remote heather hillsides.

The Scottish land and property sector has a

fundamental role to play in the future health of the economy. In the majority of cases, landowners ensure their land and property works hard for the benefit of their communities. However, even the most responsible will be rightly concerned.

The wording of the bill has been vague on definition in some areas; for example, what constitutes 'sustainable development' is unclear. This would appear to be a moveable feast over time, and such ambiguity is likely to be an obstacle to long-term investment in the rural economy by landowners, who will be unclear as to whether their plans will be deemed 'sustainable'. It is also difficult to deliver effective legislation without clear definitions.

It is frustrating that the bill is drafted in such a way that major legislation, relating to let agricultural holdings, will not be fully examined in Parliament, with major policy objectives being dealt with by subsequent regulations

rather than primary legislation. This makes it very difficult to effectively comment on the bill and will mean that the consultation process will be significantly muted. The bill mentions the introduction of subsequent regulations 40 times.

Some will argue that the bill's reintroduction of sporting rates will have a negative impact on the fragile rural economies, many of which depend on sporting enterprises. Indeed the rural sector as a whole is already economically fragile and has little capacity for an increased tax burden.

The bill has now been introduced to the Scottish Parliament and views will be sought on the proposed legislation. The drafting of the bill is hard to follow as it contains a series of amendments to other primary legislation. This means that it will take some time to fully consider the 104 sections.

City Centre Apartment Plans Unveiled

West Coast Estates proposes return to residential use for traditional Golden Square property

Proposals for a £3.5-million residential development in the traditional heart of Aberdeen have been submitted to planners.

West Coast Estates is seeking permission to transform a vacant office building in the city's historic Golden Square. The proposals are for the creation of up to 13 apartments, preserving the character of the building as part of a blueprint with a focus on quality.

The elegant area began life as an upmarket residential quarter. The more recent history of Golden Square has seen mixed use conversions of the imposing houses, with offices and restaurants prevalent, as well as guest accommodation and surgeries featuring.

West Coast Estates is keen to bring the square full circle and put a focus on residential development once again.

Iftikar Mian, director of the Aberdeen-based property specialist, said: "As a company we have extensive experience throughout Aberdeen, including in the regeneration of city centre sites for various uses. It is important to take a step back when assessing any property and not have your vision clouded in terms of its potential use.

"We have owned 6 Golden Square as an office block and it has been successfully let in the past. However, requirements in the office market are evolving and demand now is for open-plan accommodation which simply isn't possible in the traditional layout of period properties.

"The office market is also being impacted by a plentiful supply of Grade-A new-build offices, as well as a reduced demand due to the uncertainty in the oil and gas industry. From

our perspective a change to residential use is a common-sense solution to revitalise a vacant and significant building.

"Together with our design team, we have produced plans that present a superb opportunity to do something special with a key site in Aberdeen. The proposals respect the history and heritage of the building whilst tuning in to contemporary residential trends. In our view it is the best of both worlds and, in discussions with planners, the concept has been well received."

A number of stakeholders, including business organisation Aberdeen Inspired and experts at Robert Gordon University, have stated the importance of encouraging more people to live within the city centre to support businesses in the zone.

Helping Homes Achieve Their Potential

New local business aids homeowners to improve their properties

A new Aberdeenshire-based business aims to help homeowners in the north-east of Scotland maximise the potential of their properties without breaking the bank.

Homedresser, founded by Sarah Clark, works with clients to pinpoint the changes to their property that will make the most impact for the least cost, while meeting their lifestyle needs and aesthetic tastes. The service is suitable for those who are selling their properties and wish to achieve the best price, as well as homeowners seeking to improve their existing living space. Homedresser also offers 'rental refreshes' for landlords; this fast turnaround treatment revitalises a property for its next tenant when it falls vacant.

Sarah Clark, owner, Homedresser, says: "Many people dismiss interior design support as something that is outwith their financial means. This need not be the case, however. Homedresser has a strong emphasis on helping clients to retain and upcycle items they love and will happily work with existing furniture pieces and layouts.

"Each project begins with a consultation and report, after which clients are free to decide which recommendations they'd like to implement and how. If required, Homedresser can project manage and source a wide range of services on their behalf, including painting and decorating, decluttering, deep cleaning, furniture rental and off-site storage. Equally,

clients can choose to make the improvements themselves."

With 18 years' experience in the financial sector, Sarah has a strong background in budgeting and customer service. She is currently studying interiors via the KLC School of Design and believes that the combination of all three disciplines is important for Homedresser's clients.

Sarah continues: "Many of us are familiar with television programmes where the costs of home improvement projects spiral. Homedresser aims to turn that perception on its head by proving that great results can be achieved both within budget and on schedule."



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OGA First Occupant of Office Complex

Oil and Gas Authority secures new Aberdeen headquarters at AB1



The Oil and Gas Authority (OGA) – the UK oil and gas regulator – has become the first occupant of Aberdeen Asset Management’s recently launched AB1 office complex.

Formerly known as Langlands House, the property has been renamed following a comprehensive refurbishment programme, which has included the construction of a new three-storey glazed entrance area and significant investment in upgrades throughout the building to create modern, open-plan office space. The project has been undertaken as a joint venture between Aberdeen Asset Management and Manse LLP.

The OGA has agreed a 10-year lease for two wings on the second floor, with the space also including a boardroom. The organisation, which was advised by GVA James Barr, accepted the keys to its new offices on 26 June.

With the first high-profile tenant secured, a further 36,500 square feet of space at AB1 is actively being marketed by joint agents, Knight Frank and Ryden.

David Mitchell, managing partner of Manse LLP, said: “We are delighted to welcome OGA

to AB1. I believe we fought off significant competition to secure the OGA and I am certain that the superb quality of the building and its central location were the main deciders for them. We expect other lettings to follow very shortly.”

Katherine Monro, a partner in the Aberdeen office of Knight Frank, said: “The first letting is always significant and that is certainly the case with the OGA’s commitment to base its headquarters in Aberdeen, which is important for the city and is also an endorsement for AB1.

The OGA has agreed a 10-year lease for two wings on the second floor

“The refurbishment has created flexible office accommodation with a focus on quality, with the remaining space able to cater for tenants with a wide range of requirements due to the configuration options available.”

CHAP Invests in New Concrete Plant

Group expands its quarrying division with Belhelvie plant



CHAP Group has completed a recent expansion of its quarrying division with the opening of a new concrete ready-mix plant north of Aberdeen, investing nearly £700,000 in the plant located within the Aberdeenshire Council-operated Balmedie Quarry in Belhelvie.

Hugh Craigie (pictured), joint managing director, said: “We’ve been pursuing an investment in a second concrete plant within the city for a number of months after we identified a requirement for a facility north of Aberdeen to join our existing plant in Deeside.

“The location of the new plant is significant in that it perfectly positions us to service key commercial and residential developments within suburbs such as Dyce and Bridge of Don.

“Despite the current challenging economic climate in the North East, a number of major developments are continuing to come to fruition and demand on the quarry side of the business remains strong. This recent investment will enhance our ability to meet both this demand and the requirements of our growing list of clients.”

Shocking Rise in Disruptive Passenger Behaviour

UK travel operators pledge decisive action on noisy and aggressive conduct

As the summer holiday season got into full swing, the UK's largest holiday companies reported a record double-figure rise in disruptive passenger behaviour. As a result, some of the UK's biggest travel operators are calling for industry-wide measures to tackle what has become a serious problem for the travel sector.

Phil Ward, managing director of Jet2.com, said: "We are a family airline and holiday company carrying millions of passengers every year. These are people who have chosen to take their well-earned summer breaks with us and we want them to have a wonderful time. Therefore, under no circumstances will we allow the disruptive few to spoil the experience for the majority of the fantastic customers that fly with us."

Jet2.com is working closely with other high-profile holiday companies, industry bodies such as BATA (British Air Transport Association), the AOA (Airport Operators Association), and the

UK's leading airports to put in place a series of comprehensive measures to tackle disruptive conduct associated with air travel.

Over the past two years, unruly and disorderly behaviour often linked to excessive alcohol consumption prior to embarkation has risen drastically on board aircraft. Cabin crew increasingly have to deal with people displaying abusive, racist and often noisy and aggressive conduct, causing misery and disruption for other passengers nearby.

Jet2.com has already put in place a series of measures under its 'Onboard Together' programme to educate passengers about the effects of alcohol at high altitude and to outline its policies. It has empowered its staff to take decisions quickly regarding disruptive passengers, including verbal and written warnings and, ultimately, the ability to divert the aircraft to the nearest airport to offload particularly offensive people before flying remaining passengers onto their holiday

destination. Measures also include banning disruptive passengers for life, handing them over to the police, issuing a bill for the cost of the diversion and taking legal action, post travel.

Jet2.com, along with its fellow operators, has also written to the Secretary of State for Transport urging more decisive action from the government to help them enforce new policies to ensure unpleasant and disruptive behaviour during air travel is eradicated.

(continued) Phil Ward: "By far and away the majority of the travelling public are decent people wanting to have a great holiday. We want people to have a fantastic time from the moment they start their holidays with us. Most passengers absolutely know how to behave on board, whilst having a good time too. It's for that reason that we must stamp out this rise in disruptive behaviour."

More Connections through Flybe Codeshare

ABZ benefits from wider range of connections thanks to agreement with Emirates



Flybe, Europe's largest regional airline, has commenced a new codeshare agreement with Dubai's Emirates airline, further strengthening its proposition to connect regional customers with 'One Stop to the World' routes, with bookings made via the Emirates.com website, or through their local travel agent.

Passengers travelling on Flybe services and onwards with Emirates to Dubai will, with just one ticket, be able to connect seamlessly through airports served by Emirates with Flybe flights to and from Aberdeen.

Emirates started flying in 1985 and now has a fleet of more than 230 aircraft, currently serving over 140 destinations in more than

80 countries around the world. Paul Simmons, Flybe's chief commercial officer, said: "This new codeshare agreement with Emirates is yet another important milestone and an exciting development in the continued growth of Flybe. It allows us to give our UK customers a 'One Stop to the World' option with convenient, seamless access to Dubai and onwards to the rest of the world through our extensive regional route network, direct from passengers' local airport."

This news builds upon Flybe's current portfolio of existing codeshare partnerships with Aer Lingus, Air France, British Airways, Cathay Pacific, Etihad, Finnair and KLM.

Robust Footfall Figures for City Centre

More than two million visit Aberdeen city centre every month

Aberdeen city centre is averaging footfall of over two million per month according to figures collated by business organisation Aberdeen Inspired.

The data, garnered in partnership with specialist retail intelligence company Springboard, found that the heart of Aberdeen welcomed 2,005,958 visitors throughout the month of May. April's figure registered 2,022,501, while March saw a footfall figure of 2,705,660. February was 2,240,720, with January totalling 2,201,561.

The ongoing research, which uses a network of sensors to provide anonymous feedback on the movements of visitors to the area, is also finding that Union Street continues to be an integral part of the city centre, averaging a monthly footfall of 119,031 for 2015 so far.

The statistics also show that Market Street has an average footfall of 97,698; Upperkirkgate has 74,865; and Belmont Street 51,839.

Saturday has been the busiest day each month since the turn of the year, highlighting that it still remains the traditional day for shoppers to hit the high street.

.....
 “Two million passing through the area on a monthly basis”

The statistics follow Aberdeen Inspired's recent announcement that it is to roll out an innovative wayshowing initiative which aims to improve orientation, navigation and journey planning for people visiting the city centre.

The first phase of the project involved the installation of four informative map totems at key locations on Broad Street, St Nicholas Street, and Schoolhill, and outside the tourism office on Union Street.

Due to its success, the next stage of the initiative, which has been led by Aberdeen Inspired and jointly delivered with Aberdeen



City Council, will involve the installation of 54 further map totems throughout the city centre. The project has now been given final approval by councillors, who agreed a 50% funding contribution to the scheme.

Gary Craig (pictured), chief executive of Aberdeen Inspired, said: “The results that we've gained so far through the Springboard software has allowed us to begin to build up a picture of the city centre's footfall and, perhaps more importantly, what areas are key in terms of numbers of visitors.

“To have over two million passing through the area on a monthly basis is quite an impressive statistic and the fact that the often maligned Union Street remains integral to the area is also pleasing.

“As an organisation, one of our main goals is to increase footfall within the BID (Business Improvement District) zone. The more information we have, the more able we are to make informed decisions on improvements and events that will breathe new life into the area.

“The statistics will really come into their own in 2016, when we have this year's figures to compare and contrast with. However, as we move towards our re-ballot date for early next year, the statistics we have collated thus far are vitally important in helping us obtain a

solid understanding of the area that, if we are successful, can be used to shape our next phase as an organisation.” Retail specialist Springboard has also completed a recent vacancy rate survey of the city's Union Street, with statistics from October 2014 finding that 6.1% of ground floor units on the thoroughfare are empty. This is over 4% less than the UK average which currently sits at 10.3%.

The survey also found that independent units make up 55% of Union Street's offering, which again outperforms the UK average of 31.8%. The Scotland average currently sits at 29.8%.

Gary Craig added: “You often hear quoted that Union Street has too many empty shops these days, but this is not true – actual figures show that the occupancy rate has stayed relatively stable over the last four years at around 94%. Hopefully, with new office developments and some early improvements as part of the City Masterplan, we will see this level steadily grow.”

Aberdeen Inspired is the banner under which the Aberdeen BID operates. It is a business-led initiative within the city centre in which levy payers within the BID zone contribute. Proceeds are used to fund projects designed to improve the business district.



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WAITROSE LAUNCHES SELECTION OF DEAN'S SHORTBREAD

Huntly-based firm's premium products to grace Waitrose's shelves across the UK

Dean's of Huntly, a family-owned Aberdeenshire business, will now have its shortbread rounds on the shelves of 160 Waitrose shops in three flavours.

Norman Donald from Dean's of Huntly said: "Our premium shortbread rounds are now available in Waitrose branches across the UK, with a melt-in-the-mouth texture and delightful fruity twist that customers will love.

"We recommend customers try our Raspberry & Oatmeal, Lemon Curd & Oatflake, and Apple Crumble rounds with a cuppa and enjoy the extra touch of indulgence.

"We're a household name in Scotland and I'm sure Waitrose shoppers in England and Wales will soon understand why."

Oliver O'Mara, local and regional buyer for Waitrose, said: "Dean's shortbread has been stocked in our Scottish branches since they opened and we've successfully expanded the range as Waitrose has grown in Scotland. We're really pleased that our customers across the UK now have the chance to try these lovely biscuits."

Magnificent Marcliffe

Hotel to be returned to former glory



After a rather emotional announcement that Aberdeen's only five-star hotel, The Marcliffe, would not be closing, it seems the prestigious establishment is busier than ever. It is great to hear weddings are once again being booked and the Spence family intend to return the property to its former glory. The name is synonymous with the city and not only offers first-class accommodation, but it is also one of the best restaurants in town. Clearly many of those who grace the pages of TripAdvisor feel the same!

Build Teams, Reward Staff, Impress Clients

Business Now's editor on the joys of team cookery sessions



Forget golf and shoots! Nothing breaks down corporate barriers like a soufflé that refuses to rise!

If you want to build teams, reward staff or simply impress the socks off clients, there is no better place to do it than at the Nick Nairn Cook School. As countless companies have already discovered, their team-building programme is highly motivational, educational and, above all, fun. It's a true get-away-from-it-all experience right here in Aberdeen.

I've enjoyed the experience and had an amazing time, culminating in eating the delights you've created during the day...and I'm still alive to tell the tale!!

Entiér in International Track 200 Again

Catering company listed in top 100 with fastest growing international sales

Once again Entiér are featured in the International Track 200 sponsored by HSBC and printed in *The Sunday Times* on 12 July. The International Track 200 ranks Britain's mid-market private companies by fastest growing international sales. Entiér featured at number 83.



WOOHA BRINGS MODERN TWIST TO BREWING

All-female brewery set to 'Woo' the Scottish brewery market

A new Scottish microbrewery is putting a modern twist on traditional brewing by using its scientific knowledge of microbiology to create modern hop strains, alongside state-of-the-art equipment.

WooHa Brewing Company, which is based in Nairn, was officially established in 2014 and went to market in April 2015, after head brewer and owner of the brewery, Heather McDonald (pictured), decided to utilise her scientific background within the brewing industry.

The all-female brewery, which is made up of an international team of three ladies from Scotland, Germany and America, is currently one of the youngest microbreweries in Scotland.

The brewery, which opened its first premises in January 2015, began brewing two products, the WooHa lager and the WooHa porter, in April this year, and aimed to have the WooHa IPA and WooHa Wheat ready for North Hop.

Heather said: "I have always had a passion for craft beer and, after studying microbiology, I saw an opportunity to use my skills and knowledge of the market to create a unique, modern craft beer product."

A Fine Piece of Dining

Business Now's editor on the vibrant restaurant scene in Aberdeen

I remember reading some years back – I think it was in *The Herald* – a statement along the lines of: ‘despite Aberdeen gaining advantages from being the oil capital of Europe it had not been a significant spot on the culinary radar’. If that ever was the case, it must surely now be a beacon of culinary delight. The restaurant scene is vibrant and the city is proud to challenge the Central Belt as a fine dining destination.

Union Square is now bulging with alternative dining experiences, and Jamie’s Italian and Carluccio’s have both opened in the city but, although they have their place, it’s fine dining in the city that excels.

Stalwarts such as Didier Dejean at the Silver Darling continue to serve first-class seafood dishes, but new brigades, such as the amazing team at The Chester Hotel, superbly run by Kevin Dalglish; former ‘Restaurant of the Year’, Fusion Bar + Bistro; and new kids on the block, Granite Park in Golden Square, now add to the city’s culinary experience.

Scots chef Nick Nairn has opened a cook school in the city centre, which is doing extremely well as is his steak and seafood restaurant, Native, at the Hilton Aberdeen City Centre Hotel. Although he is quick to add not to aim for Michelin stars, because he’s “done all that and it’s not for me”.

Then, of course, there is the great news that the Marcliffe Hotel is not to close and we can continue to enjoy the delights of Ross Spence and his team.

I challenge anyone to say Aberdeen is not playing its part in promoting Scotland as a haven of fine dining.



Local Cheese Bids for Protected Status

Bid for Cambus O’May Cheese to be granted Protected Food Name (PFN) status



Cambus O’May Cheese is bidding to be granted Protected Food Name (PFN) status. If successful, it will see the cheese join a growing list of popular Scottish products, including Scotch Beef and Arbroath Smokies, with PFN status offering a 100% guarantee of the product’s authenticity to consumers.

Cambus O’May is an unpasteurised cheese, created using a sixth-generation family recipe by Alex Reid of the Cambus O’May Cheese Company, which is based in Ballater. Alex uses the same techniques his mother Barbara did, hand-pressing two different curds to create a cheese with a marbled effect and creamy texture.

Food Secretary Richard Lochhead said: “We already have a growing number of Scottish foods, including other home-grown cheeses such as Orkney Scottish Island Cheddar and Traditional Ayrshire Dunlop Cheese, which are protected under EU legislation and free from imitation. It guarantees the food’s provenance and supports local producers.

“The PFN scheme can benefit producers of brands synonymous with Scotland by providing them with recognition of their product and safeguarding it from imitation, and I would encourage more producers in Scotland to look at taking this forward.”

ROCK ROSE DISTILLERY OPENS IT DOORS

**Scotland's second
favourite gin celebrates
exclusive public opening**

One of Scotland's most popular small-batch craft gins was getting set to open its distillery to the public for the first time ahead of its debut at the North Hop indoor craft beer festival in August.

Dunnet Bay Distillery, which was established by husband-and-wife team, Martin and Claire Murray in 2012, will be offering members of the public exclusive distillery tours until the end of September.

The distillery is home to Rock Rose Gin, which was launched by the duo in August 2014.

During the distillery tours, guests will learn more about the popular gin, the botanicals used within it and the distilling process. A taster of the gin will also be provided.

Rock Rose Gin, which has recently been shortlisted in the Highlands and Islands Food and Drink Awards 2015 in the Best Drink Award, New Product Award and New Business Award categories alongside finalist, North Hop, was available at the festival for festivalgoers to sample and buy.

Jody Buchan, UK brand ambassador of Rock Rose Gin and mixologist at the trendy Edinburgh cocktail bar, Heads and Tales, attended the festival on behalf of the distillery, offering festivalgoers unique expert advice on how to garnish the gin correctly. With over ten years of experience within the drinks industry, he utilised his knowledge of the market, discussed the hottest trends in the industry at the moment, and how the craft gin can be utilised within different cocktail recipes.

Prior to the event, Martin Murray, owner of Dunnet Bay Distillery, said: "Rock Rose Gin is delighted to be attending the North Hop festival this year and we are really looking forward to seeing how festivalgoers react to it. Jody will provide festivalgoers with his expert knowledge of the gin and garnishes which compliment it the best."




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ACSHA Raise Dementia Funds and Awareness

Aberdeen City and Shire Hotels' Association digs deep for dementia with £20,000 fund-raising campaign



Hoteliers from across Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire have banded together to launch a £20,000 fund-raising campaign to help thousands of local families affected by dementia. Members of Aberdeen City and Shire Hotels' Association (ACSHA) want to raise the cash for the region's first dementia resource centre, which opens its doors in Aberdeen later this year.

The campaign is being spearheaded by Mike Edwards of the city's Mariner Hotel. The need to have a dedicated resource centre for people

with dementia and their families is a cause particularly close to his own heart. His father, David, was diagnosed with vascular dementia in 2008 – aged just 59. David, who had a long and successful career in the hospitality sector, is one of almost 7,500 people in the North East who are currently living with some form of dementia.

Since his father's diagnosis, Mike has discovered that many other people connected to ACSHA have also been touched by the condition in some way. He asked that Alzheimer Scotland be considered as ACSHA's adopted charity for 2015, and found wholehearted support amongst his peers.

The new Aberdeen Dementia Resource Centre is based in King Street and will formally open in September. It will serve as a drop-in for anyone seeking advice about the condition, a meeting place for people with dementia and their families, and a base for Alzheimer Scotland staff.

Abseiling Accountant Supports Transition Extreme

Aberdeen accountant to scale new heights

A fund-raising challenge is adding up to a nail-biting experience for accountant Richard Stephenson after he agreed to abseil 40 feet down the side of an iconic Aberdeen building.

Richard, an audit and accounts manager with independent accountancy firm Hall Morrice LLP, will be taking the plunge from the tower of the Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre in aid of Transition Extreme. His firm works with the award-winning social enterprise, and he stepped up to undertake the challenge when partners appealed for staff to take part. The abseil is being held on 19 September as part of Transition Extreme's celebrations to mark 10 years of being a charity. In addition to the abseil, there will be a fund-raising dinner at which adventurer Sir Ranulph Fiennes will be the guest of honour. Tickets for the event are still available at www.transition-extreme.com

A fund-raising page has been set up for the challenge, and donations can be made at virginmoneygiving.com/Richard.Stephenson

Friendly Football Raises Awareness

Local recruitment company fields team at annual charity event

Thorpe Molloy Recruitment has been putting its best foot forward in an annual charity football match in memory of a young cancer victim. The company was one of ten local businesses and hundreds of youngsters going head-to-head to help raise funds for two local charities.

The three-week football festival has been held for the last three years in honour of Aaron Williams who died of skin cancer in 2011 aged just twenty-five.

As well as raising funds, the tournament, which was set up by Aaron's friend, local policeman Kevin Lynch, has helped raise awareness of melanoma skin cancer.

Kevin said: "I set up the charity event initially for school kids at Northfield Academy, where I was based as a policeman. It's had tremendous support from the local community, including the kids from the school, and it's been great to see them taking part in the tournament with their friends.

"This year, for the first time, Aberdeen companies' and ladies' teams have been competing. It's fantastic how the event has snowballed. I hope eventually it will become a national event across Scotland!"



"It's such a great opportunity for people from across the city to come together to enjoy some friendly football while raising money and awareness for worthwhile causes. To date we have raised over £20,000 with this year's funds going to Cash for Kids and Friends of

Anchor. I'd like to thank everyone who has contributed to making the event such a huge success."

Thorpe Molloy Recruitment's team captain, David Miele (pictured, third from left), said they were delighted to take part. Although putting in a valiant performance they had to settle for a win, a draw and two losses, so will probably be sticking to their day jobs.

David explains: "This tournament provides businesses like Thorpe Molloy Recruitment with the chance to become involved in a huge community event. The football aspect appealed to almost all the guys at work so we were able to play together as a team, with the practice nights getting us moving – often the last thing you feel like doing after a day in the office. Despite not making it into the semi-finals we all had a blast and have raised awareness about the dangers of melanoma skin cancer among our colleagues, family and friends."

TAQA Powers Greenpower Racing in Aberdeen

Local school children in Aberdeen take part in Greenpower Education Trust IET F24 and Goblin sustainable racing



International energy company TAQA continues its support of the annual Greenpower Education Trust race weekend held in Aberdeen each June. Greenpower runs a series of race championships designed to get young people involved in sustainable engineering at an early age. Students from primary school age to university level build and run their own all-electric racing cars.

At the weekend in June, the Grampian Transport Museum in Aberdeen hosted heats of the IET F24 (11- to 16-year-olds) and IET Goblin (9- to 11-year-olds) race categories, with the event sponsored by TAQA.

Local school teams have also been backed by TAQA, and a number of their employees volunteered to help at the event as the global firm's UK base is located in Aberdeen. TAQA is in full support of Greenpower's main aim of educating the next generation of engineers in sustainable engineering and technology in a fun environment.

Three of the F24 teams racing at the Grampian Transport Museum qualified for the Greenpower International Final, which will be held at Rockingham, in Northamptonshire, on 11 October. The trio of teams from Scotland joining the final include Thurso High School, Grampian Transport Museum Young Engineers and Albyn School. The overall winner of the Goblin race day was Midmar School.

Greenpower CEO, Jeremy Way, said: "We always enjoy the heats in Aberdeen due to the overwhelming enthusiasm from the local schools and support from TAQA. A big thank-you goes to all the schools that competed, and we look forward to seeing the three F24 qualifiers again at our International Final later in the year. Encouraging students to learn about sustainable engineering is our main aim, and all the children that took part at the weekend seemed highly motivated by the racing and the teamwork spirit that is required on race day."

Secondary Pupils Raise £22,000 for Charity

Schools show business sense at Jasmine Charity Challenge



Six north-east schools have displayed their generosity and business acumen during a popular fundraising initiative, the Jasmine Charity Challenge.

Pupils from Northfield Academy, The Gordon Schools Huntly, Kemnay Academy, Banff Academy, St Machar Academy and Torry Academy took part in this year's challenge – raising a combined total of £22,000 for their chosen charities.

The Jasmine Charity Challenge is a private sector-funded initiative that gives secondary school students in north-east Scotland the opportunity to engage in enterprising activities. The challenge involves student teams choosing a charity and identifying creative and enterprising ways to raise a minimum of £1,000. The Jasmine Group also gives a £250 donation to each school.

The youngsters attended the finale event of the Jasmine Group initiative at Cineworld in Union Square. An individual from each school presented the results of their year-long fundraising campaign, while each participant was given a 'pupil of excellence' award to mark their contribution throughout the past 12 months.

Danny Cowie, group managing director of the Jasmine Holdings Group, said: "The pupils have shown fantastic dedication to the Jasmine Charity Challenge over the past 12 months and their enthusiasm has been great to see."



Luxurious XJ More Desirable Than Ever

Subtle changes add to already distinctive looks

The XJ, Jaguar's all-aluminium luxury saloon, is more desirable than ever. Subtle changes to the exterior design, accentuated by full LED headlights, add to the XJ's already distinctive looks. Materials such as semi-aniline leather and inlay veneers enhance an interior already considered the most luxurious in the segment, culminating in the new Autobiography model.

Matching this traditional craftsmanship is state-of-the-art technology, including a new infotainment system. InControl Touch Pro offers features such as door-to-door navigation and a 1,300-watt Meridian digital audio system.

The driving experience is better than ever thanks to a V6-diesel engine which offers more power and torque, and less fuel consumption and CO₂ emissions, and an electric power-assisted steering system that enhances Jaguar's reputation for unrivalled agility and responsiveness.

Ian Hoban, vehicle line director, Jaguar XJ states: "More dynamic and distinctive than ever, we've engineered our flagship saloon to deliver even greater levels of luxury and performance. Featuring our new world-class infotainment system, interior materials and finishes which create an even more bespoke feel, and with our higher output, lower emissions diesel engine, the XJ rewards drivers and passengers like no other luxury car."

The new XJ features a larger, more upright grille, while sculpted chrome blades in the

outboard air intakes emphasise the car's mature, prestigious character.

The full LED headlights accentuate the 'quad lamp' design feature that Jaguar sporting sedans have made their own. They are further enhanced with active front steer and static bend lamp functions, and auto high-beam assist. LED headlights also provide a colour temperature closer to that of daylight than bi-xenon lamps, improving visibility and driver comfort, and are also more energy-efficient. Twin 'J-Blade' daytime running lights are a unique feature to XJ, befitting its status in the Jaguar saloon car range. The white light instantly and seamlessly changes to orange when the direction indicator is operated.

The LED rear lights feature a new J-signature tail and position light graphic, making the XJ even more distinctive. The rear bumper now features a gloss black valance and a slender chrome insert. New LED taillights and oval exhaust finishers complete the look.

The XJ's peerless interior design has been taken to the next level. So luxurious has it become that the outgoing Portfolio trim is now used for the Premium Luxury model. The new Portfolio gains quilted soft-grain leather seats with diamond stitching and embossed headrests, and figured ebony veneer.

The Autobiography model, new to XJ in the 2016 model year and available only with the long-wheelbase body, can be identified on the outside by chrome front bumper air intakes and 20-inch Maroa wheels. Inside, there's a

unique Autobiography Intaglio, quilted semi-aniline leather seats with contrasting stitching, a leather headliner, rich oak inlay veneer, and illuminated stainless steel treadplates, air vents and boot finisher. Rear seat occupancy is provided by individual seats with seat back movement and massage function, and a rear-seat entertainment system with two folding 10.2-inch HD screens.

Following other Jaguar models, the XJ gains an R-Sport model with new side sills, three-piece front splitter, side power vents and a rear spoiler. A gloss black finish enhances the grille mesh, rear valance and the window finishers. Wheels are 20-inch Mataivia. The interior gains sports seats, R-Sport steering wheel and treadplates, Jet headliner and piano black trim or carbon fibre.

Range Summary

The new Jaguar XJ range will consist of: XJ Luxury, XJ Premium Luxury, XJ Portfolio, XJ R-Sport, XJR, XJ Autobiography.

The powertrain range will consist of: 300PS 3.0-litre V6 diesel automatic; 340PS 3.0-litre V6 petrol automatic; 510 and 550PS 5.0-litre V8 petrol automatic.

Alongside the F-Type sports car and all-new XF saloon, the XJ is manufactured at Jaguar Land Rover's Castle Bromwich Plant.

Aberdeen Jaguar specialists, Peter Vardy Jaguar on the Lang Stracht - who will soon open a new £4-million Porsche centre on Wellington Road - can be contacted on 01224 666411.



Keeping in Touch with the Rugby World Cup

“Every team entering the Rugby World Cup wants to win”

Business Now's editor is a great rugby fan and as such is counting down the days until the Rugby World Cup begins. He has tickets for the Scotland v Samoa match in October and it can't come soon enough.

So, at the time of going to press, what has Scotland head coach Vern Cotter to say?

“The selection process was made easier by some good performances from a number of players, especially in the latter part of the

season. Our priorities will focus on the major aspects of the game. “Physically we'll be working very hard to find peak form. We know that teams play better in the Rugby World Cup, and we want to be one of those teams.

“We have four matches before the tournament; four 80-minute spells in which we can practice our combinations and work our plays, in attack and defence, providing opportunities for a number of players to compete for a place in the final 31.

“Every team entering the Rugby World Cup wants to win, but to win a World Cup you first have to qualify from your pool, and that's our major focus: two games in five days [Japan and the USA], followed by another in six [South Africa] and another in seven [Samoa].

“We'll focus on preparing appropriately for each of those matches, so that we can become as effective as possible in this Rugby World Cup.”

Putting the sparkle in Rugby World Cup 2015

“We are delighted to welcome another brand sector leader to the international family“

World Rugby has announced the appointment of global premium spirits business and independent family distillers, William Grant & Sons, as official spirits and champagne tournament provider to the Rugby World Cup 2015.

With excitement and anticipation building ahead of what promises to be a record-breaking tournament, the announcement

further underscores the enormous appeal of the Rugby World Cup brand in the global sporting marketplace.

This partnership will mean William Grant & Sons' UK portfolio of premium brands, including Grant's, Piper-Heidsieck, Glenfiddich, Hendrick's, Sailor Jerry and Żubrówka, will have exclusive pouring rights at all Rugby World Cup 2015 stadiums.

World Rugby chief executive, Brett Gosper said: “We are delighted to welcome another brand sector leader to the international family of Rugby World Cup 2015 commercial partners. The appointment of a company with strong values and globally renowned brands as official spirits and champagne provider further underscores the prestige of our showcase event.”

Pick of the cHeRries

Excellence in HR, training and recruitment
celebrated at north-east awards

The winners of the annual cHeRries Awards, recognising excellence in human resources, recruitment and training in north-east Scotland, were announced in June. Twenty-six companies and individuals were shortlisted for nine awards presented at a ceremony at the Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre.

Robert Gordon University (RGU) teaching fellow and human resource management group lead, Anne Stevenson, picked up the peer-nominated Top cHeRry Award, whilst Chris Taylor from Subsea 7 received the RGU Golden cHeRry, a one-off award marking Aberdeen Business School at The Robert Gordon University's 50th anniversary.

The event was jointly organised by Aberdeen-based branding and design agency Hampton Associates, and HR, training and recruitment consultancy The Urquhart Partnership. TV star Hugh Dennis hosted proceedings, with top London-based party band Madhen providing musical entertainment.

Representatives from each category sponsor presented the awards. The winners were:

The cHeRries Blossoming Award:

Marie Linderoth, Sodexo. Category sponsor – Aberdeen Business School at The Robert Gordon University. Marie receives full funding for her Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development-accredited human resource management MS

Extraordinary HR Initiative:

GE Oil & Gas. Category sponsor – Petrofac

Fantastic HR Advisor:

Shari Norris, Petrofac. Category sponsor – Wood

Tremendous Training and Development:

(joint winners) Baxters Food Group and Subsea 7. Category sponsor – Maersk Oil North Sea UK

Finders Keepers Recruitment:

Eva Hagan, Maersk Oil North Sea UK. Category sponsor – Thorpe Molloy Recruitment

Excellent HR Manager:

Kirstian Findlay, Baxters Food Group. Category sponsor – ActivPayroll

Exemplary Employer of Choice:

Burness Paull LLP. Category Sponsor – CMS

Outstanding HR Director:

Mike Fraser, Peterson. Category sponsor – Amec Foster Wheeler



Hugh Dennis hosted the evening event



Anne Stevenson - RGU



Chris Taylor - Subsea 7



Baxters Food Group Team

'Elevated' to New Heights

Top local businesses' achievements recognised
at prestigious awards



Award Winners



Steve Bowen



Graeme Bone and Jimmy Milne



Professor Gary McEwan, chief executive of Elevator, Marianne Cran, and
the Lord Provost of Aberdeen, George Adam

The North East's entrepreneurial spirit was celebrated recently as some of the region's most successful firms were unveiled as winners during a prestigious local business awards ceremony.

More than 400 business representatives gathered for the Elevator Awards 2015 – run by Elevator along with headline sponsors The Royal Bank of Scotland, which took place at The Mercure Aberdeen Ardoe House Hotel and Spa. The audience was addressed by keynote speaker, NASA Astronaut and US Navy Captain, Steve Bowen.

Graeme Bone, managing director of Drum Property Group, was named Entrepreneur of the Year, and legendary north-east businessman, Dr James Milne CBE, of Balmoral Group, was presented with the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award for his dedication to innovation and engineering in the north-east energy sector.

Winners are as follows:

Most Promising New Business:

sponsored by Business Gateway: Bagels & Stuff

Business Success Under Three Years:

sponsored by The Royal Bank of Scotland:
Zenith Energy

Business Success Over Three Years:

sponsored by The Royal Bank of Scotland:
EFC Group

The Grampian Award for Innovation:

sponsored by Murgitroyd:
Equalizer Flange Integrity

The 'Spirit of Enterprise' Award:

sponsored by partner Aberdeen City Council:
Definition Skin and Laser Clinic

The Alick Buchanan-Smith Enterprising Communities Award:

sponsored by partner Aberdeenshire Council:
North East Sensory Services

Emerging Entrepreneur of the Year:

sponsored by ACE Winches: Murray Kerr
(SengS – Subsea Engineering Services Ltd)

Employer of the Year:

sponsored by Empire: Grampian Fasteners

Entrepreneurial Supporter of the Year:

sponsored by the Federation of Small Businesses:
June Burnett (Aberdeenshire Council)

Entrepreneur of the Year:

Graeme Bone of Drum Property Group

Lifetime Achievement Award:

Jimmy Milne CBE of Balmoral Group

Recent Appointments...



Xcite Media Makes Key Appointment

ABERDEEN-based media and events firm, Xcite Media, has announced the appointment of Mike Cramp as sales manager. Principally hired to focus on managing partnerships for the firm's inaugural oil and gas-focussed conference and showcase, Topsides UK, Mike is ideally placed to drive the event forward with his advanced industry network and in-depth market knowledge.

Previously with Alad Ltd, Mike has a proven track record in sales for publications *Offshore Engineer*, *Asian Oil & Gas* and *Drilling Contractor*, as well as an impressive knowledge of global oil and gas trade shows.



New Appointment at Aberdeen Greenspace

A north-east third sector organisation committed to regenerating and developing city centre green spaces for community use has made a senior appointment as it looks to increase funding streams following changes to government legislation.

Aberdeen Greenspace has appointed Michelle Herd to the role of chief executive. She was previously the organisation's development manager. Michelle joined the charity last summer and has worked in third sector organisations in the city for the past decade.

Spiers Recruited as Marketing Director

Johnston Carmichael has recruited Gemma Spiers as its new marketing director. Taking on a firm-wide remit, she is responsible for shaping and delivering Johnston Carmichael's strategic marketing operations across its 11 Scottish locations, reporting directly to CEO Sandy Manson.

Spiers has a decade-long track record in corporate marketing, initially working in the financial services industry before joining Deloitte, where she spent more than six years.



New CEO for Infinity Resources

Infinity Resources International has a new chief executive. Alan Golightly, who has more than 20 years' expertise in the energy recruitment sector, has been promoted to the CEO role having previously been chief operating officer with Aberdeen-based Infinity.

Alan said: "We're developing new and more innovative approaches to recruitment; challenging the status quo, taking out cost and adding value for clients."

Alan will work closely with Infinity Resources founder and director Amanda Dornan (pictured), who has more than 23 years' experience in the recruitment sector.

Equalizer Group Grows

The Equalizer Group, world-leading innovator of flange maintenance tools for the energy sector, has set up a separate service company headed up by general manager, Alan Morrison, to take forward the development of its award-winning Xtegrity system.

As GM of Equalizer Flange Integrity Systems (EFIS), Alan, who has almost 30 years' experience in the oil and gas sector, will be responsible for managing and growing all operational and sales activities for Xtegrity.





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LUX Assure Strengthens Business Development Team

LUX Assure has announced the appointment of Duncan Baillie as business development manager, OMMICA™ product line.

Mr Baillie joins LUX Assure from Roemex Ltd, where he held the position of international sales manager for four years. Prior to this, he managed business development for Biocatalysts Ltd in his role as sales manager, where he was responsible for successfully driving international sales.

In his new role, Mr Baillie will be responsible for global business development and sales of the company's OMMICA™ product.



Prodrill Appoints New Senior Recruiter

Aberdeen-based Prodrill Energy Resource Solutions has announced the appointment of senior recruiter, Steve Combe, continuing the firm's progression as a leading niche oilfield recruitment consultancy.

Steve joins the team with over seven years' recruitment industry experience, having previously held recruitment roles in technical engineering, drilling and well management, as well as recruiting for internal well resources.

Louise Wood, managing director of Prodrill, commented: "We are delighted to welcome Steve to the team."



Recycling Firm Makes Key Appointment

Keenan Recycling has made a key management appointment to bolster its safety procedures, due to its continued growth. The company has appointed George Chalmers to the role of health and safety manager to oversee the company's adherence to relevant regulations and legislation.

Mr Chalmers was educated at Bankhead Academy in Aberdeen and joins Keenan Recycling with more than 25 years' experience in the industrial sector having previously worked for a large logistics company.



Downhole Products Appoints New Leader

After more than two decades, Downhole Products' president Ian Kirk (right) has stepped aside from his role to be succeeded by Mark Dundee.

Mark Dundee joined the company in 2001 and has worked in a number of roles including warehouse operative, technical sales engineer, manufacturing manager and, most recently, global operations manager.

Ian will retain his strong links with Downhole Products thanks to a consultancy role, where his main focus will be technical training, technical client support, product development support and intellectual property.



TCO Appoints Managing Director

With over 35 years' experience within the energy sector, Paul Betteridge has been appointed managing director for TCO's UK division in response to company growth, providing strategic vision and focus on the expansion of TCO's global presence.

Mr Betteridge says: "I am delighted to have been appointed to lead the TCO UK office. The company has achieved rapid growth in recent years and I believe my experience means I am well placed to spearhead our fantastic team to the next stage of our expansion."

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Game Teaches Finance to Non-Experts

Board game helps improve profitability of organisations in Scotland



Companies across Scotland and the UK are using a board game to increase their profit margins. Created by Scottish businessman Brian Hutcheson (pictured), Pro£itable Pursuits helps non-finance staff learn how their actions affect margins, making them more cost efficient.

The game has already been used by a number of high-profile organisations, including Subsea 7, University of the West of Scotland, Parkhead Housing Association and, one of the UK's largest utilities companies, EDF Energy.

Brian, who launched specialist training firm Class 1 Consultants in 2002, said: "Financial training can be seen as boring and irrelevant to those outwith the finance department – but every employee contributes to a company's financial success. My aim was to create something to enhance this potential. People respond really well to 'play education' and this was the idea behind the interactive learning

tools. "Playing business simulation games engages the decision-making process and helps employees make more effective and efficient choices, not just during the game but also back in the workplace."

Pro£itable Pursuits sees teams compete against each other, setting up their own companies and managing their business for a full financial year. As teams play and make decisions they are able to understand links between their activities and results.

Brian has worked with organisations across a range of sectors including oil and gas, the nuclear industry and social housing associations.

So far, EDF Energy has trained over 1,200 delegates with the game as part of the organisation's Generational Leadership Programme.

Spencer Laycock, European finance training

manager with EDF Energy, said: "The benefits to an organisation where a large proportion of staff have undertaken Pro£itable Pursuits is that everyone treats their company's money like their own."

Since launching Class 1 Consultants, Brian has designed two other interactive learning tools for different industries: Core Values, geared towards the nuclear industry and Factotum, designed for housing associations.

Brian said: "The interactive training programmes significantly boost skills attainment of staff compared to traditional 'lecture'-style packages.

"By making the training fun, staff are far more likely to embrace the training and incorporate the lessons into their everyday roles, which ultimately makes a difference for the organisation as a whole."

Daunting Time for Job Seekers

Downturn in oil and gas industry has effect on everyone

Amanda McCulloch, managing director of local recruitment experts Thorpe Molloy Recruitment, discusses the challenges for job seekers and opportunities for employers in the current economic climate.

It is probably not an over exaggeration to say that everyone in Aberdeen has been affected to some extent by the downturn in the oil and gas industry.

There is a myriad of reasons: Perhaps you have experienced a dramatic change to your working life or know someone who has; your role content may have altered; possibly you have had to manage some very difficult conversations; or, as a supplier, you find yourself forecasting with the help of a crystal ball.

It is a daunting time for job seekers and is likely to remain so as there is no fairy-tale ending. We need to adjust our expectations to the reality and challenges of a lower oil price. Working in recruitment is a bit like being a barometer; through our own business activity we can measure pressure and forecast change.

From our experience, the picture is mixed across our specialisms. In commercial contracts, for example, the employment landscape has shifted dramatically from a shortage of candidates to a surplus, with many senior commercial engineers now looking for work in UK oil and gas satellite hubs or overseas. Likewise in supply chain, there is a high volume of excellent calibre candidates with transferrable skills now immediately available for work.

Business development, sales and marketing teams in operator and service companies have been slashed. There have been high volume redundancies in office personnel due to project cancellations, inevitably leading to increased workloads for those retained.

Meanwhile, in human resources, many candidates are accepting positions for which they are over-qualified, so employers are benefiting from enhanced skills and experience for relatively lower rates. This in turn is reducing the number of opportunities for candidates who would normally have been considered for mid-level roles.

Due to a focus on robust financial analysis, commercial acumen and strategic delivery, our accountancy and finance specialism is experiencing a rise in activity at the senior/executive level with organisations injecting change at the top by hiring robust talent which strengthens and challenges.

Both accountancy and law firms are leveraging the downturn to their advantage in a city where practice firms have historically battled to recruit and retain employees. Now candidates are attracted by the stability, security, good salary and benefits on offer.

Interim working has increased on a project-by-project basis and for contract terms of up to 12 months. Resourcing in this way is a compromise – it meets the need for labour without committing to permanent headcount.

The employment market within QHSE is stagnant. Employees are not moving within the industry due to the perceived lack of security. Those who are moving outwith oil and gas face salary reductions of up to £15,000. In professional trades, personnel working on decommissioning or overseas projects have been largely unaffected. Sadly, for many others redundancy has been rife and personnel with decades of experience are transferring their skills into agriculture, construction and commercial industries.

Despite the prevailing sentiment of gloom and uncertainty, there is active talent acquisition, created by a combination of circumstances including attrition-led replacement, headcount growth and skills needs analysis.

Let us not forget too about the companies benefiting from current conditions, now able to attract candidates who would historically have favoured the oil and gas industry for, let's face it, predominantly financial reasons.

Looking forwards we anticipate that an environment conducive to merger and acquisition activity inevitably means further turbulence for employees and job seekers, who have been dealt a double whammy in recent months – the shock of losing work and the realisation that it is time to moderate salary expectations.

But in the longer term, could it lead to more responsible, less reactive hiring, where salary levels are determined by skills rather than by a skills shortage? Surely that is the hope of everyone.

For more information, visit www.thorpemolloy.com/resources/useful-stuff to download a copy of our market update; or, for a confidential discussion on resourcing, please contact a member of the team on 01224 327000.

Scoro Celebrate Successful Growth

New office, contracts and staff in Dundee for recruitment specialists

Recruitment and executive search specialists, Scoro Solutions, are continuing growth plans with the addition of a Dundee office. Already situated in Aberdeen, oil and gas specialists Scoro have seen the successful launch and growth of a secondary office within the East Coast region.

As part of their five-year business plan, founding directors Ross Gatt and Scott Shand have now developed a division in Dundee that performs recruitment services for other industry sectors across Scotland, including FMCG, finance, precision engineering, manufacturing and IT.

Commenting on the Dundee office, Scott Shand said: "We are delighted to have seen the launch and growth of our Dundee office. This will be instrumental to supporting key clients across Scotland and south of the border."

Situated at Dundee's Quayside, Scoro Solutions Dundee has secured two major contracts within the area, supplying specialist professionals, and in turn has allowed successful growth of the division over the past year. Due to increasing client demand, the overall headcount in the office has doubled to a team of five with the recent appointments of recruitment executives Zara Roberts and Andy Melville.

Expansion at a sensible and sustainable pace is one of Scoro Solutions' key philosophies and plans for the next six months include continued investment in staff training to maintain the high standard of professional and personal support that each of the Scoro team can provide to clients and candidates alike.

Directors Ross and Scott are convinced that, with the appropriate level of care and diligence, this professional business can continue to grow over the next two years and still remain flexible and nimble in positioning their support offerings.

Events Calendar

September

- 4 AGCC City Connections
- 8 ABNCommunity for Business Development
- 8 AGCC Offshore Europe Business Breakfast
- 8-11 Offshore Europe 2015
- 10 AGCC Offshore Europe Evening Reception
- 10 BNS Glasgow
- 14 Effective Communication as Second Nature, The Soap Factory
- 15 ABN M4 Networking
- 17 AGCC Northern Star Finalists Reception
- 17 BNS Aberdeen, Copthorne Hotel
- 17 Startup Story: Andrew Smith, ABN; The Hub
- 22 The Big Disruptive Breakfast, Pittodrie Stadium
- 24 AGCC Northern Star Business Awards 2015
- 25-27 Scottish Home Show; AECC
- 28 AGCC On Leadership Series – Sean Fitzpatrick

October

- 2 Elevator Founder Graduation
- 3 AECC The Press and Journal Energy Ball 2015
- 5 SCDI Influencers' Dinner – Health & Safety, Chester Hotel
- 6 ABN Face-to-Face (F2F) Networking, Copthorne Hotel
- 6 AECC SPE Aberdeen 2nd Inwell Flow Surveillance and Control Seminar
- 7 AGCC Shire at sea level
- 7 E-Reps Forum, Thistle Aberdeen Airport
- 8 AGCC The Economy Business Breakfast
- 8 BNS Glasgow
- 13 ABN Network Skills Training, Inspire
- 21 ABN B4N Networking, RGU
- 27 AGCC Speed Networking
- 27 BNS Aberdeen, Palm Court Hotel
- 29 AGCC Women Mean Business – Olivia Giles
- 29 BNS Edinburgh
- 29 Business Women Scotland Awards, Glasgow
- 29 Granite Expo 2015, Hilton Treetops Hotel
- 30 AGCC Cyber Security Lunch 'n' Learn

November

- 5 BNS Glasgow
- 6 AGCC Business Breakfast
- 10 Advanced ABNCommunity For Business Development, Inspire
- 11 AGCC Maximise Your Membership
- 12 AGCC Shire Connections – Entrepreneurship
- 12 BNS Aberdeen, Norwood Hall Hotel
- 13 AGCC Doing Business in Francophone Africa
- 14 AECC The Original 106fm Pride of Aberdeen Awards
- 17 ABN M4 Networking, Aberdeen Sports Village
- 19 BNS Edinburgh, Scotch Whisky Experience
- 20 The Elevator Conference 2015
- 26 AGCC The Annual Employment Law Conference 2015
- 27 AECC CLAN Christmas Cracker

December

- 1 ABN Face-to-Face (F2F) Networking, Copthorne Hotel
- 1 AGCC On Leadership Series
- 2 AGCC City Connections
- 3 BNS Glasgow
- 4 AGCC Business Breakfast
- 8 ABN Advanced Network Skills Training, Inspire
- 9 AGCC Women Mean Business – Katy Heidenreich
- 10 BNS Edinburgh
- 16 ABN B4N (Before Noon) Networking
- 17 BNS Aberdeen, The Marcliffe Hotel & Spa

January

- 16-17 AECC Your Wedding Exhibition 2016
- 21 BNS Glasgow
- 21-22 NLP Business Practitioner for Success in Life or Business, Thistle Hotel, Aberdeen Altens
- 26 BNS Aberdeen
- 28 BNS Edinburgh

February

- 4 BNS Glasgow
- 11 BNS Aberdeen
- 24 AGCC Speed Networking
- 25 BNS Edinburgh



Five key reasons to attend the 5th Anniversary of Granite EXPO 2015

- Showcase for over 100 businesses
- Free Admission for Visitors
- Networking, Cross Selling and Knowledge Sharing
- Free Business Related Seminars
- Prize Draw

**Thursday 29th October 2015
9.30am-5.00pm
Aberdeen Hilton Treetops Hotel**

You can take part in Granite EXPO 2015 as a sponsor or an exhibitor. For more information or to book a stand please contact event organisers: Business Plus Scotland on 01651 891374 or email events@bpscotland.co.uk



What is networking?...

Networking is about building real business relationships, actively maintaining them and above all giving as much as you take.

BNS has 14 years of experience of encouraging B2B benefits, helping YOU to build your business in a cost effective, time efficient and enjoyable way.

Interested?

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or give us a call on **01224 865466**



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We welcome the opportunity to meet new clients and, if you have any queries, our friendly team can be contacted at our office:

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