

Business Bulletin

A photograph of a man with a beard and receding hairline, wearing a dark grey turtleneck sweater over a white collared shirt. He is standing in front of a large painting of a landscape with a bridge. The painting is mostly in shades of brown, green, and blue.

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Business Bulletin

December 2011

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PREMIER PARTNERS



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Creative thinking

The culture which creates millions for the North-east economy

PROFESSOR
PAUL HARRIS

The major significance of the creative and cultural industries in the North-east of Scotland has been outlined in a report drawn up by Professor Paul Harris, Head of Gray's School of Art.

The report, which was presented for information to ACSEF, shows that in the five years to 2008, employment in that sector in Aberdeen City and Shire increased by 37%, more than three times the Scottish rate, meaning more than 9,000 people now work in the creative and cultural industries (CCIs).

This data does not include any self-employment but research has shown that 68% of those working in the visual arts in Scotland, 36% of those in crafts and 26% of those in design are self-employed.

The same analysis identified the total GVA of the creative industries in Aberdeen City and Shire as £2,200m in 2006, greater than that of life sciences (£1,400m) although less than food and drink (£3,000m) tourism (£4,000m) and energy (£15,400m).

Of the four key sectors identified by ACSEF only two – energy and tourism – are larger employers in the region than creative industries.

In his report Professor Harris says there is a thinly-spread, unconsolidated, yet highly significant sector of creative and

cultural practitioners (more than 12,000) and SMEs across Northern Scotland and the Highlands and Islands, with high-impacts in revenue, GVA and employment contexts, who aren't currently being supported in business growth strategy.

"This may well be impacting on wider retail, marketing and tourism contexts and opportunities," the report states.

"The recent Creative Graduates Creative Futures report, published by the Creative Graduates Creative Futures Higher Education Partnership and the Institute for Employment Studies, stated that 50% of creative graduates work in micro-organisations; 48% with a portfolio of work/employment; and 40% want to run their own businesses in the future.

"If it were possible to retain and indeed attract such graduates to start their businesses in the North-east and support them post-graduation with appropriate skills and business interventions, then it should be possible to build a significant resonance of creative industry and harness this in a strategic fashion.

"If so, then could we benchmark and brand the region's arts, crafts and high-end creative outputs (eg textiles) to give traction in both a domestic and an international market, to provide a retail experience reflecting the best that Scotland has to offer and potentially in a way which attracts not only cultural aficionados, but indeed the general public and tourists?

"In other words, move the emphasis from creative practice to retail and marketing – potentially creating scale through consolidation and aggregation and changing perceptions from individual artists/artisans of varied quality, to a consolidated provision."

He suggested artisan and specialist food production, which is as varied as the CCIs and faces similar challenges, could be considered for inclusion in the project.

The creative and cultural industries could have a significant role to play in achieving the economic objectives for the region for a number of reasons:

- They are economically important as a source of employment and wealth creation;
- The creative industries are key drivers of innovation across the wider economy, although always recognised

as such – for example the role of the designer in offshore engineering

- They are often in the vanguard of multidisciplinary innovation with potential for important spill-over effects on the wider economy
- A vibrant and visible cultural scene adds to the attractiveness of our area and helps attract and retain talent.

"The sector needs to be consolidated and given a more prominent profile through branding, advocacy and business support and thus potentially grown even further."

"The region offers good lifestyle potential for creative practitioners and other professionals, but is lacking a visible, cultural context and heart."

**All statistical evaluations provided by ekos for the Gray's School of Art Market Assessment, November 2010.*

Creating a new economic culture

Aberdeen is to most people - both in the North-east and beyond - an "energy city."

Few would identify it with the culture and creativity for which Dundee, for example, has established a reputation in recent years.

However Paul Harris believes that the cultural and creative industries could be a vital factor for the economic development of Aberdeen City and Shire. In his report Professor Harris says that the ingredients for success are already in place.

"Clearly the creative industries at the moment couldn't be a competitor with regard to export value or employment or GVA. Energy is way more than that but I can't see any reason why the creative and cultural industries couldn't be a profile raiser for the area," he said.

"Aberdeen has a lot going for it but in its own perception and perhaps in the perception of others who may comment, Aberdeen doesn't feature as a cultural, creative city so we have to raise the profile."

He said that what his paper has shown clearly is that Aberdeen has more creative industry than Dundee which, in four years, will be the home of a new £45 million V & A museum.

"The spirit of ambition in Dundonians is immense with regard to the creative and cultural industries with the V & A coming to town and what is going to happen with regard to the waterfront."

"Why can't we do the same in Aberdeen when we have got what appears to be probably three times the size of sector of Dundee and Tayside?"

He said that the general perception was that Scotland's cultural and creative industries were "completely locked away in Glasgow and Edinburgh and a little bit in Dundee."

"But there is a significant resonance within City and Shire," he said. "How do you change the perception? You have to start believing in it."

Professor Harris said he feels the City Gardens project could be the catalyst for changing the perception.

"If there is a cultural venue within the new City Gardens project which is of international standing then that, de facto, turns Aberdeen into an international cultural venue."

"It makes it attractive to tourists and makes it the hub for indigenous activity, so those 9000 people who work in the region have some sort of focal point for their activity rather than being a network of activity at the moment."

"The trick with a lot of cultural quarters is they attract more creative people in and creative people tend to be vibrant, charismatic, and they attract others in from other professions who want that quality of lifestyle. It is a snowball scenario and that is very evident in Dundee at the moment."

"I think it is important that we have at least one cultural venue or cultural organisation which is of absolutely international standing. Now whether that is achieved through bringing cultural activity of international standing into our existing facilities or whether that is achieved by establishing one of international standing – there is a debate to be had there."

"Cultural activity within Aberdeen has to have a resonance beyond merely the indigenous and regional population. If you look at any city which has strong creative industries across the world – that would be the case."

He believes a strategy is required which consolidates the existing activity and champions it.

The local authorities, the universities, further education colleges, Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce, Scottish Enterprise, and practitioners, perhaps led by ACSEF, could play a part in creating a supporting structure which would allow the creative industries to grow and ensure Aberdeen City and Shire becomes known internationally as a creative and cultural community.

As example, he said the possibility of providing a retail platform was being explored at the moment. "How do you provide outlets for designer-makers?" he said. "It is difficult for them to get their goods to market and differentiate themselves from all the others who might be out there but may not produce such high quality."

- See Putting Festivals on the map, page 10

Growing presence



Frode Linge

the increasing demand for its technical solutions and wells expertise in Norway.

Frode will initially lead a team of three people at Senergy's Oslo office which is located at Regus's recently-opened Aker Brygge business centre.

NEWS

International growth

Oil and gas camera and video specialist EV has reinforced its global footprint by opening regional headquarters in Calgary to meet increasing demand in the Canadian energy hub for its next generation technology. The company has also established a presence in the Red Deer and Grande Prairie oil and gas hot spots of Canada's Alberta. Curtis Jerrom has been appointed to head up EV's Canada operations.

Flexlife signs MOU



Flexlife sales and marketing director Charles Cruickshank with Brazil executive manager Leonardo Pessoa Dias, Petrobras chief international officer Jorge Zelda and Flexlife chief executive Stuart Mitchell

Flexlife, an oil and gas industry specialist in subsea project and integrity management has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Petrobras to develop and provide a new integrity management system and specialised engineering services for its international oil and gas projects offshore. The agreement - Flexlife's first work in South America - was reached during the recent OTC Brasil exhibition in Rio de Janeiro. It includes the provision of Flexlife's groundbreaking subsea products and services to maintain and extend asset life and is the company's biggest deal to date.

Flexlife Chief Executive Stuart Mitchell said: "This agreement results from Flexlife developing a strong presence in Brazil and we anticipate playing an important role in addressing the challenges of delivering safe production of oil and gas in the deepwater fields. The potential is enormous for us and it is very significant for the future of Flexlife."

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*Bob Collier
Chief Executive*

Aberdeen & Grampian Workforce Survey

The British Chambers of Commerce commissioned Research by Design (RbD) to undertake a national survey with business members of the Accredited Chamber Network including Aberdeen & Grampian to: understand businesses' attitudes to recruitment; flexible working arrangements; migrant workers employed; what encourages employers to take on staff; and what skills employers need to grow their business. The national survey secured over 7,000 responses, of which 185 were in the Aberdeen & Grampian region.

We can learn a lot from the main findings of the report, which are:

The vast majority of business in the region are SMEs, with just 8% of Aberdeen & Grampian businesses completing the survey being sole traders. Many SMEs (around 4 in 10) employ workers on a flexible basis. The key reason for this is to easily adjust the size of workforce according to demand. The Working Time Directive 'opt-out' is used by around a third of businesses, and the reasons for this include the need to provide the best service to clients and customers and to give more choice to employees.

Networking, word of mouth, local newspapers, recruitment agencies and company websites are the main methods of recruitment for businesses in Aberdeen & Grampian. The majority of businesses find it difficult recruiting the right staff to fill vacancies, with almost all stating there is competition for the skills they require. Around 3 in 10 businesses use temporary agency staff; the main reason for this is to provide short term staff cover. Most of these businesses predict no change in the hiring of agency workers once the Agency Workers Directive is implemented.

Around 4 in 10 Aberdeen & Grampian businesses have received requests for flexible working in the last 12 months; the vast majority of these have been accepted, or a compromise that suited both parties has been agreed. The inability to achieve adequate staff coverage at certain times is the key barrier to flexible working.

With regard to employment regulation, dismissal rules along with health and safety are seen as the most burdensome areas of regulation for Aberdeen & Grampian firms. Businesses are fairly negative when comparing the UK workforce to their EU or US counterparts. Less than a third feel the UK has a more flexible labour market than other EU countries or the US, or that the UK has more skilled workers than the EU. Over half of Aberdeen & Grampian businesses feel they are well informed about changes to employment regulation. The main concern emerging from the survey relates to additional paternity leave and pay, which is the legislative change that is seen as most detrimental to businesses.

Just under a fifth of businesses have been threatened with an Employment Tribunal claim in the last three years, with 41% of these claims being settled. Only a minority were defended and won by the Employer, although these took a disproportionate amount of time. Half of businesses in

the region agree that employment tribunals are unfairly weighted towards the employee.

Virtually all businesses in the region provide training to employees. This is most commonly identified as on-the-job training, followed by induction training. The majority of businesses have not taken on an apprentice in the last 12 months, the main barrier being the lack of relevance to their business or sector. All those taking on an apprentice are doing so to build the skills capacity within their business.

The majority of businesses support work-related learning activities with educational establishments, with work experience placements being the most common. There are concerns that non-graduate candidates will have the right business skills to be work-ready. Overall, businesses regard their in-house skills positively, particularly in processing payroll, tax compliance and employment regulation compliance, and external resources are used to assist them when required.

Just under half of Aberdeen & Grampian businesses employ migrant workers, most commonly for professional positions, with the key reason given for employing migrant workers being the lack of domestic candidates with the required experience and skills. Only a minority of businesses have outsourced their operations overseas.

What emerges from the survey results for this region are businesses with a highly professional approach to recruitment, training & development, apprenticeships and business skills; strong compliance with employment regulation; a pragmatic and constructive approach to flexible working and employment tribunals; and a global approach to recruiting the right staff.

- Copies of the full survey results are available from AGCC on www.agcc.co.uk as part of the Chamber campaign to provide high quality research to decision-makers in the region.

*Bob Collier
Chief Executive*



Awards recognise healthy living

A total of 36 organisations from across the North-east and offshore, employing more than 29,000 people, have won top awards for boosting health and wellbeing in their workplaces.

The Healthy Working Lives Programme encourages employers to promote a healthier workforce and covers a wide range of topics including health promotion, occupational health and safety, employability, mental health and well-being, community involvement, and health and the environment.

The Bronze Award winners include Aberdeen Airport, Aberdeenshire Council, Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce, Aker MH, Aker OPL, Aker Subsea, Cosalt, Enquest, Flowerpots Childcare, Fugro Survey, Gaffney Cline associates (Formerly RDS Baker), Grampian Fire & Rescue Service, Tyco Fire & Integrated Solutions, Wood Group-Hummingbird, and Wood Group Kenny.

The Silver Awards winners are Aberdeen Foyer, Abermed, Capita Health Solutions-Energy, CNR International, Cornerstone, FMC Technologies, Milltimber School, NHS Grampian Acute Sector, Petrofac Heather, Petrofac Thistle, RAF Lossiemouth, and Sulzer Wood.

The Gold Award winners are Bibby Offshore Ltd, Castlehill Housing Association, Conoco Phillips - LOGGS platform, Conoco Phillips - Viking Platform, Shell Nelson Platform, Shell Upstream Europe, and Wood Group PSN.



Louise Shankley (Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce) and Provost Bill Howatson

The awards were presented by Provost Bill Howatson, Acting Chair NHS Grampian.

The Healthy Working Lives Team in Grampian is one of 14 teams throughout Scotland tasked with supporting workplaces to improve workplace health and safety within their organisations. The Grampian Team currently supports 195 organisations and their 85,000 employees.

For further information about the HWL Award, please contact the national advice line free on 0800 019 2211 or visit www.healthyworkinglives.com.



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News in brief

RS Occupational Health has secured deals worth £3.2 million this year.

The company was founded and is headquartered in Aberdeen and also has offices in Inverness and Great Yarmouth and continuing growth has led to a recruitment drive across the company's three sites to add new medical, nursing and administrative staff. There has been a recent move to new, larger premises in Lotland Street, Inverness to service an increasing client base in the Highlands and Islands.

Technip has been awarded a €33 million lump sum contract by Valiant Causeway Limited for the Causeway field development 450 kilometres north-east of Aberdeen.

The contract covers engineering, procurement, installation and commissioning of rigid and flexible pipelines, subsea equipment as well as umbilicals which will be manufactured by Technip's wholly-owned subsidiary DUCO under a separate contract.

Bancon Construction, a division of the Bancon Group, has secured more than £15 million of contracts in the last quarter.

They include student accommodation in Holburn Street, Aberdeen valued at £2.8 million, a £4.8 million Care Home at Craigton Road, Aberdeen, a development of 24 flats and a retail unit at Inverurie valued at £2.1 million, a £1.9 million office development in Queens Road, Aberdeen and alterations and an extension to the former International Casino building in Aberdeen.

A Scottish architecture firm with 55 staff in offices in Aberdeen, Belfast, Glasgow and London is celebrating a century of business.

BMJ Architects was launched in Glasgow 100 years ago as a specialist in cinema design but later established itself as an expert in healthcare, sciences and education design and now has a £4 million annual turnover.

Dron & Dickson, specialist in design, supply and maintenance of hazardous area electrical equipment, has reported growth in 2010/11 of more than 14.5% with turnover rising to £27.6 million from £24.1million. Pre-tax profits of just under £1million were compared with approximately £500,000 the previous year.

International oilfield services company **Expro** has secured a contract win in the Middle East with Eni Iraq BV, lead contractor of the Zubair Consortium. The \$12.5million (£7.8million) contract providing chemical analysis laboratory work for the Zubair field in Southern Iraq represents Expro's first direct contract in Iraq.

The Zubair field is one of the largest discovered oilfields in the world and the Zubair Consortium has extensive plans to rehabilitate and upgrade existing wells in the region while also drilling new wells from 2011-2012.

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Retaining and motivating key employees is a challenge as skilled individuals are in high demand. Employers view share schemes as an effective method of reward as no immediate cash is required. The award can be dependent on various targets and can be used as a retention tool where participation is linked to service. Some schemes can be completely tax free, so it's easy to understand their popularity.

Oil company share values, for example, have generally performed well and many senior employees have accumulated significant share wealth. Understanding the different types of schemes from a tax perspective can be challenging particularly where Capital Gains Tax (CGT) is concerned and, too often, CGT is not an area where employers will offer guidance.

Capital Gains can be taxing

Many employees incorrectly believe that if they may have suffered Income Tax and National Insurance on the acquisition of shares, any future sale of shares is tax free. Unfortunately this is not the case and it is vital that the CGT position is considered prior to the disposal of any shares.

There are strict rules to identify the CGT base cost of shares, and where shares have been acquired, over a number of years, via many different schemes this calculation can be complex.

Sharing the wealth

Share awards received over a long period of time can create significant asset wealth with individuals investing in properties, share portfolios, etc. In addition, many individuals look to make significant gifts to family, fund school fees, or help children acquire their first homes. All this can make tax affairs more complex generally.

Don't pay more tax than you need to

Another consideration is Inheritance Tax (IHT). No one wants 40% of their estate on death disappearing to pay IHT, when this should be benefiting their nearest and dearest. It's not unusual for HMRC to end up with more in IHT than is left for the beneficiaries.

There is no doubt that managing the tax implications surrounding share awards can be challenging but seeking professional advice in good time can result in significant tax savings.

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Putting festivals on the map

A Calendar of events at Aberdeen City and Shire

Performers at Aberdeen International Youth Festival

The manifestation of the richness of the creative industries in the North and North-east is the number and range of festivals which take place in the area.

From the Granite Festival held for the first time this year to celebrate the stone which gives the Silver City its name and the Doric Festival which celebrates its language, music and traditions to the Wizard Festival for pop fans and the Scottish Traditional Boat Festival at Portsoy there is something for every taste.

Now moves are afoot to encourage these events to join forces to create a powerful marketing tool.

Stewart Aitken is artistic director and chief executive of the Aberdeen International Youth Festival which celebrates its 40th birthday next year. He has already presented to the board of ACSEF about collective festivals believing that the creative arts should be the fifth priority sector along with life sciences, energy, food and drink and tourism to grow the economy.

The AIYF alone brings in around £1.5 million a year to the Aberdeen economy and Stewart wants to harness the collective energy which already exists because of the activities in place.

"Obviously Aberdeen City and Shire doesn't have the scale or history of festivals but it does have some very unique cultural events and organisations."

"Look at HM Theatre - very few cities of this size have a number one touring venue of that quality and when I first walked into this job I was told I had to go the to Aberdeen Music Hall because it has the best acoustics."

"Then you have the sound festival, Word Festival and Portsoy Boat Festival - they are award winning and innovative."

"Huntly has two or three festivals - it is a venue in its own right and the North East Open Studios is the biggest contemporary art event of its type in Scotland. Most of these are run by either volunteers or one or two part time staff."

"So often funding bodies and other organisations say, "let's create the new big thing that is going to attract people in. But if there was proper investment in the wealth of what is available and we started doing that joined up bit we might have that 'big thing.'

"There is a calendar of events in city and shire and you could promote them as part of a package adding in headline performances like the pantomimes and musicals and the events which come to venues like the AECC - and that's just in the performing and visual arts before you start with the other elements of creative industries which you could promote as part of the package."

"I think people may have been scared to do it because of the impression, especially the city had, of there not being a cultural vibrancy. Now people like Paul Harris and Duncan Hendry of Aberdeen Performing Arts are standing up."

"In the short term the first thing to do is embrace it, talk about it - we need to put it on the agenda. It needs to be the fifth major strand of economic development."

"In the longer term I suppose it is about us understanding how we want to invest and whether it is in venues, in bricks and mortar, or whether it is in pathways for artists."

"The small festivals have very small marketing budgets and if we could get the hotels to invest and the small events put in even £100 then as a collective we might have £5000 or £10,000"

"It would require some sort of loose organisation at least to steer a project like that forward and we hope to launch something early next year."

It is an idea which has the backing of Shona Anderson of VisitScotland. Next year is "Year of Creative Scotland" which is a chance to spotlight, celebrate and promote Scotland's cultural and creative strengths on a world stage.

Creative Scotland is investing £6.5 million of National Lottery Funding into a programme to support the programme aimed at increasing awareness of and appreciation of, as well as participation in, arts and culture among the people of Scotland.

"If we could create six or eight weeks of constant festivals across the region can you imagine how many visitors it would bring in from local people, to the regions and

internationally?" she said.

"There could be the Doric Festival leading into music festivals leading into arts and crafts right the way across. I am very passionate that we get everyone together. I would ideally see it as a six or eight week programme all joined up one after the other. You could establish it as a learning development as well because of the history and because of the artistry which is here. The ultimate aim would be to have it all year round."

"Next year is a time for us to come together and make our mark - stamp the ground and show them this is the home of the creative arts'. With the money available from the Scottish Government, through Creative Scotland, through the Lottery Funding, there is an opportunity for Aberdeen City and Shire to pull together all the festivals we do independently and really show people why they should come here. It is the richest creative area in the country - come north and experience true Scotland."

"What Edinburgh does very well is have a Festival period and everyone knows it is happening and you either go there and soak it up or you avoid it. What we are saying is you can come to Aberdeen City and Shire and soak up bits of it and enjoy it but dip in and dip out whenever you like. There are still parts of the region which will not be infiltrated by it. We will still have the wildlife and the whales and dolphins to go and watch and you will still be able to go inland and do a bit of walking in the national park and it should appeal to all ages."

She said it was important that all the individuals and small groups who make up the wealth of cultural and creative talent in the area retained their individuality.

"What makes them creative is that they are individuals," she said. "They don't all have to lose their beliefs and become part of a sheep mentality but perhaps they can work under a bigger umbrella than comes to them naturally."

"All we would ask is that maybe they cross promote each other and promote the region alongside what they are doing as individuals and feel part of it."

"They want to feel supported as well. Perhaps in the past we haven't given them the support and this is an opportunity to build on that."

A tourism partnership manager will shortly be appointed to bring together a tourism strategy for the region. The creative industries will be included in that and it will help people understand where they fit into the whole region and how it can support them.

There will be wide consultation with those connected with the industry to help guide the local strategy which will feed into the national strategy.

"That way we can take full advantage of the Scottish Government's plans when they have money available," said Seona.

"I sincerely believe this area is on the crest of a wave and really starting to pull together because people understand we have to do so to make sure we have a big voice."



FEATURES



Stewart Aitken

Harbour haul



Harbour Master - Ray Shaw

NEWS

The positive levels of activity recorded by Aberdeen Harbour during the first half of the year continued through to September with the port announcing improved performance across various sectors in the third quarter.

Across the nine months overall vessel tonnage rose by 5% on the same period last year from 18.43 million to 19.33 million gross tonnes. The number of vessels also increased by 4% from 5,688 to 5,922, a reflection of the growing number of oil-related and commercial vessels using the facilities.

African traffic has been one of the fastest growing routes with significant increases during the first nine months of the year with the tonnage of cargo handled up 21%. The growing number and tonnage of cruise vessels visiting the port also contributed to the harbour's strong performance, while the continued importance of the Northlink ferry service was demonstrated by a 2% rise.

Harbour master and operations director Ray Shaw, said: "The latest figures, which show a rise in activity across the board, provide further encouragement that the continued and significant investment being made into the port's facilities is justified."

Wave power

Kongsberg Maritime Ltd, the UK subsidiary of global marine technology company Kongsberg Maritime, has been awarded a contract with wave energy technology provider Aquamarine Power to carry out underwater noise assessments relating to its Oyster wave energy device.

The Oyster device has been developed by Aquamarine Power to capture wave energy from near-shore sites and convert it into clean sustainable electricity.

The contract represents a first collaboration between Kongsberg Maritime and Aquamarine Power, and will involve the company measuring underwater noise during the Oyster installation and operational phases at the EMEC range, Billia Croo on Orkney.



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Healthy collaboration



Steven Law and Jason Stewart both from Aberdeen Airport, were joined by Lesley Murphy from RGU for the launch.

An innovative new collaboration has begun in Aberdeen which could change the way we think about Health and Safety.

A group of students from RGU have been partnered with marketing, design and advertising agencies, tasked with finding a new way of "Keeping Health and Safety Alive".

The campaign has been facilitated by Aberdeen Airport and the brief for the students is to create a campaign around how to keep the messages of health and safety fresh and relevant.

It is not about reminding people to report spills or hold handrails as important as that may be; it is more about finding a new way of engaging people, in an attempt to maintain a positive safety culture.

Derek Provan is the Airport MD. He said "Health and Safety often gets a bad press. It regularly becomes the butt of jokes, when in fact is quite literally a life or death issue. I am delighted that we can be at the forefront of a campaign like this, and I sincerely hope that the results can change the way everyone thinks about Health and Safety".

Rita Marcella, Dean of RGU Business School, said: "This is a wonderful project for our Communications and PR students to work on as it will test their capacity to design and deliver a very real and meaningful message."

The campaign has been adopted as a module by RGU and students have until May 2012 to develop their campaign. Then a panel of judges will select the winning campaign which will be promoted across the city and 'shire in summer '12.

The judging panel is made up of Airport MD Derek Provan, Airport Head of Health, Safety and Compliance Steven Law, Nina Schofield the HSSE Director with AMEC, Wood Group PSN CEO Bob Keiller, and the General Manager of Air Traffic providers NATS in Aberdeen John Mayhew.

Merry Christmas and a prosperous 2012



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FEATURES

Reading between the lines

Stunning new library helps shape future leaders

CHRIS BANKS

Aberdeen University's new £57 million library has become an instant architectural icon but while its external appearance is obviously important the real significance is what happens behind its striking glazed facade.

The facilities inside have the potential to help shape potential business leaders, politicians, scientists and engineers of the future just as the university's libraries for the past five centuries years have done.

It replaces the Queen Mother Library and not only gives Aberdeen students state of the art facilities which will be the envy of Europe but opens up the University's priceless collections to the wider public.

Chris Banks, the University Librarian and Director, has spent the past four years planning for the recent opening and now believes that only the imagination of those leading and using it will be its only limiting factors.

"The Queen Mother Library was built for a university with a quarter of today's student numbers," said Chris. "The new library has doubled capacity to 1,200 study spaces. There are students registering with us who never came into the old library because the physical presence makes a difference. The Queen Mother Library was loathed by so many students.

"We consulted with students during the planning and visited other libraries in the UK and Europe to see what they have done and it is great that the students are now saying it looks as if it has been built with them in mind.

"In the first 31 days of term there was a 61% increase in the number of people coming through the gates and a 98% increase in occupancy - so there are more people coming and they are staying longer.

"There are simple improvements like a power socket on each desk and there are areas where students can work collaboratively which is the way it is done now because that is how it is going to be in the workplace.

"They can sit in groups and talk and there are totally silent study areas. My favourite comment so far is that if Apple designed libraries they would be like this - white and shiny and intuitive.

"The reaction has been overwhelming positive about the building."

She said there was also a massive opportunity to work with school groups using purpose built school and education facilities.

The new library also opens up the university's finest collections, some never seen, to a much wider audience.

The Glucksman Conservation Centre will open in January where, for the first time, vital preservation and conservation work can be carried out on the most fragile items in the collection enabling wider access.

The centre was made possible by a \$3 million gift from



The new library sits next to the Queen Mother library which will be demolished

US philanthropist Dr Loretta Brennan Glucksman, a long-standing supporter of the University of Aberdeen.

"We have individual items worth tens of millions of pounds and we have not had the facilities to securely display them but the new exhibition gallery gives us that opportunity," she said.

"We have superb medieval manuscripts and probably our most beautiful is the Aberdeen bestiary - a 12th century English illuminated manuscript bestiary that was first listed in 1542 in the inventory of the Old Royal Library at the Palace of Westminster - but we have 1.2million books, including 200,000 rare books and 4,000 manuscript and archive collections, 400,000 electronic books, 13km of shelving on seven floors plus 11km in special collections.

"We have created a much friendlier and welcoming environment to open these collections up.

"We have access to Thomson Reuters Eikon which is a simulated trading floor which can be used by young entrepreneurs, in partnership with our business school. Our idea was not just to put in a new facility for the business school but to be able to reach out to the business community and young entrepreneur type audiences.

"We have the opportunity of running seminars and information skills teaching. "Much of our content is around our cultural collection so we have appointed exhibition and learning officers so there will be talks for lifelong learners, schools and anyone just curious to come along to talks relating to the exhibitions or to our collections. We will have a series of public events kicking off in the New Year."

Chris moved to Aberdeen in 2007 to lead the project giving up a post in the British Library.

"I have abandoned the best library in the country, my husband (I do still see him), and a house and at the time two cats to come up here and I haven't regretted it for a moment.

"This project is not just about the building per se but about the opportunities it creates to accommodate new styles of learning, to enable research and collaborations and to engage with all of our communities through exhibitions, public events, seminars, school groups, professional visits and much more."

Promoting Scotland



The Working Party

NEWS

A group of business and public sector leaders from around the North and North-east of Scotland have joined forces to promote their regions.

"The Working Party" held its first meeting in Caithness to discuss how to best promote both inbound tourism and industry. It was set up by Aberdeen Airport in conjunction with Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce and its counterpart in Caithness.

Bob Collier, Chief Executive of AGCC, said: "The North-east region will prosper if it makes the most of the links to UK and overseas destinations which Aberdeen Airport provides. It is really important to look outward for new business. The first Working Party event combined teams from Aberdeen and Caithness and there are many shared opportunities in energy, tourism and other sectors which offer scope to work together effectively."

Trudy Morris, chief executive of Caithness Chamber of Commerce and Chair of the Wick Airport Consultative Committee, said: "We look forward to following up on these discussions and forging some new relationships and initiatives between the two areas which in turn will hopefully increase passenger numbers."

Growth overseas



Janice Grant-Shaw

Specialist information systems company Collabro is expanding its operations into the Asia Pacific region with the launch of two subsidiary companies.

The Aberdeen-based business, which provides solutions to information management process issues, has opened offices in the centre of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and in Perth, Western Australia.

The KL office will be run by Tom Kennedy with support from two members of staff whilst the Perth office will be headed up by Nigel Bull who will lead a team of four.

Janice Grant-Shaw, managing director at Collabro, said: "One of our main objectives for this year was to expand our share of the overseas market and we felt that the most efficient way to achieve this was by establishing an international presence on the ground so that our business is more readily accessible to potential customers.

News in brief

Corpro Systems Ltd., a member of Aberdeen-headquartered international oilfield services organisation Reservoir Group, has been awarded a significant coring contract by Eni, the largest Italian energy company. The contract is the third commercial project to be carried out by Corpro since it opened its Scandinavian facility in late 2010.

EnerMech has secured a multi-million pound crane maintenance contract from Maersk Oil North Sea UK Limited for assets operating in the UK.

The £3m, three year contract, covers the inspection, periodic maintenance and engineering support for all deck cranes on-board the Janice FPU, Gryphon and Global Producer III FPSO's managed and operated from Aberdeen.

Around 1,000 visitors attended a new event designed to showcase the very best of North-east business.

Granite Expo at Aberdeen's Hilton Treetops Hotel is one of the first SME showcase of its kind in the region and was supported by Original 106fm and AGCC.

Aker Solutions in Aberdeen is to manufacture and deliver a number of subsea control modules and topside power units as part of an £8million contract with Dana Petroleum plc.

The company has signed a contract for the project management, engineering, procurement and construction of a number of subsea systems for the Western Isles Development Project on the UK continental shelf. It marks the first contract agreement between the two companies

For the fourth year in a row **Ryden** has topped CoStar SPN's Scotland Industrial Agency league tables with regard to the number of disposals, number of instructions and floorspace available.

For the period September 2010 - August 2011 CoStar SPN's research team analysed market activity and found that Ryden completed more than 21% of all disposals (167 disposals) while its nearest competitor completed 10%.

The Scottish division of construction company **Mansell** - which is headquartered in Aberdeen - has been awarded the RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) Order of Distinction in recognition of the exceptional standard of health and safety management it has demonstrated over the past 17 years.

AVC Media Enterprises has been appointed official media partner for the fifth published book by The Reading Bus - "Apardion, A Leopard's Quest." The book tells the tale of a spirit from the Northern Lights who visits Aberdeen to discover if this might be his birth place.

AVC will develop the website and app, as well as provide use of AVC audiovisual equipment, use of its Business Centre, and give advice and support in the delivery of the films, animations and podcasts.

For all Members News please go to:
www.agcc.co.uk/membersnews

KTP post for OPITO

OPITO, the oil and gas industry's skills body, has created a new research post to help the sector better map its future skills needs.

The appointment is one of a series of initiatives to address the need to expand the talent pool of experienced workers in the North Sea offshore industry.

It comes after recent indications that UK Continental Shelf reserves will last until 2050 while the trend of 30-60 year olds leaving the industry is continuing, leaving a rising number of vacancies for suitably skilled and experienced workers.

Praveeni Kirtisinghe has been appointed to develop an intelligent predictive model to support the forecasting of future skills and pinch points within the UK industry. It is the first time OPITO has embarked on such a large-scale research project.

She joins OPITO via Robert Gordon University as part of a Knowledge Transfer Partnership, a part government-funded programme to encourage collaboration between businesses and universities in the UK.

Internship success

A graduate internship programme, set up by the Centre for Scottish Public Policy (CSPP) as a pilot initiative last year, has delivered over 100 opportunities for Scotland's graduates to experience paid work in organisations across the country. The majority of participants achieve full-time employment as a direct result of their internship experience.

The 'Adopt an Intern' programme has been so successful that it has received an increase in funding from the Scottish Government to develop the initiative further with financial support of £181,000.

The initiative involves organisations across the public, private and third sectors. At least half of the supporting companies have funded the graduate's salary from their own resources, allowing the Government support to be spread further.

Joy Lewis of CSPP said: "With the on-going economic challenges, it is now more difficult than ever for our talented graduates to find suitable, paid work opportunities which give them much needed experience at the start of their working life. This Programme is making an impact by opening the door to employment and providing many charities and voluntary organisations, as well as SMEs, the opportunity to add bright and enthusiastic graduates to their workforce."

The Government is also supporting the CSPP Programme with a further £37,000 to expand internationally. CSPP has also applied to the European Structural Funds (ESF), using some of its Scottish Government grant as match funding.

Michael Russell, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning said: "This is a fine example of the good work organisations throughout the country are doing to provide employment and development opportunities for our young people. Meaningful, paid internships such as this one are an excellent way for graduates to gain the relevant work experience they need in today's jobs market."

OCA awards winners



(L-R) Rob Knox, Colin Bruce and Innes Haughey

Wood Group PSN, AMEC and Muehlhan Surface Protection Ltd enjoyed success at the Offshore Contractors' Association (OCA) annual awards ceremony which acknowledge the wealth of talent across the offshore industry.

Technical Director for Wood Group PSN, Colin Bruce, was awarded the Challenge Award for Health, Safety and Environment for his leadership and commitment. He was praised for improving morale and enhancing safety culture, inspiring others to achieve greater safety performance.

Rob Knox, a Project Controls graduate within AMEC's Graduate Development Programme, scooped the Future Star Award for Training. His role has seen him work closely with OPITO for the development of the Schools Partnership which allows him to nurture and inspire young talent.

Muehlhan Surface Protection Ltd received the OCA Challenge Award for Innovation as a result of their frangible bulb covers. The company currently provides highly hazardous blasting and painting services across Shell's Central assets and their device has ensured the protection of these bulbs during fabric maintenance work, allowing continuous production for the platform.

OCA chief executive, Bill Murray, said: "We regularly hear about a skills shortage and lack of training and development across the oil and gas industry so it is a pleasure to, once again, acknowledge those who are pushing the boundaries and addressing the issues facing the next generation of workers."

Donor challenge

Maersk Oil North Sea UK Limited has been presented with an award for having the highest percentage of new blood donors in a Give Blood campaign targeted at the oil and energy sector.

More than 100 Maersk Oil staff have attended blood donor sessions in the last year as part of the Energy Industry Blood Challenge. Of those, 67 were donating for the first time or returning to donate after a break of two years or more. In total, of all those who attended, 92 units of blood were collected.

As each unit can be split in three component parts, in the last 12 months Maersk Oil donors have potentially helped save or improve the lives of 276 transfusion patients.

First Minister support



Power Jacks MD Bruce Bultitude and First Minister Alex Salmond

NEWS

Alex Salmond, The First Minister, has opened Power Jacks' new £6million headquarters and manufacturing facility at Ellon which has been purpose built to meet the company's rapid global growth.

Power Jacks specialises in producing industrial lifting and positioning equipment including screw jacks, gear boxes, actuators and planetary roller screws.

The company's expansion - which earned a Queen's Award for Business Enterprise after it increased overseas sales by 246% - resulted in the move into its next generation business complex at Balmacassie Commercial Park as it marked its 25th year in business.

Managing director Bruce Bultitude said: "Power Jacks is entering an exciting new era and as a progressive, forward-thinking enterprise, we have consolidated our position for future growth. Our new headquarters will significantly enhance our operations around the world and underpins our commitment to the North-east of Scotland where our engineering heritage dates back to 1903."

Mr Salmond said: "It is fabulous to see a Scottish manufacturing company that has its origins in 1903 and was established in its present form in 1987, continue not just to thrive, but expand, develop and grow."

One of the best

Eastern Airways, which operates more flights from Aberdeen Airport than any other airline, has been named the Best Passenger Charter Airline at an industry awards ceremony.

The UK's second largest regional airline achieved the air charter industry's accolade at the Baltic Air Charter Association Excellence Awards.

Eastern Airways celebrates its 14th anniversary this year and has significantly grown its charter business over the last two years including the re-introduction of Embraer regional jets to its fleet.

The airline is also consistently rated one of the UK's most punctual scheduled airlines and has a fleet of 30 aircraft flying from 21 airports in the UK, Ireland, Norway and France.

Growing talent

Aberdeen-based Munro's Travel Group will invest over £150,000 in its Travel Academy over the next 12 months to develop new recruits and to support its existing staff to obtain nationally recognised travel qualifications.

The firm has a 100-strong workforce and is now the largest it has been in its 108-year-history. Difficulty in sourcing experienced Business Travel Consultants however has seen around 50% of its operational staff come through the Academy.

Managing partner Murray Burnett said: "Experienced business travel consultants are in short supply within the industry and the Travel Academy has been a vital avenue for us in terms of developing the skilled people we need to support our continued growth."

"The Academy provides an effective way of ensuring that those who join our teams have the required knowledge and expertise to deliver the high quality service that our clients demand."

An intensive course is delivered covering all aspects of a travel management service.

All participants who pass the final assessment are employed by Munro's as Trainee Business Travel Consultants and are supported by Mentors until they can demonstrate working with confidence and independence on all aspects of their role and have successfully passed nationally recognised travel qualifications.

Increased service



John Sheran

An Aberdeen based reprographics company has enhanced its level of customer service with the introduction of a new Scottish call centre.

North east Reprographics (NER), based at Marywell, on the outskirts of Aberdeen, is a premier partner

of Xerox, which supplies machines and services including printers, copiers, multifunction devices, document management and scanning solutions throughout the UK and Europe.

The new call centre in Greenock has created five jobs and will support customers of NER and its Inverness-based sister company Solution X with service queries, consumable ordering and provide telephone support to resolve issues quickly.

Sign of civic pride



The statue outside Marischal College

The statue of Robert the Bruce which stands outside Marischal College on Broad Street has won an award from Aberdeen Civic Society.

The statue, created by sculptor Alan Beattie Herriot, was commissioned following a motion by Councillor Kevin Stewart, MSP.

It was unveiled in May by Lord Bruce and Master Benedict Bruce – direct descendants of King Robert. Its total height including the two metre Kemnay granite plinth is 5.6metres [18ft 4 inches].

The £120,000 statue was paid from the Common Good Fund which was originally set up by King Robert.

Aberdeen Civic Society's aims include: stimulating public interest in and care for the beauty, history and character of the city of Aberdeen and its surroundings; encouraging the preservation, development and improvement of features of general amenity and historic interest; and encouraging and recognising those who have contributed to the amenity of the city by means of new buildings or the restoration and preservation of old buildings.

Imajica acquired

Aberdeen based brand, media and communications agency Imajica has been acquired by CMS Holdings Limited. CMS has acquired all the existing assets of Imajica, creating a new holding company which will oversee the development of a number of new opportunities.

Imajica Director Jeff Riley; "CMS were impressed by our team, the strength of our client base and the quality of your work. Not only are we retaining our creative and technical team, a number of strategic positions have been identified which will allow us to take the business to a new level. These announcements will be made as soon as we have agreements in place."

"The existing team has moved to modern serviced offices within PMAC House in the Bridge of Don."

Extreme partnership

Aberdeen Convention Bureau has signed a partnership agreement with social enterprise Transition Extreme Sports Ltd, which uses urban and extreme sports to attract and positively engage local young people.

The two-fold partnership is initially for a year, with the potential to be extended.

As a registered charity, Transition Extreme uses its public sports facilities, including a 15 metre climbing wall, and skatepark for BMX bikes, skateboards and inline skating, to generate income which then funds its award-winning community work.

Aberdeen Convention Bureau is responsible for bringing business tourism into the North-east, and proactively promotes the area as an international conference destination.

The partnership will see the team at the Bureau promoting Transition Extreme as a venue for team-building activities, an unusual dinner or drinks reception or social activities as a way of relaxing after a day's work.

The facility also has meeting rooms which can cater for training sessions, seminars, board meetings or networking events for up to 100 people.



RGU in top 50

Robert Gordon University's Aberdeen Business School has been ranked in the global top 50 for its MBA programmes in the "Beyond Grey Pinstripes" survey" published by The Aspen Institute's Centre for Business Education.

RGU was rated as Scotland's highest placed school, at 50, and was one of only five UK universities to be ranked in the top 100 MBA programmes. The rankings include top American universities, Stanford Graduate School of Business and Yale School of Management and Madrid's IE Business School, rated top European university.

The survey involves research into MBA programmes covering 12,000 courses and faculty research abstracts from universities around the world, evaluating how well they incorporate social, environmental and ethical issues into their programmes and ultimately how effective they are in preparing students to meet the business challenges they face upon graduating.

IMIST first

Falck Safety Services has become the first company in the Middle East to gain approval to deliver a groundbreaking new global training initiative for the oil and gas industry.

The safety training provider's Abu Dhabi centre is the first to meet the stringent criteria set by learning and skills specialist Atlas to invigilate the International Minimum Industry Safety Training (IMIST) e-learning programme, a global initiative developed to significantly improve safety standards for the offshore workforce worldwide.

Debating Champions

Tourism challenge



L-R Current JCI Aberdeen President Steven Wilson, Stan Yau and Craig Watson

Junior Chamber International (JCI) Scotland have returned from the JCI annual World Congress having won the JCI World Debating Championship. The team, all members of JCI Aberdeen, fought off stiff competition to take the title which was last won by Scotland in 2002.

Each November around 5,000 JCI members gather at the World Congress which this year was held in Brussels.

Members from more than 100 countries share experiences and find new ways to create positive change at both local and global levels.

The debating competition consisted of a knockout tournament involving Australia, Canada, England, Norway, Russia, Scotland, Sweden and Turkey. After several rounds, JCI Scotland faced Australia in the final where they opposed the motion that "The JCI brand is not what we say but what we do."

As a result of the win, JCI Scotland will be hosting an international debating masterclass in March 2012 attracting members worldwide.

Scottish tourism businesses are being challenged to look at ways of tapping into a predicted 45% growth in sailing tourism in Scotland over the next 10 years.

Companies are being urged to take advantage of this predicted growth in a new sailing guide published by Tourism Intelligence Scotland (TIS), as part of its Opportunities for Growth series.

Currently generating just over £100million a year for the Scottish economy - with market share predicted to increase to £145million in the next decade - sailing is set to become one of the fastest growing activity markets for Scottish tourism.

The new guide provides key intelligence on the sector, as well as offering advice on how businesses can ensure that sailing visitors - ranging from experienced yachters to those attending a sailing event or festival - have the best experience possible.

Scotland is often described by enthusiasts as one of the top sailing destinations in the world. Recent figures show that more than 167,000 visiting boat nights are made here each year, with more than 40% of these made by boats from outside Scotland, contributing particularly to our remote, rural economies.

The guide is available to businesses which register at www.tourism-intelligence.co.uk.

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News in brief

The Aberdeen office of property consultancy, **Knight Frank**, has secured a series of significant design and project management contracts during the last six months totalling more than £5 million.

Among these is a new purpose-built headquarters at Minto Drive in Altens, which will house offshore clothing suppliers K&L Ross.

Knight Frank has also been appointed to design and build a new office, workshop and yard facilities in Inverurie and Dyce.

Aubin, an independent supplier of specialist chemicals to the energy industry, has announced a strategic partnership with an agent in the Middle East which will promote the company's full range of specialist chemicals and services in the UAE and Oman.

The partnership agreement with Leaders Oilfield Equipment LLC covers the provision of cement and stimulation additives, pipeline cleaning gels and gel pigs and marine buoyancy gels and will assist Aubin access Middle East markets while complementing the range of products offered by Leaders.

An Aberdeen based computer skills training provider has been recognised as an accredited Small Business Learning and Development Provider by the Learning and Performance Institute.

Nicholson Solutions is one of only three accredited providers in Scotland and the only one to provide training across the entire North of Scotland.

Stockland Muir, the joint venture partners responsible for Aberdeen Gateway Business Park, is investing £3million in a development of speculative industrial units.

The first phase of the development will comprise two units extending to 11,700 sq ft and will consist of a workshop facility with high specification offices arranged over two storeys, fully secure concrete yards and car-parking provision.

Construction of the first unit is well expected by the year-end.

For all Members News please go to:
www.agcc.co.uk/membersnews

New facility open



New CLAN Centre

A North-east cancer support charity has opened the doors of its new headquarters in Aberdeen.

Four years after first announcing it was searching for a new home, CLAN Cancer Support has moved into the purpose-designed building on Westburn Road, Aberdeen leaving behind its previous home of more than 15 years on the city's Caroline Place.

The new CLAN House will allow the charity to greatly expand the services and support it currently offers to anyone affected by cancer in North-east Scotland, Orkney and Shetland.

It offers specific areas for children and families, areas for relaxation and a wide range of therapies as well as outdoor space for visitors to enjoy.

The new centre includes expanded accommodation and facilities for people travelling from outwith Aberdeen City for treatment at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary within the CLAN Haven facility.

CLAN Chief Executive Debbie Thomson said: "The enthusiasm and dedication we have seen from our supporters, whether individuals, families, trusts, companies or whole communities, has been overwhelming at times and we are extremely proud to be able to thank them all for their support with a centre which we have all had a hand in creating."

"We are confident the new CLAN House will allow us to expand our services over time to ensure that we can continue to provide our clients with a diverse range of facilities now and in the future. This is a very proud day for us all."

CLAN Cancer Support is an independent charity which offers support to anyone affected by cancer. Based in Aberdeen, the charity covers the whole of Grampian, Orkney and Shetland. CLAN is also developing services in the community and now has a presence in Ballater, Inverurie, Peterhead, Stonehaven, Orkney and Shetland.

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Strategic change



Keith Wallace

Aberdeen-based EPC Offshore has made a step-change in its management structure with the creation of three dedicated business streams to capitalise on growth in key sectors of the North Sea oil and gas industry.

The move, which will see project units focused on the subsea, brownfield and floating

production storage and offloading (FPSO) markets, comes following the company's rapid growth.

NEWS

The strategic shift will see the company work towards becoming a centre of excellence for FPSO projects, expanding its capabilities to incorporate due diligence, technical competency and delivery strategies for offshore operators as well as design and construction management. The group will be led by chief operating officer Peter Kirkbride and director Anthony Quick.

EPC Offshore has also brought together an expert team focused on small-scale brownfield projects in the UK Continental Shelf, led by topsides project group leader Alan Cairns.

Chief executive Keith Wallace said: "While our focus to date has been on building a core hub of clients, it is essential we now take a long-term view on how we can continue to grow whilst retaining the fundamental elements which have contributed to our success so far."

\$600 billion potential

The UK continental shelf could generate in excess of \$600 billion in new revenues through a combination of fresh funding and investment, fiscal certainty and targeted incentives, greater public and private sector collaboration, and a more coordinated approach by industry and education according to a new report from PwC in Aberdeen.

The report, "Northern Lights: a strategic vision of Aberdeen as a world-class energy capital," outlines the positive actions that industry, financial, public sector and academic stakeholders will need to take together if they are to secure the coveted position as one of the global energy capitals of the next 40 years, delivering excellence and providing a lasting legacy for Aberdeen.

It also delivers a cautionary note: Aberdeen may be reaching a crossroads. Stakeholders should collaborate more to build on the city's 40 year track record in oil and gas, without which there is a risk that the opportunities within reach may slip away, leaving the future prosperity of Aberdeen much less certain as oil and gas reserves inevitably decline.

Dutch impact

The Dutch Authorities are implementing changes on January 1 which will extend social security regulations to include the Dutch Continental Shelf and will have an impact on many North-east firms.

Alison Sellar, Managing Director of activpayroll, has warned that these companies need to take proactive action to avoid the risk of legal action. She said that although the industry has benefited from exemptions in the past social security contributions are now being demanded from non-residents operating in Dutch territory.

"These legislative changes will affect non-residents of the Netherlands working on the Dutch part of the Continental Shelf. Dependant on a number of conditions being met, these individuals and their employers could be obliged to make contributions to the Dutch social security scheme."

New energy group



Tom Faichnie

Aberdeen-based independent chartered accountant, Campbell Dallas, has been instrumental in establishing an energy network within the UHY worldwide network of independent accounting and consulting companies. Tom Faichnie, partner with Campbell Dallas and head of their specialist energy division, says they have

received an enthusiastic response from members keen to be part of the network.

"Although we're based in Aberdeen, oil and gas is a global industry so we need to act globally, not just as an Aberdeen team. As the only Scottish member of UHY, we believe that by setting up the Energy Group we can establish proper working relationships with our counterparts in UHY offices around the world so that they are not just a name in a book."

North Sea partners

A partnership extending across the North Sea between Aberdeen and Stavanger has enabled oil and gas consultancy Apply Altra to secure participation in a front end engineering and design (FEED) contract in Norway.

The contract for topside FEED engineering on Marathon's Bøyla Tie-Back Project will be carried out jointly with Apply Sørco - the Norwegian mother company of Apply Altra - and is expected to be the first of many significant projects that will involve cross border co-operation. The staff from Aberdeen will have the main responsibility for the topside process design solutions.



Prodrill leading the way

The past few months have been steadily encouraging for the North Sea drilling industry

"BP has just penned a deal extending exploration within the Clare Oilfield until at least 2050, whilst Apache recently bought out Exxon North Sea assets, including the North Sea's Beryl field, to increase its presence in the region. It has also been reported that North Sea offshore drilling activity rose 45% from the second to third quarter of this year*", comments Louise Wood, Managing Director of Prodrill.

Leading resource specialists, Prodrill has also seen an increased trend for highly experienced drilling and well engineering personnel, reporting recording breaking half year results:

"It has been a tremendous year so far for Prodrill and we are on track to achieve 15% growth on our previous year. We have continued to see an increased demand for our services and now supply industry experts in over 24 countries world-wide. The UK continues to remain buoyant, representing over 50% of our business. Internally, we have continued our growth, increasing our staff by five personnel."

"Whilst there still remain certain skills shortages for key disciplines in the drilling sector, our success is driven by understanding the current market demands. We take a proactive approach to

resourcing solutions, develop strong networking links, and remain close to our client's activities -helping them with manpower planning. Over the forthcoming months we will see some key industry drivers push forward, including competency measurement - this may continue to put further demands on skills shortages and resourcing for projects."

* Deloitte's North West Europe Review

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*Customer Confidence Index (CCI) March - September 2011

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WE ARE DELIGHTED TO ANNOUNCE THE LAUNCH OF THE FIFTH ANNUAL CHERRIES AWARDS TO CELEBRATE, RECOGNISE AND REWARD THOSE WHO HAVE MADE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO EXCELLENCE IN HUMAN RESOURCES, RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING.

THIS YEAR WE ARE PLEASED TO INTRODUCE TWO NEW AWARDS. THE 'EXEMPLARY EMPLOYER OF CHOICE AWARD' WILL BE AWARDED TO AN ORGANISATION WHICH CLEARLY DEMONSTRATES THAT 'PEOPLE' ARE AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE BUSINESS STRATEGY. THE FINAL AWARD OF THE EVENING, 'THE TOP CHERRY AWARD', WILL RECOGNISE AN INDIVIDUAL WHO HAS DEMONSTRATED AN OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO OUR REGION'S HR COMMUNITY, AND WILL BE ANNOUNCED ON THE NIGHT!

NOMINATIONS FOR THE AWARDS ARE NOW OPEN SO IF YOU KNOW AN ORGANISATION, TEAM OR AN INDIVIDUAL WHO IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS HAS DEMONSTRATED EXCELLENCE IN COMMITMENT, INNOVATION, AND STRATEGIC VISION IN THEIR HR, RECRUITMENT, RETENTION AND TRAINING STRATEGIES, WHY NOT NOMINATE THEM FOR A CHERRY?

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Our role at the Chamber is to find you a mentor whose skills and experience are ideally matched to your needs. The search can begin as soon as you get in touch. All we need from you is a few minutes of your time to understand your ambitions, your issues and your needs.

There is a pool of 600 mentors throughout Scotland, experienced business people from a range of sectors and industries, all with their own unique blend of business and life experience and crucially, each has a burning desire to 'give something back' and support businesses and the economic growth of Scotland.

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To help your business grow contact businessmentoring@agcc.co.uk or call 0845 609 6622; click on www.businessmentoringscotland.co.uk for more information, including case studies.

Business Mentoring is a service that is provided through the partnership of Scottish Chambers of Commerce (SCC) Scottish Enterprise (SE), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The strategic aims of the service are to contribute to the improved performance of Scottish businesses and the economy by assisting and encouraging more businesses that are seeking to develop and grow, both domestically and internationally.



Events

Sponsorship Opportunities

Are you aware of the range of sponsorship and advertising opportunities the Chamber offers? From inserts in delegate packs to headline sponsorship of our Business Breakfast series, we provide opportunities to fit member companies and budgets of all sizes.

For more information please contact Seona Shand, Head of Membership on 01224 343929 or seona.shand@agcc.co.uk

The Events...Event

Scotland's only exhibition dedicated to the meetings, events and corporate hospitality industries will take place at the Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre on January 19 next year. Building on the success of the first Events Event, sponsors Elite Promotions are confident that the 2012 exhibition will be even bigger and better.

It is expected that there will be more than 100 exhibitors covering everything from the latest team building games to Scotland's top conference venues. Highlights for the exhibition will include the very latest in lighting, event furniture and a full size Formula 1 racing car simulator. There will also be a prize draw for event buyers who register online and attend on the day. The prize includes the use of a chauffeur driven BMW 7 Series, a three night break at a luxury apartment and dinner at one of Scotland's top hotels.

Information can be found on www.theeventsevent.com or call Elite Promotions on Aberdeen 636363.

Date for your diary...

The Events...Event Business Breakfast

Date: Thursday January 19, 2012

Time: 7-9am

Venue: AECC

For more information on our forthcoming events, visit www.agcc.co.uk/events.

MEMBERSHIP

Is rail consultation on the right track?



Kate Yuill
Policy & Communications Manager

PWhether you're a frequent or infrequent passenger on the train, chances are you'll have something to say about the journey – and judging on some of the feedback we get at the Chamber, that "something" is more likely to dwell on the negative than the positive.

Trains being cancelled, trains running late, long journey times, poor facilities, no facilities, overcrowding; confusion over booking, cost, service... issues over rail travel as part of the wider transport infrastructure is something many of our Chamber members will have encountered; the unfortunate few may even have encountered all of the above in one return trip to the central belt.

Well Transport Scotland is now giving you the opportunity to have your say and to give your views on how future rail passenger services in Scotland should be delivered through the launch of its Rail2014 Consultation.

In 2014, both the current contract for rail passenger services (ScotRail) and the funding arrangements for Network Rail in Scotland are due to come to an end and a plan to take rail travel into the future must be in place by then.

The closing date for the consultation is February 20, 2012 and the outcomes will be published later in the year.

There are around 78million passenger journeys a year on ScotRail services, and a further 6million passenger journeys across the border to and from England. As a mode of transport it is on the increase with demand increasing by 25.5 percent over the past seven years and an expectation that it will continue to grow. Our rail network is extensive with 350 stations and around 2,800 kilometres of track, a quarter of which is electrified.

The consultation will consider a variety of issues affecting delivery of rail services in Scotland including fares, reliability, facilities on the trains and in the stations as well as wider environmental factors.

Some of the issues being considered have a major significance to this part of the world. In particular, the consultation is considering whether services north of Edinburgh should be provided by the Scottish franchisee with Edinburgh becoming an interchange hub for cross-border services in the east of the country. In effect that would mean cross-border services would terminate at Edinburgh with passengers heading further north having to move to an onward connection provided by ScotRail.

According to the consultation document this "Edinburgh Hub" could deliver a number of benefits relating to finance, resilience (i.e. all passenger franchised services in Scotland would be provided by one operator which would apparently make it easier to provide services during bad weather); control (i.e. no reliance on DfT services for connectivity) and simplicity.

It does however recognise that there are "some possible drawbacks" which include a "perceived or actual" time penalty in having to change at Edinburgh for a journey that might have previously been direct and the need for increased service frequency to improve onward connectivity.

The Chamber has previously campaigned strongly on the need to maintain through connections between the North and North-east of Scotland and London on the basis that businesses must be confident that they will have excellent connectivity to London and beyond to support their future development. Losing that direct route would be a real step backward in terms of supporting the economy and future potential of this region.

Connection with the business hubs in North and central England are also essential and a through train is a viable and sensible option to road or air travel.

In 2010 we lobbied the former Transport Minister Stewart Stevenson on the issue prior to his meeting with UK Transport Minister Theresa Villiers in London last November.

It was a campaign that met with success when the Department of Transport, which manages cross-border services for the UK Government, confirmed in January this year that the northern links would be safeguarded.

It is bitterly disappointing therefore that less than a year later, it is up for debate again.

The Chamber, in consultation with members, our policy council and our transport partners will prepare a response to the consultation. An important element of that will be getting your views.

The comments and questions to be answered are extensive - Caledonian Sleeper Services are also under threat, will that have an impact? should the time you have to stand on a train before you get a seat be increased? should poor performance be finalised? should alcohol be banned?

You can access the full consultation document at www.transportscotland.gov.uk/Rail2014. If you travel by train or your employees do, please take the time to respond - and please also send your comments to kate.yuill@agcc.co.uk

You can contact
Kate Yuill on:
t: 01244 343913
e: kate.yuill@agcc.co.uk

Floral tribute for city businessman



I-r Donald Buchan, of the Chrysanthemum and Dahlia Society, with Douglas Craig and Hazel Main, Director of the Horticultural Society of Aberdeen

David Craig, former chairman of Aberdeen's Craig Group who died just before his 94th birthday last year, has had a dahlia named after him in a tribute to celebrate his life and work.

The Royal Horticultural Society (RHSA) has officially registered the specially-grown dahlia in honour of Mr Craig.

RHSA of which Mr Craig was a long-standing director and latterly an honorary vice president - has appointed his son, Douglas Craig, as its president elect. He will officially take office in January.

Mr Craig senior, who helped lead the family-owned shipping and energy services firm to international success in the oil and gas industry, is thought to have been the oldest chairman of any Scottish company.

However, away from the business world, Mr Craig's great love was gardening and his dahlias were his pride and joy. He entered flower shows every year, winning the dahlia section of the annual Banchory Flower Show 25 consecutive times.

He was also president of the Chrysanthemum and Dahlia Society for many years and in his honour, a member of the society has named his latest hybrid flower after him.

Douglas Stewart grows hybrid dahlias and, along with the society's secretary, Donald Buchan, applied to the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) to officially name the dahlia, which is a red small decorative type, after Mr Craig.

Funding available

In a bid to encourage Scottish businesses to reduce their carbon impact and travel costs, the Energy Saving Trust Scotland is offering organisations interest free loans of between £500 and £50,000 for the installation of measures which make their transport and travel arrangements more sustainable.

Applications are encouraged from every size and type of organisation in both public and private sectors.

Funded by Transport Scotland the loans can be used to meet installation costs of measures which would help businesses reduce their environmental impact. This could include installing video and teleconference facilities, bikes and bike storage units, fleet management software, vehicle efficiency devices or low carbon cars and vans.

Ian Murdoch, Energy Saving Trust Scotland Transport Manager, said:

"Taking out a loan to help your organisation become more sustainable is a great way of boosting corporate and social responsibility. As the loan is interest free, with repayments spread over six years, it's an attractive proposition for any company."

To find out more, or to arrange a free sustainable transport review for your organisation, call Abigail Betney on 01224 253916 and ask about a low carbon transport loan or visit www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/lowcarbontransportloans

NEWS

Success in Brazil

A series of workshops is to be held in Aberdeen to assist companies in the oil and gas sector considering doing business in Brazil.

Success in Brazil will cover the legal, cultural, taxation and marketing aspects of conducting business in Brazil and is designed to support the market visit by Scottish Development International to Brazil in March 2012.

Starting in January, the five modules will be delivered by Business in Brazil, a company which specialises in advising UK companies on how to enter the Brazilian market in conjunction with representatives from Nabas Law, a Brazilian law firm and independent chartered accountants Campbell Dallas.

The modules will be held in the Campbell Dallas offices at 10 Carden Place, Aberdeen on January 17 and 31, February 13 and 28 and March 13. The cost is £1,250 plus VAT per person and the maximum number of places available is 10.

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TRAINING

The Annual Employment Law Conference 2011 – A Sell Out!

The Aberdeen offices of McGrigors, Paull & Williamsons and Simpson & Marwick joined forces last month to deliver another successful Annual Employment Law Conference. Hosted this year at the Ardoe House Hotel, speakers Sandy Kemp (Simpson & Marwick) discussed the new Agency Workers Regulations and the implications and impact to employers. David Hughes (Simpson & Marwick) considered the Equality Act one year on reviewing case examples surrounding the area and the results of getting it wrong. Finally, Sean Saluja (Paull & Williamsons) reviewed Discipline and Grievance and detailed the legal framework around which all HR processes and procedures should be underpinned.

This explanation of the current themes in employment law provided an excellent foundation for speaker Toni McAlindin to build her retrospective review of the year and her overview of the most high profile cases reaching tribunal, as well as those less known.

The 180 delegates were given the chance to demonstrate learning through interactive workshops, this year delivered by Peter Sharp (McGrigors), ably assisted by Lili Hunter (Lili Hunter Consulting). Focused on Mediation, delegates worked with scenario cases to resolve the issue, demonstrating how to avoid tribunal and the associated settlements.

Growing year on year, the conference now supports exhibition stands and advertisers, keen to profile their services to the HR audience. Exhibitors this year offered a free prize draw for a few lucky winners;

Bon Accord Payroll Services Weekend break for 2 to Guernsey - Taryn Young (Read Well Services)

Solutions Lanson Black Label Champagne - Trish Davidson (The Urquhart Partnership)

MS Office Training Course to the value of £175 + VAT - Duncan Palmer (M I Swaco)

Kudos Round of golf for 4 people at Gleneagles- Ishbel Inkster (Wood Group Management Services)

Next year's conference is confirmed for Wednesday 7th November 2012. We look forward to welcoming another sell-out crowd to what is now the premier HR event in the North east.



Calling all 16 - 19 year olds

AGCC still has a number of fully funded places available through Skills Development Scotland, for individuals in the 16-19 (start up to 20th birthday) age group. These are specifically offered in Business & Administration and Customer Service, and the SVQs can be undertaken at either Level 2 or Level 3, which is very much focused on the individual's work role.

The principles and values of good Business & Administration and Customer Service are at the heart of every successful company, and these SVQs are designed for individuals who can provide evidence of their competence, through performing a range of workplace activities and tasks. The good news is that there are no tests or exams, just on-going assessment of practical, every-day work activities, combined with the provision of guidance and support throughout the term of the qualification.

These fully funded places include Modern Apprenticeships, which provide people in employment with the opportunity to work towards an industry recognised and accredited qualification. The funding is also aimed at individuals working in a variety of industry sectors, representing the creative industries, energy, construction and engineering, financial and business services, tourism, food and drink, life sciences, retail and many others.



AGCC is widely acknowledged for successfully delivering quality learning and personal development programmes to member companies, and the VQ Team likewise have an excellent track record in assisting individuals to achieve their learning and development ambitions through an SVQ.

For further information please contact George Brand on 343914 or at george.brand@agcc.co.uk also visit our VQ pages on the website at www.agcc.co.uk/vq



CHAMBER DIARY

Keep up to date with all the goings on at the AGCC

For up to date details on all the Chamber news and events, please visit our website:

www.agcc.co.uk

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DEC	EVENT	TIME	VENUE
Tue 13	Effective Time Management (Training)	9.15 - 4.30 pm	AGCC
13 & 14	Essential Management Skills (Training)	9.15 - 4.30 pm	AGCC
Thur 15	Project Management - The Basics (Training)	9.15 - 4.30 pm	AGCC
JAN			
17 & 18	Essential Management Skills (2 days - Training)	9.15 - 4.30 pm	AGCC
Thur 19	The Events Event Business Breakfast	7-9am	AECC
Tue 31	Deliver Effective Presentations (Training)	9.15 - 4.30 pm	AGCC
Thur 26	Conducting Constructive Appraisals (Training)	9.15 - 4.30 pm	AGCC
Wed 25	Introduction to Social Media (1/2 day - Training)	9.15 - 4.30 pm	AGCC
Tue 31	Introduction to FPSO's (Training)	9.15 - 4.30 pm	AGCC
FEB			
Wed 1	Motivation & Delegation (Training)	9.15 - 4.30 pm	AGCC
Wed 8	Introduction to Export Rules (Training)	9.15 - 4.30 pm	AGCC
Thur 9	Time Management (Training)	9.15 - 4.30 pm	AGCC
Tue 14	PA's Guide to personal effectiveness (Training)	9.15 - 4.30 pm	AGCC
Tue 14	Introduction to supply chain management (Training)	9.15 - 4.30 pm	AGCC
Wed 15	Development of Competence Based Systems (Training)	9.15 - 4.30 pm	AGCC
Thur 16	Enhanced Communication Skills for Managers (Training)	9.15 - 4.30 pm	AGCC
Fri 17	City Connections - Kissing with Confidence	11.45am - 2pm	DoubleTree by Hilton
Mon 20	Communication & Interpersonal Skills (Training)	9.15 - 4.30 pm	AGCC
Tue 21	Interview Skills (Training)	9.15 - 4.30 pm	AGCC
Wed 22	Introduction to INCO Terms (1/2 day - Training)	9.30 - 12.30 pm	AGCC
22-23	Introduction to Marketing (2 days - Training)	9.15 - 4.30 pm	AGCC
Thur 23	Introduction to Employment Law (Training)	9.15 - 4.30 pm	AGCC



CHAMBER DIARY

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Russia eyes the Far East



*Jon Woodwards,
International Business Director*

The Eastern Gas Programme - Gazprom's Eastern Strategy

In September 2007 the Russian Federation Industry and Energy Ministry approved funding for the 2.4 trillion rouble Eastern Gas Programme to be managed by the state owned company Gazprom. These objectives edged closer to reality with the signing recently of preliminary agreements between Russia, South Korea and North Korea on constructing a pipeline across the eastern Sakhalin Peninsula.

At the core of this giant project was the construction of an integrated gas production, transportation and supply system in Eastern Siberia and the far eastern Russian Federation to capitalise on potential gas exports to China and other Asia-Pacific countries.

Russia courting North Korea

Gazprom, the world's biggest gas producer, sought consent from North Korea to build a new pipeline link that would carry as much as 10 billion cubic meters of gas a year across its territory to South Korea. This marked a significant shift in diplomatic relations since the two countries remain technically at war after their 1950-1953 conflict ended without a treaty.

Despite the abundance of natural gas production, the average gasification level in Eastern Siberia doesn't exceed 7 per cent, while the identical figure throughout Russia makes up 62 per cent. Eastern Siberia and the far east territory cover nearly 60 per cent of the Federation but the regional gas potential has been poorly explored to date standing at 7.3 per cent for the onshore area and 6 per cent for the continental shelf.

Sakhalin Peninsula

The Eastern program will create four centres of gas production located in Sakhalin, Yakutia (Chayanda field), Irkutsk and Krasnoyarsk territories. Each of them will have

its own gas processing facilities. Sakhalin will be developed first with the development of Chayanda starting in 2016 and Kovykta no earlier than 2017.

The Sakhalin Shelf will be the primary focus for starting up natural gas production and supplying it to Russia's far east via the 1830km long Sakhalin-Khabarovsk-Vladivostok (SKV) Pipeline which aims to deliver natural gas to Vladivostok by the third-quarter of 2011.



The second phase, Sakhalin 2 is a large integrated Production Sharing Agreement carried out by an international consortium with Gazprom as the majority shareholder. The first Russian LNG plant was built in 2009 and exports will be delivered to the far east region to develop the gas delivery capability and new employment opportunities.

Sakhalin phase 3 will concentrate on geological exploration with production of natural gas scheduled for 2014 with the subsurface licences awarded to Gazprom for the Kirinsky, Vostochno-Odoptinsky and Ayashsky blocks. The Kirinskoye field will become one of the natural gas sources for the SKV gas transmission system.



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Survey shows tax hike still hurts...



(l-r) Cliff Lockyer, Ron Cookson and Bob Ruddiman at the launch at Survivex Dyce

Ongoing economic uncertainty as well as lasting effects of the Chancellor's tax grab, continues to impact negatively on confidence and investment in the UK oil and gas sector, reveals the 15th AGCC Oil and Gas Survey.

More than half the respondents to the survey, which was sponsored by national law firm McGrigors and conducted by the Fraser of Allander Institute, said the shock Budget announcement which increased tax on the profits of oil and gas operators by 12%, had a direct affect on operational activity and planned long term investments in the sector.

The survey, which was launched in November at the Survivex Training Centre by Chamber Vice-President Ron Cookson, Cliff Lockyer of the Fraser of Allander Institute and Bob Ruddiman, Head of Energy at McGrigors, is the 15th in the ongoing series and draws on responses from oil and gas operators and contractors to identify current trends in several areas including investment, exploration and employment. The findings are used to identify how the performance of this sector might impact on the wider business community.

The focus on skills and recruitment highlighted re-emerging issues for the industry. Skills shortages, inflation and the need to retain core staff are beginning to drive up salary costs for contractors. Both operators and contractors said average pay increases were higher in 2011 than in 2010 and higher than the UK average.

The majority of operators reported rising exploration and development activity in 2011 and expect these trends to continue through 2012. Over the next three years the majority of operators and contractors again expect to increase staff, reflecting expansion of activities, international working and to meet needs in specialist disciplines.

Robert Collier, AGCC Chief Executive, said: "When David Cameron visited Aberdeen in October he said the budget tax increase had not damaged the industry. Our survey has shown that 50% of oil and gas operators felt it had negatively affected investment plans. Whilst the tax grab may not have halted all future projects, what it has done is harm the potential of the North Sea and risks some fields being left undeveloped. It is ironic that reduced activity will reduce the amount of tax paid to the treasury."

"Our survey also revisited the issue of skills and highlighted several re-occurring problems. The industry continues to rely on recruiting from within and as a result is driving up pay for individuals rather than looking to recruit people from other sectors into the industry. This may be good for the contractors but it is not in the long-term interests of the sector, adding to the problems of skills shortages and rising staff costs. The industry must do more to address this problem."

Mr Ruddiman said: "The prediction of seasoned industry observers of how the sudden Budget tax increase would dent confidence and undermine trust in the UK oil and gas industry has been borne out by this survey."

"There is no great comfort in being able to say to Westminster politicians that 'we told you so', and it is time to move on, but we have to hope they have taken on board the strong message from operators that without a stable and transparent tax regime, investment capital will be diverted to other oil and gas producing regions and the UKCS will pay the price of Government meddling."

- Full details are available at www.agcc.co.uk/ogs



“What do you want from Santa?”

HOT TOPIC



“ I know Mr Claus must be a very busy man so I have been pondering for a long time over what I'd like for Christmas. Since I have heard he's a miracle worker I am sure he won't mind me posing him a challenge.

First of all I would like him to stop the Government from trying to control businesses. It is bad enough that we pay daft amounts of VAT, National Insurance Contributions, PAYE and Corporation Tax etc etc but do they want us to go out of business? The compulsory pension may push some of us over the edge.

I would also like him to spread the word about hairdressing – it is a career and not just something folk do when there are no other options.

Finally I would like to gather all the IT gremlins and all the machines which stop you getting through to a human on the telephone and wrap them up in the red tape businesses have to deal with before throwing them all down an ice hole near the North Pole.

If Santa could do that it would be a happy Christmas. ”

Lorraine Watson, Hatstand Nelly - Hair, Juice, Body.



“ I would like Santa to get in touch with me a bit earlier this year because after Christmas last year he had to let some elves go following a bit of a downturn. There wasn't time to consult properly which might have allowed for the successful redeployment of all the elves. I know Christmas, although a time of good cheer, is also a time when people may need to down man for a fresh start in the New Year. Santa's plans to replace elves with machinery didn't really work out last year but if he is planning to 'let go' some more elves he does need to prepare properly. He can't just tell them they are redundant – consultation will be needed – but let's hope that there is plenty of work for them over the next 12 months. ”

Lilli Hunter, Lilli Hunter Consulting Ltd



“ This Christmas I would love Santa to leave a great big box of corporate supporters under my tree. An organisation like VSA, which has to raise over £17million annually to provide services to the most vulnerable people in our community, relies greatly on the support of local businesses, whether through their fundraising efforts or employee volunteering schemes.

In 2012 I would love to see more companies encouraging their staff to become involved in corporate social responsibility; which studies have shown can lead to increased happiness and wellbeing, passion, enthusiasm, and productivity amongst employees.

And Santa, if it's not too much to ask, I would also love to find Gary Barlow, a Broon's annual and a Terry's Chocolate Orange under my tree! Merry Christmas everyone and all the very best for a prosperous 2012. ”

Karen Barlow, Director of Fundraising & Communications, VSA



“ Colossal investment in the development of people and innovative technology to ensure the next generation of game-changing 'people technology' which is vital to further internationalising Aberdeen City and Shire's world class expertise for the future prosperity of the region and the energy industry.

I also want to see qedi realise its bold ambition of becoming the global leader in commissioning and technology for the energy industry, and to score a hat-trick of industry awards this year after winning the Northern Star Overall Global Business accolade and SCDI's BP Award for Outstanding International Achievement in the Oil and Gas Industry.

Finally, I would love to wake up on Christmas Day and find that the desperately-needed Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route had magically been built – and I'd try it out with the McLaren F1 that I'm expecting from Santa! ”

Stuart McLeod, Managing Director of oil and gas commissioning and technology specialist qedi

— NEW MEMBERS AT THE CHAMBER —

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NEW MEMBERS

Hot Topic Correction:

Unfortunately two of the comments in last month's Hot Topic: "What would you like to see on your bonfire?" were transposed.

The correct comments are published here:



"My effigy on bonfire night would be unethical recruitment agencies. As soon as they hear of a vacancy, these agencies fire out CVs to clients to try and get ownership of a potential candidate, even if they haven't spoken to them first. It means that when I and other recruiters send in CVs which we have already discussed and have permission to submit on behalf of our client, we are told that it's already been received. It ends up being a frustrating battle for ownership. They also post 'ghost' jobs which don't actually exist in order to build their CV database. I know that candidates don't like their CVs being sent out willy nilly to companies and neither do clients like receiving multiple copies of the same CV. Many of them end up just being bombarded with hundreds of unsuitable applications."

Erin Harris, Recruitment Manager, Project Excellence LLP



"Anyone who has a negative or indifferent perception of the North-east! I'm so passionate about our region, industry and people, that I am always 'educating' clients about our vibrant and international business community. Whenever I speak with clients from outwith Aberdeenshire I encounter a significant lack of knowledge about our region. I have worked in many countries and if everyone knew the facts about the North-east's economy and our position in the UK, Europe and internationally, I am certain they'd rush to invest and work here and we all need to spread the message at every opportunity. On another note, I see many people who are not pro-active in terms of their work and, realistically, you get what you put in. Too many people expect to reap the rewards from others without putting in some serious groundwork themselves. There is no short cut to success."

Rosemary McLennan, Director, Aberdeen PA Ltd Systems

On the move

IT services company Skibo Technologies has recruited six additional members of staff to its support team after winning contracts worth more than £400,000.

The recruitment drives brings the total number of people employed at the company to 34, an increase of 20% since the start of the year.

Sarah Toop, Michael Gervaise, Darren Wallace, Lee Johnston, Hasrat Bhanot and James Gomez have joined Skibo's support services team.

ON THE MOVE

Ashleigh McConnell and **Morag Christoffersen** have been promoted to become Associates in the private client and commercial departments of Mackinnons Solicitors. Ashleigh specialises in trusts and executors and Morag specialises in shipping and commercial law. Nicola Elder has taken up the new post of Practice Manager and Bruce Craig has becomes Managing Partner taking over from Charles Scott who held the post for more than 20 years and remains as Senior Partner.



New appointments

Isobel Maughan has joined Lighthouse, the Aberdeen-based multi-disciplinary design company, as Business Development Manager. John Duncan, Managing Director at Lighthouse, said: "Isobel's knowledge and experience will support our strategy of growing the business and in turn growing our clients business's through their brands and by providing clients with specialist communications and creative learning solutions".



Isobel Maughan

Cerri McDonald, Business Development Manager for IT support specialist Solutions, has been elected to the Board of Directors for International Energy Skills & Training Alliance (IESTA). A professional communications specialist, Cerri has played an active role in the business growth enjoyed by Solutions over the last five years. She said: "I am eager to work with the alliance to continue delivering innovative training solutions to the global oil and gas industry. The collaboration of Scottish training expertise most definitely gives IESTA members a strong competitive advantage and I'm thrilled to be part of the team."



Cerri McDonald

Commercial property company, FG Burnett, has added to its expertise with two new appointments in Aberdeen. Chartered surveyor **Stuart Fyvie**, who previously worked with Aberdeenshire Council and **Davis Langdon** has joined the consultancy's building surveying team where he will assist with design and specification projects, dilapidations and building surveys.

Robert Eunson has rejoined FG Burnett, where he started out as a graduate trainee in 2003. Robert joins the company's commercial valuation department from J&E Shepherd and will work across the office, retail and industrial sectors, providing valuations for FG Burnett clients.



Keith Taylor

Keith Taylor, an operations manager for construction firm Mansell, has been appointed Chairman of the Aberdeen branch of The Chartered Institute of Builders.

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New partner Rodney Whyte (front) with directors Jonathan Kirkwood, Shirley Allen and Richard Scott.

Legal firm McGrigors has strengthened its Aberdeen office with the appointment of a new partner and three directors. Real estate expert **Rodney Whyte** has been made partner and along with Aberdeen-based **Tracey Menzies** is one of the firm's 20 partners specialising in commercial property development and construction law.

Rodney Whyte counts CALA amongst his clients and recently played a leading role in advising Ribnort, the developers of the 750,000 sq ft international business park ABZ to be built at Aberdeen Airport.

Shirley Allen has been appointed a director in the energy and infrastructure team and with an extensive oil and gas background has advised clients in the upstream and services sectors of the UKCS, US, Europe and the Middle East.

Banking and finance lawyer **Richard Scott** has been appointed director and specialises in financing in the oil services, maritime, project finance and infrastructure sectors. The fourth senior promotion sees **Jonathan Kirkwood** appointed director in the corporate team. Dual qualified in Scotland and England and Wales, Jonathan has worked on a variety of mergers and acquisitions, private equity, joint venture and corporate real estate transactions.

Andrea Robertson has been appointed as senior sales advisor at the Deveron Homes' Cairn View development in Kemnay. Andrea has more than 20 years of experience in property sales.



Andrea Robertson

Two members of the Brewin Dolphin team in Aberdeen have been promoted to investment managers after reaching a major milestone with industry body, the Chartered Institute for Securities and Investment (CISI).

The promotions bolster Brewin Dolphin's position as one of the largest and most qualified investment management teams in the North-east of Scotland. The company's Aberdeen office now has nine investment managers and four financial planners.

Carrie Keenan and **Susanne Evans** have each been promoted after attaining the crucial "private client investment advice and management" component of their CISI Diploma.



Susanne Evans and Carrie Keenan

International learning and skills specialist Atlas has appointed **Stewart Buchanan** as product development manager to spearhead the growth of the company's expanding range of products for the oil and gas and other safety-critical industries worldwide.

This new position will be pivotal to supporting Atlas' repositioning as a leading innovative, learning, compliance and competency workforce solutions business.

With 24 years of project and account management experience under his belt, he joins Atlas from AVC Media where he held the post of digital and creative development director. Prior to this Buchanan was founder and managing director of Hotchilli Design Ltd.



Commercial law firm Paull & Williamson has welcomed back **Jim Tierney** as a consultant to its dispute resolution and health, safety and environmental divisions following his retirement after 11 years serving as a sheriff.

Mr Tierney originally joined the firm as an assistant in 1979 after 10 years in the central belt, becoming a partner in 1982. He was head of litigation for many years leading various complex and high profile cases such as Piper Alpha, Ocean Odyssey and Braer.

In 2000 he moved to a career in the judicial system starting as a sheriff in Perth before taking a position in Aberdeen in 2003 where, in addition to his general duties, he sat in the Commercial Court from 2004 until his retirement earlier this year.



Jim Tierney

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