

## Space – the final frontier for successful mechanic Wayne

SPACE – or a lack of it – has proved something of a final frontier for Buckle businessman Wayne Falconer, who has run Falconer's Garage on the March Road Industrial Estate for the last two-and-a-half years.

Mr Falconer was first on MSP Stewart Stevenson's itineray last Friday during his MSP Town Time visit to the town, and he took the opportunity to highlight just how the lack of suitable accommodation was holding back bold plans to expand and potentially double his current workforce of six.

"There aren't enough big units in Buckle to suit what I need: none of them are purpose-built businesses units, they're converted from something else like fish factory units", Mr Falconer told the Advertiser. "For example, I can't find ones with enough height to take the car ramps and I'm really short of car parking space for vehicles waiting to be worked on."

"I could expand and employ up to six more people, I reckon, based on the volume of work I have at the moment and the amount I have to turn away, but I haven't got the space to do it."

"If I'd been around five or six years, and I owned my own house I could maybe buy a plot of land and go for a purpose-built new build, but that's not possible for me."

"Location is very important as well. There's no point in me taking on premises outside Buckle as it will put off a lot of my customers from coming. I offer customers a lift home at the moment when their car is in with us but if I was out of

town I'd basically have a guy driving folk around full time and that's not realistic."

Mr Falconer outlined how labour intensive his business was and therefore the potential for growth - large jobs involving engines or clutches could involve two or three mechanics, with MOTs monopolising the time of another until completed. Other lines undertaken by the firm also keep the staff busy, with around 10 tyres being sold a day.

The pressure the current situation is putting on Mr Falconer, a mechanic of 20 years' experience, is "insane". He explained: "As it stands now it's putting an insane amount of pressure on me."

"I'm at the garage until 11pm most nights - one night I was here until 2am - and I'm in full days Saturdays and Sundays. It's a seven-day week and it's because I can't expand."

Mr Stevenson vowed to encourage Moray Council to seek ways to address the problem.

He added: "We've got very successful businesspeople here in the town and it's vital they have access to the proper facilities to operate and develop their business."

"I hope the council will rethink their approach to this. It's important that issues such as this are solved by local action."

"There is a very real need for light industrial and office space and remains one of the challenges facing growing businesses such as Falconer's Garage."

Mr Stevenson visited a range of businesses and other organisations during his day in Buckle.

# MSP 'very impressed' by Buckle businesses

By Alan Beresford

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OPTIMISM was in the air on the business front last week when local MSP Stewart Stevenson visited Buckle as part of a nationwide project.

Mr Stevenson, accompanied by local councillor Sonya Warren and wife Sandra, spent last Friday meeting both businesses and community groups under the auspices of the Scottish Towns Partnership's MSP Town Time initiative.

Top of the agenda were four broad areas of inquiry - town centre vitality, digital connectivity, access to public services and community engagement.

Coming hot on the heels of figures showing the Buckle area ahead of the curve in Moray when it comes to new business start-ups under the New Enterprise Allowance scheme, Mr Stevenson was left with a positive impression.

"There is so much going on in Buckle, I was very impressed," he said.

"I heard from a great many people about the potential and importance of fibre broadband, which is in the process of being rolled out across Scotland. It was made very clear just how vital this was to the future of businesses in this part of the world. This was brought



Stewart Stevenson (second right) and his wife Sandra, (right) meet Buckle councillor Sonya Warren (left) and Wayne Falconer, owner of Falconer's Garage.

Picture: Becky Sanderson, Image No 029902

home to me, amongst other places, in Cluny Auctions, who offer an online facility for their auctions which would not be possible without broadband.

"This project to bring superfast

broadband to rural as well as urban areas of Scotland was backed by the Scottish Government; had it been left to the free market alone then it would have been a very long time before Buckle and communities like it got access to it which would, of course, have had a negative effect on those firms who rely on doing business with the wider world."

Traditionally a fishing port, Buckle and places like it have seen the industry die back over the past few years. However, Mr Stevenson highlighted that fish processing had assumed a vital role in the local economy, employing a "huge number of people". His visit to Eat Mair visit helped confirm this impression, a firm he described as running at full capacity.

Mr Stevenson added: "This visit was very worthwhile; it's great to have that personal contact and to gain impressions first-hand rather than relying on a report which was written by someone else."

"Through my conversations today I have been able to gain and talk through a great many ideas for the future."

Mr Stevenson visited a whole host of organisations, beginning with Falconer's Garage on the March Road Industrial Estate, and non-business organisations including the Buckle Fishing Heritage Centre Ltd and Buckle RNLI lifeboat station.

## Musicians back after 20 years

TWO well kent faces on the Scottish traditional music scene will kick off their Scottish tour this weekend at Speyfest in Fochabers.

Aly Bain and Phil Cunningham were at the first Speyfest 20 years ago and have been regular performers at the music festival over the years.

They will headline at the playing fields in Fochabers this Friday (July 31) at the start of the popular festival.

Described by many as the "best traditional musicians", Aly and Phil have a 30-date tour of Scotland over July, August and September.

Other headliners and acts appearing at Speyfest over the weekend include Sandi Thom, Seth Lakeman, Blazin' Fiddles, Miller's Folly and The Elephant Sessions.

Opening night on Friday sees the Fochabers Fiddlers and the Calum Stewart Trio perform on the Windswept Stage before Aly and Phil bring the evening to a close. Banffshire singer-songwriter Sandi Thom, who has enjoyed chart success, takes to the Windswept Stage on Saturday.

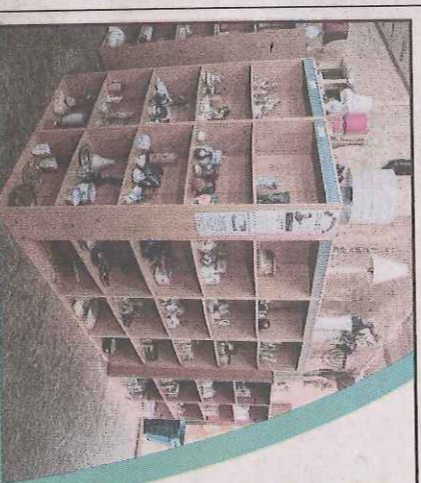
For the full programme and ticket information go to [www.speyfest.com](http://www.speyfest.com). Tickets can also be purchased in advance from the Speyfest caravan at the Public Institute.



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