

Business Comment

DECEMBER/JANUARY 2024

**Talent
and Skills**

Macklin Motors Kia Edinburgh

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Lonehead Drive, Newbridge, Edinburgh, EH28 8TH

Michael Stachura | 07977392463 | michael.stachura@macklinmotors.co.uk



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Talent and Skills

Welcome to the latest issue of Business Comment magazine.

This issue spotlights Talent and Skills, a topic of importance for every businesses. The Chamber recently hosted a Talent and Skills conference at Edinburgh College, aimed at collaborating to co-develop positive solutions to some of the talent and skills issues facing various sectors.

The conference marked the beginning of an ongoing journey, with businesses acknowledging the necessity to enhance their workforce skills. Despite challenges in financing and expertise, the benefits of investing in your workforce, including a productivity boost, are tangible and substantial. You can read more on the conference insights later in the magazine.

In this issue, you'll also discover Skills Development Scotland's new employer hub, aimed at promoting upskilling and reskilling, learn about the Living Wage campaign's positive influence on 12,000 city employees, and explore Phoenix Group's initiative encouraging staff to actively shape their career paths.

Graduate Apprenticeships, offering full-time work and supported study, are a key pathway to skill improvement. Queen Margaret University share the impact of this approach in areas like engineering, with a majority of these apprenticeships in STEM fields.

Also featured is an update on the Chamber's Net Zero journey, and thought-provoking insights on hybrid working from Ann Frances Cooney, a partner at integrated legal and business services provider DWF.

Enjoy your read!



Liz McAreavey
Chief Executive,
Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce

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Well-educated workforce serves as a rich source of talent



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From interruption to integration: Embedding Learning & Development as part of your organisational culture



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EICC - pioneering inclusivity in events

The world is becoming increasingly tuned into the importance of inclusivity across the board, and in the world of events, the EICC is proud to be working with its clients to be mindful of the varying needs of their audience.

As an inclusive venue, with an offering which centres around accessibility, the team at the EICC is on hand to guide organisers through areas of consideration, so that their event can be equally enjoyed by everyone in the audience.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) aims to promote fair treatment for all. This means ensuring everyone can be their true selves, whether that's those from the LGBTQ+ community; people from ethnic minorities or those who have disabilities or present as neurodivergent.

Carron Webster, Assistant Director of Sales at EICC, comments: "Staff, clients and delegates have become so much more aware of EDI factors in recent years, particularly since the pandemic. Across the industry, we want to be sure the suppliers we work with, and the conferences we attend, have wellbeing and inclusivity at their heart."

The industry-wide competition for recruiting talent has also provided a strong business reason to ensure everyone is included, supported and made to feel welcome, as organisations seek to retain and attract valued employees.

The EICC has seen an increase in the number of conferences it hosts which are dedicated to specific communities, but there's also a desire to make sure all events are well set up to accommodate everyone, whilst catering for those who need additional support.

When considering diversity, one area of focus is the speaker line-up. "A few years ago, the speakers would represent a very limited demographic, almost regardless of the subject matter," Carron adds. "Now event organisers ensure they have a far more diverse mix of speakers and panellists – which is great to see as it makes the event content relatable to a far wider demographic."

What we eat and drink at events is a huge consideration too. Events should be providing food and beverage options for a wide set of requirements, often based around religious and dietary reasons. Ensuring a good selection of non-alcoholic drinks and plant-based food options for the growing community of vegetarians and vegans, is a great start.

Having hosted the Autism-Europe Congress in 2016, and more recently, It Takes All Kinds of Minds (ITAKOM) by Salvesen Mindroom in

March 2023, the EICC has been on a journey to adapt its processes to deliver events which are inclusive for those who present as neurodivergent. This can cover a range of conditions including ADHD, autism and Tourette's syndrome.

Measures that the EICC has implemented for neurodivergent audiences include: lanyard systems designed to help staff and attendees identify the specific needs of individuals; avoiding sudden music or noise when it comes to announcements and presentations; switching off hand-dryers in the toilets with paper towels provided instead; use of silent applause, known as flappause, rather than clapping, which can trigger some individuals; quiet rooms for those needing some time out; and providing individual pre-portioned food and cutlery.

Having a team of staff which undergo regular awareness training covering specific areas of equity, diversity and inclusion is extremely valuable. An experienced venue team can guide organisers through the areas they need to consider and help ensure that events run smoothly while catering for everyone.

To find out more, visit eicc.co.uk.

Inquirer launched

The Edinburgh Inquirer – which launched just three months ago – is rapidly establishing itself as a “must read” for those interested in the city, and in particular its business, politics and culture.

Founded by three experienced journalists, the digital newsletter aims to re-energise public interest journalism, and holding those in power to account in a balanced and effective way.

Offering both free and paid subscriptions, it has grown from a standing start of zero readers to attracting the attention of tens of thousands of eyeballs each month. The award-winning team of founders is Euan McGrory, former Editor of titles including The Scotsman, Edinburgh Evening News and Scotland on Sunday; David Forsyth a former News Editor of the Edinburgh Evening News, and Kenny Kemp, journalist and writer of several books on business.

The Edinburgh Inquirer are amongst the newest Chamber members, as they wanted to be “part of a business community we believe is fundamental to the continued success of Scotland’s Capital”.

Euan McGrory said: “When we started out, we said that we would take the time to explain the big things and show how things really work in Edinburgh, and in particular we look at how the worlds of politics, business and culture intersect in this amazing city.

We did that with the city’s tram plans when we were first to break the news about plans to take the extended route through the Meadows. We investigated the real challenges facing Princes Street and how the downturn in the construction industry has thrown major developments into question. We explained how Edinburgh is slipping in its aspiration to become a digitally connected Smart City and revealed exactly how radical the impact of the city’s licensing of short-term let properties might be.

We said that we would stand up for your interests and hold power to account. We investigated the impact of arts funding cuts on the work of organisations bringing communities together across Edinburgh and creating opportunity where none might otherwise exist. We revealed lawyers fears of an “Orwellian” power grab by the Scottish Government almost two weeks before the mainstream media and spoke to one of the world’s leading experts in drug addiction about where the city, and the rest of Scotland, is going wrong in tackling this deadly scourge. We spoke to baggage handlers working at Edinburgh Airport to reveal the full impact of the budget airlines’ low-fare model on their working conditions.

We have celebrated inspiring Edinburgh success stories from the inventor and investors who revolutionised global eye care and our groundbreaking Life Sciences sector to our rapidly growing film industry and the music promoters who persuaded the world’s biggest stars to swap Glasgow for Edinburgh.

Our commitment to sustainability led us to examine how the Capital’s leafy conservation areas will have to change to meet climate targets. We also revealed the full disturbing extent of sewage dumping in the Water of Leith and investigated the impact of SUVs and Edinburgh’s efforts to squeeze them out of the city.”

The Inquirer has now published more than 60 newsletters, supported by its subscribers. Euan added: “We are a start-up with ambitions to become a long-term fixture of life in the city, a space for reasoned and tolerant debate, and to build and grow a sustainable platform for high quality, public interest journalism. If you like the sound of that, please support us as we support our city.”

If you want to know more about the Inquirer please visit us at: edinburghinquirer.co.uk/about



Kenny Kemp,
Euan McGrory and
David Forsyth

Innovation is a necessity in business and law

The dictionary notes that ‘innovation is crucial to the continuing success of any organisation.’ As a leading law firm, recently shortlisted in the Innovative Firm of the Year category at the Legal500 Scotland Awards, Shoosmiths is constantly embracing - and investing heavily - in new ways of doing things.

David Jackson, our CEO, has recently co-authored a book – ***Legal Practice in the Digital Age*** – underlining why it’s imperative to marry the human skills of lawyers with innovative technology to deliver smarter, faster and better service to clients. In our view, in this ever-changing world, lawyers who combine technology with their emotional intelligence (EQ) will be the ones to thrive.

The recent CAN DO Scotland Innovation Summit at the Glasgow Science Centre further explored trends in innovation – and legal practice needs to keep pace. During what was a busy and stimulating event, I and colleagues joined many industry leaders to consider the legal implications and commercial opportunities that can arise when the business world embraces new thinking as part of its strategy for success.

Glasgow’s hosting of the summit comes at a time when real estate developers, planners and the energy sector wish to positively transform town and city landscapes and healthcare seeks to harness the full potential of increasingly sophisticated tech, including artificial intelligence (AI). In the fast-paced world of motorsport, our cutting-edge client Extreme E is developing electric and even hydrogen based global racing aligned with carbon saving goals.

I hosted a discussion focused on how business can achieve gender parity in the fundraising landscape, particularly in venture capital transactions where so many female founders face obstacles. Offering practical advice from an investor and founder perspective, we were joined by John Cushing, CEO of mnAi - the leading data analyst behind the recent independent review commissioned by the Scottish Government.

He helped us delve into the reasons why so many studies and seemingly insightful recommendations, combined with positive activism from investors, stakeholders, professional advisers and the wider entrepreneurial support eco system has yet to engender sufficient change to achieve gender equity for female entrepreneurs.



Kimberley Goh
Legal Director in the
corporate team at
Shoosmiths in Scotland

The summit also highlighted the synergy between legal practice and the diverse innovation landscape and Shoosmiths’ corporate, energy and tech teams, among others, actively led or contributed to diverse themes rooted in change. This included the legal issues around Fintech and artificial intelligence, considerations when supporting the net zero ambitions of a business and how to navigate tricky employment issues (in a post-Covid world) like talent retention and mental health.

Whether directed towards entrepreneurs focused on their start-up, scale-up or to protect their brand or at investors seeking

laser-sharp contracts or a strategic exit, thoughtful discussion during the summit put innovative business practice and law at the heart of the matter. It cast a light on some of the brilliant cutting-edge businesses and minds that are achieving success through aligning tech with their talented people.

From a legal perspective, the event also further underlined that in our fast-paced commercial world, it’s increasingly the role of the skilled lawyer, empowered by their firm to embrace technology, that will help more clients navigate towards success. For innovation is no longer an option – it’s a necessity.

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Wide range of qualifications boosts young people's work skills across the capital

The Scottish Qualifications Authority has signed an agreement with the Open University which will allow learners from across the country who have completed its Higher National Certificates, and Diplomas – including SQA's next generation of Higher National qualifications – to progress onto Open University degree programmes at advanced levels.

The Articulation Agreement between the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and the Open University (OU) means learners who achieve a SQA Higher National Certificate or Diploma will be able to progress, or articulate, onto year two or year three of a related BA/BSc Open Degree with Honours at the OU.

Learners holding a SQA HNC who have amassed 120 credits on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) will now be able to transfer those credits and gain exemption for modules at OU Level 1, granting them access to year two of an OU degree programme. Learners who hold a SQA HND and amassed 240 credits, will be able to gain exemption for modules at OU Level 1, and OU Level 2, gaining access to year three.

The next generation of Higher National qualifications

SQA's existing portfolio of Higher National Certificates, and Diplomas have always provided learners with qualifications that meet the needs of employers, and this agreement enables those individuals to continue their learning journey with the OU. SQA's NextGen:HN are the next iteration of Higher National qualifications and have been designed to give learners the skills they need to thrive in the modern workplace.

The new certificates and diplomas support lifelong learning by promoting the acquisition of meta-skills – the skills necessary to learn and apply new knowledge quickly – while also developing critical industry, and subject specific skills. Currently there are 20 new NextGen:HN courses being piloted in colleges and training providers across Scotland, covering subjects such as Accounting, Networking and Cloud Infrastructure, Social Services, and Software Development.

Flexible approach to learning

The OU is the largest academic institution in the UK and a world leader in flexible distance learning. Since it began in 1969, the OU has taught more than 2.2 million students worldwide and currently has over 205,000 students, including more than 21,000 in Scotland.

Speaking about the agreement, Theresa McGowan, SQA Regional Manager for Edinburgh, East Lothian and Midlothian, said: "The Open University is renowned for its flexible approach to learning, and through its acceptance of the SQA HNC/D as an entry qualification into years two and three of its aligned degree programmes, we will hope



Steven McGeever, Senior Partnerships Manager at Open University in Scotland and Dr Gill Stewart, SQA Director of Qualifications

to see wider access to higher education in a manner that suits learners' needs, improves attainment, and ultimately helps learners achieve their career goals."

"This agreement demonstrates the value of our Higher National qualifications, including the NextGen:HN, and recognises the skills, knowledge, and experience that the learners who hold them have achieved over the course of their studies. We will work closely with our centres – schools, colleges, and training providers – to help them and their learners make the most of opportunities available to them through this partnership."

Steven McGeever, Senior Partnerships Manager at the Open University in Scotland, said: "We are delighted to be entering into this agreement with SQA, which highlights a mutual commitment to widening access to degree level study and providing pathways for students who want to build on previous study at college."

"At the Open University we recognise the value of SQA HNC and HND qualifications, which are designed to meet the needs of industry and prepare students for further study, and this agreement demonstrates how students who've completed an HNC or HND can use the credit they've achieved towards our BA/BSc (Honours) Open degree and study by flexible distance learning in a way that suits them."

Further information

To find out more about SQA's next generation of Higher National qualifications, visit www.sqa.org.uk/nextgen.

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.





Does your business have a power cut plan?

Scotland's weather can be unpredictable, and evidence shows it's becoming windier and wetter. Storms can pose a real risk to the power supply, so we want to help your business prepare. SP Energy Networks is the electricity network operator responsible for keeping power flowing in Edinburgh and to over 3.5 million homes and businesses across Central and Southern Scotland, Cheshire, Merseyside, North and Mid Wales and North Shropshire.

David Climie

District General Manager,
SP Energy Networks

Our job is to keep the lights on and that's why we've been investing heavily in making our network even more resilient so it can better withstand severe weather.

We are delighted to be supported by the Chambers network to share our Winter Preparedness Guide. We want to make sure businesses from all sectors have practical advice and tools to hand so they can ensure their operations are prepared and resilient for whatever the weather may throw at them.

At SP Energy Networks our own teams prepare for winter weather all year round and we're 'storm ready' for the months ahead. Storm Babet and Storm Ciarán have already affected parts of Scotland and there will be instances when the weather impacts power supplies despite preparations. We have seen more 100 mph winds whipping up debris in

recent years, which can be very challenging as our teams work at height to secure overhead power lines.

As the District General Manager for Edinburgh and the Borders, I oversee the operation of the Distribution network with brings electricity to close to 650,000 customers, covering the City of Edinburgh and stretching down to Northumberland.

In preparation for winter, we make sure we have additional resources in place, both in terms of skilled people and equipment. We carry out all our winter asset checks across our network area by October, alongside extra winter inspections of high-risk equipment. With storms already hitting Scotland, that additional resource is ready now. We carry out the same checks on our transmission network and the main interconnected transmission system is flown by helicopter and examined using thermal imaging to identify any defects.

Through a combination of investment, new technology and preparing now, we know we're reducing the number of people who do go off supply and getting those who are

affected back on quicker than before. Over the last decade, our 'Average time off supply' figures have reduced by 25%.

It's important we explore every avenue to help prevent unplanned outages weather can bring and make sure we can restore power as quickly and safely as possible. To report a power cut or get information about an existing outage, call us using the national freephone number, 105.

Edinburgh's vibrant economy depends on the many businesses of all sizes that operate across the city. We want to make sure they are prepared for what winter can bring and what to do in a power cut. We would like to thank Chambers of Commerce members for contributing to the development of the **Winter Preparedness Guide for Business** and welcome any business who wants advice or information to get in touch.



Edinburgh Chamber's net zero journey

As the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce we have a responsibility to not only support businesses on their net zero journey but to also lead by example and focus on our own sustainability journey to ensure we play our part in the city reaching its net zero target by 2030.

The Edinburgh Chamber started its net zero journey a year ago with the first step seeing us calculate our carbon footprint to get a baseline which we could then build and work from. This is a good starting point for any business and it enabled us to know where we currently are with our carbon emissions and what areas we should be focusing on to help us reduce our emissions and impact.

A company's carbon emissions can be split into scopes 1, 2 and 3 and therefore as a starting point we calculated our Scopes 1 and 2 emissions. Once we had calculated these we started collecting data for our Scope 3 emissions.

This is the Edinburgh Chamber's largest scope of emissions and therefore it took a while to collect the required data. Once we had this data we calculated our scope 3 emissions using a carbon calculator. This created our baseline and from this we could then see where our largest areas of emissions were and decide what areas we were going to prioritise and focus on going forward.

Some of these actions include setting up a Green Champions team to ensure

all departments are represented and are part of the Chamber's net zero strategy. The Green Champions team going forward aims to meet regularly and it gives members an opportunity to discuss progress as well as share ideas of other actions and areas we could be focusing on.

As part of our net zero journey we have also signed up to the Edinburgh Climate Compact which is a commitment to take action within our organisation to contribute to a green recovery and radically reduce the city's carbon emissions. We hope through being part of the Climate Compact we can learn from other organisations, share learnings and support other SMEs to sign up and start their net zero journey.

Since starting our net zero journey there have been a few learnings to note. Firstly, it's ok if it takes a little longer than you initially thought, to collect the required data. Data collection is one of most important steps when starting your journey so take your time to ensure you have accurate data for your reporting year. This is particularly true for scope 3 as it may

require you to speak to your suppliers and request data for your company.

Secondly, once you have calculated your baseline, start with the actions that you have most control over and will give you the small wins, start small and then work on the more challenging actions.

Thirdly, ensure everyone on the team is on board. Employees are a key part of any company's net zero plan so ensuring everyone is on board and engaged is vital to meeting set targets and actions.

Lastly, when creating your strategy it's important to acknowledge the work you might already be doing in regards to sustainability as they are always a good starting point. For example, we donate unwanted or faulty IT equipment to get recycled or refurbished.

If you are looking for support to help you start your net zero journey please get in touch with the project team at netzeroedinburgh@edinburghchamber.co.uk or call the team on 01312 212999. Our netzeroedinburgh.org website is packed full of resources, net zero guides, and toolkits so please check it out.



Is hybrid working here to stay?

A **survey** on the characteristics of homeworkers in Great Britain from the ONS showed 16% reported working from home only and 28% reported working both from home and travelling to work. Whilst many employers are focusing on getting employees back to the workplace there is still a high demand from many for a hybrid working option.

Hybrid working can bring with it a wealth of benefits for employees including; improved wellbeing, increased productivity and greater flexibility. Employers are also seeing the advantages from better engagement, to a more diverse workforce, to better talent recruitment and retention – to name but a few.

However, there can be certain drawbacks to a hybrid working arrangement which it is important for employers to be aware of and to keep under review. For example, it can be harder to maintain a positive workplace culture when employees are not altogether. This is something which employers can work on by having “collaboration days” or “anchor days” when everyone comes together. A positive culture can also be cultivated remotely through regular virtual meetings and frequent communications. Other areas of challenge to hybrid working can include; employees struggling with boundaries between home life and work life, a lack of motivation leading to a downturn in productivity and isolation/loneliness – mental health is a key factor when considering working arrangements.

As well as the advantages and disadvantages to hybrid working employers also need to consider the legal implications. Have terms and conditions of employment been updated to reflect the working arrangement? Do they allow sufficient flexibility should the employer need employees in the workplace? Is there a robust home working policy setting out key dos and don'ts of home working? Who is responsible for insurance? Have data protection obligations been considered? Health and safety? We have also seen requests from employees who wish to work remotely from abroad. There are a number of employment and tax legal obligations which would need to be considered before such a request should be approved. Employers should make it clear to the employee that approval is required before working outside the UK. Clearly a lot to think about.

Considering hybrid working arrangements in the context of diversity and inclusion is



Ann Frances Cooney
Partner, DWF

also important. Allowing flexible working improves access to employment for a range of people, creating a more diverse workforce. Employers need to be mindful of the risk of discrimination claims surrounding the practice of hybrid working. For example, it may be considered a reasonable adjustment to allow a disabled employee to work flexibly. It could be discriminatory to refuse to allow a female employee with children to work from home as they believe she will be distracted but to allow a male employee with children to work from home. Hybrid working provides a real opportunity to focus on diversity and inclusion, employers should ensure policies and procedures are applied in a transparent and fair way.

The four day working week trial was reported to be a resounding success where 70 companies trialled 100% of pay for 80% of time. In total 92% of those who took part in

the trial extended the arrangement as it was working so well, with employee wellbeing identified as improving, whilst productivity and business performance was maintained. With the British Chambers of Commerce **reporting** that nearly three quarters of firms attempting to recruit are facing difficulties, a truly flexible working arrangement can be a key differentiator when it comes to talent retention and attraction. As the economic climate still presents a challenge, many employers cannot afford to increase pay and so flexible working can be a more cost conscious way to remain competitive in the labour market.

In answer to the question “is hybrid working here to stay?” the answer has to be “yes, for some”. When hybrid working works well, it really does work well. Now is the time for employers to take stock and strategically decide what works best for their business.

Hybrid working can bring with it a wealth of benefits for employees including; improved wellbeing, increased productivity and greater flexibility. Employers are also seeing the advantages from better engagement, to a more diverse workforce, to better talent recruitment and retention – to name but a few.

Supporting businesses throughout Scotland

As a leading insurance and risk advisor with a firm commitment to client service and continuous improvement, our presence in the Scottish market has attracted a significant number of clients, boosting operations in Edinburgh and across the region.

Recent years have proved that it is increasingly difficult for businesses to predict potential challenges and to ensure their best interests are well protected. As a risk advisor, it is our responsibility to support businesses and help navigate the complex world of insurance, providing support with risk management, trade credit, employee benefits amongst others, all essential for maintaining a safe and secure workplace.

With years of experience in the industry, we are well-equipped to guide you through the complexities of insurance. We understand that businesses face a myriad of risks, and our goal is to offer peace of mind by developing insurance strategies that mitigate these risks effectively.

To make sure you make the most out of your next insurance renewal, we'd recommend:

1. Early engagement

Start your insurance renewal early, we recommend 4 months ahead of renewal. This can help secure better renewal terms and conditions.



From left to right Bruce Lees, Managing Director, Amy Knox and Angus Montgomery

2. Choose your broker wisely

Working with a broker who has specialist knowledge of your sector will help to present your business clearly, they will know the right insurers to approach in the market, presenting your business correctly to avoid an incorrect understanding of the risk.

3. Commit to the exercise

Work together with your broker, be clear and transparent about your business, investing

the time in the process will provide a better result for you.

4. Risk Management

Work with a broker who offers risk management support, this will not only improve the safety of your business but can help reduce your insurance costs. Pro-active risk management is a key factor in Insurers' considerations.

5. Service

It should not always be about the price you are paying but the service you are receiving. A good broker will always tell you if you have the correct cover in place.

As a leading risk advisor, PIB is committed to supporting the growth and success of businesses across a range of industries in the region. For more information contact Amy Knox.

t. **07522 229701**

e. **Amy.Knox@pib-insurance.com**
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A missing ingredient for talent retention

At Phoenix Group we are committed to helping the UK make the most of the opportunities brought about by people living longer lives than previous generations and to helping businesses, government and individuals rise to some of the challenges that this also brings.

Cath Sermon

Phoenix Group, Head of Campaigns & Public Engagement, Phoenix Insights

We need to change how we live, learn and work to ensure we are making the most of this extra time rather than working to a 20th century model and mind-set.

As part of Phoenix Insights, the think tank that Phoenix Group set up to help society respond to greater longevity, I've been looking at what the potential implications are for how people plan and manage their careers.

Our **Careers Advice for Longer Lives** report revealed that a third of 45 to 54 year olds expect to change careers before they retire. Our research, with Ipsos MORI, also found that just over 50% of UK adults expected to be in the same job in 12 months' time, and only 1 in 10 would like a different job with their current employer.

This should be a wake-up call for employers looking to engage and retain their experienced workers. Yet, this research also found that many midlife workers feel

underprepared and unequipped to make beneficial career moves.

If we don't address this we are risking thousands of people leaving the workforce prematurely and exacerbating economic inactivity among the over 50s.

This is why we believe employers, government and careers advice providers should do more to inspire and support people to actively plan and manage their careers over what might be 50+ years of working life.

What people need and want from work changes throughout their lives. It's clear companies need to do more to reflect these changing requirements and support their employees' careers at all ages. That means making greater efforts to engage and retain their experienced workforce.

The whole approach needs a radical rethink to enable and encourage non-linear career moves at scale, to ensure that lifelong learning becomes a reality and to provide the flexibility that people want at different times throughout their lives.

This is why, in partnership with a brilliant group of organisations including Amazing If, BraveStarts, Careershifters, Enterprise

Nation, Now Teach, Women Returners and the Learning & Work Institute, Phoenix Group helped to launch a "Careers can change" campaign to inspire people to see that their careers can change successfully, throughout their lives.

The campaign aims to inspire people to take action for their careers and connect them to information and support, whether setting up a side-hustle, changing industry or just working out what else to do.

At Phoenix we aim high, always looking to be the best place anyone has ever worked. Alongside an established programme of learning and mentoring opportunities, in the last year we have piloted a number of new approaches.

These include a Midlife MOT, which enables colleagues to evaluate their individual wellbeing, work-life and wealth, and makes recommendations for actions they can take to plan their career going forward as well as trialling and evaluating a number of Squiggly Career workshops, in partnership with Amazing If.

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Scotland's Tourism Industry: A Year-Round Economic Engine

Tourism in Scotland is a year-round industry. Regarded in a survey of Scottish residents as the most important industry, it creates jobs, sustains communities and attracts investment – building and growing towns and cities right across the entire country.

Neil Christison

Regional Director,
VisitScotland



Our tourism industry continues to face incredibly challenging circumstances, with the cost of doing business and cost of living well documented. Despite these challenges, interest in Scotland has remained incredibly strong. People do still want to travel - in whatever way they can - and Scotland is very much on their travel wish lists.

From visitors to businesses, destination to public sector organisations; we are all having to consider our activities and ensure we are utilising resources as efficiently as we can.

VisitScotland is steadfast in our support of local tourism, and so for us, our focus is using marketing, partnership work and business support activities to promote Edinburgh, Midlothian, East Lothian and West Lothian as a year-round destination. Inspiring and influencing visitors at those crucial early planning stages, using the channels we know they use.

Of course, our job is made easier thanks to sterling tourism offer in Edinburgh and the Lothians, and the dedicated and passionate people behind it. It was great to see some of those leading lights recognised at the Central and East Scottish Thistle Awards this year with accolades for Camera Obscura & the World of Illusions, The Real Mary King's Close, East Lothian Cottages, Drift, Fringe by the Sea and The Original Rosslyn Inn. The best of luck to them ahead of the national final in December. And more recently, Edinburgh's reputation as a fantastic place to visit during the festive season was further cemented in a survey from Trivago that showed that the city was ranked third in the top 10 booking destinations for Christmas 2023 and number two destination worldwide to see in the start of 2024.

The strong recovery of international visitors is one of 2023's success stories. Many of our key overseas markets have now almost equalled, and in some cases surpassed, 2019 levels. Overseas holidaymakers tend to stay longer and spend more, they are increasingly becoming a key part of the visitor economy.

We aim to build on this global interest when our flagship travel trade show, VisitScotland Connect returns to P&J Live in Aberdeen 17-18 April 2024. Registration is open now for eligible businesses. Earlier this year, it



was fantastic to have The Scotch Whisky Experience, Visit East Lothian and Carberry Tower and many more, to meet with tour operators and travel agents from across the world.

The return of international visitors is especially important while the domestic market adjusts to the cost-of-living challenges. Latest insights suggest concerns around rising costs or personal finances are impacting domestic recovery. Consumers are booking later or having to adjust their trip to suit their financial needs, saving money on shorter trips, booking different accommodation or forgoing eating out or visiting places. We know that this is having a knock-on effect on businesses. Domestic tourism across the entire UK is facing the same challenges.

The latest consumer insights indicated that there is a strong interest in visiting Scotland's cities with Edinburgh and Glasgow the leading destination for autumn and winter breaks amongst Scottish residents. VisitScotland is committed to building on this interest – from domestic visitors as well as international – through our extensive marketing activity. We continue to promote regional and seasonal spread, inspiring visitors to discover lesser-known parts of our region and consider traveling at other times in the year. We are working with partners such as Expedia, ScotRail, LNER and Historic Environment Scotland to help amplify this message. We recently partnered with Visit East Lothian and DFDS to promote the region as a destination for visitors from Germany and the Netherlands travelling to Scotland by ferry. Recent social media and influencer activity has also highlighted East Lothian as a destination for short breaks and wellness.

It has been a busy year for tourism in Edinburgh and the surrounding region once again. The world-famous Edinburgh festivals and the staging of the 2023 UCI Cycling World Championships men's road race from Edinburgh provided a welcome focus on Scotland over the summer months. A number of events were supported through EventScotland programmes this year including Party at the Palace, Lammermuir Festival and Vogrie Pogrie Community Festival. In celebration of the 2023 UCI Cycling World Championships, the Community Cycling Fund, designed to support sustainable cycling projects and free events across Scotland also saw events such as West Lothian Cycle Circuit Grand Opening and fun day take place within the region.

There is still much to enjoy in the city and surrounding region with Edinburgh's world famous Hogmanay celebrations, Beecraigs Festive Forest and seasonal events at Dalkeith Country Park. 2024 promises to be another big year with more exciting hotel developments in Edinburgh, the opening of the world's first inland surf resort – Lost Shore – at Ratho, major investment at the Scotch Whisky Experience and some fantastic championship golf on offer at East Lothian once again, as well as the Sprint World Orienteering Championships taking place in Edinburgh. We look forward to welcoming new and returning visitors throughout the year.



Data, The Key to Business Transformation

Complicated systems architecture. Poor data integrity. Sound familiar?



Pam Shields
Transformation
Mentor, Evolution
Transformation

In the past 30 years, as technology improved, many established industrial businesses developed unplanned complex system architectures. An ERP backbone is often layered with different systems to address the bespoke needs of each process or function. It is common for such systems to only be visible to a small number of internal teams, and barriers to information access are often consciously and unconsciously put in place.

The problem is exacerbated when a functionally siloed approach to process improvements has been taken with little consideration of the impacts of process changes on upstream or downstream processes. Traditional separation of product and service processes can further complicate matters.

Complex systems can give rise to complex and inefficient data structures. The integrity of data and overall performance of a system will be compromised when data structures are poorly designed or lack organisation.

“What I am seeing is businesses dealing with an epidemic of data problems which I call Silos of data.” (P.H Kukuk, Your Single Source of Truth, 2019)

During digital transformation projects the consequences of poor data integrity may not be fully grasped until the system build reveals the extent of the problem, adding significant time to the project or even causing the transformation to fail.

Data structures are one of the main factors that affect the quality of onboarding and training. When learning the intricacies of a complex system takes too long, many new hires feel frustrated and demotivated, and may decide to quit. This can have a negative impact on the business, as the loss of talent creates a skills gap that is hard to fill in a short time. Moreover, the stress on the remaining team members may trigger a domino effect of resignations. You're left with two choices – transform and simplify systems and processes or have enough redundancy in

terms of costly, inefficient, frustrated human resources. I know which I prefer.

With the advent of the AI era looming, data is becoming more important than ever and this trend is unlikely to change any time soon. Although cleaning up bad data is critical to transformation success, it is significantly more dangerous to ignore the reasons behind the creation of the situation in the first place. Many businesses are doomed to repeat the same mistakes over time as they rush into problem-solving and end up fixing the problem and not the cause of the problem.. Data strategy should be related back to people. By enlightening them in terms of how easy their jobs can become as a result of clean data , businesses can often save thousands spent on projects to remedy data problems.

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Name: Kathleen Ann McAdams

Company Name: Albany HR

Website: albanyhr.com

Q In five words or less, what does your organisation do?

Help employers create fantastic workplaces

Q How long have you been in your current role?

Since March 2017 when I set up Albany HR

Q What does a week in your job look like?

Very varied! For me and my team it's a mixture of advising business owners and HR teams on tricky people management situations, how to increase employee engagement and productivity and business development.

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

We were very proud to sponsor the ECC 'Employer of the Year' award in 2023.

Q Your favourite top tip or quote in business?

"A single act of kindness throws out roots in all directions, and the roots spring up and make new trees." Amelia Earhart

Q How long have you been a member of the Chamber for and why did you join?

I joined in 2021 to get better understanding of the business environment in Edinburgh and to meet new people with shared interests – making Edinburgh great!

Q Where do you read your copy of Business Comment?

On the bus



Kathleen Ann McAdams

GET WITH IT

By Bill Magee

Scottish Business Technology
Writer of the Year



Digital Xtra Fund is going that extra cyber mile by supporting the delivery of extra-curricular computing and digital activities for young people, aged 16 and under. But that's not all.

The expertise of this particular Scottish charitable incorporated organisation is urgently needed to help plug the skills gap and identify and nurture talent.

The SCIO also seeks to improve participation of girls and under-represented groups. Digital and with it computing science is fast emerging as an exciting and dynamic career path.

The fund has just delivered 26 grant awards totalling £110K to local tech and coding clubs spanning 18 Scottish local authorities and an outreach of around 3,000 children and young people.

It comes as Computerworld reports teaching Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) represents the fastest growing career skill

that employers seek. Either involving new employees or by upskilling existing workers.

Specifically what's become known as AI "prompt-engineering" students who master this particular skill are urged to put it on their resumes and LinkedIn profiles.

Such a skill is becoming key not just for OpenAI, Google, Amazon and Microsoft but for all open-source models.

Since the start of this year LinkedIn has seen on average a 75 per cent rise each month in members adding terms like "GAI", "ChatGPT", "Prompt Engineering" and "Prompt Crafting" to their profile.

World Economic Forum confirms AI and machine learning specialists top the list of fast-growing jobs.

Followed by sustainability specialists, business intelligence analysts and information security analysts, and renewable energy engineers.

For upskilling and reskilling existing employees, online learning platforms like Udemy, Coursera and Code Academy are recommended.

Skills Development Scotland has published a new strategic plan setting out priorities for the next five years, offering a vision of an agile, dynamic employer-led skills and career ecosystem

A Young Person's Guarantee is key to the plan to ensure career services are fit for purpose and future-proofed to meet the demands of a changing world of work.

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AFTER

Why continuous learning is essential for business success



In today's fast-changing and competitive world, businesses need to constantly adapt and innovate to thrive. Terms like the Fourth Industrial Revolution or 4IR have become synonymous with business transformation marked by connectivity, advanced analytics, automation, and cutting-edge manufacturing technologies.

Businesses that actively encourage continuous learning to upskill employees will reap the benefits of improved performance, productivity, creativity, and, ultimately, customer satisfaction.

Take data analytics as an example. Levels of demand for data analysis skills vary across different sectors, and not everyone needs to become a data scientist, but a basic level of data literacy is ever more important in almost every role in increasingly 'data-rich' environments. Data-driven insights can inform important business decisions, such as when to launch a new product or how to improve the bottom line.

A recent survey of businesses in Scotland by the Scottish Funding Council showed there is huge demand for tailored business skills, but little understanding of the resources available or recruitment tactics which can be employed to upskill the workforce.

One very cost-effective route for employers to consider is the graduate apprenticeship programme. Graduate Apprenticeships (GA's) are mostly undergraduate degree-level qualifications. They are a tripartite between employers, universities and apprentices in a careful balance of both full-time paid employment and full-time studies with the university.

GA programmes are a common route in engineering, indeed 60.7% of all Graduate Apprenticeship enrolments in 2021/22 were in a STEM related framework, but often overlooked as a solution for 'softer', yet crucial, business skills such as data literacy.

To have someone embedded in the workplace with access to a university environment is a great way of infusing new skills into the business. Their academic assessments can be tailored to business needs and employers benefit from the immediate transfer of learning into the workplace.

The BA (Hons) Business Management (Graduate Apprenticeship) course at Queen Margaret University requires GA employees to attend campus for lectures on day release, one day a week during two 10 week terms of teaching each year. As a guide, employers should allow staff to commit about 20% of their time to their studies, which includes the term time day release.

A QMU Business Management Graduate Apprentice has access to modules such as 'Digital Business & Innovation', reflecting on technology-based disruption, innovation and business opportunities; 'Business Law' and 'Ethics, Governance and Sustainability', addressing challenges around GDPR and responsible business behaviour; 'Project

Management' and 'Strategy as Practice', understanding operations, data flows and longer term considerations and implications of data. Knowledge in these areas have direct practical applications in modern business environments.

Apprenticeships attract highly driven school leavers, but are also a great way of motivating and retaining existing employees at different career and education stages; for example, it is possible for those with further education qualifications such as an HND, to be considered for advanced standing in the four-year degree.

By embracing continuous learning and by encouraging employees to learn new things and share their ideas, businesses can foster a culture of innovation and collaboration, and stimulate creativity and problem-solving.

Scan for more information on how QMU Business Management graduate apprenticeship programme could impact your business.



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Well-educated workforce serves as a rich source of talent

The robustness and prosperity of the Edinburgh City Region's economy can be largely attributed to its well-educated workforce, which serves as a rich source of talent.

Edinburgh boasts a high-skilled workforce that constitutes over 50% of the total, a figure that is eight times the number of low-skilled workers. This puts Edinburgh well ahead of other cities such as Manchester, Bristol, Leeds, and Glasgow. A significant factor contributing to this advantage is the high level of education among the workforce, with approximately half holding a degree or equivalent qualification.

However, in an increasingly fast-paced world, the demand for new skills is at an all-time high. Therefore, more efforts are needed to sustain the talent pipeline, address skills shortages and gaps, and motivate businesses to invest in their employees' development.

To this end, the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce organised a skills and talent conference in collaboration with Edinburgh College. Representatives from businesses, HR professionals, Skills Development Scotland, Edinburgh College, and the Chamber convened for an initial discussion and a series of workshops.

Liz McAreavey, the Chamber's Chief Executive, highlighted a report from the renowned business consultancy, McKinsey & Company, which examined reskilling in the UK. She pointed out that the report suggests over 90% of the UK workforce will require training or upskilling in the next 10 years. According to the report, reskilling would yield

positive economic returns in about three-quarters of cases for UK employers.

However, the reality currently falls short of this potential, with a UK government survey revealing that only 62% of workers received workplace training in 2017. This underlines both the magnitude of the challenge and the opportunity it presents.

Liz McAreavey, Chief Executive at Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, highlighted that the report suggests effective reskilling could boost productivity by between 6% and 12%, and emphasised that addressing the skills gap is crucial for enhancing productivity, an area that has seen little progress in Scotland over the past three decades.



Jon Buglass, Vice Principal of Innovation Planning and Performance at Edinburgh College, underscored the college's commitment to equipping students and businesses with essential skills in areas of projected future growth, such as renewables, engineering, and health and social care. He expressed the need to assist businesses, particularly SMEs, in bridging the skills gap, and noted that while 78% of employers in the region anticipate a need for upskilling in the workforce, many are uncertain about how to finance it.

Buglass also advocated for greater parity of esteem from employers, particularly for HND and HNC graduates, who are often ready to enter the workforce upon graduation.

During the conference, Skills Development Scotland presented the Employer Skills Survey 2022, offering insights into skills supply, skills gaps, and training across Scotland and the UK. However, it was noted that the survey does not reflect the recent slowdown in the labour market that occurred in 2023. The survey revealed:

- Supply challenges have intensified across Scotland and the UK, making vacancies more difficult to fill.
- There has been a significant increase in skills shortages, with 10% of establishments in Scotland reporting a Skills Shortage Vacancy (up from 6% in 2017).
- Skills gaps have slightly decreased in Scotland, with 15% of establishments reporting a skills gap and 4.8% of employees in Scotland not being fully proficient, marking the lowest level recorded.

- Training activity has declined across Scotland, with access to employer-provided training reaching the lowest recorded level since the survey's inception in 2011.

Alongside this, Edinburgh is experiencing demographic shifts, with a growing yet ageing population. This presents a challenge in replacing skills as workers retire, particularly impacting high-growth sectors such as health and social care, technology and data, and renewables.

Reskilling would yield positive economic returns in about three-quarters of cases for UK employers.

At the conference, delegates participated in workshops focused on Skills Gaps and Deficits, Upskilling and Reskilling, and Retention of Talent. Key takeaways for further exploration included:

- The need to actively promote work-based learning and develop a 'learning culture' within organisations, recognising the importance of meta/transferrable skills.

- The importance of diversifying recruitment approaches and offering equal recognition between post-school pathways, such as valuing the skills of college graduates alongside university graduates.
- The necessity of embedding learning into organisations and simplifying the process for individuals to enhance their skills through retraining or upskilling programmes designed to fast-track people into new careers.

A balanced approach was highlighted, emphasising the need to retain older workers to leverage their experience and expertise, while also recognising the need for workforce movement to bring in fresh ideas and talent.

Retention of talent within businesses and the region was identified as crucial, given the financial and time costs associated with employee turnover. To achieve this, it was suggested that organisational cultures need to foster a greater sense of employee value through career development and learning. Businesses would also benefit from improved guidance from the government and education providers regarding available upskilling support.

Lastly, increased transparency over funding available for addressing skills issues was deemed essential for progress in tackling skills gaps and deficits and enhancing productivity.

The Chamber looks forward to continuing the conversation on the vital importance of skills, talent and investing in our workforce, and will keep members updated on our progress with this work.

From interruption to integration: Embedding Learning & Development as part of your organisational culture



Bhavna Nair
Learning and Development Strategist at
AND Digital

The future is powered by technology. Most people in the work environment are feeling a mixture of excitement and apprehension at what is coming. Organisations, teams and individuals are exploring ways to prepare for the evolving landscape in order to not be left behind. The future of work will be fuelled by rapidly changing technological advancements and therefore a demand on our people to continuously adapt to new skills.

Organisational Focus

So how do organisations activate, enable and incentivise the continued development of these human skills?

At the end of 2022 AND Digital commissioned research into the UK's 'Digital Skills Gap'. The white paper acknowledged

the need to invest in and prioritise behavioural transformation.

The most pertinent points raised for the Learning & Development (L&D) areas, focused on growth and continuous learning as part of 'developing yourself', supporting others around you to learn and grow via 'developing others' and displays leadership traits by 'influence and inspire' those around you.

To accomplish this type of transformation, you require a different approach. One that takes roots into what people do and the way they behave everyday.

Change the dynamics: from Learning intervention to Learning ecosystem

Unlike learning interventions, which are specific, targeted initiatives, the learning ecosystem is a long-term strategic approach to building a culture of continuous learning. It has multiple touchpoints - a network of experiences. The aim is for it to be embedded within how people work. At AND Digital, we are looking at 3 pillars to grow our capabilities: content, communities and context. All elements play a part in the 5 areas which we focus on while evolving the L&D ecosystem at AND Digital.

Pull, not push

Learning engagement is influenced by behavioural changes and habits. As L&D teams, we are used to pushing content and resources to people. Organisations often mandate skill development but the outcomes are poor. It becomes a check box exercise.

No amount of force can embed learning if you don't see value in it. A much better way is to move the responsibility of learning and growth to the people.

We want to make sure we create an ecosystem that pulls them in naturally - we show people their potential through learning

paths. We curate content that is relevant to business needs & larger holistic learning aspirations. We aim to instil learning as a core value!

An example that works well in our organisation is the introduction of the "Power Hour". We call it a Lunch & Learn in disguise. It does not interrupt your lunch but provides time for insights & inspiring ideas for implementation or it is used for reflection - a space to play back experiences and add meaning.

Learner agility

Developing yourself has 3 focus areas in our AND ecosystem:

- **Acknowledge** that you have had a learning experience is the first step. The ecosystem helps learners to draw attention to the learning moments that happen naturally in daily occurrences.
- **Playback:** Personal reflection will give you time to think about the experience - then connect with others & ask for their take on it - intentionally gather feedback.
- **Contribute:** Create something! And identify opportunities to share with others - become a mentor or coach.

Role Modelling

Role modelling is a crucial component. We have created an environment in which people feel they can fully participate, and are empowered to evolve their knowledge and skills.

Leadership has the important task of creating and safe-guarding psychological safety, diversity of thought and providing access to a learning and feedback culture for everyone.

Everyone is encouraged to look for the next opportunity to learn, apply new ways of working professionally and pass it on through mentoring.



Partnerships

L&D teams are instigators and promoters for the learning culture, but we rely on the contributions of our people to maintain learning dialogue & opportunities

- **Subject Matter Experts:** Empower the people who have knowledge to create & curate the most relevant resources (content)
- **Communities of Practices:** Create opportunities for people to connect, meet up, network (communities)
- **People Processes:** Integrate learning moments with HR processes e.g. performance reviews, feedback approach, competency frameworks (context)

External partnerships to enhance learning capabilities will benefit the organisation as well but do come at an additional cost.

Tailored Approach

Do we as the Learning & Development team truly understand the business & ongoing needs? How do we customise solutions to inspire learners across the organisation?

The essence lies in tailoring experiences and content for employees to be invested in it. Learners are motivated when they see a clear relationship between content, outcomes, their roles and the value it brings to their personal and professional development.

Moving Forward

Creating and embedding a Learning ecosystem takes time and effort. The short-term benefits are often hard to articulate at an organisational level but persistence will pay off. Investing in your people's development will increase their happiness and job satisfaction, it will deepen their commitment to your organisational goals and it will strengthen the internal collaboration between your teams.

In addition, it will create a sense of belonging for all involved and it will provide you with lots of opportunities to shape and maintain a healthy culture for your employees.

The most pertinent points raised for the Learning & Development (L&D) areas, focused on growth and continuous learning as part of 'developing yourself', supporting others around you to learn and grow via 'developing others' and displays leadership traits by 'influence and inspire' those around you.

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How workplaces can support healthy ageing at work

The Supporting Healthy Ageing at Work (SHAW) project, managed by researchers at the University of Edinburgh Business School has found that employers can do more to support workers over the age of 50, through helping them reflect on and communicate their health and well-being needs at work.

More organisations are realising the untapped potential of recruiting, retraining and retaining workers in mid to later life, however, many employers admit that they do not feel equipped to support the health and well-being needs of these workers.

Workers over 50 are the fastest growing workforce community, and yet the over 50s represent 28.3% of economically inactive adults in Scotland¹. This is in stark comparison to much lower levels of economic inactivity in England and Wales. Of these economic inactive workers, many would return to paid work if a workplace was more accessible and welcoming. Crucially, excluding retirement, health is the most common reason for over 50s leaving work in 2023¹. This leads employers to ask what can they do to offer a more accessible, welcoming and supportive workplace to be attractive to workers in mid to later life.

Looking beyond policy

The SHAW project conducted a 3-year investigation into less-discussed aspects of health at work: cognitive decline, poor sleep, stresses from unpaid care, financial well-being and menopause.

What they found was that employers need to look beyond blanket policies around supporting worker health in mid to later life. The research team identified six barriers to supporting healthy ageing at work, and have highlighted these areas for targeted improvement:

1. Non-disclosure of health and well-being issues by the employee
2. Some health and well-being issues that aren't seen as "being ill"
3. Lack of awareness of mid-life health and well-being



4. Organisational culture and climate
5. Lack of psychological safety
6. Unchallenged gendered ageism within the workplace

Effective and open communication

SHAW project researchers have suggested that there are three ways that employers can directly improve supporting healthy ageing at work:

1. Line manager training to raise awareness of these six barriers to supporting health and well-being
2. Reflection tools to enable employees to identify health and well-being in relation to work
3. Communication tools to facilitate communication between individuals and others within a work environment. This

encourages early disclosure of health and well-being by engaging relevant people within the organisation and can support people managers to navigating health and well-being issues with their individual workers.

This model is one of individualised support at scale, and can be best achieved with a company-wide culture of supporting health and well-being. The SHAW project has worked with a range of high profile organisations within the following sectors: finance, social care, manufacturing and engineering. As the research project is drawing to a close, the project team are working with organisations to provide a tailored approach to supporting the health and well-being of workers in mid-later life.

Get involved

If you would like to learn more about how to support health and well-being at work, the SHAW project research team would be happy to provide more information on their innovative, evidence-based approach to supporting employers to support their workers. SHAW@business-school.ed.ac.uk.

SHAW project is funded through the UKRI Healthy Ageing Challenge Social, Behavioural and Design Research grant number ES/V016148/1. Professor Wendy Loretto is the Principal Investigator.

¹ UK Government. [www.gov.uk/government/statistics/economic-labour-market-status-of-individuals-aged-50-and-over-trends-over-time-september-2023/economic-labour-market-status-of-individuals-aged-50-and-over-trends-over-time-september-2023#:~:text=Inactivity%20by%20country%20and%20region,%25%20and%20Scotland%20\(28.3%25\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/economic-labour-market-status-of-individuals-aged-50-and-over-trends-over-time-september-2023/economic-labour-market-status-of-individuals-aged-50-and-over-trends-over-time-september-2023#:~:text=Inactivity%20by%20country%20and%20region,%25%20and%20Scotland%20(28.3%25).).





Bridging the Digital Divide: Empowering Edinburgh through Data Skills and Inclusive Learning

The numbers of females in tech jobs is now 30%, up from 24% in 2020.¹ Despite this significant progress, evidence shows that women in digital technology professional roles still tend to be paid lower with a salary gap of nearly £20,000 between men and women.²

The Data Skills Gateway is on a mission to improve data and digital skills across the Edinburgh City Region, with a focus on reducing inequalities of opportunity. Through a package of different offerings the team have been targeting priority groups, including: people with a disability; those from minority ethnic backgrounds, people who are neuro divergent; veterans, and women. Over 3,500 learners have now participated in a range of SCQF level courses, from the under 16s to those over 60.

The Gateway works with a range of delivery partners and is part of the City Region Deal, bringing together industry, universities, colleges, schools and others, to develop a pipeline of skills and progression routes into data careers. The team have been especially keen to provide women learners with a route into roles requiring data and digital skills, and has been looking at innovative ways to deliver the upskilling required.

The “**Women in Digital and Data Innovation Skills**” programme, delivered

by Edinburgh College, develops data science, employability, and other transferable skills for women learners. The programme, supported by Equate Scotland and the Data Lab Community focuses on teaching the Professional Development Award (PDA) in Data Science and provides pathways for further learning at Edinburgh Napier University (**BSc in Data Science**), or support into employment. Participants gain confidence in utilising digital technologies in educational, social, or vocational online environments.

Edinburgh College have also supported Access to Industry on the **Access Data** project to deliver a data skills progression route, mainly through the National Progression Award (NPA) in Data Science. This programme targets unemployed people in Edinburgh and those on low incomes.

And the team has been keen to support displaced Ukrainian women living in Edinburgh. Working in partnership with Capital City Partnership, EQUATE Scotland and Code First Girls, the Data Skills for

Work project has supported 10 women to move along a pathway to employment with **Nat West**. The Data Skills for Work team have also helped to fund Code Division’s work with displaced Ukrainians.

Given the crucial role of data in organisational success, the demand for data literacy and associated meta-skills is growing across all job roles. The targeted programmes by the Data Skills Gateway aim to tackle gender and other imbalances in data-related roles. All of the programmes have been especially designed to ensure inclusive learning environments, working alongside third sector partners to provide additional support as and where required.

For more information:
For people | What We Do | DDI

¹ SDS (2023). Digital Economy Skills Action Plan 2023-2028. Available online at: www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/50035/digital-economy-skills-action-plan.pdf

² Haystack (2021). What are we worth? Available online at: www.haystackapp.io/resources/what-are-we-worth

Perfect Paints: Harnessing VR for Next-Level Training

While traditional training methods often struggle to provide a truly immersive learning experience, virtual reality (VR) offers a unique environment that simulates real-world scenarios.



The immersive nature of VR enables individuals to learn by 'doing' – proven to enhance skill development and retention. By replicating realistic scenarios, users can apply their knowledge in a risk-free environment, making mistakes and learning from them without adverse effects. This can be especially beneficial for training that involves complex procedures or skills that require much practice.

QSE Ltd specialises in comprehensive training solutions to empower people with the knowledge and skills to implement and maintain effective ISO management systems.

We believe real learning goes beyond theory, so our courses are designed for a realistic and hands-on experience. Our product, Perfect Paints, is a virtual manufacturing facility situated on a digital industrial estate. It is complete with offices, employees and production facilities, backed by a QHSE management system, and filled with all the records you would find in real life.

Realistic multisensory experience to aid learning

The combination of Perfect Paint's visual, auditory and interactive elements create a multisensory experience that appeals to various learning styles, enhancing understanding and retention of course materials. People navigate around the workplace using a computer keyboard or games controller where they can make observations, ask questions and gather information.

Perfect Paints is used in a variety of quality, environmental, and health and safety scenarios, embedding skills, including

auditing and incident investigation. It is our goal to make the educational experience more memorable and impactful and, by using Perfect Paints, we go beyond traditional teaching techniques. The emphasis on practical application, personalised learning paths and real-time feedback ensures that each individual not only acquires knowledge but also develops the skills necessary for personal growth.

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Skills Development Scotland launches new employer hub to drive upskilling and reskilling

With the economy and our world of work changing at an ever-faster pace, learning new skills isn't just something that young people have to think about.

From getting to grips with advancing technologies to adapting to new ways of working, more and more people are looking towards upskilling and reskilling to help their careers.

And neither is it something to only consider when changing jobs. For businesses looking to source new skills, plan ahead or attract new talent in a competitive jobs market, training and development can be an essential ingredient to future success.

To support businesses with their skills needs, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) has launched a new employer hub, bringing together a series of tools and services so that employers can identify ways of working smarter.

Recognising that skills are a vital part of the growth and productivity of any business, the support available on the employer hub can help employers plan for and manage their skills needs to ensure their business has the right people with the right skills in the right roles.

Marion Beattie, Head of Skills Growth and Inward Investment at SDS said: "This new part of the existing SDS website has been developed in consultation with employers

and offers tools so businesses can identify the skills they need now and in the future.

"It's easy to navigate, points employers towards what further support is available and can help any business develop a skills plan that will help boost growth and productivity."

The employer hub includes a Skills Management Tool to help businesses identify their skills priorities and a Skills Discovery Tool which offers help with upskilling and reskilling by comparing current roles in a business with future needs.

There's also access to useful webinars and lots of information on other ways that SDS can support a business.

One company to benefit from SDS support is RoslinCT, a global cell and gene therapy contract development and manufacturing organisation based in Edinburgh and Boston.

With support from SDS and Scottish Enterprise as part of a Team Scotland approach, the company has been able to grow their business by investing in upskilling their people and attracting new talent.

RoslinCT has been account managed by Scottish Enterprise since 2015 receiving a

range of support, and in 2020, went through Skills for Growth, a fully-funded service from SDS for businesses with fewer than 250 employees which helps them identify their skills needs.

This led to a new people strategy to help leadership and management deal with challenges associated with rapid growth, including communications and personal development.

Callum Watson, Head of People at RoslinCT, UK said: "Team Scotland have been incredibly supportive throughout our growth journey and have been instrumental in helping us to ensure we are able to meet our ambitious plans for expansion and growth. The team have been with us, providing guidance and support whenever we've needed it.

"They have supported us in the creation of our People Strategy which provided a roadmap to ensuring RoslinCT was able to meet its goals from a people perspective and that our workplace is the best possible place to work."

To find out more about the skills support available for your business, visit employers.sds.co.uk



Chamber Training Calendar

January 2024

January

Monday 15th

Understanding Origin & Preference

Wednesday 17th

Networking Lunch at Tattu Edinburgh

Thursday 18th

Essential Management Skills

Thursday 18th

Focus on Food - Export Procedures

Tuesday 23rd

Advanced Facebook Strategies to Increase Sales

Tuesday 23rd

Developing Edinburgh with Andrew Kerr, Chief Executive, City of Edinburgh Council

Wednesday 24th

Video Creation for Business

February

Monday 5th

Introduction to CDS - A practical Guide

Tuesday 6th

Customs Procedures and Documentation

Tuesday 6th

Inspiring Women in Business Lunch with Katie Milligan, Chief Commercial Officer of Openreach

Thursday 8th

ICC - INCOTERMS ® 2020 RULES - Half Day Workshop

Monday 19th

Focus on Food: Tariff Classification

Tuesday 20th

Networking Lunch at the Botanist

Thursday 22nd

Understanding Commodity Codes

Monday 26th

Beginners Guide to Export Licensing Controls

Tuesday 27th

Understanding Export and Export Documentation

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

edinburghchamber.co.uk/training-events/





A busy end to the year for Chamber events

As another bustling year at the Chamber draws to a close, it's an ideal moment to look back at the recent highlights from our eventful calendar.

Our signature networking events have been a hit, providing our members with opportunities to connect at some of the city's premier venues. A fully booked Networking Lunch at Harvey Nichols Forth Floor Brasserie offered a stunning view of St Andrews square, complemented by a tasty seasonal lunch menu. But the culinary journey didn't stop there. Our members ventured across the city for another delightful lunch at The Bruntsfield Hotel, with our upcoming Members Festive lunch set to take place at the exquisite Black Ivy.

Embracing the spirit of Halloween, our October early start event took a spooky turn. Our members visited Edinburgh Dungeons for a thrilling start to their Friday morning. Amidst the coffee, connections, and pastries, there were plenty of frightful delights, including flying guts and squirming leeches.

While networking is a key focus, we've also hosted several panel discussions and business updates to keep our members abreast of developments in our city. Our Developing Edinburgh series brought together key stakeholders to discuss the Future of Urban Mobility, shedding light on new travel infrastructure, innovative tech, and urban planning considerations in line with the city's 2030 plans. Forth Ports joined us to outline the progress of the Green Freeport consortium and their plans for green job creation and trade expansion. We were also thrilled to collaborate with



Our Scottish Future for an event attended by over 200 people, featuring discussions on Scotland's economic growth by leading political and business figures including Gordon Brown.

Following our festive break, we have an exciting line-up of events to kickstart the new year. Andrew Kerr will deliver his annual Business Address at the Bank of Scotland on 24th January. And in keeping with our networking tradition, we'll be returning to



Yotel Edinburgh for our popular Speed Networking session to help you forge new connections for the New Year!

Lastly, as 2024 approaches, we're also gearing up for our Annual Edinburgh Chamber Business Awards. Scheduled for February 29th at the EICC, this event will bring together Edinburgh's business community to celebrate our city's success. Don't forget - entries close on January 17th! We hope to see you there.



Navigating the generation game in the workplace – flexibility, benefits and reverse mentoring

Chris McDowall

Partner at Anderson Strathern

Admit it. If you're old enough to remember buying music on CD, you've probably given side-eye to that 20-something in the office who is "working" with earbuds in while also tapping frantically on their smartphone.

Are they really "multi-tasking", or just skiving? And how on earth can they concentrate with music on?

There's no denying younger people can work very differently to, say, the Baby Boomer generation. And with the state pension age on an upward trajectory, for the first time in living memory there are four generations in many workplaces.

This can cause headaches for employers who don't yet understand each generation's differing needs. "Boomers", Gen X, Millennials and Gen Z have demands that can be poles apart – sometimes leading to workplace tensions, or worse.

If someone feels unfairly treated by their employer due to age, they could potentially claim discrimination under the Equality Act 2010. One colleague making ageist comments to another could even

be seen as harassment on grounds of age under the Act.

So how do we avoid these pitfalls and create a workplace where everyone can thrive?

Younger generations are increasingly seeking a socially and environmentally conscious employer, who genuinely cares about mental health, wellbeing and development. Having grown up with social media, they're used to instant feedback and value recognition. If they don't get what they want, they often find a new job.

Boomers often prefer a more structured environment and can be fountains of in-depth knowledge. But chronic health problems are more likely for this generation, leading to potential absence management issues.

In the middle, Generation Xers are usually conscientious and willing to embrace change, but also more likely to be juggling caring responsibilities, or have perimenopause symptoms, which can lead to burnout if not carefully managed.

Something uniting all generations is a desire for flexibility. This might mean more home-working for the Gen X parent, or flexi-time to the Gen Z who wants to party earlier than 5.30pm on a Friday.

All this is a lot to manage, but if we can all get along, there are many positives to

a wider generational pool. Who better to keep up with the pace of technological change than a Gen Z colleague, while older generations share their knowledge with younger co-workers?

Employers can do a lot to aid intergenerational office harmony. It's essential – as a bare minimum – to have fit-for-purpose policies and procedures that all employees have been given bespoke training on. From a legal perspective, these must be applied as equally as possible to everyone.

Creating a menu of flexible benefits, so each generation has choice, and nobody feels unfairly disadvantaged by age, is worth considering. It's important not to exclude anyone from any perk.

Reverse mentoring, where junior staff can share skills with senior colleagues, can effectively build generational bonds. Workplace events, like carer-positive sessions, can help people learn what matters to colleagues, increasing empathy.

No matter what support you bring in, if someone – whatever the generation – thinks it's fantastic, that's another happy employee who's likely to stick around.

AS Anderson Strathern

Building a sustainable future through talent development in the construction industry

The business world continues to feel under pressure from so many external forces. Whilst showing signs of improvement, inflation remains stubbornly high.

We continue to face challenges linked to the ongoing war in Ukraine, the aftermath of the Covid pandemic, the direct and indirect effects of climate change and, with the economic effects of the recent events in Israel and Palestine still to be fully realised, it seems as though times have never been more challenging.

Whilst these global events remain largely outwith our control, we do have the power to influence one of the other biggest challenges facing all industries – how we ensure we have the people and skills needed for the future.

It is a well-documented fact that the construction industry is facing a significant skills shortage which only increases with each passing month. Not only are traditional trade skills in need of increased focus and promotion, but we are looking for the skill sets that will help us to deliver the projects of the future – those that meet the challenges of digitalisation and climate resilience.

Skills and talent are the lifeblood of all sectors and we have an economic and moral imperative to diversify our talent pools to ensure we have the people and skills to meet future demand.

At Balfour Beatty, we have been working with key partners to explore ways that we can engage with under-represented groups and bring them, and their skills into our business.

■ We worked collaboratively with Capital City Partnership, funded by the Edinburgh and South East City Region Deal, to run a pilot 'Ukrainian Construction Academy'. The programme to support underemployed Ukrainians with experience and skills in construction and provided practical training to help secure sustainable employment. 9 candidates received offers of employment and we are working to expand the 'Construction Academy' model across Scotland, opening up to the wider migrant and refugee communities and workforce returners. www.youtube.com/watch?v=FA_tGH-LSNw

■ We partnered with the Association for Black and Minority Ethnic Engineers (AFBE) Scotland to run a virtual work experience programme. The programme, open to 14-18 year olds, was designed to engage with young people from under-represented groups. As of October, 232

young people across Scotland have registered to take part in the programme which involves completing construction research tasks and the opportunity to dial into live Zoom calls and included speakers from Balfour Beatty and AFBE members including Ethical Power & SSE.

■ We have been working in partnership with Cyrenians in Edinburgh, to develop a Green Skills Pathway for young people in Edinburgh. This programme seeks to engage with young people around the concept of sustainability and provide training pathways to careers in a number of 'green' jobs including within the construction sector.

To address upcoming challenges around talent attraction and upskilling our workforce, we must work collaboratively across our sector to attract and retain people within construction and engineering, to inspire people to work in an industry which has strong pipeline of work, provides energy security and to deliver nationally critical infrastructure which supports our journey to netzero.

balfourbeatty.com





Thousands of Edinburgh employees benefit from fair pay after Living Wage campaign

A campaign to boost the number of businesses which become real Living Wage accredited has led to 12,000 Edinburgh workers receiving a direct, guaranteed uplift in pay over the past decade.

Since the Scottish Real Living Wage campaign was first launched in 2013, over 700 Edinburgh businesses have made the **voluntary commitment** to pay the only wage rate designed to rise in line with the cost of living in the UK.

Those commitments have meant total pay increases to the value of almost £100m over the last 10 years for the lowest paid workers in Scotland's capital city.

Speaking at an event in Edinburgh on Wednesday to mark Living Wage Week Scotland, Councillor Jane Meagher welcomed the achievement but said fair pay must go further.

As Co-Chair of the Edinburgh Living Wage Action Group and Convener of Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work, she said: 'We've had a record-breaking few years in Edinburgh for Living Wage sign ups and it feels like we're witnessing a real movement. This year alone we have seen more than 100 businesses sign up as real Living Wage employers, and eight Edinburgh employers committing to **the new Living Hours standard**. This needs to be celebrated, but we cannot be complacent.

The next few months and years will be critical because we know that poverty in Edinburgh is rising. Just last week, we **declared a housing emergency** because we simply do not have enough adequate affordable housing in the city to meet demand. With households facing financial

insecurity and Edinburgh's rents some of the highest in the UK, secure wages are as important as ever.

We know Edinburgh-based businesses want to help tackle low pay and insecure work, but we know that employers are under increasing pressure. They too face a cost of living crisis, high bills and recruitment challenges.

As the rate of the Real Living Wage rises to £12 an hour, Living Wage Week and the events hosted here in Edinburgh and across the country provide an opportunity to showcase how far we've come, while acknowledging that more work is needed. We need to help employers to make the Real Living Wage the norm. Everyone deserves a fair day's pay for a fair day's work.

Kat Brogan, Managing Director of Mercat Tours and Co-Chair of the Edinburgh Living Wage Action Group, said: 'To any employer who is not there yet but wants to sign up to the Real Living Wage, now has never been a more crucial time. The cost of living - particularly in Edinburgh - remains high.

As a powerful advocate for Living Wage businesses, our Action Group can provide advice and guide you towards becoming a Real Living Wage employer. It will benefit your team, your business and Edinburgh as a thriving city which offers a fair experience for all.

The Real Living Wage is a crucial element of 'Real Living' - a happy, healthy, fulfilling

life - and it's so important to highlight its importance this Living Wage Week.

Earlier this year, over 70 delegates from 16 UK towns, boroughs and cities joined the City of Edinburgh Council to call for employers to offer 'a fair day's pay for a fair day's work' at **Scotland's first Living Wage Places Network event**. Edinburgh's selection followed the Scottish Capital's recognition as a Living Wage City in 2021.

Christine McCaig, Projects Coordinator at Living Wage Scotland, added: 'We are celebrating the continued progress toward 'Making Edinburgh a Living Wage City' this Living Wage Week. Around one fifth of the 3400 accredited Living Wage employers in Scotland are based in Edinburgh, signalling Scotland's capital city as a significant contributor to the continued growth of the Living Wage employer movement.

Despite the challenges facing many businesses, more employers are showing their commitment to tackling in-work poverty and demonstrating leadership and resilience at a time when workers need it most.

The Edinburgh Living Wage Action Group was established in 2021 with the aim of building the living wage movement in Scotland's capital city. Employers who would like to know more about the group, or would like information and advice on becoming accredited can contact policyandinsight@edinburgh.gov.uk.

Edinburgh College course to help meet surge in demand for EV technicians

As the climate crisis intensifies, so too does the need for the global workforce to become equipped with new skills to help nations across the world to become less reliant on fossil fuels and emit less carbon.

Edinburgh College recognises the climate crisis is one of the most significant global challenges of the century and is determined to play its part slowing down the effects of climate change.

Key aims set out in the College's Sustainability Strategy 2019-24 are centred around green skills, both embedding them into the curriculum and supporting business partners across the region to upskill their staff with these crucial skills.

The Capital College is delivering electric vehicle courses aimed at helping the nation to meet demand for thousands of Electric and Hybrid Vehicle (EV) technicians over the next decade.

Recently published research by the Institute of Motor Industry (IMI) highlighted that there are currently (as of October 2023) 43,500 qualified technicians in the UK, but only around 6% (2386) are trained to an advanced level. It warns of a shortage in years to come due to a decline in number of technicians becoming qualified in 2023 compared to last year.

The IMI's research predicts that, by 2030, the sector will need 107,000 EV-trained technicians, increasing to 126,000 by 2032 and potentially 185,000 by 2035. However, with the current dipping trend in those becoming qualified, the IMI projects the UK may be left with a shortfall of qualified technicians by 2030, which could even reach 13,000 by 2032.

In addition, a report released in 2022 by the Social Market Foundation also raised



concerns over an estimated shortfall of technicians qualified with the skills required to maintain all of the UK's EVs.

In response, Edinburgh College has revamped its training offer in EV technology and is now delivering a new Level 4 IMI Award in the Diagnosis, Testing, and Repair of Electric and Hybrid Vehicles – aimed at the diagnosis of these vehicles rather than maintenance. This course provides progression for those studying on the hugely successful Level 2 and 3

programmes, which have seen hundreds of students engaged over the past five years.

The new course consists of three days of hands-on practical diagnosis and testing on live electric vehicles. This course builds upon fundamental knowledge gained during the Level 3 course, offering participants a comprehensive exploration of advanced diagnostics techniques, tools, and methodologies of electric and hybrid vehicles.

Participants will also delve into the intricate components that make up an EV, including batteries, electric motors, charging systems, and sophisticated protection devices.

Jonny Pearson, Vice Principal: Education and Skills, said: "It is vital that as one of Scotland's largest colleges, we play our part in training the EV technicians the nation needs, and so we are pleased to have added the new Level 4 qualification to our suite of EV training courses.

"With the shortage of trained technicians forecast by industry bodies, it is imperative that work with the automotive sector to ensure that the workforce has access to the skills it needs to meet the demand for EV experts in Scotland, and in turn supporting the country to meet Net Zero targets.

Find out more about [Green Skills training at Edinburgh College](#).



Stepping up support for small businesses

SSE Energy Solutions unveils £15m support fund targeted at businesses struggling with their energy bills.



Nikki Flanders

Managing Director of SSE's customer businesses, SSE Energy Customer Solutions (GB&IRL)

Heading into winter, SSE Energy Solutions has enhanced its customer supports with a dedicated £15m support fund targeted at businesses struggling with their energy bills.

While some businesses will continue to receive government bill support through the Energy Bills Discount Scheme (EBDS)

over winter, many businesses will see a considerable drop in the level of government support they receive this winter compared with last winter.

The fund is in addition to the support SSE Energy Solutions has provided customers throughout the pandemic and the energy price crisis. This support has included the extension of payment term options for struggling customers and shielding some customers from more than £10m of non-commodity industry charges.

Nikki Flanders, Managing Director of SSE's customer businesses, SSE Energy Customer Solutions (GB&IRL), said: "Despite the fact that wholesale energy prices have fallen considerably from last year's highs, they still remain double the historic norm, which we understand is challenging for many businesses. Combined with the existing support for our customers, this represents the most comprehensive package of financial assistance to help businesses with their energy bills anywhere in the GB non-domestic market."*

In an effort to encourage businesses to take simple steps to help improve their energy efficiency and lower their costs, SSE is also asking its customers that don't already have smart meters to book an installation at no additional cost.

Smart meters are playing an important role in helping the UK deliver a cleaner and more sustainable energy system. The Committee on Climate Change has said that without the flexibility enabled by Smart meters, the cost of reaching Net Zero could be up to £16 billion a year more expensive than current estimates predict.**

Smart meters serve as a key part of a business' toolkit in monitoring, managing and ultimately reducing or shifting energy consumption to reduce costs and emissions, with small businesses fitted with smart meters already collectively saving around £1.5 billion each year on their energy bills.

SSE Energy Solutions were also proud to sponsor STV during the channel's first ever 'Sustainable Scotland Week' in August, a special seven-day, cross-platform mission to raise awareness of how climate change is impacting Scotland's communities and inspire viewers and partners to live more sustainably.

* Based on the £15m fund and shielding some customers from £10m of non-commodity costs

** www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Net-Zero-Technical-report-CCC.pdf



Despite the fact that wholesale energy prices have fallen considerably from last year's highs, they still remain double the historic norm, which we understand is challenging for many businesses. Combined with the existing support for our customers, this represents the most comprehensive package of financial assistance to help businesses with their energy bills anywhere in the GB non-domestic market.

We thank our Partners for their continued support of the Chamber.

STRATEGIC PARTNERS



ENTERPRISE PARTNERS





Sarah-Jane (SJ) Macdonald

SJ bolsters WJM's Private Client offerings

Sarah-Jane (SJ) Macdonald is set to enhance WJM's private client offerings with her extensive background specialising in trusts and contentious private client matters.

SJ serves on the Society of Trust and Estate Practitioners (STEP) Scotland committee and represented the organisation at recent Parliamentary discussions.

She was awarded the Core prize in 2021 for promoting mediation in Scotland, won a STEP Worldwide Excellence Award for trust law, and is currently shortlisted for the Private Client Rising Star of the Year Award by Legal 500.

SJ also recently authored "A Practical Guide to Legal Rights in Scotland", the pioneering textbook that consolidates the law on legal rights.

Speaking of her new appointment, Sarah-Jane said: "I'm excited to be able to share my know-how with the esteemed team at WJM to offer the highest quality Private Client services."

Although based in WJM's Edinburgh office, SJ's expertise will be available to clients across the firm's five Scottish offices.

David Mackay

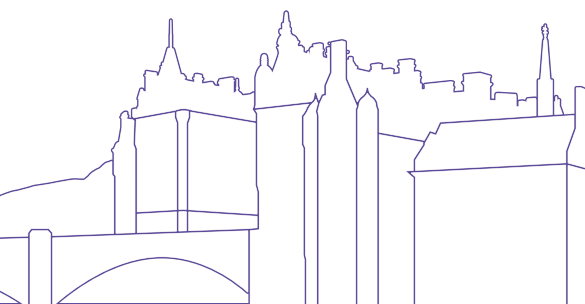
David Mackay has been appointed as Children in Scotland's new Head of Policy, Projects and Participation. David will be part of the organisation's strategic leadership team and lead the organisation's Policy, Projects and Participation department, which works to engage children and young people and ensure that their voices are heard at all levels of policy and decision-making.

David brings to the role more than a decade of experience in the children's sector, having worked with the Early Years team at the Scottish Book Trust before joining Children in Scotland as Policy Manager in April 2019.

During his time with the Children in Scotland, David has driven forward significant projects and policy areas, on a broad range of topics including mental health, the implications of Brexit, the environment and the creative arts. He is a passionate advocate for children and young people.



David Mackay



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Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, Business Centre,
2nd Floor, 40 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 2LE
www.edinburghchamber.co.uk

President: **Jane Clark-Hutchison**
Chief Executive: **Liz McAreavey**

EDITOR

Emma Reid, Tel: **0131 221 2999**
Email: emma.reid@edinburghchamber.co.uk

FEATURES EDITOR

David Forsyth, Tel: **07887 955778**
Email: david@benchmarkpr.co.uk

PRODUCTION & DESIGN

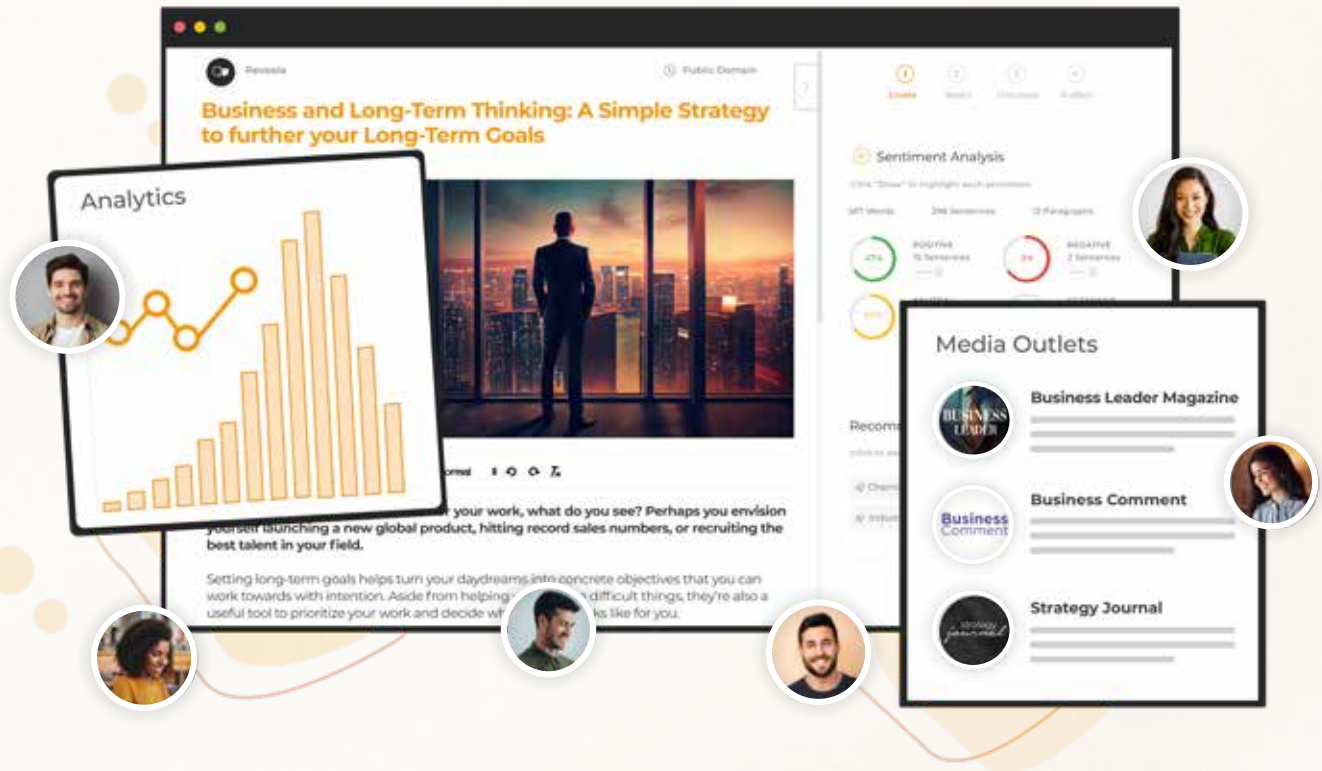
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9-11 Carlisle Square Newcastle Upon Tyne NE1 6UF
Tel: **0191 5805990**
Email: production@distinctivegroup.co.uk
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ADVERTISING

Contact: **Liz Hughes**
Business Development Manager,
Distinctive Media Group Ltd
Tel: **0191 5805467**
Email: liz.hughes@distinctivegroup.co.uk
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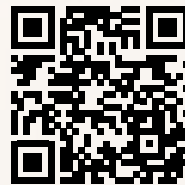
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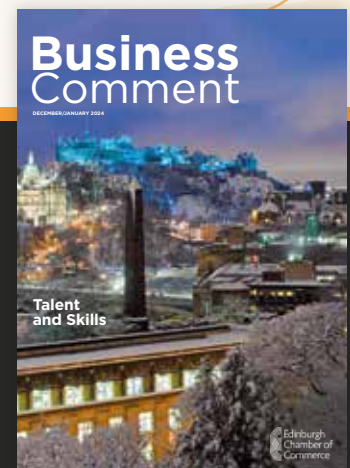
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