

Business Comment

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2025

**Infrastructure
& Development**

 Edinburgh
Chamber of
Commerce



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Infrastructure & Development

Welcome to this issue of Business Comment, which focuses on Infrastructure & Development.

It is encouraging to see that our Capital remains a powerful draw for investment. Recent figures from KPMG highlight the pivotal role of Edinburgh and Glasgow in driving private equity investment in Scotland - increasing by 36% to £9.4 billion last year. A significant share of that private capital is flowing into our built environment, fueling developments that enhance the city's visitor economy, from luxury hotels to budget-friendly stays.

The role of infrastructure in the city's future development is vital, and in Edinburgh, we are fortunate that our infrastructure partners are working hard to ensure a future that is bright, sustainable and fairer.

In this issue, we spotlight the major investment at Leith, where Forth Ports is driving the development of green energy infrastructure, strengthening Scotland's supply chain and positioning the city at the forefront of renewable opportunities. Edinburgh Airport, fresh from a record-breaking year serving 15 million passengers, shares its ambitions to expand global connectivity, unlocking new trade routes and business potential. Scottish Water outlines its Climate Change Adaptation Plan, tackling the critical challenges of a warming planet.

We also delve into the transformative regeneration of Granton Waterfront, a bold project creating Edinburgh's first net-zero coastal community - delivering affordable homes, open spaces, enhanced public transport, and low-carbon energy solutions. And we hear from Heriot-Watt University on their innovative work with Scotland's world-renowned distilling and brewing industries, ensuring they thrive sustainably.

Elsewhere, as always, there is much to read about the innovative, exciting, and inspiring work being carried out within this city by organisations of all sectors and scales.

Enjoy the magazine.



Liz McAreavey
Chief Executive,
Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce

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Investing in green energy ports to drive economic growth and promote the Net Zero transition



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Our climate is changing at such a pace that businesses need to adapt



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Honouring Heroes: The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo Donates £750,000 in support of military and arts charities

Following a successful Show in 2024, and in line with its charitable ethos, The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo has announced a generous £750,000 donation to various military and arts charity partners as part of its annual charitable giving. This announcement comes as the Tattoo has also committed to donating an additional 75p per ticket sold in 2025 to St Columba's Hospice Charity, as chosen by a public vote.

This significant contribution, the largest donation since 2019, underscores the Tattoo's longstanding commitment to supporting the armed forces and their families, ensuring that those who have served their country are provided with the assistance and resources they need. As well as continuing their proud support of traditional arts in Scotland.

The funds will be allocated to a range of military charities, such as The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity, the Army Benevolent Fund and The RAF Benevolent Fund, all dedicated to supporting veterans, serving personnel and their families. These organisations play a crucial role in offering essential services spanning mental health support, rehabilitation programs, financial assistance and much more particularly in complex cases. Locally in Scotland, the Tattoo also funds valuable work from the Army in Scotland Trust as well as art funding including those run by Scottish Schools Pipes and Drums Trust and Edinburgh International Festival.

In 2025, The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo is celebrating their 75th Anniversary Show, The Heroes Who Made Us, which highlights the rich history and heroes that makes it the internationally renowned production that it is today. Without the military or traditional artforms of dance, piping, drumming and fiddle playing, the Tattoo would not be what it is today, and the £750,000 donation reaffirms the Tattoo's commitment to charitable giving since its inception in 1950.

In addition to this significant financial contribution, The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo also remains committed to the preservation and promotion of traditional arts in Scotland through its own Tattoo Traditional Arts Programme (TTAP). This initiative aims to nurture and develop talent in traditional Scottish music, dance, and performance, ensuring that cultural traditions continue to thrive for future generations. The TTAP offers workshops, masterclasses, and performance opportunities across traditional artforms and allows a fostering of vibrant artistic community that celebrates Scotland's cultural heritage.

The full list of charities and projects that



will be supported by The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo are as followed:

- 51 Infantry Brigade Welfare Fund
- Allied Forces Foundation
- Army Benevolent Fund
- Army in Scotland Trust
- Army Piping and Drumming Committee
- Edinburgh Garrison Welfare Fund
- Edinburgh International Festival
- National Piping Centre
- Scottish National War Memorial
- Scottish Schools Pipes and Drums Trust
- The Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund
- The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity

Jason Barrett, Chief Executive, The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo said: "We are privileged to be able to support these remarkable charities and initiatives. Between 2016 and 2019 we were fortunate enough to be in a position to donate a total

of £1million to these charities annually. The pandemic curbed this level of giving but we are delighted to see the figure rise again. We are on track to see a return to our pre-pandemic figure of £1million annually in 2025 - a testament to our ongoing dedication to those who have given so much for their country.

"Providing support to our military communities and supporting the traditional arts in Scotland is a core part of our mission. Through the Tattoo Traditional Arts Programme, we provide new platforms for artists to develop their skills and share their talents with the world. It is crucial that we continue to invest in the cultural fabric of Scotland, ensuring that our traditional arts are preserved and celebrated."

Tickets for The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo's 75th anniversary Show are now on sale and can be purchased at www.edintattoo.co.uk/tickets or on the phone, **0131 225 1188**. The Show will run from 1-23 August 2025.

Lord Provost Celebrates Gracemount's National Award-Winning Success

Edinburgh's Gracemount Leisure Centre, recently named Scotland's Centre of the Year at the prestigious ukactive awards, welcomed the Rt Hon Lord Provost and Lord Lieutenant of the City of Edinburgh, Robert Aldridge today to recognise their outstanding achievement in community fitness and wellbeing.

The Edinburgh Leisure centre which has seen a remarkable 14% increase in visits between 2022 and 2023, received the distinguished visitor for a comprehensive tour led by Managers Craig Cassidy and Jen Murray. The visit highlighted the facility's exceptional contribution to community health and inclusion.

"We're so much more than just a gym or a swimming pool - it's a friendly and bustling community hub at the heart of the local area," said Craig Cassidy, Manager at Gracemount Leisure Centre. "With staff who go out of their way to make customers feel at home, it's somewhere people feel inspired and empowered to live happy, healthy and active lives."

The centre's recent success is attributed to several key initiatives:

- Development of an extensive Additional Support Needs (ASN) programme, including multi-sports activities, and specialised family swimming sessions which supports over 100 families, giving parents and children the opportunity to get active together in a supportive environment.
- Implementation of their Active Communities programme, providing access to hundreds of people affected by health conditions, disabilities, inequality, and poverty. Working alongside community partners, such as health professionals and social workers, projects such as Steady Steps for people at risk of a fall; Open All Hours, which gives local young people free access to fun diversionary activities on a Friday night.
- Investment in staff development and wellbeing, resulting in exceptional customer service scores of 9.5/10
- A major gym refurbishment featuring new Life Fitness equipment, leading to a dramatic increase in class participation from 226 to 706 customers monthly



The ukactive awards, open to all UK fitness facilities from independent studios to national chains and leisure trusts, recognised Gracemount's outstanding commitment to meeting community needs through a rigorous assessment process including written submissions, customer surveys, mystery shopping, and digital reviews.

Gracemount's success is further evidenced by its above-industry-average member retention rate of 14.4 months, demonstrating its vital role in promoting sustained community health and wellness.

The Royal Yacht Britannia and Fingal Hotel welcome new Director of Hospitality

The Royal Yacht Britannia and its sister ship, the luxury floating hotel Fingal, have appointed a new Director of Hospitality to lead their world-class guest experiences in Edinburgh's Port of Leith.

Ross McLean will now lead a crew of over 100 hospitality professionals delivering the highest levels of service across both ships.

Originally from Scotland, Mr McLean, 39, brings over 19 years of global hospitality management experience to his new position. Most recently, he was the General Manager of Operations at Millbrook Resort in Queenstown, New Zealand, which is one of the Southern Hemisphere's premier golf resorts and regularly wins awards as one of the best in the world in hotel, golf and spa categories.

Starting his hospitality career in the restaurant sector, Mr McLean was



awarded Young Restaurateur of the Year and was a HIT Scotland 'Art of Leadership' scholar. Now living in the Scottish Borders with his wife Renee and two daughters, Ross enjoys rugby, golf, and has always loved being in the outdoors.

Widely travelled and with a passion for the industry, Mr McLean's operational and leadership experience will ensure continuity in delivering outstanding hospitality aboard The Royal Yacht, including the Royal Deck Tearoom and private dining, as well as all aspects of Fingal Hotel.

Commenting on his appointment, Mr McLean said: "It's a real honour to build on my 10 years leading the Millbrook Resort in New Zealand by taking on this key role with Britannia and Fingal - two such unique venues with strong heritage and stories to tell. I look forward to creating even greater synergies between the UK's top tourist attraction and our luxury floating hotel."



Building Perpetually Adaptive Enterprises and Public Services

In an era of rapid and perpetual change, adaptability is crucial in order to drive growth, whether at an enterprise level or for the wider economy. Perpetually adaptive enterprises need infrastructure and systems that are agile, cost-effective, and easy to maintain over the long-term.

Yogesh Vitavkar
 Head of AI Transformation & Modernisation Services UK&I, Tata Consultancy



Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) leads in helping organisations to be perpetually adaptive, building infrastructure, future-proofing operations with cloud and AI-enabled solutions. The public sector in Scotland faces a pivotal moment to transform its IT infrastructure to meet evolving citizen needs and digital demands. Current systems limit data use, hinder adaptability, and fail to provide personalised experiences. Cloud and AI-enabled infrastructure is key to transforming public services and addressing these challenges.

AI-First Cloud Enabled Approach

TCS believes AI-first, cloud-enabled infrastructure is key to transformation. Deploying AI in cloud unlocks the power of data and democratises knowledge, enabling the transformation of critical services like healthcare, transport, and energy. This approach offers flexibility, allowing organisations to quickly adapt to changing needs and scale resources. Cloud-based systems enhance collaboration, breaking down data silos and improving decision-making. It

shifts public sector organisations from capital-intensive IT investments to a more predictable, adaptable model, freeing resources for innovation. While the cloud provides the foundation, AI acts as the catalyst, driving smarter, personalised services through data analysis and trend identification, leading to predictable outcomes and informed policy decisions. AI plays a critical role in enabling adaptable infrastructure. It allows systems to anticipate challenges, optimise performance, and automate processes.

Journey to a Perpetually Adaptive Enterprise

TCS is helping organisations globally, design and implement AI-first, cloud-enabled infrastructure to create integrated, adaptive enterprises. To maximise value, the AI-first approach must align with the public services value chain, optimise cloud investments, leverage knowledge across the public sector ecosystem, and build an information superstructure to enhance knowledge use. Successful delivery involves incremental stages: identifying use cases, building the foundation with Minimum Viable Products (MVPs), and scaling projects while ensuring security best practices. AI-powered tools enable personalised, seamless interactions to meet the public's expectations.

Adaptable infrastructure doesn't need to be expensive. Cloud-based, 'as-a-

service' models reduce upfront costs and provide long-term value. Heriot-Watt University, in Edinburgh, partnered with TCS to develop a solution aimed at enhancing the use of institutional data by modernising to cloud. The long-term goal is to enable data-driven decision-making by providing easy access to analytics and insights, ultimately improving the entire journey for students.

TCS is the technology partner for Improvement Service (IS), the go-to organisation for local government improvement in Scotland. TCS is implementing its cloud-enabled DigiGOV™ platform to drive the digital transformation of services provided to citizens, local businesses, and local authorities across Scotland.

A Vision for the Future

The infrastructure transformation of Scotland's public sector through cloud and AI is not just about technology—it's about delivering better outcomes for people. By embracing these innovations, public sector organisations can provide faster, smarter, and more accessible services, fostering trust and satisfaction among citizens.

TCS is proud to be a part of this journey, empowering Scotland's public sector to build a future-ready enterprise landscape. Together, we can turn the promise of technology into tangible benefits for everyone.



Your vision. Your event. Our expertise.



What do you need...

Because whatever it is, we've got it covered.

Exhibitions and events are a different breed from normal business. Expectations are high and challenges are limitless but don't worry, you've got us.



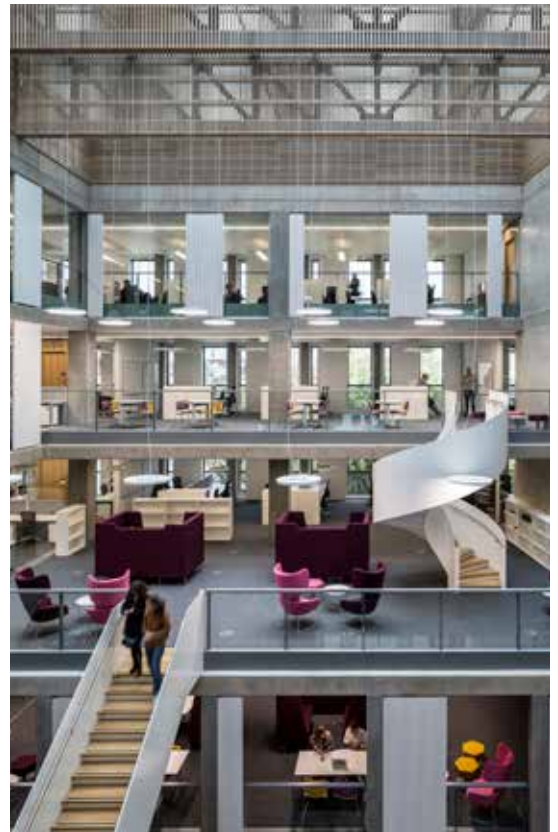
Where do you want it...

Our on-site goods handling prowess turns challenges into triumphs. No shipment is too heavy, no space too tight – we make the impossible, possible. Let us take care of all your lifting and handling requirements on-site.



What do you want...

Product delivered to your stand anywhere worldwide? Your existing stand assembled? Your new stand manufactured and built on-site ready for your arrival? We have no limits to what we can offer you.



Why Businesses Are Choosing to Co-Locate at the University of Edinburgh's Innovation Hubs

Companies of many sizes and at different stages of growth are choosing to locate at the University of Edinburgh.

Partnership working with academics, access to the next generation of talent, and simply being close to likeminded entrepreneurs and spin-outs are just a few of the reasons for joining Edinburgh's thriving innovation ecosystem.

Founded in 1583, the University of Edinburgh has spent over 400 years building its expertise.

Our heritage combines with cutting edge research to make Scotland's capital city one of the best knowledge centres in the world.

Beyond our University, Edinburgh and the surrounding region has much to offer. A Global Investment Report published by Vestd found Edinburgh-based businesses secured the third most funding rounds in 2024, after London and Manchester, plus the city's finance sector is second only to London among UK cities.

The University's strategic mission to deliver data-driven innovation plays a key part in delivering this success, and our introduction of six innovation hubs has the specific aims of increasing space and facilities for industry-academic collaborations and fostering a community of entrepreneurs and investors.

One of the hubs, the Usher Institute, is based at the Edinburgh BioQuarter, a global destination for healthcare, groundbreaking medical research and life sciences innovation and entrepreneurship.

The newest hub is Edinburgh Futures Institute, which houses sector experts for the creative industries, tourism and travel-tech, public services, and fintech in an award-winning restoration of a Grade A-listed former hospital in the heart of the city.

Opened in 2018, the Bayes Centre hosts a community of around 35 co-located members and partners, is established as the University's Innovation Hub for AI and Data Science, and leads on the coordination of entrepreneurship programmes Venture Builder Incubator and the AI Accelerator, and EIE, Scotland's flagship technology investment conference.

Neil McGillivray, Chief Operating Officer of the Bayes Centre, said, 'Edinburgh is a small city with a large and connected university, so it can provide a close-knit network of civic and national contacts and opportunities to foster collaboration. We're making more space available for you to co-locate your business with us. Joining us in any of our Innovation Hubs will open doors to experts in dozens of sectors.'

'You can work with academic and research staff, students, and other university partners, including public sector organisations and business development professionals. You can also build your business using our world class facilities or by participating in one of our accelerator or incubator programmes.'

Jude Henderson, Chief Operating Officer at Edinburgh Futures Institute, commented: 'Our existing industry residents range from early-stage start-ups and spin outs, to larger and more established national and international organisations. We know from listening to them how they benefit from close proximity to AI specialists and to other companies working in similar areas, as well as the breadth of expertise offered by University of Edinburgh staff.'

It's this interface that creates opportunities for companies to take part in discussion panels and seminars, shape and inform our curriculum and contribute to the life of the University as well as building their profiles as thought leaders within their sectors.

Co-location is a win-win for the University and industry. If you want to join us, get in touch to discuss your options - ddi.co-location@ed.ac.uk.



Transformative growth for Scotland's Built Environment sector

Scotland's Built Environment sector has experienced transformative growth this year and has been one of our fastest growing sectors as a firm.

Robert Forman

Partner, Burges Salmon
(Built Environment Sector)



The key trends driving this evolution include a robust push towards sustainability, with green buildings and renewable energy integrations at the forefront, and a hospitality sector that has performed exceptionally well, bouncing

back from the impact of the pandemic. This upward trend is something we've seen across the UK. In Scotland, our Hotels team has been involved in numerous high profile transactions this year, including the acquisition of Edinburgh's iconic Caledonian Waldorf Astoria Hotel and, most recently, the financing for and £49 million acquisition of, the DoubleTree by Hilton Edinburgh for international hotel owner Pandox. Elsewhere, we led on deals for Virgin Hotels and NUMA, as developers and investors target new ventures to boost tourism into the UK.

With a Scottish landscape that sets up the UK very well for reaching net zero, looking ahead there are also huge opportunities for further growth as Scotland looks to bolster its ports infrastructure to support the growth of its offshore wind capabilities.

These trends, together with the on-going challenges of a labour market in high-demand and the substantial increase in material costs, have had far-reaching implications across the sector, and as a result, we've scaled up our team to support our clients in navigating this evolving landscape.

Labour's infrastructure plans could mean a bright future for PPPs

The UK infrastructure sector could be gearing itself up for a major shift as the private sector eyes a revived role as an active delivery and financing partner

Stuart McMillan

Partner, Burges Salmon



Labour has long been open about its strategic ambition to collaborate more heavily with the private sector, through public-private partnerships (PPPs), and this is a change that will be welcomed by many. It has been clear for many years

that there is a critical need for a massive step-shift in infrastructure investment in the UK. This can only be achieved by the public and private sectors working together, with Government ensuring that the UK is an attractive place for the private sector to invest in.

However, we need PPP models which the private sector can understand and easily invest into. There won't be a "one size fits all" model such as PFIs, Private Finance Initiatives, but there could be a number

of models the Government could look at and develop to suit different aspects of infrastructure investment. This might include things like RAB in sectors such as nuclear, models similar to the Welsh MIM on social infrastructure and roads and other more bespoke models such as the DPC model currently being rolled out in the water sector.

Infrastructure is at the forefront of government plans and there's still much that needs to be worked out.

The Benefits and Challenges of B Corp Certification with Muckle Media

Muckle Media, a creative PR and communications agency based in Edinburgh, made history by becoming the first Scottish PR agency to achieve B Corp certification.



This prestigious certification recognises businesses that meet high standards of social and environmental performance, transparency, and accountability. Muckle Media's B Corp journey exemplifies the rigorous process, inspiring Edinburgh's small enterprises with its rewards and challenges.

The Benefits of Certification

Muckle Media's certification showcases their commitment to a business model that values more than just profit. This accomplishment has enhanced their reputation and connected them with a global community of businesses that share a vision of sustainability and positive impact, including organisations like Patagonia.

The certification has also helped Muckle Media attract clients who prioritise working with ethical businesses. Their Returners to Communications Programme, Kickstart trainee scheme, and commitment to being a Living Wage employer highlight their dedication to fair work and community engagement. These initiatives not only strengthen their business but also demonstrate the tangible impact they are making in their community.

Challenges along the way

The road to B Corp certification was not easy. As Nathalie Agnew, Muckle Media's Managing Director, shared: "Getting started was the hardest part. I initially thought we would be Scotland's first B Corp, but it took us a while to find the time and energy to complete the process. Many evenings and weekends went into getting everything done".

The thorough certification process involved documenting and proving the agency's ethical practices, from employee benefits to waste management.

Muckle Media also had to make a legal commitment to change their governance structure, ensuring they are accountable to all stakeholders, not just shareholders. This shift required the buy-in and participation of the entire team to uphold and continue improving their sustainability and ethical standards.

An Ongoing Commitment

Achieving B Corp status is only the beginning. Nathalie emphasised that while the certification is a fantastic

achievement, it also comes with the responsibility of continuous improvement: "We recognise that this is just the start of our B Corp journey. We're committed to growing our impact and fulfilling the promises we've made to our people, our clients, and our planet".

Why MM's Journey Matters

For Edinburgh businesses considering B Corp certification, Muckle Media's experience is a powerful example. Despite the challenges, the benefits – from attracting values-aligned clients to fostering a stronger internal culture – far outweigh the effort. Their journey shows that with persistence, any business can transform itself and contribute to building a more sustainable and inclusive economy.

Is your business ready to take the leap? Muckle Media's story demonstrates that no matter your industry, becoming a B Corp is an achievable goal that can open doors to new opportunities and positive impact. For further information on Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce's B Corp project check out [here](#).

Sleep: The Silent Key to a Thriving Workforce

It's midday on Wednesday, and your team is struggling. Conversations lack focus and tempers are unusually short. What's behind this dip in performance and mood? The answer could be simpler than you think: sleep deprivation.

Sleep deprivation, caused by poor quality or insufficient sleep, is a silent epidemic affecting up to 50% of employees.

Struggling to concentrate? Forgetting deadlines? Growing irritable? These are just some of the signs, along with increased illness, mistakes, and a higher risk of mental health issues.

Research suggests sleep deprivation costs UK businesses a staggering £1,248 per employee annually, with tiredness contributing to 200,000 lost working days every year.

For employers, this is a wake-up call. While organisations are quick to promote fitness challenges or mental health, they often neglect sleep health – a cornerstone of overall wellbeing. Yet without it, even the most motivated teams can falter. Poor sleep is linked to reduced cognitive function, increased anxiety, and 70% increased risk of workplace accidents.

For night shift workers, the risks are even more alarming: they are 25-30% more likely to sustain injuries.

So how can employers take action? Start by recognising the signs of sleep deprivation in your team: Declining focus, mistakes, irritability, or unexplained absences. Then, equip your workforce with tools to reclaim their sleep.

Sleep Action's Sleep Healthy Workplace Webinars provide expert-led guidance on sleep's vital role in wellbeing and offer practical solutions for improving sleep.

Just as menopause and paternity leave have become part of workplace wellbeing conversations, sleep health should be an engrained norm for employers and employees.

Prioritising sleep health is a smart investment in productivity, safety, and morale.

Ready to create a healthier, happier workplace?

Visit www.sleepaction.org/healthy-workplace and sign up for Sleep Action's Sleep Healthy Workplace Webinars today.



About Sleep Action

Sleep Action is the UK's oldest sleep charity.

Established in 1998, we have supported thousands of people to have healthy sleep. We are the leading provider of sleep support, training and resources in the UK. We work with professionals, families and employers to promote healthy sleep for everyone.



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Promote better sleep for a happy, healthy, motivated, and safe workforce

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Renewable Energy Storage Opportunities

Scotland stands as a leader in the UK’s renewable energy sector, generating approximately 70% of its electricity from renewable sources—well above the UK average of 46%.

Jonathan Kirkwood
Partner, DWF Group



Wind energy, both onshore and offshore, dominates this output with installed projects totalling a combined capacity of over 12GW. However, as we saw over the cold snap in January, when wind speeds falter, then the renewable energy output from these wind sources collapses, leading to a reliance on other forms of power generation including from fossil fuels like natural gas.

Conversely, overproduction of wind energy often results in costly constraints. It is estimated that the UK paid almost £1bn in 2024 to wind farm owners to switch off their wind turbines as the national grid cannot store excess energy. Electricity storage solutions address these issues and also allow stored power to be dispatched when required, thereby dealing efficiently with fluctuations in demand, as well as providing back up power if required in the case of outages.

Recognising this need, the UK Government’s Clean Power 2030 Action Plan, published in December 2024, sets ambitious targets: doubling onshore wind capacity and tripling offshore wind capacity by 2030. It is acknowledged that this will require an annual investment of £40 billion over the next 5 years, compared to the average annual

investment of £11 billion between 2020 and 2024 – with most of the funding coming from private investment.

Crucially, the plan also includes proposals for increased storage capacity, focusing on Battery Storage and Long Duration Energy Storage (LDES) such as pumped hydro, longer duration batteries and new technologies such as hydrogen.

The scale of opportunity is significant. As of Q2 2024, the UK had 4.5GW of installed battery storage capacity, with a 2030 target of 23-27GW. Similarly, pumped hydro storage capacity, currently at 2.9GW, is targeted to reach 4-6GW by 2030.

Battery technology is one of the key opportunities for onshore wind farm developers and owners, in particular. The 2030 Action Plan acknowledges existing frustrations with planning and grid connection delays which will need to be addressed if the Government targets are to be met. Given the requirement for such an increase in the next five years, the modular nature of many types of battery storage solutions and the stated aim of addressing the delays in current consents and grid connections, the opportunity for the addition of battery storage capability to onshore wind farms is huge.

In terms of LDES, pumped hydro remains the most established technology. There are six projects currently under development in Scotland which will more than double the UK’s pumped hydro

storage capacity to 7.7GW by 2035. These are the first pumped hydro projects to be commissioned in the UK since 1984.

Green Hydrogen has been identified by the Scottish Government as a growth area with an emphasis on the opportunity for export, presenting another compelling avenue for wind farm owners and the continuing development of hydrogen to power technology is also likely to create an increased domestic demand. Since excess power from wind farms can be used to produce Green Hydrogen, this would be a good opportunity for wind farm owners to explore, especially as the cost of such production is expected to come down as capital costs reduce due to improvements in technology, and the renewable power required to produce hydrogen can be provided at times when the wind farm is unable to export energy to the national grid.

Scotland’s established position in renewable energy, bolstered by favourable policies and the formation of Great British Energy headquartered in Scotland, provides a strong foundation for growth. With the framework laid out by the Clean Power 2030 Action Plan and Scotland’s natural advantages, the path is clear for renewable energy storage to flourish, driving both environmental and economic benefits. The DWF Energy Team, with its deep expertise in the sector, is well-positioned to support clients in navigating exciting opportunities ahead.

60 Seconds With

Name: Sarah Pryde-Smith

Company: Simba Charity

Website: www.simbacharity.org.uk

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

A: Support bereaved families make memories.

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

A: 6 months.

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

A: Varied, insightful, collaborative, emotional at times, values led and purposeful!

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

A: The collaborative approach taken to develop our strategy, 'Honouring the 1 in 4' and I'm excited to see the impact.

Q: Your favourite top tip or quote in business?

A: "Strive for progress, not perfection!"



Sarah Pryde-Smith

Q: Why did you join the Chamber of Commerce?

A: We rejoined last October. I think it's so important to connect with other organisations, share resource, collaborate and listen.

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

A: On the iPad, on the bike, trying to take my mind off how many minutes I've got left to pedal!

GET WITH IT

By Bill Magee

Scottish Business Technology
Writer of the Year



Innumerable socials are readily available at our digital fingertips but sorting out which ones are commercially relevant to a business development plan can prove problematic.

Social Media has taken over our busy business lives. That's a given.

Therein lies a snag as ambitious organisations attempt to further develop their commercial infrastructure looking ahead.

The sheer scale of data creation activity on any given day, minute - even second - is revealed by independent think-tank Bernard Marr & Co. The findings are surprising.

The ubiquitous nature of cyber activity, and overwhelming pressure bearing down by Big Tech to go for their endless digital conveyor belts of new products and features, is mindboggling.

Daily:

Facebook: One billion stories and 350 million photos shared daily

Instagram: 95 million photos and videos posted every day

LinkedIn: Two million posts, articles, and videos daily

Email: 241 million messages sent daily

Online shopping: Engages six million users every 24 hours

And every minute:

TikTok: 625 million videos viewed

YouTube: Over four million videos watched

Snapchat: More than half a million photos shared

X (formerly Twitter): Despite user drop-offs, 456,000 tweets are still posted

BlueSky: A rising decentralised microblogging platform gaining traction

Incredibly, Google processes over 40,000 searches every second, totalling 3.5 billion searches per day.

While digital activity keeps rising, one small shift offers a bit of relief: the average time spent on social media dropped from 151 minutes per day in 2023 to 143 minutes in 2024.



Cold digital comfort for what can become overwhelming pressure bearing down on commercial outcomes.

As you plan that exciting New Year business venture do not hesitate to seek expert help.

Getting it right can prove tricky.



Chamber Training Calendar

February & March 2025

Date	Course	Time
Tuesday 25th February	Essential Management Skills	9:30 - 16:00
Thursday 11th March	Becoming a Successful Leader	09:30 - 16:00
Thursday 27th March	A Beginners Practical Guide to Exporting	09:30 - 12:30
Wednesday 2nd April	Customs Procedures and Documentation	09:30 - 15:30
Wednesday 23rd April	A Beginners Practical Guide to Importing	09:30 - 12:30
Thursday 6th May	Understanding Export and Export Documentation	09:30 - 15:30
Thursday 29th May	Methods of Payment & Letters of Credit	09:30 - 15:30
Tuesday 10th June	Mastering Incoterms 2020: Roles, Risks and Responsibilities	09:30 - 12:30

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

edinburghchamber.co.uk/training-events



Chamber Events Calendar

March - September 2025

Date	Event	Time
Wednesday 5th March	Circular Economy and the Net Zero Transition	09:15 - 11:00
Thursday 6th March	Rising Stars Networking Evening: Cocktail Masterclass with The Alchemist	17:30 - 19:30
Tuesday 11th March	Networking Lunch at Liberté Brasserie	12:30 - 14:30
Friday 14th March	Early Start at the National Gallery of Scotland	09:00 - 10:30
Thursday 27th March	Networking Breakfast at Duck & Waffle	09:00 - 10:30
Wednesday 9th April	Behind the Scenes at the Festival Theatre	09:00 - 11:00
Wednesday 10th April	Networking Lunch at Hawksmoo	12:30 - 14:30
Friday 25th April	Early Start at Cyrenians	09:00 - 10:30
Tuesday 29th April	Partner & Corporate Roundtable: UK Government Employment Rights Bill	09:00 - 10:30
Wednesday 30th April	Inspiring Women in Business Lunch with Francesca Hegyi OBE, Chief Executive of Edinburgh International Festival	12:00 - 14:00
Tuesday 6th May	Speed Networking at YOTEL Edinburgh	09:00 - 11:30
Wednesday 14th May	Networking Lunch at Bonnar's	12:30 - 14:30
Tuesday 3rd June	Networking Lunch at Brewhemia	12:30 - 14:30
Friday 12th September	Edinburgh Chamber Golf Day at the Dalmahoy Golf Course	08:30 - 13:00

Investing in green energy ports to drive economic growth and promote the Net Zero transition

Investing in green energy ports like the ports of Leith and Dundee is a crucial step towards achieving decarbonisation and, to achieve this successfully, private investors and governments need to collaborate to provide the necessary financing and create favourable regulatory environments to accelerate this transition, says Stuart Wallace, Chief Executive Officer of Forth Ports.



Stuart Wallace
Chief Executive Officer,
Forth Ports



Ports across Scotland continue to serve as crucial hubs for the import and export of goods – from aggregates and timber products for the construction sector to potatoes and whisky for Scotland’s exporters. Traditionally, ports have also handled fossil fuels and their associated supply chains but, with the shift towards renewable energy and low carbon fuels, there is a significant opportunity to repurpose and upgrade these port facilities.

In December, Forth Ports announced a

further £50 million private investment in infrastructure at the Port of Leith, having secured its largest ever offshore wind contract, the delivery of the 1.1 gigawatt (GW) Inch Cape Offshore Wind Farm. This latest investment in infrastructure at the Port of Leith is in addition to the £150m already spent in Dundee and Leith to deliver upgraded facilities to support green industries.

This additional financial boost will enhance Leith’s marine access, infrastructure and vessel assets and includes plant and equipment that will be used to deliver Inch Cape. It will also create up to 50 new and upskilled green energy jobs to support the project which will be delivered through the specialist team at Forth Projects.

Inch Cape represents a very significant

milestone for Forth Ports as it is the largest offshore wind contract ever to be awarded to the business. When it goes live, Inch Cape will have a significant impact on Scotland’s energy transition, as the country drives to achieve net zero carbon emissions with strong domestic capability.

Forth Ports’ strategy and investment to create and build the renewables hubs ahead of market demand has been achieved in both Leith and Dundee, which is currently the marshalling and assembly hub for the construction of EDF Renewables’ and ESB’s major offshore wind farm, Neart na Gaoithe (NnG), which achieved the milestone of its first power generation in October.

Through the development of the infrastructure to support offshore wind

Scotland’s ports can act as production points for low carbon energy projects, from offshore wind farms and hydrogen production to the development of sustainable fuels and carbon capture. This not only supports the future growth of the UK’s offshore wind industry, but also provides a template for other ports across the Forth Ports group and across the UK.



- alongside the hydrogen economy and sustainable fuel production - ports can play a central role in the national transition to a sustainable energy future. However, to fully realise this potential, it is essential to address the many challenges that cause delay. From reducing the time to achieve planning consent and the

delivery of major transmission upgrades to increasing renewable funding allocations and the development of business models to support hydrogen, there are many essential steps we can take to encourage large-scale global investment.

Recent steps to create a dedicated marine planning unit in Aberdeen are welcome,

as are efforts to streamline the Section 36 planning regime and the transmission connections process. These steps will go a long way to help create a pipeline of projects. However, given the scale of the opportunity, Scotland must maintain its focus on ensuring adequate resources for consenting and licensing authorities to ensure prompt decisions are made. Against this supportive background companies can invest for the long term to grow local supply chains.

Undoubtedly, Scotland's ports can act as production points for low carbon energy projects, from offshore wind farms and hydrogen production to the development of sustainable fuels and carbon capture. This not only supports the future growth of the UK's offshore wind industry, but also provides a template for other ports across the Forth Ports group and across the UK.

The creation of high quality, green jobs, ranging from construction to high-tech engineering, can have a lasting positive impact on local communities. To realise the potential of ports like Leith, strategic investment and strong policy support are essential. With strategic investment in supply chains and robust policy support, green energy ports can become pivotal players in the international effort to combat

www.forthports.co.uk





Our climate is changing

It is changing at such a pace that unless organisations, businesses and services don't act, invest and adapt, the consequences could be far-reaching and damaging on many levels.

Gordon Reid

General Manager Zero Emissions,
Scottish Water
Chair, Edinburgh Adapts Partnership



Scottish Water published its first Climate Change Adaptation Plan almost exactly a year ago (February 2024) outlining what we need to do to maintain reliable and robust

water and waste water service provision for many decades to come.

We serve five million people - 2.5 million households and more than 150,000 business across the country; our investment programme is valued at more than £1 billion annually, and that means we are one of Scotland's three biggest infrastructure investors - supporting employment, skills development and vital infrastructure which keeps our country running.

Business planning is a key part of ensuring we spend the money raised from public charges on the right things at the right time and place. Investing for a climate changed future is now fundamental to how we do business.

The years which lie ahead are no doubt challenging; scientifically based predictions of warmer winters, different rainfall patterns, increasing flooding and a generally warming

SCOTTISH WATER CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION PLAN 2024



atmosphere mean we face an uncertain and less predictable landscape.

It's the single biggest challenge we face as the country's public water and waste water utility and as a society.

However, adapting to the changed and changing climate is something we are going to have to face together to ensure our communities, our customers and our societies can thrive and flourish.

The scale of the issue may seem unmanageable, and the answers unclear.

There is no single silver bullet to solve it.

But by working together, coordinating our efforts and being innovative, bold and ambitious we can navigate the future which lies ahead, in both the short and long term.

Scottish Water is building for that future; one which might see prolonged periods of drought impact on the availability of water

from our taps and sewers which cannot cope with intense localised rainfall.

We're investing in technology, putting innovation at the heart of our operations.

First and foremost, however, we are an organisation which can only be successful because of the people who work for us. We have fully engaged our workforce and supply chain in understanding how we can all play our part.

Having employees who are part of the answer is fundamental. Without a workforce which is committed to doing things differently the solutions to how we adapt to climate change may remain just out of reach.

Businesses can play their part individually and collectively by looking at their operations, policies and investment priorities so that we can all make a collective difference.

Our approach to developing our adaptation plan was:

- to understand the climate change risks that will impact our assets and services.
- to understand when these risks may happen and plan for them- we need a shorter- term focus on operational resilience to maintain service and will focus on adapting assets in the longer term.
- to dimension the financial impact of adaptation- for Scottish Water we forecast £2-5b over the next 25 years.
- to understand and plan for the impacts climate change will have on our employees, our partners and supply chain.

The impacts of climate change will vary from business to business and all businesses need to understand and plan for them. If you are unsure of where to start, visit the website.

www.scottishwater.co.uk



Edinburgh’s Green Gateway: Transforming Granton Waterfront into Scotland’s Net-Zero Coastal Community

Granton Waterfront Phase 1 received full planning approval in November 2024, bringing plans to deliver a new environmentally friendly coastal town in Edinburgh a step closer.

This first phase of regeneration will bring 847 ‘net zero ready’ homes, built in partnership with Cruden Homes on the city’s largest brownfield site. These warm, energy efficient homes will be a mixture of social rent, mid-market rent and homes for sale catering for families and those who require wheelchair accessibility. The new development will create attractive local living for residents by providing capacity for a new primary school and a low carbon heat network. There will also be commercial units, active travel routes and other sustainable transport infrastructure as well as attractive public and open space. This exciting first phase of regeneration in Granton Waterfront will be delivered from 2025 to 2032.

As part of the Council’s strategy to address the city’s housing emergency 45% of the homes will be affordable.

In addition, a low carbon heat network will be delivered alongside the homes, providing

a low carbon zero direct emissions source of heat and hot water. The Council has been working with its proposed concessionaire, Vattenfall Heat UK Ltd to take forward the design of the heat network.

Alongside this, the Council continues to drive forward early action projects in the area which includes delivery of over 600 affordable ‘net zero ready’ homes across three sites. The project to restore the Granton Gasholder is now complete and the park built within the frame is now open to visitors from the local area and beyond. This key placemaking destination will form the heart of phase 1.

Background information

Over the next 10-15 years, the Granton Waterfront regeneration programme will create a new residential-led mixed-use community, home to around 8,000 people on Edinburgh’s waterfront. It will deliver around 3,500 net zero carbon homes

(of which at least 35% - 1,225 - will be affordable), a low carbon heat network, a primary school, a health centre, commercial and cultural space and a new coastal park. This new development will be supported by new cycling and walking routes and enhanced public transport connections. The revitalisation of Granton Waterfront’s historic buildings and industrial built heritage, coupled with the delivery of new leisure and recreation opportunities, will significantly increase visitors to the area, creating new local employment opportunities. Partner organisations to the Council will deliver substantial new cultural and educational assets in the Granton Waterfront over the regeneration timeframe. The overall development will make a significant contribution to Edinburgh’s target to become a net zero carbon city by 2030, through a mix of energy efficient buildings, clean heat solutions, sustainable travel options and a nature-based approach to climate mitigation and adaptation.

Distilling a Sustainable Future: Heriot-Watt's Vision for Brewing and Distilling Infrastructure

Brewing and distilling are more than a proud part of Scotland's heritage; they are a dynamic global industry shaping local economies and international markets.

A recent report by Reuters highlighted that demand for premium spirits has soared by 90% over the past decade, creating exciting growth opportunities but also new infrastructure and supply-chain challenges. Heriot-Watt University, with its longstanding expertise in brewing and distilling sciences, is uniquely positioned to help the sector respond to these challenges and thrive sustainably.

The scale of production in a modern distillery can be monumental: a single large site may use around 2.5 million litres of water each day, requiring significant energy to move, heat, and process. These figures highlight just one of the urgent needs for innovative approaches to resource and energy management. According to the Scotch Whisky Association, the industry has made steady progress in cutting emissions and improving environmental impacts, yet meeting net zero targets will demand an even bolder commitment to future-focused infrastructure.

Heriot-Watt has been at the forefront of innovation in this sector for well over a century. The University's International Centre for Brewing and Distilling – established in 1903 – was among the world's first academic institutions to offer formalised education in these sciences. Generations of Master Brewers and Distillers have walked our halls, going on to shape much of what the world recognises as top-tier brewing and distilling.

Today, our legacy endures through global education, collaborative research and



partnership with industry giants and smaller craft enterprises alike.

Beyond academic heritage, Heriot-Watt is rapidly expanding its role as a catalyst for new ideas and sustainable growth. The Global Research Institute for Net Zero and Beyond (iNetZ+) drives cross-disciplinary research in resource efficiency, carbon capture, and clean energy solutions. One standout project is the UKRI-funded TransiT Digital Twinning programme, which offers brewers and distillers the opportunity to trial adaptations to their supply chains and production processes in a risk-free virtual environment. These "try-before-you-buy" digital tools allow complex decisions to be made swiftly, reducing potential disruptions and ensuring that any new infrastructure or technology is optimised for efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

Collaboration is key to driving the industry forward, and talent development lies at the heart of that mission. Nearly one in four specialists in brewing and distilling is approaching retirement, highlighting a pressing need for a new generation of expertly trained professionals. Heriot-Watt is tackling this head-on through partnerships such as our ongoing talent initiative with Diageo, providing Graduate Apprenticeships tailored to the sector's emerging needs. These apprentices gain academic knowledge combined with real-world experience, positioning them to become the industry's next leaders in sustainable production and innovative infrastructure.

Industry partners and alumni consistently demonstrate the tangible impact of these collaborations. The Port of Leith Distillery, for example, showcases how energy-

efficient design principles and a bold vision can be combined with scientific rigour to produce spirits in sustainable new ways. Elsewhere, technology ventures such as research-led robotics venture 'Crover' highlights the breadth of challenges – and opportunities – across the supply chain. By developing the world's first robotic grain monitoring system, Crover can "swim" through stored grain to detect moisture, temperature, and spoilage risk. Crover has reported up to a 40% reduction in grain waste, nurtured and co-located in Heriot-Watt's National Robotarium, this research-led venture is now expanding into global markets. These success stories illustrate how academic research, entrepreneurial thinking, and industrial know-how can yield both commercial gains and environmental benefits throughout the supply-chain.

From rural decarbonisation to pioneering new technologies, Heriot-Watt is committed to building solutions that benefit both industry and society. By bringing together technical expertise, practical collaboration, and a historic commitment to excellence, the University remains at the forefront of shaping a greener, more resilient future for brewing and distilling. With global demand still growing and sustainability goals more pressing than ever, there has never been a better time to embrace the transformative potential of research-led innovation.

Heriot-Watt's vision is clear: through collaboration, technological advancement, and a focus on sustainable talent development, the brewing and distilling sector can continue to flourish, safeguarding its heritage while building an infrastructure fit for the future.



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

Shaping Edinburgh's Future: Growth, Infrastructure, and Opportunity

A new year is always something to look forward to. It means fresh beginnings and opportunities, but also allows us to look at the year gone by and what was achieved.



2024 marked a record year at Edinburgh Airport. A record year for any Scottish airport with more than 15 million passengers travelling through our terminal.

We facilitated more flights between Scotland and North America than ever before. Hainan Airlines increased its services to China, meaning better connectivity to Asia. We saw Emirates return to our capital city with direct flights to Dubai, and Qatar Airways increased its Doha route to twice a day.

This growth is something our teams across the airport have worked tirelessly with our campus partners to achieve, and are very proud of.

But what does it mean for the city?

For me, it's quite simple – and it's not only about providing more choice for that summer holiday.

It also means more people are exploring new business opportunities and forging connections overseas. And crucially, it means more people are visiting our city and experiencing the best Scotland has to offer – whether they're taking in our world-famous festival season, enjoying our amazing food and drink, or immersing themselves in our culture, history and heritage.

This is all positive, and at the airport we want to build on this positivity.

Our intention is to continue growing in a sustainable way – supporting even more trips away for people, connecting Scotland to different parts of the world, and welcoming many new visitors to Scotland.

But for this to happen we need to ensure we have the infrastructure to support it.

We've publicly set out how the airport will be expanding in the future. This is something I'm asked about a lot, and there will be more on those plans to come.

In the meantime, there are a number of important infrastructure projects already in the works across our campus to ensure we're ready for short and medium term growth.

We're spending £5.8 million to expand our check-in hall in time for the busy 2025 holiday season, and we're sure passengers will be impressed with what they see when they come through this summer. Parts of the hall are being redesigned to create more room, while new self-service technology and digital wayfinding will be brought in.

We're expanding the food and drink options available in departures, bringing some new restaurants and bars to the airport to ensure as much choice as possible.

And our most important asset – our runway – will be fully replaced in winter 2025/2026, with works starting this November. This is a significant project which has already involved many months of meticulous planning, but it's something that will ensure the airport is primed and ready to meet the demand for travel in Edinburgh for many years to come.

This type of forward planning is a non-negotiable for us. It's something we're constantly doing to ensure we're equipped for this demand, as more people plan that trip to the city and the country we're so proud of.

And our investment not only enables our own growth to deliver aviation connectivity – we understand that we can support the wider community.

Our sister company's proposed Crosswind housing and mixed use development will address some of the housing pressures in Edinburgh. A new access road – which we will fund – will support Crosswind and other neighbouring developments, as well as the airport, when councils and government are cash strapped to provide for such infrastructure. And proposals to build a district heating system to serve a growing west Edinburgh will help us all on the path to decarbonisation.

This planning is something I'm sure we're doing all across Edinburgh as the city develops.

I've no doubt you'll agree it's in each of our interests to ensure we're ready to provide the best city for those visiting from all across the world. And ensure they leave telling their friends why the Travellers Choice Awards were right to name Edinburgh among the world's best places to visit earlier this year.

Personally, I find it's always an incredibly proud moment when we hear about the fantastic experiences visitors have had in our city and across Scotland. I'm sure many of you reading this are the same, and the work we're all doing now will ensure we share many more of those moments in 2025 and beyond.

But those fantastic experiences are only possible if we as a city and country provide it. It's the stays in our amazing hotels, the first-class food and drink that we serve, and the momentous events we host. We all need to be putting Edinburgh's and Scotland's best foot forward to make it happen.



Gordon Dewar
Chief Executive,
Edinburgh Airport

Revitalising North Bridge: Innovation, Sustainability, & Community Impact with Balfour Beatty

The installation is located on the east plinth of the bridge's south pier. Permanent platforms are being installed to improve access for future inspection and minor maintenance. The project has generated £37 million in social value spend, with 82% of labor spend being local and 61% of SME spend within a 20-mile radius. Upon completion, these works will extend the bridge's lifespan and eliminate the need for further maintenance for years to come.

Managing complex logistics

The bridge sits above Waverley railway station and railway lines and provides a vital connection for both vehicles and pedestrians between the old and new towns, both of which are UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

The logistics of maintaining access to the bridge has required careful consideration, collaboration and management. Utilising a suite of digital tools has helped us to mitigate and manage risk and minimise disruption to ensure successful project delivery. Using BIM, we created a BIM Execution Plan to help inform buildability decisions and clash detection. 3D laser scanning and drones helped us to model the bridge to support the council with planning and future maintenance on the bridge.

A further challenge was the installation of the complex scaffolding that was required to enable our teams to gain entry to areas of the bridge that have not been accessed in this extensive manner for 125 years. Traditional scaffolding relies on ground support, but due to the interface with the railway station and the low capacity of the roof, we had to suspend the scaffolding from the bridge itself. This required multiple stages of design and checks. Although the access was challenging, it enabled thorough inspections which revealed the need for more extensive repairs than initially anticipated.

Cast repairs and carbon footprint savings

To reduce the project's carbon footprint, our teams have focused on cutting construction waste and carbon emissions, particularly in energy-intensive tasks, such as the production of steel and concrete. By repairing cast iron components instead of replacing them, the Comparison Life Cycle Assessment we carried out alongside our specialist supply chain partners, showed an 89% carbon footprint reduction.



By retaining 30% of the existing cast iron on the bridge and repairing 63% of the components, we were able to further lower embodied carbon. Additionally, we improved the façade to allow for movement and reduce stress-induced defects, reusing original materials to preserve decorative features. Through complex assessments we were able to utilise as much of the existing bridge fabric as possible.

Community engagement initiatives

To ensure we leave a positive legacy beyond the life of the project, our social impact team has developed a bespoke social impact plan focused on engagement with local schools and higher learning facilities, charities and volunteer groups. To date the team have:

- Engaged with approximately 1,400 people in a variety of educational activities aimed at inspiring the next generation to pursue careers in the construction industry.

- Facilitated a site visit for 75 children and partnered with Edinburgh schools and the Superpower Agency in an eight-week writing workshop. This initiative produced books inspired by the history and refurbishment of the iconic North Bridge, enhancing students research, writing, and interpersonal skills.

- Collaborated with the Ukrainian Construction Academy and EVOC (Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations Council) to provide work experience for 3 Ukrainians. This included specialised training to facilitate employment in the construction sector.

- Raised £3,500 by participating in the Edinburgh Kilomathon, raising money for the Lighthouse Construction Industry Charity, which supports the emotional, physical, and financial wellbeing of construction workers and their families.

www.balfourbeatty.com

People must be at the heart of smart city development plans

Edinburgh Napier University research into the governance of smart cities is already making a difference.

Cities around the world are changing. Edinburgh, like many other large municipalities, is grappling with the complexities of digital transformation and all the ethical challenges they bring.

Half the global population already lives in cities, with projections indicating this will rise to 70% by 2050. As these pressures on infrastructure build, the use of cutting-edge digital technology can help improve urban life for millions of people.

However, building a smart city is not simply about deploying the tech – it is about making sure it benefits everyone equitably.

Our team at Edinburgh Napier University has now established itself as a global leader in smart city governance research. We have published three global studies for the United Nations in the last three years, offering evidence-based insight into how cities can effectively manage their digital transformation plans.

By addressing the complexities of smart city governance, we have been able to provide clear guidance that empowers local and regional governments to build more sustainable, inclusive, and innovative urban futures.

At the heart of our research is a UN governance framework for people-centred smart city projects that we developed. This is made up of three critical themes: strategic planning, collaborative ecosystems, and technological infrastructure.

These dimensions are all intrinsically linked. A city's strategic plan must incorporate partnerships and data management provisions, while technological systems should reflect the needs and priorities of the diverse communities they serve.

These UN reports shed light on how municipalities worldwide are managing the challenges of adopting digital technology. While many cities are embracing it, there are still significant gaps in ethical oversight, public participation, data governance, and the equitable distribution of resources.

Take ethical oversight for example. This is an area which is critically underdeveloped, as only 16% of cities are implementing policies that address the moral implications of their digital transformation. Without these frameworks, cities risk exaggerating inequalities at the expense of already marginalised communities. They can also



Professor Luca Mora
Professor of Urban Innovation,
Edinburgh Napier University



Dr Paolo Gerli
Lecturer of Digital Innovation,
Edinburgh Napier University



risk eroding public trust over concerns such as data privacy and surveillance.

Nevertheless, this also represents an opportunity for cities to develop guidelines prioritising human rights and social equity in the digital era. By embedding ethics into their procurement processes and creating advisory boards with diverse representation, cities can ensure smarter solutions align with societal values.

Public participation is another area requiring urgent attention. Although technology has the potential to empower communities, less than a quarter of cities report robust citizen engagement. Whether it's online consultations, neighbourhood workshops, or interactive urban dashboards, engaging urban communities can help build trust.

It's a similar story for data governance. Fewer than 30% of cities actively share data with partners, limiting transparency

and collaboration. New York City's Open Data Portal is a good example of how cities can use data-sharing platforms to foster research, entrepreneurship, and public accountability.

Crucially, as cities embrace digital transformation, they must ensure that access to smart technologies are not limited to privileged groups. Barriers such as affordability, digital literacy, and connectivity must be addressed if cities are to make the most of these changes. Providing free public Wi-Fi in underserved areas, or targeted digital skills training can empower communities to take up the opportunities new technology brings.

By putting people first, smart city development can truly become the engine of sustainable development and shared prosperity for all our communities.

For more information, please visit: www.napier.ac.uk.

The importance of community transport initiatives in rural Scotland

Good transport networks in rural areas are essential for both the health of the local economy and the vibrancy of local communities.



Sheila Tulloch
Partner, Anderson Strathern



Whether it is ensuring access to vital goods and supplies, encouraging young people to live in rural areas, or attracting tourists who support local businesses, transportation is vitally important. However, despite being in an era where we have never been more connected, we see significant challenges when connecting rural communities via public transport.

Recent studies have shown that 64% of households in large urban areas of Scotland have cars, compared with almost 89% in rural areas. This is reflected in inverse proportions regarding bus usage, with the Scottish Household Survey travel diary showing that 53% of those who used the bus the previous day lived in large urban areas compared to 3% of users living in remote rural areas.

The reality of modern living means that reducing car ownership is not always feasible – bus services won't necessarily be able to call at every village or farm frequently, and many people living in rural areas run businesses or have jobs that require the use of a vehicle.

However, adequate public transport can help discourage car use and provide a vital service to those who don't have access to a vehicle. Whilst a linked-up, efficient public transport service needs a strategy and delivery plan initiated at government level, there are actions that can be taken at a

local level to fill specific gaps and improve the quality of life for residents of remote and rural communities.

One example of this is community transport initiatives, where projects are delivered by groups based in the communities they serve. The Scottish branch of the Community Transport Association has over 180 members delivering a diverse range of projects across the whole of Scotland, many of these in some of Scotland's remotest locations.

One such initiative is the Glenfarg Community Transport Group in Perthshire, which operates two community buses driven by a team of 15 volunteer drivers. The service is designed to promote social and recreational activities for those living in Glenfarg, with scheduled monthly outings as well as being used by local clubs and organisations. In April 2023, the group also took over a 55 Bus Service between Glenfarg and Kinross, setting up as a Scottish Charity and entering a Public Social Partnership (PSP) with Perth & Kinross Council.

Community transport initiatives can take many forms, with several of them also featuring impressive net zero credentials. On the island of Rousay in Orkney, the local Development Trust transformed its community electric car into a tailored door-to-door service. The Trust employs two drivers, offering trips to the shop, post office and surgery for island residents.

The impact of such initiatives can be life-changing for users and are a microcosm of how life in remote and rural areas requires appropriate transport provision if the area is not only to survive, but to thrive.

Reliable transportation is also crucial for businesses. Access to efficient networks can determine the viability of operations, for example, ensuring a shellfish business can reach overseas markets quickly or that farmers can transport livestock to slaughter while maintaining high welfare standards. Addressing these needs requires fit-for-purpose road and ferry infrastructure across Scotland, and we look forward to seeing how these issues will be tackled in the Government's Rural Delivery Plan, due by 2026, and the new National Islands Plan, which is expected in 2025.

The availability of funding is of course key to the delivery of all transport services. This is a particular challenge for Scotland's community transport sector, which is described as a "highly fragmented and competitive funding landscape" by the Community Transport Association. For example, the Rousay scheme mentioned above received funding from the Community Transport Small Grant Scheme operated by Orkney Islands Council, but not every local authority area will have similar schemes available.

Whether you are an established organisation or an individual with an idea that might benefit your community, we have a dedicated Charities and Third Sector team at Anderson Strathern who would be happy to have a discussion with you. With offices in Orkney and Shetland, we also have first-hand experience of many of the transport issues affecting peripheral communities in Scotland.

If you are facing a similar situation, please get in touch with Sheila Tulloch at Sheila.tulloch@andersonstrathern.co.uk.

Big plans and bigger execution: data and digital infrastructure in Scotland in 2025

It's almost impossible to read an article on digital infrastructure in the UK without seeing a reference to the opportunity offered by Scotland.



With a cool, favourable climate and available renewable energy, a tech-literate, skilled workforce, and a favourable government committed to digital industries, Scotland is a compelling choice for data centre development.

In addition, there are now signs that the central UK government is more supportive of digital infrastructure development north of the border. As part of the recent AI Opportunities Action Plan, supercomputing power in the UK will be increased twenty-fold – with Edinburgh's Archer2 project set to benefit.

Elsewhere, Scotland's coastal and previously developed industrial areas are ideal candidates for early AI Growth Zones. Within existing facilities such as South Gyle, we will be extending our ongoing user experience upgrades.

With such a backdrop, it is not surprising that data centre development throughout Scotland is poised for substantial growth in 2025. The November 2023 longlist for Scottish data centre development will – with any luck – soon be a list of projects underway.

An unexpected part of the driving force of this expansion is that the eastern Scottish coast is a natural landing point for Nordic

AI data and traffic.

We have already explored the Nordic connection and what it might mean for Scotland, but the points bear repetition. 2020 to 2023 saw over £1bn in disclosed investment in data centres in the Nordic region, and it is the UK's 8th biggest export market.

Facebook, Google, Amazon Web Services, and Apple have all made recent, significant investments in Nordic data centres. For 2025 and beyond, looking east across the North Sea for market opportunities – or models to mirror – seems a powerful idea.

The bigger picture

How these technologically based opportunities interact with a recovering economy will be critical for the Scottish digital business community.

The latest Scottish Fiscal Commission forecast for the Scottish economy expects 1% growth in 2024 (up from 0.2% in 2023) rising to 1.5% growth in 2025 and 1.6% in 2026. (This compares with the UK Office for Budget Responsibility forecasting UK GDP growth of 1.1% in 2024, rising to 2% in 2025 and 1.8% in 2026).¹

For Scottish businesses, that leap from 0.2% to 1.6% is a very welcome progression. But,

to turn those 24 months into a long-term platform for sustained economic growth, Scotland must be able to embrace (and benefit from) the opportunities of AI and lay the foundations for technology businesses to grow, thrive, create jobs and attract investment.

These conditions include the skills needed to exploit digital development and an infrastructure that can support growth. Scotland has an impressive record in this regard, seen in everything from the inclusion of digital connectivity in the recent Scottish Futures Trust Business Plan², to the original Changing Nation strategy document from 2021³.

To keep this growth on track, support for data centres, and a keen encouragement of private sector investment in digital infrastructure is critical.

References

1. See Economic Outlook - Scottish economic bulletin: January 2025 - gov.scot.
2. See Business Plan 2024-2025.
3. See A changing nation: how Scotland will thrive in a digital world - gov.scot.

www.pulsant.com

Saving Edinburgh's Palm Houses

Standing 22 metres (72 feet) high, the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh's Temperate Palm House is one of the key landmarks in the capital, visible from Edinburgh Castle. Yet this city icon, together with its adjoining Tropical Palm House, are almost 200 years old, and centuries of Scottish winters have taken their toll.



Located at the heart of the Garden, the two A-listed structures are outstanding examples of late Georgian and Victorian engineering and part of Scotland's architectural heritage. However, their true value comes with the role they play in providing a safe refuge for many of the fascinating plants that are part of the Botanics' Living Collection of plants. Yet, with the stonework crumbling, ironwork rusting and brittle horticultural glass shattering during storms, the plant specimens, some of which are endangered in their native habitats, were increasingly at risk.

To save the Palm Houses, a restoration programme was launched in 2021, part of the Garden's landmark development project, the Edinburgh Biomes.

Beginning with the removal of plants for safekeeping, the renovation works proper began in September that year, with the creation of a skeleton of scaffolding inside and outside the buildings – so intricate it took six months to build –

before the Palm Houses disappeared under layers of protective wrap.

Then, the challenge of restoring six hundred square metres of ironwork began.

At almost 7 metres high (22 feet), the 19 giant arched windows which grace the front and sides of the Temperate Palm House are among its most memorable features, and the mission facing the team was to restore, rather than replace, the original ironwork. With each window consisting of three parts, each with varying levels of corrosion, this proved to be quite a challenge but, just before Christmas 2024, the final restored arched window was successfully reinstalled.

Replacing almost two thousand metres squared of glass has also required skill and creativity.

The old glass was prone to break during storms, forcing the buildings' closure and posing a danger to the Living Collection. Now, the two new types of glass being installed – laminated panes in the roofs

and toughened glass in the windows – is expected to be more resilient and less likely to shatter in the face of weather.

Creating panes of glass that exactly fit the curved nature of the Palm Houses' domes has also been testing and a unique numbered template for each of the 5,750 panes of glass had to be created from plywood.

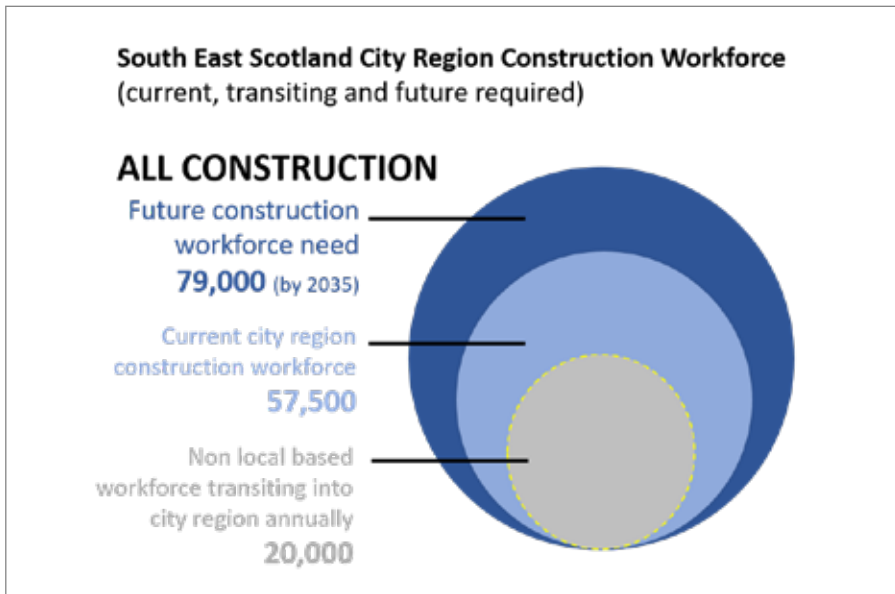
This spring, the final repairs will be made before the construction element ends and the historic buildings are returned to the care of the Botanics. The next chapter in the Restoration of the Palm Houses – the landscaping, up-to-date interpretation and return of the precious collection of plants – will then be written.

The restoration of the Palm Houses is supported by the Scottish Government, National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic Environment Scotland and the Garfield Westfield Foundation.

To help save the Palm Houses, please visit www.rbge.org.uk/palmhouses.

Addressing the City & Region Growth Opportunities

During the next 10 to 15 years the city of Edinburgh and surrounding region will see significant growth both in population, housing and expansion of key construction and net zero infrastructure sectors.



expand training facilities and staffing, linking the four regional colleges of Edinburgh, Fife, Borders and West Lothian and with private training providers would double the training output capacity. Helping the city region local based workforce to grow from 36,000 to 73,500 underpinning a total workforce target of 79,000.

Future infrastructure such as district and community heat networks, proposed in the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies (LHEES), also provide the opportunity for the city and partner local authorities to combine knowledge, resources and link across local authority boundaries. The recent large heat network in Granton, first of its kind in the UK, brings together leading Scottish construction innovation companies such as CCG in partnership with housing associations and the city of Edinburgh council.

As the delivery of the offshore renewable energy contracts progress our skyline along the Forth estuary will change to show the outline of the massive wind towers and blades being assembled and floated out to the North Sea. To underpin this delivery there is the opportunity to create thousands of high quality, green jobs in areas of local deprivation.

The task ahead may appear significant and challenging, but there is no doubt that infrastructure will play a major role in the city and regional growth for the next 10-15 years. The opportunity ahead is to maximise the collective commerce and benefits to our local businesses, SMEs and public sector partners to address the oncoming city and regional growth pipeline.

Sean Smith
 Director, Centre for Future Infrastructure,
 Edinburgh Futures Institute,
 University of Edinburgh



Through the partnership formed across the six local authorities of Edinburgh, Fife, East Lothian, Midlothian, West Lothian and the Scottish Borders via the City Region Deal, a collective approach has been forged to maximise delivery and address future growth.

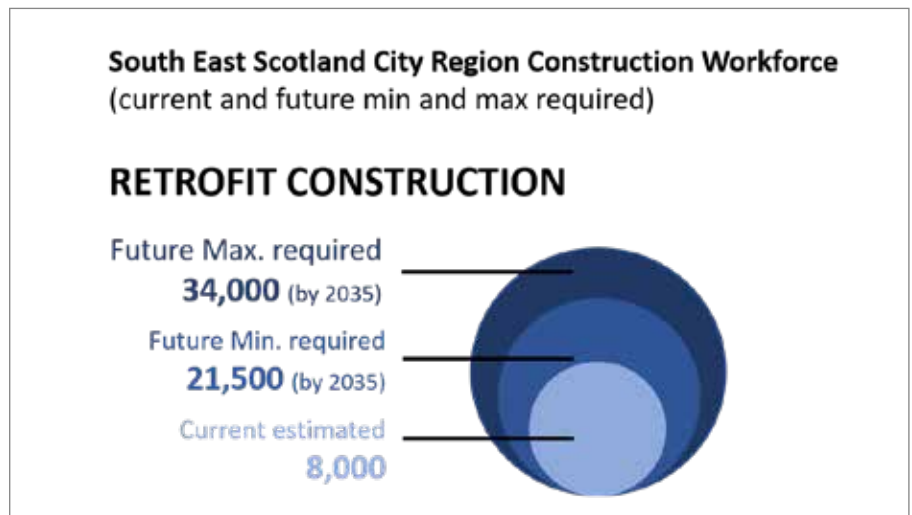
A key factor has been the development of the Regional Prosperity Framework (RPF) providing the fusion to develop and plan for future city and regional requirements, of which critical pathways have emerged such as the future delivery of net zero outcomes, Forth Green Freeport (also including Forth Valley) and mapping of investments required for skills and future workforce.

According to the CITB the south east of Scotland is the largest regional construction workforces (57,500) operating in Scotland. Of which 20,000 commute into the region from outside the city region.

Funded by Innovate UK and the RPF, recent studies led by the University of Edinburgh, local colleges and Fife Council on behalf of the region, has mapped major growth areas for the construction workforce to deliver the oncoming £18 billion in retrofit works by 2045. To retrofit the 670,000 regional homes to meet net zero will require the regional retrofit workforce to expand from

current circa 8,000 to minimum 21,500. In addition, the Regional Housing Board has been supporting the major new housing site proposals pipeline for 45,000 homes. This also links to sites infrastructure and resulting community benefits investments.

With 35% of all Scottish construction forecast in this city region and only 16% of the Scottish workforce locally, as other regions address their net zero ambitions (using more of their local workforce) it is likely that a minimum 21,500 workforce for retrofit and net zero will be required for south east Scotland to meet the 2036 peak activity pipeline. The recent £25M proposal of the Net Zero Accelerator Hub (NZAH) to



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Sue Rigby

New Principal and Vice Chancellor. for ENU

Edinburgh Napier University has appointed Professor Sue Rigby as its new Principal and Vice Chancellor, effective January 2025. A palaeontologist with extensive academic leadership experience, Rigby previously served as Vice Chancellor of Bath Spa University since 2018.

During her tenure at Bath Spa, she successfully grew student numbers, doubled university turnover, and established financial sustainability. Her academic career includes roles at the Universities of Cambridge, Leicester, and Edinburgh, where she advanced to senior management positions.

Rigby brings significant external experience, serving as Chair of Student Minds, board member for QAA and AHRC, and leading culture initiatives for the West of England Combined Authority. She is also chair of two arts venues.

She joins Edinburgh Napier after the university was named Higher Educational Institution of the Year and top university in Edinburgh for student satisfaction. Expressing enthusiasm for her new role, Rigby stated she is "delighted to be joining Edinburgh Napier University" and committed to helping the institution "thrive and grow".

BDO strengthens Scotland team with partner hire

Accountancy and business advisory firm BDO LLP has strengthened its Scottish team with the appointment of Stuart Macdougall as an audit partner.

Stuart brings 20 years' experience of working with entrepreneurs, private-equity-backed companies and large international groups. He also has significant ESG expertise and will be supporting businesses on their sustainability journey.

Stuart's expertise includes dealing with a wide range of UK GAAP, US GAAP and IFRS technical issues, and assisting companies with acquisitions and disposals of businesses. His role will also include supporting teams and businesses on their sustainability journey including ESG reporting and accounting for climate related issues. .

He joins from Saffery where he previously led the Entrepreneurs National Practice Group and more recently the sustainability service line, as well as being the Co-Chair for Nexia's Global ESG group. Prior to that he spent over 17 years at PwC in London and Scotland.

Martin Gill, head of BDO in Scotland commented: "As a firm, we're committed to investing in our people and offices right across the UK. Hiring someone with Stuart's expertise is testament to our strategy to provide the best advice from local experts across all disciplines to the businesses and organisations based in Scotland."

Stuart Macdougall, partner added: "I'm looking forward to leveraging my ESG expertise and championing audit quality to support the businesses we serve in managing their risks and opportunities for success. BDO has an inspiring and collaborative culture across specialisms and offices, and I look forward to working with my new colleagues to support the growth of our audit practice as well as our wider ESG service line offering."

Stuart has been named twice as one of the top 35 Chartered Accountants under the age of 35 by ICAS.



Stuart Macdougall



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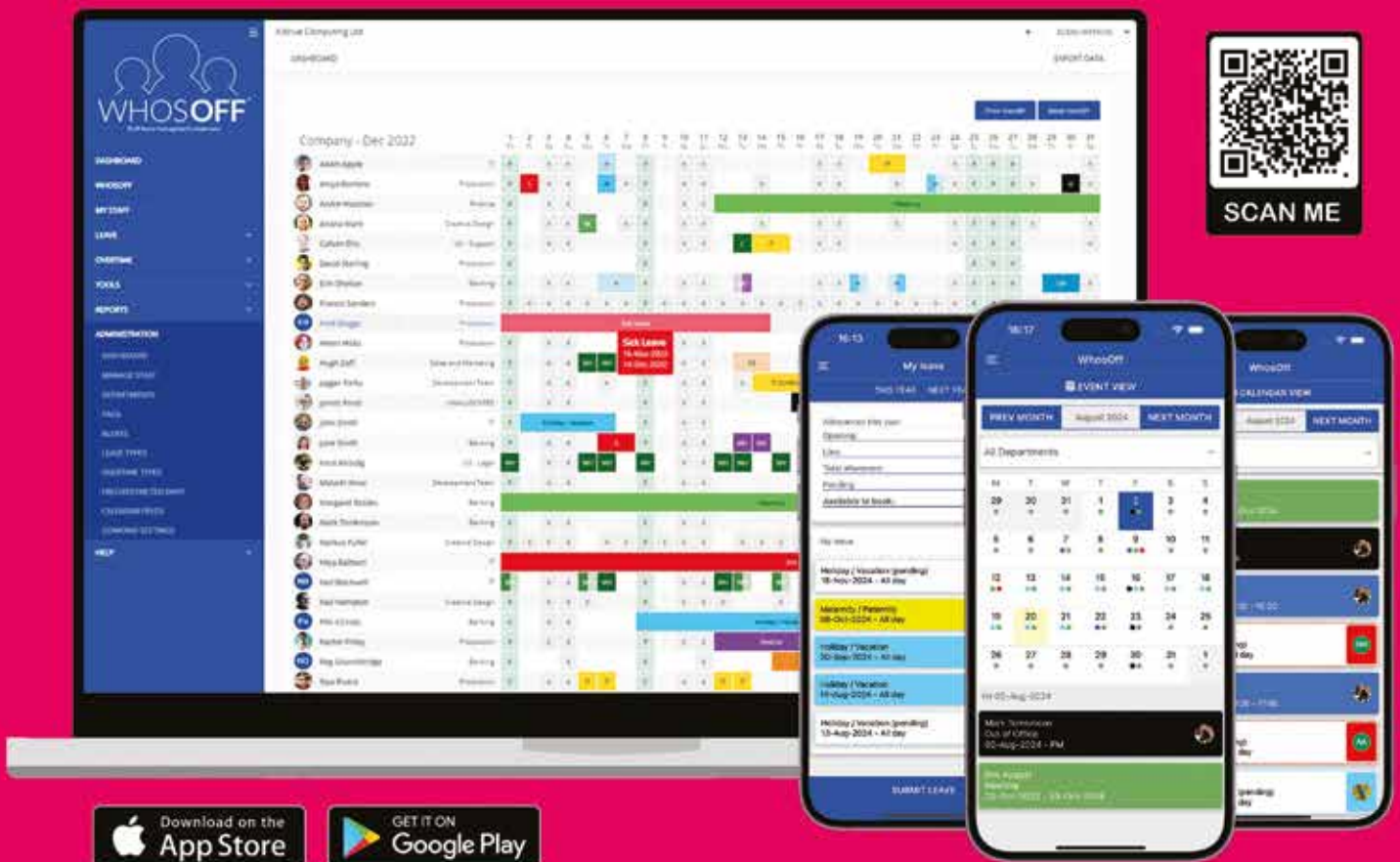
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