



CAITHNESS

BUSINESS NEWS

November 2020 | caithnesschamber.com

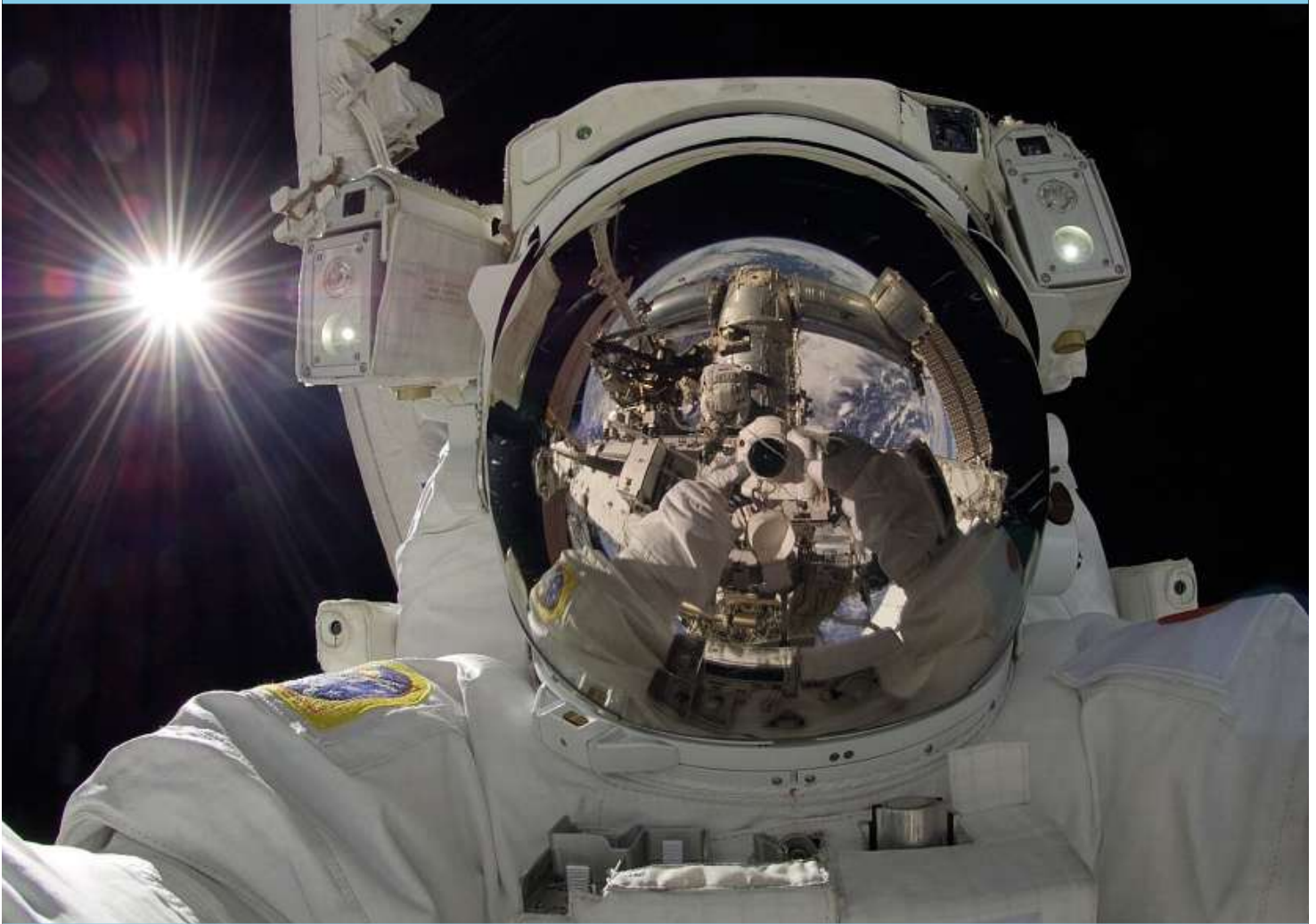
Chamber looks
forward to 2021

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Chamber Comment



In normal circumstances, I would use this introduction to our final newsletter of the year to look back over the ups and downs of the past year and look forward to what we can expect in the year to come. Yet, as we are all too aware, we remain in anything but normal circumstances.

As with so many other organisations and businesses, the Chamber's plans for

2020 have been upended by COVID-19, and the outlook for 2021 remains uncertain. It is important, however, that despite everything the year has brought we remember that there are still substantial, long-term challenges and opportunities facing businesses in the North Highlands.

This year has seen the Chamber continue its fight for a Public Service Obligation from Wick John O'Groats Airport, which would ensure that the business community of the North Highlands has access to the air services it needs to sustain and grow our economy. Sustainability remains a key focus for the Chamber. While we have had to postpone a range of planned pilot projects with Zero Waste Scotland, we remain committed to ensuring that the economy of the North Highlands grows and develops in a sustainable fashion. With both UK and Scottish Government pushing hard for a net zero economy, this will be of crucial importance in years to come.

Last but by no means least, there are new growth opportunities

in the region in areas like renewable energy and aerospace. As a Chamber, we will be doing everything we can to ensure that this region – and our members – see the benefits of these opportunities. What you will see over the coming pages is a range of businesses which are surviving and thriving despite everything the year has thrown at them. We may not know what 2021 will bring, but we can be sure that businesses in the North Highlands will face down the challenges and grasp whatever opportunities may come.

Trudy Morris
Chief Executive, Caithness Chamber of Commerce

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Decommissioning, Waste Management and Radiological Protection Capability



Introduction

Nuclear Waste Management is a key area that Atkins/SNC-Lavalin has been developing and delivering for several decades. With a specialist Decommissioning, Waste Management and Radiological Protection team possessing a wealth of experience across the NDA estate, Atkins/SNC-Lavalin can provide Suitably Qualified and Experienced Personnel (SQEP) to solve the most challenging decommissioning and waste management problems.



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Ross Beveridge
Ross.Beveridge@atkinsglobal.com or 07887758123



Mackays Hotel celebrates 65th anniversary

Mackays Hotel on Union Street in Wick has been a leading accommodation provider and a cornerstone of local community life in Caithness for over six decades since being purchased by the first family member in 1955, Murray Lamont's maternal grandmother.

The hotel is now owned and operated by third generation of Lamonts, Murray and Ellie, along with their 34-year-old daughter, Jennifer, supporting 25 local jobs and welcoming around 54,000 global visitors to the North Highlands each year.

Murray and Ellie took over the management of Mackays Hotel in 1983 and went on to purchase the property from the rest of the family in the 1990s. Since then, the hotel has gone from strength to strength winning a number of industry awards and accolades, including 'Caithness Business of the Year' in the Highland Business Awards 2016, overall winner of the 'Developing the Young Workforce' category at the Highland Business Awards 2017, and a Gold Tourism Award as part of The Green Tourism Business Scheme.

The family-run hotel continues to go the extra mile to support those in need around the region. During the recent lockdown, the Lamont family worked with Legion Scotland project to provide Caithness veterans and pensioners with regular hot meals and companionship whilst self-isolating at home, as well as a meals on wheels home delivery service for people in and around Wick. Accommodation was also let out to key workers shielding from their families.

Murray Lamont, owner of Mackays Hotel, said: "We're incredibly proud to have reached this significant milestone for our family-run hotel and as an integral part of local community life here in Caithness. We pride ourselves on our warm Highland welcome to guests from across the world every single year and look forward to continuing that tradition for many years to come."



Dunnet Bay Distillers unveil their 'Refill Rewards Club'

Hot off the heels of the launch of its innovative fully recyclable and freepost return Rock Rose Gin pouches, Dunnet Bay Distillers have unveiled a new reason for gin lovers to raise a celebratory glass. Not only are the recyclable pouches now available across all Seasonal and Signature Spirits, they are launching a 'Refill Rewards Club', a monthly subscription service of spirit pouches.

Either monthly, bi-monthly or quarterly, members will receive a pouch of their choice of Rock Rose Gin or of Holy Grass Vodka, designed to refill the distillery's now iconic ceramic bottles. What's more they'll receive a selection of mixers, garnishes and a lovely wee surprise gift in each delivery too. Plus, members can even change their pouch choice as often as they like - providing an opportunity to taste the full Dunnet Bay Portfolio.

These pouches were the very first in the UK to have a partnership with Royal Mail, meaning they can be sent back to the distillery via freepost. Once at the distillery, the pouches will be collected by a specialist recycling company and recycled into new items. To recycle, the pouches simply need to be popped into the post box - no stamp required!



Whether you're simply seeking advice or assistance at any stage of the procurement and contract lifecycle, M2PCS can offer a Fully Professional Service.

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ILM (Highland) pivots business **to launch online retail shop!**

ILM (Highland) is delighted to announce the launch of their new online Electrical Retail Shop. Like many businesses, lockdown and the impact of coronavirus has adversely affected us, so this news means that our offering can now reach the whole of the Highland community all day every day. The Electrical Retail Shop sells new and refurbished items such as washing machines, fridges and freezers, tumble dryers, cookers, etc.

ILM is a local charity and social enterprise based in Alness which delivers valuable services throughout the Highlands. Profits from the Electrical Retail Shop support our charitable services to help keep vulnerable people living independently at home through our Care & Repair and Handyperson services.

ILM's Business Development Manager Claire Weaver said, "Having the online retail shop means we can reach a much wider audience, where people can shop in the comfort of their own home. All of our stock is also available for home delivery throughout the Highlands – which can even be on the same day depending on where the customer lives. We want to make things that little bit easier for people."

For more information on ILM (Highland) or to browse their Electrical Retail Shop you can visit www.ilmhighland.co.uk/shop/

BBM Solicitors **celebrates 10th birthday!**

BBM Solicitors celebrates its 10th Birthday on 22 November 2020!

The firm was set up to provide market leading quality insolvency, litigation and corporate legal services. BBM

was founded by brothers Eric and Alasdair Bajjal, and supported from the beginning by their friend and colleague Jennifer Simpson (then Hamill- a lot has changed in 10 years!). Alasdair left the practice in 2016 to undertake full time Christian missionary work in South Africa, but Eric and Jennifer still lead the practice.

The firm is still boutique but has grown over the years. The firm now employs nine solicitors, two trainee solicitors and four administrative support staff split between the two offices, and having brought and retained quality and graduate jobs in the Caithness area.

BBM are now recommended by the leading legal directories for their litigation and restructuring work, with Eric leading a team instructed from around the country and the world in relation to Scottish litigation and insolvency. However, the Highlands and Islands, and Caithness and the Northern Isles particularly, are critical to BBM's identity and success. Responding to market demands the firm now also offers quality legal services to private individuals and for those involved in property transactions.

BBM had planned a series of events to mark the occasion, but celebrations will have to be deferred because of the pandemic.



OCA continues to deliver **despite COVID challenges**

Despite the challenges that 2020 has brought with the COVID-19 pandemic, Ormlie Community Association has continued to deliver vital services to those who need it most.

A Mums Group every Tuesday and Thursday with crèche facility gives access to a range of advice sessions and talks with professionals. Silver Citizens activities are delivered twice a week for adults over 65. With crafting, internet and social activities in a warm, friendly environment, these help combat social isolation and loneliness – a key need for many at this difficult time.

At the other end of the age spectrum, the "Fun, Young and Involved" and "Teen Scene" groups meet regularly to offer crafting, pool tournaments, cooking baking, games night and much more to young people in the area.

Last but by no means least, the Get It service operates three days a week to offer advice and support on employability, job seeking, training and accessing benefits. Service users can also access the internet, telephones and photocopying to assist with their activities and get other advice and support, for example on energy costs.

To learn more or find out about joining our Board of Directors, becoming a Member, Volunteer or accessing our services, contact us on 01847 891789.



Fibre 1 secures new **affiliate partnerships**

We are delighted to announce our new affiliate partnerships with Ross County Football Club and Inverness Caledonian Football Club

As an affiliate partner the Club's receive a commission for every contract signed with us for Energy (Ross County) Energy & Telecoms (Inverness Caledonian Thistle). A great way for local businesses to support the Clubs and make savings.

We believe strongly in supporting the community. We are currently the short sponsors for both League Two side Elgin City FC and Lossiemouth FC who compete in the Highland League. Both clubs have recently signed affiliate deals which will see revenues go back to each club to support their fundraising strategies and community development programmes and we are extremely pleased to add Premiership side Ross County and Championship side ICTFC to the mix.

These partnerships support Ross County's and ICTFC's strategies to diversify streams of income for the long-term success of the Clubs.



Amentum – a new name, 116 years of experience

Amentum has been supporting governments with safe nuclear management, operations, decommissioning, waste management, disposal, and site closure for the past 116 years. We bring four decades of experience in supporting UK clients, regulators and communities to safely deliver complex nuclear missions. We are committed to continue this work and are currently actively involved at several nuclear clean-up projects in the Caithness area.

Our team consists of the most experienced engineers, technical experts, programme and project managers, having delivered the Windscale AGR decommissioning programme, implemented the national integrated low-level waste strategy, managed the low level waste repository, developed the waste strategy at Dounreay and executed the Plutonium Contaminated Materials decommissioning programme.

In Amentum we are proud to have

- Achieved a 97% reduction of annual volume of low-level waste across the UK.
- Realised savings of £1.9 billion by removing the need for a second repository until 2130.
- Moved special nuclear materials off the Dounreay site.
- Overseen the full lifecycle of the two low level waste vaults at Dounreay.
- Saved more than £400m of the Sellafield Lifetime Plan.

David Batters, our UK Senior Vice President, says: "We continue to look for new partners -particularly local small medium companies as well as committed people to help deliver our mission". Please visit our webpage www.Amentum.com and contact us directly if you will like to know more. We look forward to hearing from you.

Contact: Lorraine.doran@amentum.com



North Point Distillery brings the Caribbean to Caithness

A Far North distillery has launched after completing an international funding round worth over £250,000. Co-founder's Struan Mackie and Alex MacDonald aim to bring a taste of the Caribbean to Caithness, while showcasing the history and heritage of the region.

Struan Mackie, a former spirits industry advisor with PricewaterhouseCoopers stressed the significance of the investment, despite global uncertainty. "Completing a competitive fundraise during a pandemic is testament to North Point Distillery and the quality of our team. We've been blown away with the response from investors, and we are delighted to have secured valuable foreign direct investment for the region. Creating long-term jobs in the community is incredibly important to us."

Commercial Director Alex MacDonald said "the fantastic local support we have received since launching has been mirrored in our pre-order sales for the Christmas season, with our North Point Pilot Rum being lined up by overseas buyers too! Given the profile of our investment, we feel we are uniquely placed to use our brand ambassador network in North America to secure further sales which is an exciting opportunity for us. We hope that we can play our part in being a prominent exporter for the region going forward."



FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Coffee and a Chat 26 November 2020

Join the Chamber team for an informal chat

Coffee and a Chat - Festive Edition 17 December 2020

Join the Chamber team for an informal chat -
this time with a mince pie!

Keep up-to-date with the latest news and events:
visit caithnesschamber.com, follow us via
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Alternatively, email the team to be added to
our mailing list.

Rum launch for northern distillery

LOCAL ingredients and an international outlook are the recipe for success for one of the north's newest distilleries.

Struan Mackie left behind a career in London to pursue his dream of setting up a distillery in his home county of Caithness.

Distillery co-founder and fellow rum enthusiast Canadian-born Alex MacDonald put his background as a sales director and international connections to good use to secure a significant investment from North America in mainland Scotland's most northerly rum distillery. This seems only appropriate given North Point's trans-Atlantic inspiration.

"Rum is our drink of choice, and there are also incredible links between the Far North and the Caribbean," Struan explained.

"The more we looked into that, we realised very quickly there were so many stories which linked these two places, so rum was very logical for us in being able to share these stories about that period of navigation and exploration by creating a rum that is Caribbean inspired, but with our own unique Highland twist.

"We are trying to be as sustainable as we



Struan, Alex and marketing manager Laura MacKenzie.

can, so we have sourced the vast majority of our ingredients as locally as possible. Unfortunately, I'm yet to find a way to grow sugar cane in Caithness, so we take the raw cane and molasses from Jamaica and Barbados, but pretty much everything else comes from the immediate vicinity.

"We use ex-whisky casks from Highland distilleries, and a mix of traditional and local botanicals. It's nice to have that immediate relationship with the area and the land."

North Point Pilot Rum, named in honour of the pilots who guided ships through the Pentland Firth, will be the distillery's flagship offering, but it will also be joined by a limited-edition Distiller's range beginning with Skerra Spiced Rum and Crosskirk Bay Gin.

North Point's products, especially its rum, add another element to a region that is already known

as a hotbed of spirits production thanks to its mix of new and established whisky and gin distillers.

"It is fantastic to be a part of that community and while our path is very much about rum, I hope we will be able to work with other local spirit makers," Struan said.

North Point Distillery plans to welcome visitors to their site next spring to take advantage of its proximity to the North Coast 500 and the area's historic and natural attractions.

More immediately, however, is the delivery of the first completed product that will be ready just in time for Christmas.

"We were completely blown away by the response to our pre-order launch, but our main priority now is getting everything finished up so we can hit the shelves at Christmas," Struan said.

"It's really exciting for us because this has been a couple of years in fruition, so it will all become real when I see North Point Pilot Rum on the shelves."

■ The North Point range is available now for Christmas pre-order at www.northpointdistillery.com

We are trying to be as sustainable as we can, so we have sourced the vast majority of our ingredients as locally as possible.

Struan Mackie



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Calum Maclean



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