

Business Comment

DECEMBER 2024/JANUARY 2025

The Future Workforce

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The Future Workforce

Welcome to this issue of Business Comment, which focuses on The Future Workforce.

In this issue we are looking at the future workforce, something that concerns almost every business and every educational establishment in the country. Putting it simply, without being able to find and employ the right people with the right skills and attitudes, we will not achieve the kind of economy we want and need. The key is understanding better what those skills will look like, and finding the best way to provide them.

In Edinburgh, we have one of the most educated workforces in the UK, and that has been a major factor in the city's economic success which has endured over the decades. In this issue of the magazine we look at some of the planning and activity going into ensuring that continues in the decades to come.

Not least through the transformative work being carried out at the University of Edinburgh's Data Driven Innovation projects at the magnificent new Edinburgh Futures Institute, where Executive Leadership training is helping enable informed decision-making across a range of vital sectors. Also through the work Edinburgh College does with NHS Lothian in the healthcare sector.

And the role our festivals are playing in nurturing a pipeline of talent in our growing and successful creative industries is laid out by the Chief Executive of Edinburgh International Festival Frances Hegyi. And Heriot-Watt University let us know what they are doing to help the growth of Scotland's burgeoning space sector, with its enormous potential to bring high-value employment to thousands of Scots.

Otherwise, and as ever, the magazine is full of exciting, inspiring and innovative work being done by our members and partners. As the year draws to a close, and despite the headwinds that have been faced, Edinburgh's business community remains vibrant.

Enjoy the magazine.



Liz McAreavey
Chief Executive,
Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce

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“Transformative” partnership aims to keep hostelling affordable and sustainable amid rising costs

Energy consumption at one of Edinburgh’s largest hostels has significantly decreased due to a pilot programme aimed at reducing visitor costs and enhancing sustainability.



After the success of the innovative energy saving programme at Edinburgh Central Hostel, Hostelling Scotland is now exploring how to roll out the energy saving programme across their portfolio of larger hostels which are open all year round.

The ‘Eyes on the Energy’ trial came after Hostelling Scotland was introduced to energy monitoring solutions company, Energy Saving Bear through Royal Bank of Scotland.

The partnership saw the hostel install high-tech sensors to measure electricity usage throughout the premises, allowing the team to pinpoint exactly where and how much energy was being consumed or wasted and providing a clear foundation for developing effective energy-saving solutions.

The project, which is on track to achieve a return on investment in less than six months, has already resulted in a 19% drop in consumption in just four months.

Margo Paterson, CEO of Hostelling Scotland, said: “The results of this trial could be transformative for our Edinburgh Central Hostel – and hostels across Scotland. With energy prices affecting the sector, we are on a mission to make travelling in Scotland accessible and affordable to visitors. The beauty of hostelling is how it provides opportunities to a wider group of people to explore more of what our beautiful country has to offer.

“As an organisation, we are always experimenting with ways to make sure we give people the chance to travel while reducing their impact on the environment. We’re very pleased to see this trial showed significant energy savings and reduced carbon emissions.”



Located at the top of Leith Walk, Edinburgh Central Hostel is in a prime city centre location and is visited by travellers from across the globe looking for a budget stay, as well as being a place for carers and Parent Network Scotland to use for respite breaks. It also enables youth programmes to give disadvantaged young people the opportunity to see part of the country they might not have been able to.

Kevin Havelock, Head of Commercial Mid Markets at Royal Bank of Scotland, added: “By introducing Hostelling Scotland, our long-standing customer, to Jamie and the team at Energy Saving Bear, we empowered them to harness smart technology and innovative solutions. This collaborative effort led to a deeper understanding of energy consumption patterns and inspired a cultural shift towards sustainable practices.

“The early success of this partnership is a testament to the strength of collaboration. By uniting efforts and sharing a common purpose, we have achieved significant results.”

To find out more about the support Royal Bank of Scotland provides to businesses to grow and scale, please visit www.rbs.co.uk.

The results of this trial could be transformative for our hostel – and hostels across Scotland.



People matter at Aberdeen Considine

A workplace that works for everyone: Aberdeen Considine's people first strategy.

Leading law firm Aberdeen Considine, which employs more than 450 people, including around 160 in Edinburgh and the central belt, is two years into the implementation of a progressive and ambitious "people agenda", with a view to enhancing the employee journey, creating the best possible working environment and nurturing a culture in which all colleagues are enabled and empowered to do their best work and achieve their highest potential.

People Matter is led by Sally-Anne Anderson, who previously headed up Aberdeen Considine's employment team. Sally-Anne joined the firm's management team in September 2022 and turned her focus to working alongside the Managing Partner and HR Director to develop and implement a "people first" strategy that aligns with the objectives of the business and supports its aim to promote excellence in delivery of property, legal and financial services for the firm's expanding client base.

A platform known as 'we are listening' has been developed to measure and understand employee engagement and experience. Based on the priorities arising from employee feedback the firm has: rolled out a host of enhanced family-friendly policies; introduced 'AC Flex' offering a range of flexible and hybrid working arrangements; implemented a "Dress for your day" policy; rolled out

menopause and neurodiversity policies and; initiated meaningful discussions on important topics relating to employee wellbeing and DE&I as part of a firm-wide 'Let's Talk' initiative. Aberdeen Considine has also created a learning and development hub and work is ongoing to enhance colleagues' learning and development journey, linking closely with career progression as well as leadership development to build a strong leadership

pipeline going forward. This is also supported by the development of a new performance development platform centring around regular feedback and recognition.

Sally-Anne said: "It is a pleasure and privilege to lead the People Matter project, with the backing of the senior management team at Aberdeen Considine, who are committed to creating the best possible employee proposition, ensuring that as a business we attract new talent and retain the accomplished and committed professionals who already make this long-established firm a great place to work."

She added that delivering the project is not without its challenges, "As a diverse business - both in terms of the range of professional services we deliver and our geographical scope (from Peterhead to Manchester) - there are no 'one size fits all' solutions. Our people strategies and policies must all be highly bespoke and adaptable to ensure that every business area is accommodated in the way that works best for them. It takes time, consultation, listening and understanding to reach the right solutions, but the results are very rewarding when we do.

"As a business we believe that our greatest investment is in our people and the People Matter project is a practical and tangible expression of that commitment."



Sally-Anne Anderson,
HR Management Consultant,
Aberdeen Considine

Future Workforce – Trends & Implications

The way we work is changing rapidly, driven by factors like COVID-19 and generative AI. Some changes may feel hyped and short-lived, but others reflect long-term trends and deserve our attention.



Thomas Peschken-Holt
Head of Queen Margaret Business School



Leave entitlements (incl. bank holidays) increased in the UK by almost 50% since the 1950s, highlighting a move towards better work-life balance. Models like 80/9 (80 hours over 9 days), and the possibility of hybrid and home working are more than COVID-19 overhangs - they represent a cultural shift that reflects the growing demand for more flexibility and improved quality of life.

Employee wellbeing is a key theme for the future workforce. The pandemic raised awareness of public health and the lack of employee workplace health support.

Long-term sickness due to stress and desk-based work are concerns. The 'unconscious unbossing' of Gen Z with disinterest in middle management due to perceived stress, has led some companies to cut such

positions. New generations favour patchwork careers of fractional contracts and freelance work, creating challenges in an economy with skill shortages. Beyond the debate about returning to the office, the implications are far ranging from change in policies to embrace flexible working models to change in organisational structures creating attractive role profiles.

Lifelong learning is crucial in response to changing work landscapes. Universities are preparing students for jobs that don't yet exist, with technologies advancing and penetrating new areas. Technological changes including Internet, mobile devices, smart phone apps and AI, have not only resulted in more efficient working practices, they have made some jobs redundant, while also creating new ones. The learning required to embrace such changes differs from traditional professional development. For example, aside from traditional management upskilling, healthcare professionals learning coding for health analytics is more of a lateral development. Employees will need to engage in continuous learning throughout their

careers, embedded through elements such as sabbaticals to funding support.

Responsible behaviour as a reflection of one's values is increasingly important to the modern workforce. Employees seek employers whose values align with theirs, including diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Authentic organisational culture is essential, as employees will call out insincere efforts. Companies must create mechanisms for whistleblowing and ensuring the employee voice is heard - addressing behaviours that fall short of expectations to build employee trust and loyalty. All of these areas require expertise in responsible behaviour and how to lead internal discussions - not all organisations will require a sustainability officer, but they will require an understanding of responsible behaviours, sustainability and DEI.

The evolving workforce landscape presents both opportunities and challenges. Proactively engaging with these trends is vital for attracting and retaining talent. However, there are pitfalls embedded within these trends ie the lifelong learning impact on perceived stress leading to burnout, the complexities of managing a diverse and dispersed workforce or overcoming a potential generational digital divide. In the same way that businesses need to adapt - professional bodies, colleges and universities are partners in this skill development ecosystem. Collaboration is key to developing novel solutions and approaches for the future workforce.

The evolving workforce landscape presents both opportunities and challenges. Proactively engaging with these trends is vital for attracting and retaining talent.

Customised qualifications for your business

SQA Customised Awards allow your organisation to decide the content and structure of a qualification, with SQA helping with development, external quality assurance and certification. Employers can design their own qualifications that are unique and meet business needs, with flexibility on the content and structure of the qualification.



An SQA Customised Award can be integrated with existing business and staff development processes. It offers a large range of benefits, from achieving business objectives and increasing individuals' skill levels, to offering development opportunities for employees and providing an official credit rating for the qualification on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

Building qualifications to recognise skills

Pro Paints is a Scottish based painting and decorating company that has developed its own unique spray-painting qualification at SCQF level 6 with the assistance of SQA. Craig Haney, Managing Director of Pro Paints said he took the decision to work with SQA to develop a new Customised Award in airless spray painting for his employees and local trades, after he realised there was no formal accreditation for spray painting.

Pro Paints has been spray-painting for years and provides training for its staff, but with no qualification available, there is no formal recognition for local painters and decorators. Craig wanted his staff, and other local

tradespeople, to have the opportunity to develop their skills and have their experience officially recognised.

Craig reached out to SQA and spoke with his local Regional Manager to discuss his requirements, and what he wanted the Pro Paints qualification to achieve. With SQA's support, Craig was able to write the units that make up the Certificate in Airless Spray Painting; area preparation and learning how to safely operate the spray machine, protecting and masking the spray area, and learning how to use the machine.

Craig says, "Having the chance to develop my own qualification, that I can then deliver to my staff and other local businesses has been a really rewarding experience. Seeing your people build on the skills they have and get recognised for the work that they do has been a really positive experience."

Positive feedback

Kevin Graham, a painter and decorator from KG Painting & Decorating, said, "I got in touch with Craig at Pro Paints because I wanted to expand my skills and explore different ways of working. The spray-painting course has been incredibly beneficial to me. It has

not only improved my technical skills, like control and layering, but also broadened my creative perspective. I've gained confidence in experimenting with new techniques, and the award has inspired me to think more boldly in my work. The guidance Craig provided has also helped me refine my personal style, making me more versatile as a decorator."

Find out more about how SQA Customised Awards can benefit your organisation at www.sqa.org.uk/customisedawards.

As the Regional Manager for Edinburgh, East Lothian and Midlothian, Theresa McGowan has extensive knowledge of SQA qualifications, from those delivered in schools and colleges, to workplace-based qualifications. If you would like advice on delivering SQA qualifications, please contact Theresa at theresa.mcgowan@sqa.org.uk.



Pro Paints is a Scottish based painting and decorating company that has developed its own unique spray-painting qualification at SCQF level 6 with the assistance of SQA.

Capital Theatres has launched the King's Theatre Heritage Project to celebrate Edinburgh's theatrical history

Capital Theatres has launched the King's Theatre Heritage Project, a new initiative dedicated to celebrating the rich history of Edinburgh's theatre community.



At the heart of the project is The People's Archive, a comprehensive digital platform offering access to digitised programmes, photographs, playbills, press articles and oral histories, shared by members of the community and those who have enjoyed performing and working at the King's. With over 2,700 items, this searchable catalogue will enable users to immerse themselves in the history of the King's

Theatre through diverse research projects, ranging from genealogy articles to model boxes and costume design.

While the complete archive will launch in spring 2025, Capital Theatres has released a taster of what people can expect. Inspired by a newspaper article from 1937, a mini online exhibition tells the story of Bethia Cassie a cleaner at the King's Theatre in 1917 who eventually became a lighting technician - a very unusual job for a woman at that time. Heritage Project volunteers used census records, archive photographs and interviews with Bethia's descendants to uncover her story, the first of many which will be told as part of The People's Archive.

Complementing the archive is a series of Heritage Talks which invite audiences to explore the rich history, heritage, and storytelling behind theatre productions, both on and off the stage. Supported by Historic Environment Scotland and The National Lottery Heritage Fund, The People's Archive and Heritage Talks are part of Capital Theatres' ongoing commitment to preserve and promote Edinburgh's theatre heritage for future generations.

Three talks per season will be held on select Wednesdays at 5:30pm in the Event Rooms at Festival Theatre, ahead of evening performances. The Heritage

Talks feature expert guest speakers and provide a unique opportunity for audience members to engage directly with professionals in the field of theatre heritage, history, and production.

Heritage Talks Programme:

- 5 February 2025: Dr Sian Barber from Queen's University Belfast discusses the transition from film to theatre, censorship, and British film history behind *Mary Poppins*.
- 12 March 2025: Ruth McKay, Chair of Capital Theatres Youth Advisory Board, highlights the archives of the King's Theatre with a talk on community theatre, focusing on a discussion of *Show Boat* through the ages.
- 9 April 2025: King's Theatre staff lead a special Q&A on the conservation of the King's Theatre, giving a behind-the-scenes look at this historic project.

A taster of the People's Archive can be viewed here: www.capitaltheatres.com/kings-future/kings-stories/peoples-archive-kings-profiles.

Tickets for each talk comprise of a £2 donation to Capital Theatres. For more information and to book tickets, visit the website at www.capitaltheatres.com or contact the Festival Theatre Box Office by calling **0131 529 6000**.





Digital help is at hand

Whether it's accessing cutting-edge manufacturing tools or adopting AI-powered systems, businesses that keep up with digital advancements stand to gain a real edge. But for SMEs to truly harness this potential, a digitally skilled workforce is essential.

Martyn Kendrick

Regional Director
Relationship Management,
Bank of Scotland



Yet, new research shows that many parts of Scotland's economy lack these skills. The Fraser of Allander Institute's 'Skills for Today and Tomorrow' report reveals that only 21% of Scottish firms feel their employees are fully equipped to meet their digital needs, and nearly half (46%) aren't addressing this skills gap.

This shortfall isn't just a hurdle for individual businesses, it's a barrier to productivity across Scotland. As technology evolves rapidly, having a skilled team to be digitally adept is crucial for businesses to remain competitive.

So, what steps can businesses take to close the digital skills gap?

Resources available

A major challenge for businesses in addressing the digital skills gap is knowing where to find help.

The good news is that there is plenty of free-to-access support available to help

businesses navigate this journey.

For example, we launched our Digital Academy to help businesses in Scotland tackle the growing digital skills gap. The academy offers a range of resources, including free live training, interactive videos and on-demand guides, designed to help businesses of all sizes enhance their digital capabilities. It's an excellent resource for businesses looking to boost their workforce's skills.

In addition, Business Gateway – the publicly-funded business support service – offers valuable help through its Digital Health Check: a quick 5-minute questionnaire that helps businesses assess their digital skills and identify areas for improvement. It provides tailored recommendations and directs businesses to relevant resources, making it perfect for those just starting out or looking to enhance their digital capabilities.

The power of the apprentice

Alongside educational resources, a powerful way for businesses to develop digital skills within their workforce is through apprenticeships.

Apprenticeships are a great option for companies that rely on digital technology and want to bring in fresh

talent or enhance the skills of their existing team. Apprenticeships are open to employees of all ages, providing opportunities to upskill, reskill or gain new expertise through hands-on experience – not just in the classroom. This approach helps boost productivity and ensures the entire team is skilled in an ever-evolving digital landscape.

There are a wide range of digitally-focused apprenticeships available, including Modern Apprenticeships in areas like Information Security and Data Analytics. These programmes not only help bridge the skills gap in critical fields but also enable businesses to cultivate internal talent – the knowledge apprentices bring can eventually be shared and spread across the entire organisation.

Digital skills are only going to become more important, and Scottish firms can lay the foundation for future prosperity by embedding digital at the core of their operations.

By building a team fully equipped with the skills to adapt, innovate and thrive in a digital world, businesses not only drive their own growth but also boost productivity – a crucial factor for staying competitive and fostering economic growth across the country.



Gavin Jack,
Dean, The University of
Edinburgh Business School

What are your primary goals for the University of Edinburgh Business School over the coming years?

It is a privilege to lead the Business School following Professor Wendy Loretto's successful tenure. The School, with its world-class University setting and vibrant city location, has immense potential. My role is to unlock this potential for even greater impact.

My priorities include enhancing our core business—teaching and research. We aim to provide students with a world-class education, fostering independent thinking and equipping them for meaningful careers and life goals. Our research should produce academically sound knowledge that offers fresh perspectives and benefits society.

Equally important is ensuring our work addresses contemporary issues faced by business and society. Strengthening our civic contribution in Edinburgh and Scotland is key. As a globally renowned School, we can deepen engagement with local business communities, government, and civil society to address priorities like inclusive economic growth, innovation, and climate finance. By collaborating with other disciplines at the University, we can act as a bridge between academia and external stakeholders.

This civic mission aligns with our history. In 1916, the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce encouraged the University to offer a business

degree, leading to the launch of our Bachelor of Commerce in 1919. This deep connection to the city remains part of our DNA.

How is the Business School adapting its curriculum to meet the evolving demands of the business world?

As the business world evolves, Business Schools must adapt their curricula to remain relevant. We regularly review what and how we teach, ensuring alignment with contemporary issues and business needs. Feedback from alumni, students, accrediting bodies, and our International Advisory Board helps us stay current.

Recent additions to our programmes address key topics like climate change, data analytics, AI, and diversity in organisations, complementing core subjects such as accountancy, finance, strategy, marketing, and HR management. Practical connections are embedded through guest lectures, live case studies, client projects, mentoring, and student treks to diverse organisations.

Executive Education is a prime example of academia-industry collaboration. Our partnership with NatWest Group supported over 63,000 employees (99.9% of its workforce) with the skills to advance its climate goals. This scalable, impactful programme blended learning strands to foster a culture of positive change, earning the School a shortlist spot in the 'Best

Business School Partnership' category at the AMBA & BGA Excellence Awards, a globally recognised accolade for Business Schools.

What skills do you believe are most critical for students to acquire in preparation for the future workforce?

I think there are a few skills areas that are vital for students to develop during their studies to equip them as they enter the future world of work.

Analytical and creative skills are crucial. While technical competencies are important, they alone cannot address the complexity of real-world problems. Managers must navigate incomplete or conflicting information, requiring strong analytical and metacognitive skills to think critically and devise creative solutions. Digital literacy is increasingly vital as generative AI tools process vast data, but human judgement remains key to interpreting outputs. Similarly, sustainability skills are in demand, especially in sectors like financial services, to drive the low-carbon economy.

Leadership skills - both self-leadership and leading others—are equally critical. The future workforce will demand adaptability, as students may switch roles or organisations, or hold multiple positions simultaneously. A clear sense of values, purpose, and a lifelong learning mindset will help them navigate these changes and maintain resilience.

Collaboration and empathy will also be indispensable. Effective leadership in cross-functional or cross-cultural teams requires bridging differences and fostering inclusion. Adapting to diverse working preferences (e.g., remote vs. in-person) and supporting colleagues' mental health will be key to building inclusive and compassionate workplaces.

How does the Business School prepare students for leadership roles in diverse and globalised workplaces?

Developing students to be responsible leaders is an important goal for the Business School and part of our commitment as a signatory to the United Nations' Principles for Responsible Management Education (UN PRME). A distinct capability of the University of Edinburgh Business School lies in student development, where we support the personal and professional development of students as learners ready to thrive in a changing and complex world.

Students learn about core concepts of diversity and global business through individual courses in our formal curricula. For example, all our students take the first-year course 'Global Challenges for Business', which in 2019 won a global education award from the Aspen Institute - 'Ideas Worth Teaching'. We also have full programmes dedicated to International Business, Global



Strategy and Sustainability, and International Human Resource Management. We embed opportunities for cross-cultural interaction and learning across our degrees, taking advantage of the highly diverse student and staff cohorts at the Business School. In this academic year, we have 78 nationalities across our postgraduate cohort, and we provide opportunities for some undergraduates to study abroad, and students on our MBA with International Exchange programme to study for a semester at one of our overseas partner institutions.

Educating the whole person so that they may flourish is a mantra of the School, and so we offer an extensive range of opportunities for students to engage in self- and leadership development, notably through our distinct and celebrated coaching culture.

What recent research projects at the Business School do you find particularly impactful or innovative?

Colleagues at the Business School are leading impactful research projects, particularly in sustainability, often collaborating with businesses, third-sector organisations, and policymakers locally and internationally to drive legislative, organisational, and regulatory change.

The Wellcome Trust-funded Living Good Food Nation Lab, led by Professors Mary Brennan, Angela Tregear, and David Marshall, advances health-focused, net-zero food systems in Scotland. Partnering

with public authorities, it supports Local Good Food Nation Plans, with Professor Brennan's earlier work influencing the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Act 2022.

Associate Professor Theodor Cojoianu's climate finance research addresses biodiversity loss and the climate crisis. As a member of the European Commission's Platform on Sustainable Finance, he has shaped policies clarifying 'green' investments for institutional investors.

Project FAIR, led by Dr Ishbel McWha-Hermann, collaborates with international NGOs to improve HR and reward practices in aid organisations. A key output is the Equitable Compensation Playbook, guiding fair and transparent reward systems.

To foster interdisciplinary collaboration, we recently launched three new research labs: the Gamification and Systems Thinking Lab (GST Lab), the Digital and AI Transformation Lab (DAIT Lab), and the Imagination Lab (ILab), joining the existing Minoritised Enterprise Policy & Action Lab Scotland (MEPALs). It's an exciting time at the University of Edinburgh Business School!

It is a privilege to lead the Business School following Professor Wendy Loretto's successful tenure. The School, with its world-class University setting and vibrant city location, has immense potential. My role is to unlock this potential for even greater impact.

Edinburgh health charity cuts gas use by 25% with simple boiler tweak

Pilton Community Health looked at their gas usage and found an energy saving measure has shrunk their carbon footprint.



Pilton Community Health Project (PCHP) is over 40 years old and is Scotland's oldest community health project.

Through a Community Wellbeing Programme the charity works alongside people and families in North Edinburgh to take steps to better health and wellbeing and in turn, create a healthy community and environment. Based in the local neighbourhood, PCHP has a community hub, three meeting rooms, a training kitchen for cooking and shared office spaces.

As part of their environmental commitments, Project Assistant Rita Visakaviciute took part in the Edinburgh Chamber's Net Zero Edinburgh cohort* in late 2023. The PCHP was keen to ensure they are doing all they could to reduce their impact on the planet.

Like many charities, they are aware of rising operating costs and the challenges of securing funding to continue to deliver a wide range of health promoting activities in the heart of the community.

"We have a responsibility to the people we support and to be accountable to our funders. One of the ways we do this is to know how much energy we use," says Rita. PCHP want to be able to show they take their environmental commitments seriously.

In December 2022, they lowered the flow temperature on their gas boiler to improve efficiency.

It wasn't until they collected their energy data for one of the Edinburgh Chamber workshops, that they realised this quick change had cut their gas use by a quarter – around 20,000 kWh – in a year. A huge decrease in energy use by one simple adjustment.

Taking a closer look at the gas meter, they discovered the boiler was set to run seven days a week, instead of five days the Project is in use. They also adjusted the daily start and finish times for the gas heating.

Rita made a call to the building's maintenance team, who changed the boiler settings two days later. "It was super super simple," says Rita.

The charity is now on track to cut their gas consumption by 40% compared to last year, based on previous and current usage. In addition, with the data they gathered as evidence, the team are ready to decide which areas to tackle next on their net-zero journey.

Top tips from Pilton Community Health Project:

1. Read your energy data. If you don't know your usage, you can't make changes.
2. Changing people's behaviour can take time. Start with reducing emissions from the systems and parts of your building that are easy to change.
3. Take it step by step. You don't need to tackle everything in your carbon footprint all at once.



Learn more:

*Pilton Community Health Project participated in a cohort delivered as part of the Net Zero Edinburgh project which is managed by the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce. The project is funded by the UK Government and the City of Edinburgh Council and supports Edinburgh's SMEs on their net zero journey.

Our next cohort will be starting in January 2025 so please get in touch with the team by emailing projects@edinburghchamber.co.uk if you are interested in participating in the cohort or learning more about the project.

For more please visit the website at www.pchp.org.uk.



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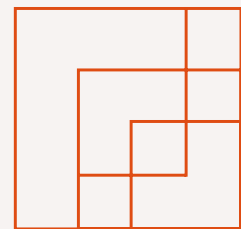


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60 Seconds

Name: Fiona Gibson

Company: Capital Theatres

Website: www.capitaltheatres.com

Q: In five words or less, what do you do?

A: Share extraordinary live theatre experiences.

Q: How long have you been in your current role?

A: I've been working at Capital Theatres since April 2020 – which was certainly an interesting time to start a new role at an in-person venue.

Q: What does a week in your job look like?

A: Nurturing relationships with cultural leaders and stakeholders, managing the multi-million pound redevelopment of the iconic King's Theatre and of course curating a varied and entertaining programme for Edinburgh audiences year-round.

Q: Your proudest moment with your organisation, or biggest 'win'?

A: Hosting the Scottish premiere of Cameron Mackintosh's Hamilton, which was both the fastest selling and highest attended show in the history of the Festival Theatre.



Q: Your favourite top tip or quote in business?

A: "Put art at the heart."

Q: Why did you join the Chamber of Commerce?

A: It's a fantastic opportunity to build our relationships with the wider Edinburgh business community.

Q: Where do you read your copy of Business Comment?

A: With my morning coffee of course!

GET WITH IT

By Bill Magee

Scottish Business Technology
Writer of the Year



Edinburgh highlighted in a global report as a top destination and magnet for investment makes it even more critical the skills required to match such an accolade are readily available, writes Industry Commentator Bill Magee.

Digital upskilling development programmes based on nurturing recognised talents are under greater pressure to deliver a fully equipped workforce irrespective of sector in greater numbers.

A new global study places the Capital on an equal footing with London, New York, Singapore and Vancouver. The Scotsman reports this is centred on Edinburgh's booming financial sector and a general quality of life.

Scotland's Future Skills Action Plan morphed into the long-awaited Logan Report. Described as "critical" by the National Strategy for Economic Transformation and aimed at firmly establishing the country as a "world-class entrepreneurial nation".

Central to the process is the Techscaler programme giving support and back-up to

start-ups. Unfortunately without its creator Mark Logan who has quit but in his short tenure has left in place an invaluable legacy.

It's all about improving the venture capital network and balancing computing and information communication technologies (ICT) to attract increasing numbers of students to the subject.

Also connecting existing initiatives and projects through a more structured tech-support system, and boosting funding to utilise what already exists across numerous institutions and agencies.

"Efforts to match skills aim to address shortages in high-tech, analytical, digital, and STEM fields. In 2023, 19.2% of the UK workforce was employed in engineering and tech roles, earning significantly more than average salaries.

Women remain significantly underrepresented, with their roles decreasing by 38,000 compared to 2022. Change is needed.

Based on traditional comparisons, where Scotland represents around one tenth of UK GDP - that's many, many hundreds of budding female tech entrepreneurs lost to the workplace and economy.

That award? Scotland's capital was judged "best in class" among some of the most investment-worthy cities in the world, in a new global tracker of 63 cities.

The accolade was revealed in "Full City Competitiveness Redefined Tracker" - bit of a digital mouthful! - via sustainable development consultancy Arup.

As long as Edinburgh gets its digital skills offering right. And it will...



According to the latest quarterly report by law firms Wright, Johnston & Mackenzie (WJM) and Irwin Mitchell, Edinburgh has replaced Brighton as the highest-ranking UK city outside of London for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) attractiveness.

The study, which incorporates the latest analysis by the Centre for Economics and Business Research (Cebr), examines recent changes to the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) attractiveness of 50 locations based on 10 economic indicators*.

It shows 11 of the top 20 FDI hotspots are currently in Scotland, the Midlands, and the North of England. It also reveals these locations account for around 80 per cent of the 24 cities which improved their ranking position compared to Q3 2024.

Scotland's capital moved up to fourth position with an overall score of 49.1. The report says Edinburgh's strong performance is founded on its consistent performance across all three pillars comprising the Index.

Edinburgh demonstrates robust performance in the infrastructure category, attributed to its extensive public transport usage and the interconnectivity of its transport network, along with advanced digital infrastructure.

Regarding its growth potential, Edinburgh's overall score has risen from July 2024, driven by relatively strong employment growth forecasts for 2025. The report adds that, although the city's score in the skills category fell slightly, it remains strong due to institutions like the University of Edinburgh.

Fraser Gillies, Managing Partner at Wright, Johnston & Mackenzie LLP, which has five bases across Scotland including an office on Edinburgh's St Andrew's Square, commented on the findings: "Edinburgh's strong performance in the previous report was already impressive, and it is particularly pleasing to see the city move even further up the league table.

"This consistent improvement highlights Edinburgh's robust local infrastructure and growth potential, making it an increasingly attractive destination for foreign investment."

Aberdeen is another Scottish city that is

performing strongly, moving up 18 places in the league table. This was attributed to comparatively strong employment growth forecasts and its relative distance from the North East Scotland Investment Zone.

Investment Zones in the UK are designated areas where the government collaborates with local authorities and businesses to foster economic growth and innovation. These zones aim to leverage local strengths and untapped potential by offering a range of incentives, including tax reliefs, planning support, and business assistance.

The North East Scotland Investment Zone was announced in 2023 as part of a collaborative effort between the Scottish and UK governments. The initiative aims to boost the region's economy through targeted investments, tax reliefs, and other incentives over a five-year period.

Pushpin Singh, Senior Economist at Cebr, said: "Our findings underscore the transformative potential of Freeports and

Investment Zones in reshaping the UK's investment landscape.

"Cities like Aberdeen, Liverpool, and Newcastle are emerging as significant beneficiaries, demonstrating how targeted infrastructure and skills development could potentially create hubs of economic opportunity."

The Office for National Statistics recently published the latest FDI statistics, revealing that the value of the UK's inward FDI position increased by £126.8 billion, reaching £2,068 billion.

According to the latest statistics from the Department for Business and Trade, 1,555 projects landed in the UK during the 2023/24 financial year as a result of FDI, resulting in 71,478 new jobs being created. Out of these projects, 1,023 represented new investment, with 357 involving an expansion of an existing investment, and the remainder accounted for by mergers and acquisitions including joint ventures.

Location	Overall Score			
	Nov 2024 Score	QoQ Change	Nov 2024 Rank	QoQ Change
Inner London	78.6	6.6	1	0
London	73.8	5.3	2	0
Outer London	66.8	5.5	3	0
City of Edinburgh	49.1	10.5	4	2
Greater Manchester	47.1	10.7	5	3
Oxford	46.9	7.3	6	-1
Birmingham	46.0	8.2	7	0
Manchester	43.0	8.4	8	1
Cambridge	42.8	8.8	9	1
Leeds	41.9	14.7	10	8

Quarter-on-quarter change in FDI Attractiveness score across Q4 2024 and Q3 2024 (Irwin Mitchell / Cebr)

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Edinburgh's Strategy for Bridging Skills Gaps, Enhancing Workforce Development and Collaboration



Bridging Skills Gaps

In a recent survey from the Scottish Chamber network, there was some encouraging signs that labour market concerns may be easing somewhat amongst businesses. However, they remain high, with half of respondents still reporting difficulty recruiting. A year ago, the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce held a half-day event to address the talent issues facing local businesses. Bringing together over 50 representatives from various sectors, the event tackled pressing concerns such as skills shortages, challenges in training and upskilling, and talent retention. In light of the persistent challenges in this area, the recommendations that came out of this event are worth revisiting today.

Recommendations for the Scottish Government

One message that came through strongly in the event was that where the Scottish Government is offering support with skills and training, too many employers simply aren't hearing about it. Over half of small businesses are unaware of key support programs, and this lack of visibility hampers efforts to improve access to vital training resources. The Scottish Government is therefore urged to improve communication around its skills initiatives, whilst simplifying the current system to improve access. Long-term funding stability would also be beneficial, giving time for policies to 'bed in', and enabling businesses to plan more effectively for sustainable workforce training and development.

Another key suggestion stressed the importance of more flexible learning opportunities – with 78% of regional employers anticipating the need for upskilling in the near future, we recommended greater access to short and focused interventions to widen access to learning opportunities.

Alongside this, the role of employers in the skills system should be better recognised and enhanced. For example, increased opportunities for work placements as part of qualifications (even in non-vocational subjects), and better collaboration with small employers to increase internship and work experience opportunities would be important steps to improve the supply of 'work-ready' young people coming out of schools, colleges and universities.

National Policy Reforms from the UK Government

The main recommendation for the UK Government was that we need more flexibility around graduate visas. Scotland excels in higher and further education, and draws a huge number of highly skilled and educated people from overseas to study in our universities in particular. Our immigration system needs reformed to make it easier for these international graduates to stay in Scotland so our employers can make good use of this pool of talent.

Business-Led Strategies for Recruitment and Retention

Whilst there is much that our local, national, and UK policymakers can do to support businesses in tackling skills gaps and recruitment challenges, the event also identified key actions that businesses can take within their own organisations. For example, instead of focusing narrowly on specific qualifications, businesses are urged to recognize the potential of candidates with transferable skills. This shift not only widens the recruitment pool but also opens up opportunities to a broader range of candidates, including those from different educational and professional backgrounds.

Continuous learning should be central to workplace culture. The event really highlighted for us the importance of

embedding upskilling and reskilling into daily operations, creating an environment where employees are encouraged to develop professionally throughout their careers. Such a culture would help businesses to meet changing skills needs internally rather than relying solely on external hiring, which can be costly and time-consuming.

Retention of talent requires fostering a positive company culture, where employees feel valued and connected to their work. By emphasizing career development and aligning roles with individual skills and aspirations, businesses can boost employee engagement and reduce turnover. Event attendees also identified the value of offering external development opportunities, particularly for employees with limited internal career progression paths. The issue of retaining older workers was also raised as a specific area that perhaps needs more attention in many workplaces than it is currently being given.

A Collaborative Path Forward

To retain and attract talent, Edinburgh's industries and city leaders need to position ourselves as vibrant and growth-oriented, with a quality of life that outcompetes other regions. Collaboration between businesses and educational institutions is critical to developing clear pathways into Scotland's diverse sectors. By aligning the efforts of governments, educational institutions, and businesses, Edinburgh can foster a talent ecosystem that not only meets today's needs but adapts to tomorrow's demands. Through these combined efforts, the city is well-positioned to address its skills challenges, grow its economy, and secure a prosperous future for its workforce.

For more information about our policy work, contact our policy team via email at policy@edinburghchamber.co.uk.

Executive Education at the Edinburgh Futures Institute: Upskilling Your Workforce to Achieve a Data-Driven Future

In today's rapidly changing world, businesses must adapt to new technologies, societal shifts, and environmental challenges. .

Upskilling staff and developing forward-thinking leaders has become crucial. The Edinburgh Futures Institute (EFI), part of the University of Edinburgh and funded by the Data-Driven Innovation (DDI) initiative, stands out not just for its mission to empower businesses through data and innovation, but also for its iconic home, a future-focused space for learning, research, and innovation. Housed in the historic Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, EFI blends heritage with cutting-edge facilities, creating an inspiring hub for innovation and collaboration.

In 2024, we officially opened our doors to the public in the transformed and revitalised Old Royal Infirmary building. The Futures Institute is accessible to staff, students and the public, honouring the motto inscribed in stone on the building's wall: "Patet Omnibus". Which means "Open to All".

Our Nightingale wards are home to a diverse range of businesses, from fintech and financial services to travel, tourism, and creative industries. This vibrant community fosters interdisciplinary collaboration, enabling ideas to flourish.

EFI Executive Education: Upskilling for the Future

We understand that upskilling is key to future-proofing your business. With the rapid pace of AI, climate change, and evolving societal expectations, businesses need to be agile and innovative. EFI offers a variety of executive education programmes, both open and bespoke, to help leaders and staff navigate complex landscapes confidently.

Supported by the DDI initiative, we focus on harnessing data to solve real-world challenges and make informed decisions.



Our programmes cover leadership development, digital transformation, and sustainability, providing practical learning experiences that can be directly applied to your organisation.

Unlocking Potential

Drawing on expertise from across the University of Edinburgh, including the Business School, Bayes Centre, Informatics, and Law School, participants gain a well-rounded, interdisciplinary perspective to tackle complex challenges





Key areas we focus on include:

- **Leadership:** Effective leadership is at the core of every successful business. We can design Executive Leadership programmes, working with senior academics from the Business School, to help executives develop the strategic thinking needed to lead through uncertainty, motivate teams and navigate the complexities of modern business.
- **Climate and Sustainability:** As businesses face increasing pressure to adopt sustainable practices, EFI's sustainability courses equip leaders with the tools to integrate environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles into their strategies. These courses help businesses not only meet regulatory requirements, but also drive long-term impact.
- **Digital Transformation and AI:** In an age where digital technologies are transforming every industry, our courses in artificial intelligence (AI) and digital transformation help leaders understand how to leverage these tools for growth and innovation. One of our flagship courses, 'AI for Senior Managers in Financial Services', is designed to demystify AI and show how it can be used strategically, understand regulation and improve decision-making and operational efficiency.

- **Data-Driven Decision-Making:** In a data-rich world, leaders need to know how to make informed decisions that drive growth and innovation. Our data-driven courses give participants the skills to use analytics and data insights to shape business strategies and improve outcomes.

Our programmes are designed to be practical, engaging, and immediately applicable, ensuring that delegates can implement what they've learned to make an impact within their organisations right away.

Through a mix of hands-on learning, case studies, and interactive sessions, we ensure participants leave with both knowledge and actionable strategies. Our programmes foster critical thinking and problem-solving, giving leaders the tools, they need to approach challenges with a fresh perspective.

A Collaborative, Interdisciplinary Environment

EFI's unique environment fosters collaboration between academia and business. Our courses draw on the expertise of world-class academics and industry professionals, creating a truly interdisciplinary approach to learning. This ensures that participants not only gain insights from their specific field but also benefit from a broader understanding of how other industries tackle similar challenges.

Our new home in the transformed Edinburgh Royal Infirmary is where business leaders, academics and professionals work alongside each other and reflects our collaborative spirit. This environment provides the perfect backdrop for learning and innovation, allowing participants to share knowledge, foster new ideas and build networks that can lead to future partnerships and opportunities. EFI is open to all!

Ready to Upskill Your Workforce?

In today's competitive business environment, upskilling your team is one of the best investments you can make. Whether you're looking to enhance leadership, embrace digital transformation or tackle sustainability challenges, EFI's Executive Education programmes provide the insights, skills and confidence your leaders need to drive success.

If you're interested in hearing more about the opportunities at Edinburgh Futures Institute or would like a tour of our iconic building contact Jackie Whittaker by email at jacqueline.whittaker@ed.ac.uk.



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Edinburgh Futures Institute

Colleges key to future-proofing the Health & Care workforce

As the demand for skilled health and care professionals in Scotland and the wider UK continues to grow, so does the importance of colleges in educating and nurturing the industry's workforce for today, and the future.

At Edinburgh College, we continue to take a proactive approach to preparing the workforce to meet the challenges of the ever-evolving healthcare sector, demonstrating how important College education and skills training is in addressing skills gaps and providing our NHS and social care system with the workforce it demands.

Through innovative programmes, cutting-edge facilities, and industry partnerships, our College is equipping students and professionals with the advanced skills required to excel in their careers while addressing critical gaps in this vital sector of industry.

Bridging the skills gap in healthcare

The health and care sector faces an unprecedented and pressing need for well-trained professionals across a variety of disciplines. In acute hospital settings, there is a need for more doctors, nurses, support workers and medical administration staff, while in the community, shortages in the social care

workforce mean the entire health and social care system is under pressure.

Colleges across the UK have a key role to play in addressing these skills gaps to not just alleviate pressure on these vital services but to help them become efficient and future-proofed.

For example, at our Capital City College – where we remain committed to facing these challenges head-on – we have reimagined how we train healthcare professionals by introducing new and bespoke programmes which align with industry standards and emerging trends. We are working more closely than ever with local healthcare providers and NHS boards; and we have adapted our learning spaces as we embrace technology-enabled care and simulated experiences which reflect real life settings – ensuring our learning and teaching remains relevant and impactful.

Positive partnerships and meaningful interventions

A strong partnership with NHS Lothian enables the College to deliver customised training to progress students into

healthcare support worker roles. The three-week Skills Boost course gives participants the training they need to start their healthcare career as a band 2 support worker and guarantees them employment with the NHS upon completion of the course. Training on the course is delivered by College lecturers and NHS professionals, ensuring the programme delivers what is required to address local healthcare system demands whilst providing a clear pathway to employment. To date 122 students have completed the course, with 109 still in NHS employment.

In addition, we have recently strengthened our partnerships with our local authorities and are working in collaboration to develop an education pathway from early years through to higher education (college and university). As part of this strategy, we have started to deliver insight sessions aimed at giving students the opportunity to experience active learning within our Digital Care Hub and hopefully motivates them to choose a career pathway in health and care.

At Edinburgh College, we continue to take a proactive approach to preparing the workforce to meet the challenges of the ever-evolving healthcare sector, demonstrating how important College education and skills training is in addressing skills gaps and providing our NHS and social care system with the workforce it demands.

On top of that, our social services team is working alongside the Care Inspectorate to deliver Protection training to 400 inspectors over three years. This programme will ensure inspectors are confident with new procedures and that they are applied consistently.

In addition to these invaluable partnership programmes, the core curriculum at colleges plays a vital role in preparing students for university study and equipping the workforce with skilled employees. Last month (November 2024), approximately 200 students from various health and social care disciplines graduated from Edinburgh College with HNC or HND qualifications. These achievements mark the beginning of their journeys toward further studies in their chosen fields or new careers in care homes,

hospitals, and community healthcare settings. Each course is thoughtfully designed by industry-experienced lecturers, in collaboration with partners such as the NHS and the Scottish Government.

Underpinning all these initiatives are the cutting-edge facilities colleges have at their disposal which are designed to bridge the gap between knowledge, competence and professional application.

At Edinburgh College our Digital Care Hubs contain replica medical wards with a patient room, toilet, and wet room facilities; infection control and decontamination areas; a reflection room; and a care-at-home room. In addition, our Sighthill Hub houses an award-winning Virtual Reality (VR) room designed to give students an immersive experience which demonstrates how a patient with

dementia experiences day-to-day life; as well as state-of-the-art Dental and Pharmacy facilities.

These facilities allow students to realistic patient simulators with true-to-life responsiveness, in a variety of care settings, enabling them to develop patient testing and care skills.

Looking ahead

Colleges have a significant role to play in building the future health and social care workforce – it is already clear we possess the capability and innovative processes required. With further collaboration and forward-thinking across education providers and with policy makers, capacity in Scotland's colleges can be expanded to ensure we meet the present needs of the industry; but also, to prepare for the future.



We thank our Partners for their continued support of the Chamber

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Edinburgh International Festival: Nurturing Scotland's Creative Talent

“Festivals play an essential role in supporting the Scottish skills pipeline” says Chief Executive, Francesca Hegyi.

Just a few months ago, we were preparing for the start of the 2024 Edinburgh International Festival where we welcomed over 2,000 talented performers to our city. All artists performing at the International Festival are invited by the Festival Director and the Festival meets all costs relating to that performance (travel, accommodation, fees and venue costs). Last year this amounted to some £8m and means that we can present artists on our stages irrespective of their means to come to and stay in Edinburgh. Talent is the only criterion. The 2024 programme was again well received by audiences, artists and critics alike, and our commitment to welcoming the broadest possible audience paid off with almost double the number of concession tickets being taken up compared with the previous year. As soon as one edition of the Festival draws to a close (or even before!), our attention starts turning to the next year's programme, and that of future years.

As a team, we are always incredibly proud of what we, and our artists, deliver but it is now impossible to ignore that we are in an environment that is the most challenging it has been for a generation, with sharply rising costs and public funding flat since 2008 (no, that's not a typo).

We take our position as a leader in the creative industries, seriously and remain committed to supporting the thousands of individuals in Edinburgh and beyond, who rely on the International Festival for their livelihoods, not just in August but year-round. The countless restaurants, cafes, hoteliers, taxi drivers, couriers, electricians, joiners and everyone who makes Edinburgh in August the largest performing arts



event in the world. This contribution to Edinburgh's economy is recognised in the Chamber's recent Call to Action, where culture and the creative industries were identified as one of the five sectors with significant growth potential.

Beyond the performances on our stages, we create opportunities for as many people as possible to discover our work, from young people to community groups to our industry peers in Scotland and internationally. We work with artists and young people, connecting them through schools, local groups and workshops, giving performance opportunities or longer-term projects that explore themes inspired by the artists' work or the Festival itself.

Last year over 2,800 Primary 7 pupils took part in our Art of Listening project which introduced them to classical and other forms of music. Some 53 schools across Edinburgh took part, all for free, as again the Festival covers all the costs.

Our talent development programme, Rising Stars, gives our most promising young musicians an opportunity to be mentored by our visiting world-leading artists and a chance to perform during the Festival on an international stage and to hone their skills. After an audition process, we bring together early-career musicians aged 18-25 – ranging from violinists to trumpeters – with professional mentors and their peers.

The scheme culminates in a public, ticketed performance within our main programme, where the emerging artists have the rare chance to perform at one of world's most preeminent arts festivals. As with any of our artists, they are paid a fee, and their travel and accommodation are paid for and arranged by the International Festival.

After the performances, the young musicians share that this glimpse into the professional world is an invaluable experience, motivating them to pursue their careers and aim to perform internationally. Equally, audiences have the opportunity to witness a special collaboration that could only happen at an event like the International Festival.

We know that for young artists it can be hard to find opportunities like this early on in their careers, and with nearly 300 applications this year alone, there is a clearly a real appetite for more.

It's a great privilege to be able to work in this way for young people in Scotland. We can introduce them to the creative arts and the potential of not just becoming an artist on stage, but to working behind the scenes in a production, which can be a realistic career option for many people. The Creative Industries now employs more people in Scotland than the financial services and is growing at least twice as quickly as the rest of the economy. Arts and culture then are not just a 'nice to have' when resources allow, but a critical part of the future economy of Scotland, and particularly of Edinburgh, and we ignore them at our peril.

The business community of Edinburgh, alongside our donors and partners, is absolutely essential in providing the chance for our young people to discover their creativity and career defining opportunities. It is encouraging to think that the next generation of performers on our stages – and those around the world – will have been nurtured by the International Festival and our many supporters in the city, and that is something of which Scotland can rightly be proud.



Francesca Hegyi,
Chief Executive,
Edinburgh International Festival

Scotland's Space Ambitions: The Role of Universities in Building a Thriving Ecosystem

Scotland is rapidly establishing itself as a key player in the global space industry. With one operational spaceport and two more in advanced stages of development, the country is building a vibrant ecosystem of space and satellite businesses, cutting-edge research, and a highly skilled workforce.

As we look to the future, the aerospace sector's growth is not without challenges. Large-scale infrastructure investments and a skilled workforce are both essential to meet the industry's demands. I believe universities like Heriot-Watt play a pivotal role here, not only in educating tomorrow's talent, but as active partners in driving the innovation and collaboration essential for this sector to thrive. Scotland's ambition to lead in space demands a strong alignment between enterprising academic research, industry partnerships, and talent development, and at Heriot-Watt, we're focused on creating that alignment.

One of the most exciting advancements at Heriot-Watt is our role in the UKRI-funded Integrated Quantum Networks Hub, a £39.5 million initiative set to revolutionise data security through quantum-secure satellite and ground communication. With support from 40 industry partners, contributing nearly £20 million in additional funding,

this project exemplifies our commitment to impactful, collaborative research.

This level of industry engagement underscores Heriot-Watt's strength in building partnerships at scale, making us an ideal partner for the space industry. By connecting world-class research with robust industry collaboration, we are not only advancing the frontiers of knowledge but actively addressing the sector's most pressing challenges.

A unique asset in our research portfolio is the Hub Optical Ground Station (HOGS). This high-resolution telescope is dedicated to quantum and photonic-based satellite communications, enabling us to explore and demonstrate secure data transfer across space. Positioned within our Edinburgh campus, HOGS sits alongside our Research Park—a vibrant, cross-sectoral environment where collaboration and knowledge sharing are at the heart of innovation.

Our Research Park is home not only to space-focused businesses but also to a diverse range of industries, from advanced manufacturing to energy and digital technologies. This diversity fosters an ecosystem where ideas and expertise can flow freely across disciplines, creating unique opportunities for businesses to draw on insights from multiple sectors. Partners benefit from access to our cutting-edge research, as well as a network of academics, students, and business leaders committed to solving complex challenges across industries, including but not limited to space.

This co-location opportunity is something we've already seen yield impressive results. One example is our partnership with Celestia, a global leader in satellite antenna technology. Through this collaboration, Celestia has benefited from Heriot-Watt's expertise in antenna engineering, tapping into our research infrastructure and hiring highly skilled graduates to advance their work on multi-satellite tracking systems. This has enabled Celestia to contribute to satellite constellations that are essential for high-speed internet access in remote areas and improved environmental monitoring capabilities. The partnership not only benefits Celestia but also strengthens the

broader space ecosystem, demonstrating the potential of university-industry collaboration.

The demand for skilled professionals is another critical element of Scotland's space industry, particularly as the sector continues to grow. With STEM education at our core, Heriot-Watt has been proactive in designing programmes that align with industry needs in space and related sectors. The Scottish Science Advisory Council has highlighted the pressing need for greater collaboration between industry and academia to develop and retain a skilled workforce capable of meeting future demands. Our five Centres for Doctoral Training, focused on fields like quantum science and photonics, help create a pipeline of talent for high-tech sectors. Programmes like our Aerospace Engineering degree and Graduate Apprenticeships (GAs) equip students with the hands-on skills needed to thrive in this expanding sector, ensuring Scotland's workforce remains competitive and resilient.

Graduate Apprenticeships (GAs) will play a crucial role in building that workforce. These programmes, which combine academic study with real-world industry experience, address skill gaps while ensuring that students can apply their knowledge directly in professional settings. An inspiring example is Fatima, one of our Graduate Apprentices in engineering, whose work for her employer resulted in a £100,000 cost savings. Fatima's achievement highlights how GAs provide immediate, tangible value to businesses, while helping students build a practical understanding of their field. For the space industry, where continual innovation is key, GAs represent an effective way to develop a future-ready workforce.

In addition to building talent, our partnerships with the private sector provide crucial support to the growing space economy. For example, the Heriot-Watt Research Park offers co-location opportunities that give businesses access to our extensive R&D facilities and infrastructure. Celestia is one of many companies that have chosen to base operations here, where they can collaborate with our academics and



Professor Gillian Murray,
Deputy Principal for Business &
Enterprise, Heriot-Watt University



tap into our skilled graduates to further their innovations in satellite technology. In a sector as specialised as space, this proximity to talent and technology can accelerate innovation and foster cross-industry synergies.

Moreover, our global presence gives us a unique advantage in bringing international perspectives and connections to Scotland's space sector. With campuses in Dubai and Malaysia and a robust Heriot-Watt Online education platform, we connect Scotland with international insights and expertise. We regularly engage with global academic and industry leaders, and our graduates are part of a worldwide alumni network. This global outlook helps us provide a richer educational experience and expand the

reach of Scotland's space sector by building international partnerships.

As we look ahead, I see Heriot-Watt University as more than an academic institution. We are a bridge between Scotland's ambitions and the international space community, committed to nurturing a skilled, future-focused workforce and advancing research that directly supports industry needs. But beyond supporting existing sectors, universities like ours play a crucial role in shaping the industries of tomorrow. Through our knowledge, research, and innovation, we drive the development of new fields, creating the foundational knowledge and ecosystems they need to thrive.

At Heriot-Watt, this commitment is embedded in everything we do—from collaborative projects and targeted skills programmes to shared research resources that bring together academia, industry, and emerging talent. I believe universities can be catalysts not only for Scotland's success in space but for a broader vision of economic growth and technological advancement that positions Scotland as a leader in multiple high-impact sectors.

The opportunities for growth are enormous, but they require a proactive approach to building the infrastructure, skills, and partnerships that will enable Scotland to compete globally. Scotland is on an exciting trajectory, and universities have a central role to play in realising its potential.

Purposing plants to combat extreme urban weather events

Edinburgh Napier's enterprise hub is joining forces with Queen Margaret University and Edinburgh College

Bright Red Triangle (BRT), the enterprise hub at Edinburgh Napier University (ENU), has agreed a significant new partnership with Queen Margaret University (QMU) and Edinburgh College (EC) which will offer entrepreneurial support to their students, graduates and staff.

The formal agreement, which is the first of its kind in Scotland, means more budding entrepreneurs will be able to use services such as advice, training, workshops, and opportunities to turn innovative ideas into business ventures.

The collaboration will also offer specialist support across each institution's key areas of expertise – including wellbeing, health, food and drink, creative industries, tourism, design, engineering, construction, computing, and AI.

Since its formation in 2005, BRT has supported more than 1,000 start-ups and freelancers from the ENU community. They have access to the BRT Start Up Studio in Edinburgh, one-to-one support from business advisers, online and in-person training opportunities, and a wealth of contacts.

These services will now be extended to students, graduates and staff of QMU and Edinburgh College. In addition, the student and graduate communities will be able to use BRT services at their own institutions, providing those seeking support with more convenience and flexibility, as well as the opportunity to collaborate with entrepreneurs from the other institutions.

Over the last year BRT has appointed two Entrepreneurs-in-Residence – tech sector leader, Nigel Chadwick, and serial entrepreneur and chair of Women's Enterprise Scotland (WES), Lynne Cadenhead. A new training collaboration with WES, which supports female-led businesses, has also been set up.

The agreement aims to create a strong network among the three institutions, aligning with the Scottish Government's National Innovation Strategy 2023-2033 and its Entrepreneurial Campus blueprint.

It is hoped the partnership will help support more people to follow in the footsteps of



entrepreneurs like Lauren Leisk. The QMU graduate and founder for Fodilicious, a specialist food company producing the UK's first low FODMAP certified products for Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), has made the most of support services at QMU since graduating.

Lauren said: "I'm inspired by this latest move to partner with Bright Red Triangle, which has an international reputation for entrepreneurial support.

"Scotland needs better services which support women to develop as entrepreneurs – equipping them to navigate the business environment more quickly when they graduate.

"I think that this partnership will only improve support for talented people who harbour ambitions to run their own business. I'm certainly looking forward to accessing BRT services which will help me grow Fodilicious by identifying new routes to market."

Professor Andrea Nolan, Principal and Vice Chancellor of Edinburgh Napier University, said: "We take great pride in the many examples of entrepreneurial spirit which have emerged from the Edinburgh Napier community in recent years.

"Bright Red Triangle has an impressive record of helping to transform innovative ideas into viable, difference-making businesses.

"We hope this agreement to extend BRT's support to the QMU and Edinburgh College

communities will offer a platform to more aspiring entrepreneurs, grow the networks of our enterprise hub and strengthen regional partnerships."

Sir Paul Grice, Principal of Queen Margaret University, said: "We recognise the collaborative power that universities have in creating the entrepreneurs of the future and the impact of this on the economy, and we are pleased that the BRT partnership presents a unique interdisciplinary offering that ensures more students, graduates and researchers in Scotland have the opportunity to access an entrepreneurial education.

"By capitalising on BRT expertise and working collaboratively, we can create a cultural shift which helps more graduates to view entrepreneurship as a viable career path.

"This exciting partnership allows QMU to build on its long-term collaboration with Business Gateway East Lothian by harnessing BRT's extensive expertise in entrepreneurial support and improving graduate skills and employability by stimulating entrepreneurial mindsets."

Michael Jeffrey, Vice Principal of Edinburgh College said: "Equipping people with entrepreneurial skills as well as technical and vocational training is essential for preparing them to thrive in today's dynamic economy.

"At Edinburgh College, we work collaboratively with a range of partners to ensure we are empowering students to not only excel in their chosen careers but to become the entrepreneurs and innovators of the future.

"We're excited to be joining up with our university partners, through Bright Red Triangle, to tap into the wealth of entrepreneurial support available to students, staff and our wider college community, and provide increased opportunities to access business support and advice across the city."

Scotland needs better services which support women to develop as entrepreneurs – equipping them to navigate the business environment more quickly when they graduate.

Retirement income crisis expected in early 2040s

New analysis by Phoenix Insights, Phoenix Group’s longevity think tank, finds the UK is less than two decades from crisis point where nearly three in five defined contribution (DC) pension savers will enter retirement with savings below expectations or below an adequate level.



Tomorrow’s problem?

The UK’s pension system is at a critical juncture, with significant concerns about the adequacy of retirement incomes for future generations. Phoenix Insights has published its latest report ‘Tomorrow’s problem? Analysing the future impact of DC pension undersaving’ mapping out when and how the undersaving crisis will materialise over time.

The analysis, undertaken with Frontier Economics, groups future retirees into five categories* to estimate whether they are saving enough to meet their future retirement needs based on the Pension and Lifetime Saving Association (PLSA) retirement living standards**.

Between 2025 and 2060, over half (54%) of retirees with a DC pension are projected to be either “undersavers” (individuals expecting at least the PLSA’s minimum retirement income standard but not on track to achieve expectations) or “financially struggling” (individuals expecting a retirement income below the PLSA minimum retirement living standard).

Percentage of newly retired DC savers classified as “undersavers” or “financially struggling” (Figure 1)

The years 2040 to 2044 represent a critical period, as it will see the highest number of “financially struggling” or “undersavers” reaching retirement (Figure 1). Three in five (59%) of all new DC savers retiring during this period will fall into these two categories of concern, equivalent to 2.67 million people.

The analysis finds this group are predominantly born in the 1970s, female, working full-time, earning below £80k (about half of them earn below £20k) and expecting to retire between the ages of 66 and 70.

Patrick Thomson, head of research analysis and policy at Phoenix Insights:

“The analysis paints a bleak picture of future retirement incomes. We are already reaching the stage where the majority of people with a defined contribution pension will enter retirement with either less than they expect, or less than they need in terms of a minimum living standard. This situation is set to worsen over time and peak in the next 20 years.

“There is an urgent need to address undersaving to better support people achieve financial security later in life. Immediate policy interventions should include a plan to increase minimum auto-enrolment contribution rates when the economic conditions allow. And this should go hand-in-hand with policies to make work more sustainable and accessible for the over-60s, so people can continue to earn and save later in life.

“The plight of retirement incomes is clear to see, but we have a golden opportunity to take meaningful action to turn the tide in undersaving and improve the retirement prospects of future generations. These really aren’t tomorrow’s problems anymore.”

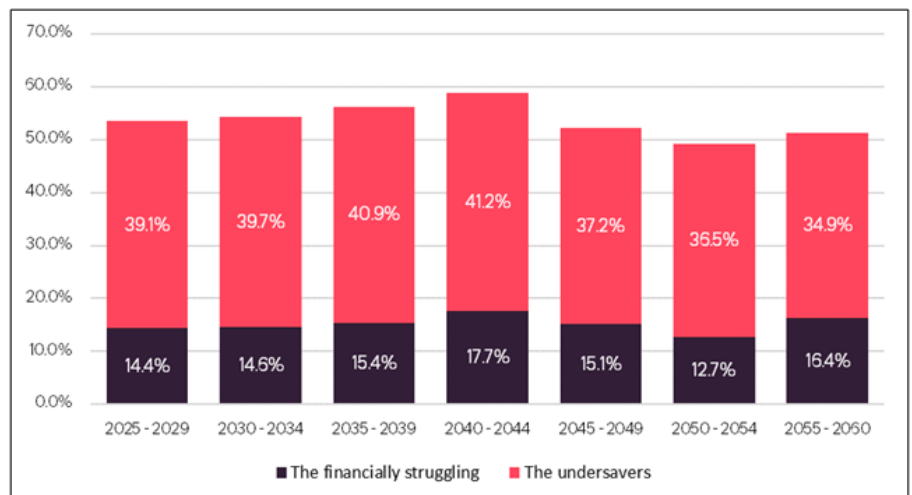


Figure 1: Frontier Economics analysis of Phoenix Longer Lives Index data (October, 2024)



Reducing the Cost of Workplace Conflict

A new Act came into force in October this year, placing duties on employers to take 'reasonable steps' to protect employees from sexual harassment.

According to ACAS, workplace conflict costs UK organisations £28.5bn a year – that's an average of £1,000 per employee.

Multiply the number of employees by £1,000 and you have some idea of how much these disputes cost your organisation annually. This is sometimes nicknamed 'conflict tax'. The headline statistics on workplace conflict are staggering. Close to 10 million people a year experience it and, of these, over half suffer stress, anxiety or depression as a result. Just under 900,000 take time off, nearly half a million resign, and more than 300,000 are dismissed.

After unfair dismissal, the most common causes of workplace conflict that make it to an employment tribunal all relate to equality issues – race, disability and sexual harassment.

While the Covid furlough scheme meant fewer people were dismissed from their jobs, the number of sexual harassment claims continued to rise during the pandemic years. This is due in part to the 'Me Too' movement empowering more people to speak out. However, recent times have also seen the rise of 'alpha male' social media influencers like Andrew Tate, who have fuelled a rise in misogynistic behaviour which can often spill over into the workplace. To try to reverse that long-term trend, The Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 came into force on 26 October 2024.

This places new duties on employers to take 'reasonable steps' to protect employees from sexual harassment at work. It will also give tribunals the power to increase compensation payments by up to 25% if an employer breaches this duty.

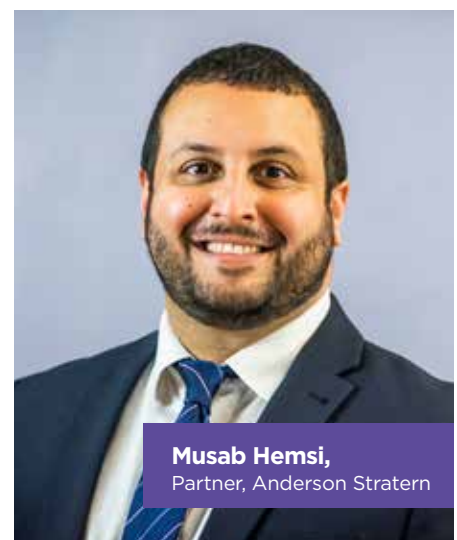
There is no cap on the amount of compensation that can be awarded for an equality claim, and the record currently stands at £4.6m. Employers should ensure they have a harassment policy which is frequently reviewed, conduct regular training sessions and ensure any harassment complaints are taken seriously. Establishing a confidential method of reporting, such as an online tool, should also be a consideration.

When I trace sexual harassment complaints back to the beginning, often it's the initial conversation with a line manager that exacerbates the problem. Managers often mishandle complaints at the first stage, either by not following the correct process or prejudging the outcome, occasionally leading to the managers themselves being sued. Equality-related conflict should always be taken very seriously, sometimes managers can under-react to situations, leading to further issues. I tend not to lay too much blame on these managers, as often they have simply not been correctly trained or lack knowledge of the policies set to guide

them. It goes without saying that training is vital. But this cannot be boring or stale; it must be interactive and engaging to avoid being a tick-box exercise. Role play is an excellent way to practise handling sensitive situations in a safe environment. It's also worth a reminder that the same equality law that affects huge corporations also applies to a tiny start-up as soon as they employ one person. In reality, however, tribunals are likely to apply higher standards to big businesses.

Having a proactive strategy to minimise and effectively address sexual harassment, along with other causes of employment disputes, can significantly reduce your conflict tax. But it can have other positive outcomes too, such as creating a better workplace culture, improving morale, and enhancing your reputation as a responsible and caring employer.

After unfair dismissal, the most common causes of workplace conflict that make it to an employment tribunal all relate to equality issues – race, disability and sexual harassment.



Musab Hems,
Partner, Anderson Stratern

Nurturing Future Talent

Our team, at the EICC, is what makes our venue unique. We're proud to work with a group of dedicated and passionate people, who collaborate to deliver brilliant events for our clients.



We're always looking out for talented people to join our team. People who have the passion to make a difference to our industry and to our clients. We believe that you can't teach passion, but what we can offer is the support of an experienced and skilled team of people who can provide inspiration and teach best practice.

There are career opportunities covering many different disciplines at the EICC. From client development and event planning to engineering and technical production. Opportunities are also available to work on a casual basis during events with the Front of House and the Event Logistics Teams.

New team members can be confident that they are joining an environment which provides a platform for them to develop and succeed in their new role. Every new employee receives an induction programme, which gives them a comprehensive introduction to each department and its functions. Following that, there's a range of training and development opportunities which are

aimed at supporting team members through their individual career routes.

As an inclusive venue, it's really important to us that every attendee enjoys the experience of the event equally. Having a well-informed team of people is vital in achieving this, so our staff attend regular awareness sessions covering equity, diversity and inclusion. With this enhanced awareness we can confidently work with and advise our clients on how to deliver inclusive events for their own audiences.

Beyond our existing team, we carry out engagement opportunities which allow us to spend time sharing knowledge and insights with the future stars of our industry. We hold student open days where we invite school, college and university students to the venue for tours and educational sessions. And with close links to Edinburgh's universities and colleges, members of our team take regular guest lectures to share the EICC's approach to planning and delivering business events with event management students.

The EICC's commitment to inspiring and developing new talent is also shared by our food and beverage partner. Leiths at the EICC provide apprenticeships aimed at a wide range of careers - from entry level right through to senior management. Positions cover both front and back of house and they support employees at any stage in their career to gain a qualification whilst doing the practical part of the job.

Business events, such as those held at the EICC, have the potential to positively impact our society in a multitude of ways - including developing new talent. The recent launch of the EICC's Fellowship Scheme sees early career researchers benefitting from complimentary spaces at conferences, which helps to accelerate their scientific careers. By encouraging clients to offer spaces to those studying related fields, conferences held at the EICC can contribute to developing scientific research in Edinburgh and beyond.

Visit eicc.co.uk/careers to keep up to date with the latest career opportunities at the EICC.

The Edinburgh Gin Distillery at The Arches – a new distillery, and home of Edinburgh Gin – opens in heart of Scotland’s capital

World-renowned Edinburgh Gin has unveiled its new distillery at The Arches on East Market Street, combining heritage with innovation. Officially opening on 6th December, the facility features preserved historic arches, a roof terrace, and a chic bar, creating an immersive space for gin enthusiasts.

The distillery is powered by three bespoke copper stills: Annie and Lina, named after pioneering female gardeners, and Matilda, used for experimental creations. Distillery Manager, Finlay Nicol described the launch as a “true milestone for the brand, representing our relentless dedication to innovation and excellence in all things gin.” He added, “We believe this is more than just a distillery – it’s a testament to our rich heritage, knowledge and commitment to sustainability, and our brand-new stills alone are an embodiment of this.”

Powered by 100% renewable energy, the distillery is operationally carbon-neutral and reflects the brand’s eco-conscious ethos, including packaging made with 49% recycled glass and fully recyclable materials.



Visitors can book one of four experiences, from tastings to gin-making workshops. Brand Homes Manager, Melissa Rickerby said, “We’ve crafted unforgettable programmes for the new distillery which are as expertly curated as our spirits. These new experiences offer a deep dive into the intricate art and science of gin

making, led by passionate experts who bring every detail of our process to life, offering a truly immersive journey through the world of gin.”

The Edinburgh Gin Distillery at The Arches is open now, Mon – Sun 11:00 – 21:00. Experiences are available to book [here](#).

Thomson Cooper Celebrate 75th Anniversary

Thomson Cooper is proud to announce its 75th anniversary, marking three-quarters of a century of growth, innovation and commitment to client service.

Formed in Dunfermline on 21 November 1949 by founder T. Hunter Thomson and his business partner Harold Cooper, the business has expanded significantly and now employs over 100 staff across its Fife and Edinburgh offices. The firm remains an independent practice, and has built a strong legacy of trust, expertise and reliability.

Thomson Cooper is driven by a passion for fostering long-term relationships and evolving to meet the changing needs of clients. The partner group are supported by teams of trained professionals committed to providing tailored solutions that drive success. This forward-thinking approach harnesses the latest technology to deliver streamlined processes and effective digitisation.

“We’re incredibly proud to celebrate 75 years of service excellence,” said

Managing Partner Alan Mitchell. “As we reflect on our years in business, we are reminded that the foundation of our success has always been the relationships we’ve built with our clients and employees. This milestone is not just about celebrating the past, it is about looking forward to the future. Our commitment to client service and professionalism has positioned us well for the future. The core values that have sustained us – listening, advising and supporting clients to achieve their goals – remain the foundation on which we will continue to build our success.”

To celebrate this significant anniversary, Thomson Cooper will be hosting a series of events over the next 12 months which highlight the firm’s appreciation of those who have been integral to its success, as well as raising funds for charity.

Alan Mitchell



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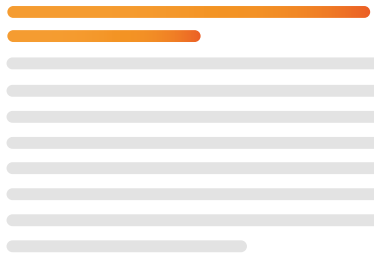
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Chamber Training Calendar

January & February 2025

January	Course	Time
Wednesday 8th	Methods of Payment & Letters of Credit	9:30 - 15:30
Thursday 16th	Project Management	10:00 - 15:00
Wednesday 22nd	Customs Procedures, Documentation & Rules of Origin	9:30 - 15:30
Thursday 23rd	Social Ads Mastery Course: Propel Your Business Growth with Effective Online Marketing	10:00 - 12:00
Wednesday 29th	Viral Content & Trending Topics	10:00 - 12:00

February	Course	Time
Thursday 6th	Import Procedures: Inward & Outward Processing	9:30 - 15:30
Tuesday 18th	Finance for Non-Financial Managers	10:00 - 15:00
Wednesday 19th	Incoterms 2020	9:30 - 12:30

Visit our website to find out more and book your place.

edinburghchamber.co.uk/training-events



Highlight's from Edinburgh Chamber's events calendar

In the latter half of the year, our events calendar has delivered a vibrant mix of networking opportunities, business updates, and roundtable discussions, all designed to connect, inform, and inspire our members.



Call to Action Conference

In late October, we hosted over 160 members for our Call to Action Conference. This event brought together leaders from business, culture, and government to shape Edinburgh's economic growth strategy and enhance the promotion of the capital's strengths. Key sectors like fintech, creative industries, health, technology and green energy were highlighted as areas for future growth such as workforce upskilling and scalable infrastructure. Emerging themes included the need for unified ambition and stronger advocacy to attract investment, positioning Edinburgh as a leading UK city, ready for investment and good growth.

Green Freeport Update

In November, we partnered with Forth Ports for their annual Green Freeport annual business update. They updated on the Forth Green Freeport, which has the potential to support 56,000 jobs and attract over £50 million in investment. By creating Scotland's largest renewables hub, the Green Freeport will play a pivotal role in driving economic growth and supporting the nation's energy transition.

Business Resilience at Royal Botanic Gardens

Later that month, members gathered at the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh (RBGE) for a session on Building Business Resilience in a Changing Climate. Experts

from SP Energy, Scottish Water, Turner Townsend, and RBGE explored strategies to help businesses and individuals become more climate-ready.

Leadership Sessions

We concluded our Leadership Sessions for 2024, sponsored by Henderson Loggie, with an inspiring talk from Marie Owen, Founder & CEO of LS Productions. This creative powerhouse shared her business journey and insights on authentic leadership, leaving attendees motivated and informed.

Networking Highlights

Networking remained a priority, with events hosted in some of the city's popular venues. Highlights included coffee and catch-ups with Elior at Hibernian FC, featuring a stadium tour, and lunches at Le Petit Beef Bar and The Alchemist. Our Rising Stars network had a hands-on experience making sushi with Maki & Ramen, adding a unique twist to their professional development.

Festive Celebrations

As we approach Christmas, our calendar is set to bring festive cheer. December's networking lunch at Malmaison City will feature seasonal flair and all the trimmings. Members will also gather at Edinburgh Zoo for a festive early start, where some of the zoo's furry residents will enjoy their own foodie Christmas crackers.

Looking Ahead to 2025

Looking ahead to 2025, we're excited to kick off the New Year with an ever-popular networking lunch at Dishoom. Rising Stars will continue their culinary adventures with pasta making at Virgin Hotels, and January will culminate with the annual City of Edinburgh Council Address, co-hosted with Bank of Scotland. Here, Cllr Cammy Day and Chief Executive Paul Lawrence will share their vision and plans for the year ahead.

Another highlight is the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce Business Awards, on the 27th February at the EICC. This year's theme, "Pioneering Progress," celebrates Scotland's rich history of innovation, tracing back to the Enlightenment. This era saw groundbreaking advancements across various fields, from economics and medicine to engineering and philosophy, which continue to influence the world today.

Our awards recognise excellence across 15 categories, from small businesses to those championing sustainability. There's a category for everyone. Explore all the award categories and criteria for the awards on our [website](#), but be quick as entries close on the 14th January 2025.

With so many achievements behind us and more exciting events ahead, we look forward to another year of growth, connection, and opportunity with our members.



Catherine Gee

New head of ESG Operations at DWF

Catherine joined DWF, a leading global provider of integrated legal and business services, as its new Head of ESG Operations in July this year. As part DWF's ESG Leadership Group she will help shape and drive their ESG & Sustainability Strategy in collaboration with Kirsty Rogers, Chief Sustainability Officer and the wider team.

Catherine has extensive experience of governance and leadership in the environmental sector as well as driving and shaping environmental, social and sustainability initiatives and partnerships to achieve positive impact and behaviour change at scale.

She joins DWF after years in leadership at Keep Scotland Beautiful, most recently as Deputy Chief Executive. As Head of ESG Operations, she will integrate ESG objectives across practice groups, embed initiatives into operations, and manage ESG reporting.

Forth Ports appoints new Chief Financial Officer

Forth Ports Limited, the UK's third largest ports group, has appointed Stuart MacGregor as Chief Financial Officer and as a member of the Group's main board.

Stuart brings a wealth of expertise to the role, with a career spanning over 30 years in the international drinks and UK house building sectors, in financial leadership, strategic business transformation, commercial and operational excellence. Most recently, as Chief Executive Officer at Stewart Milne Group, he led the business through significant strategic initiatives, driving both growth and operational performance.

Prior to that, he held senior financial leadership roles at both Stewart Milne, including the role of Chief Financial Officer, and Heineken based in Europe. Stuart is an ICAEW Chartered Accountant. He joins the company on 9th December 2024, reporting directly to Chief Executive Officer, Stuart Wallace. His appointment follows a thorough and competitive recruitment process.

Commenting on the appointment, Stuart Wallace, Chief Executive Officer, said: "With a proven ability to align financial strategy with business ambitions, Stuart's financial and executive director leadership will be pivotal as we continue to evolve as a business, positioning Forth Ports for continued sustainable growth and long-term success. I am confident that Stuart will not only strengthen our executive team but also bring significant strategic insight and value to the main board and we look forward to him joining the business in December."

Stuart MacGregor said: "I am thrilled to be joining Forth Ports at this exciting time for the business. This is a growing company with strong ambitions in sectors that are critical to the Scottish and UK economies. I look forward to playing my part in its future success."

Forth Ports has outlined its commitment and the actions it is taking to achieve a Net Zero carbon operation by 2042 alongside the Thames Freeport and Forth Green Freeport partnerships which are seeking to accelerate the drive to Net Zero across the country.



Stuart MacGregor

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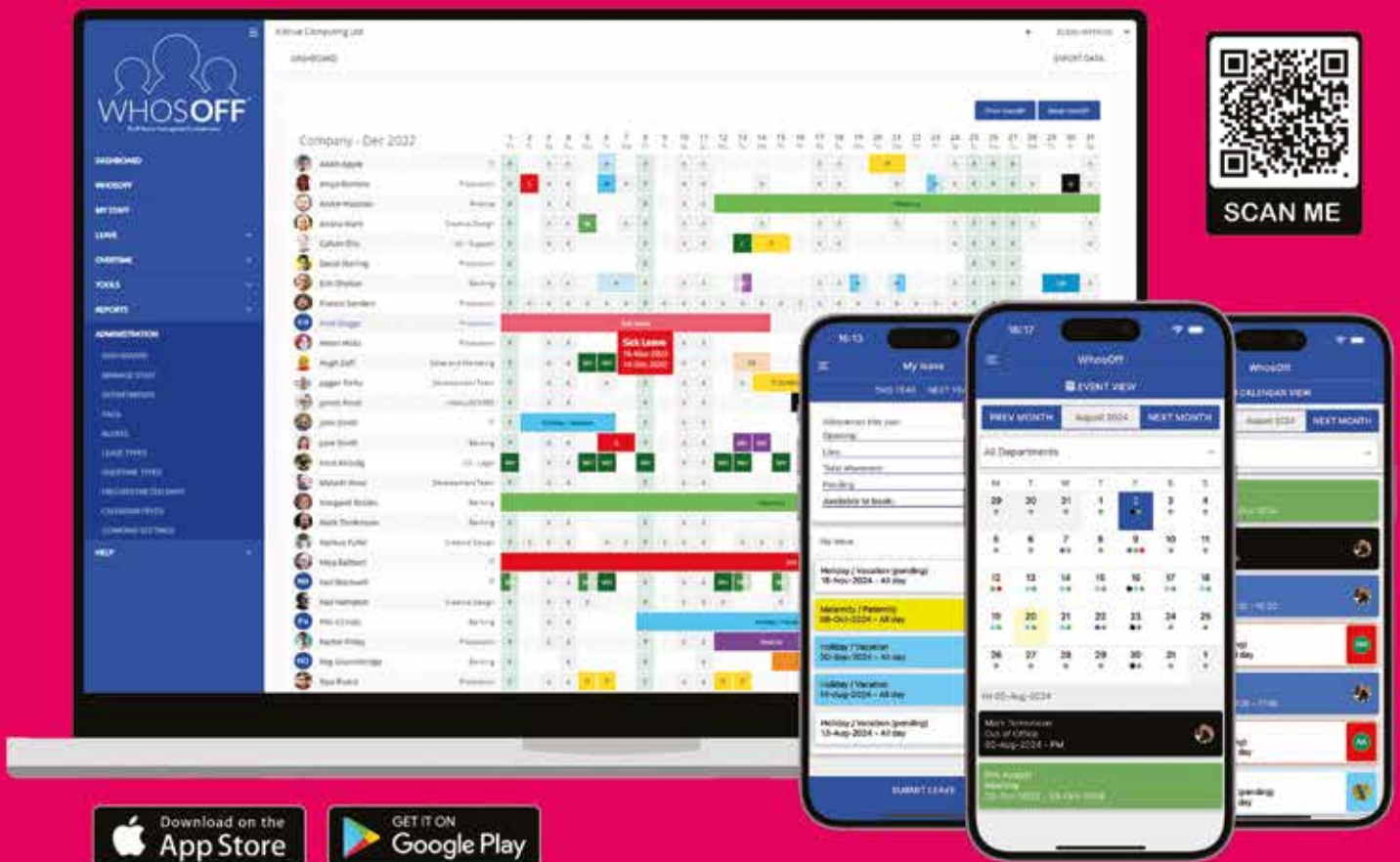
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