



CAITHNESS

BUSINESS NEWS

February 2021 | caithnesschamber.com

North Highlands
**ready to take off
post-pandemic**

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CAITHNESS
CHAMBER of
COMMERCE

STRONGER
TOGETHER



One of the world's deepest nuclear clean-ups

Jacobs is playing a key role in the programme to clear and treat radioactive waste at Dounreay.

Alongside Dounreay Site Restoration Limited, we are focused on safe and efficient delivery of facilities for waste retrieval and encapsulation from the 214 feet deep Shaft and the adjacent Silo.

And we're looking forward to working with Berkshire Engineering, who are based in Bower, Caithness, on test and trials work associated with the programme.

Jacobs

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Chamber Comment

The start of a new year is traditionally a time to put old problems behind us and focus on the new challenges and opportunities to come. This year, however, it is hard to do either of those things, with the COVID-19 pandemic still causing devastation to our lives and economy.

It is clear that businesses in the North Highlands face a challenging year ahead and

that they will continue to need support from both our governments to help them get back on track and start the economic recovery of our region.

What we now need is for government to develop an economic exit strategy and long-term package of support for businesses and communities across the country.

A key factor in this for the North Highlands is the clear requirement for Scottish Government to invest in a Public Service Obligation (PSO) to support lifeline air services in the region. We have already seen the consequences of loss of air services, with one major company in offshore wind ceasing operations from Wick as a result.

A PSO is a perfect example of a strategic investment – one which will support the economic recovery of the region post-pandemic, enable long-term investment in growth sectors like renewable energy and and play a key role in boosting the whole Scottish economy.

The recent Scottish Budget made much of Scottish Government's

ambition that “no part of Scotland is left behind”. This is a worthy goal, and one which we now need to see backed up by a strong, sustained programme of investment in remote and rural regions like the North Highlands.

The coming years will be hard, and there is no avoiding the scale of the challenge that we face. We now need our governments to step up and commit to a future for the North Highlands that sees the region grow and succeed for years to come.

Trudy Morris
Chief Executive, Caithness Chamber of Commerce

PREMIER PARTNERS



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Belzona Polymerics launches three new products for 2021

Belzona Polymerics is pleased to announce that it has started 2021 with the launch of three new products.

Specialising in erosion, corrosion and chemical protection, Belzona is a world leader in the design and manufacture of repair composite materials and protective coatings for machinery, equipment, buildings and structures.

Belzona have been providing solutions for a range of industrial issues for over 60 years, and this new suite of products provides a simple, safe and effective means to assist with an even greater range demanding projects. These new solutions include:

- Belzona 5813 – an electrostatic dissipative coating for metal or conductive substrates requiring corrosion resistance and earth bonding
- Belzona 5815 – A containment grade solvent-free epoxy coating with

BELZONA 5813 – Who?

Who would benefit from this coating?

Timber Mills **Confectionary Making** **Gypsum processing** **Heavy Engineering**

Bakeries **Waste & Recycling** **Water/ Wastewater** **Powder Coating**

BELZONA
Repair • Protect • Improve

enhanced flexibility

- Belzona 7311 – A new metal to metal bonding paste grade material with increased adhesion

In addition to these, Belzona provide a range of products to assist with issues including erosion, corrosion, chemical attack, abrasion and weatherproofing. Their solutions offer a range of benefits rarely found elsewhere, including in-situ repairs, cold cure materials and simple application techniques.

For more information about any Belzona products and how they can help with your projects, contact Mike Armour today on armour.mike7@googlemail.com.

Stacks Bistro building the next generation of hospitality talent



In January we put out an early call for job opportunities starting in April 2021. We have been delighted with the great number of under 16's and 16-18 year olds who have applied for our positions. There has been a genuine interest in a career in Hospitality from almost everyone who has applied. After such a difficult year, with many hospitality businesses uncertain of the future, it is refreshing to see that the next generation are as passionate about food as we are! The under 18's we began training in 2016 when we opened, are now showing the new recruits the ropes. Although that makes us feel really old, we could not be prouder.

Looking forward, we are positive that this year will be the year of the "staycation" for Scotland. After months of being cooped up, the Highland locations with big wide natural spaces are set for a busy season. We plan to re-schedule the Charity Brunch events we missed in 2020, we have a brand-new seasonal menu ready for spring and are ready to teach our new young minds about comfort food! Fingers crossed we can enjoy it all more feeling free and safe in Summer 2021.

Caithness Business Serviced Apartments seeks buyer

After years of providing top quality serviced accommodation to visitors to Wick, Donald Campbell is hanging up his hat and seeking a buyer for the business.

Caithness Business Serviced Apartments have long been an ideal place to stay for business travellers, combining all the comforts and privacy of home with all the convenience that comes with staying in fully-serviced accommodation.

Donald has dedicated a huge amount of effort over the years to keeping the properties in fantastic condition and ensuring that each and every guest they welcome has a fantastic stay. Despite the challenges of COVID-19 and lockdown the business is trading well, but with retirement on the horizon, he feels the time has come for someone new to take on the opportunity and grow the business even further.

Comprising four generously sized and self-contained apartments, the Caithness Business Serviced Apartments offering has proven popular over the years with business travellers looking for a long-term, hassle-free accommodation option, as well as with those seeking shorter-term overnight stays, such as tourists travelling on the North Coast 500.

The sale of the business is being handled by Simon Fraser at Business Partnership.



Strathnaver Museum secures major funding boost

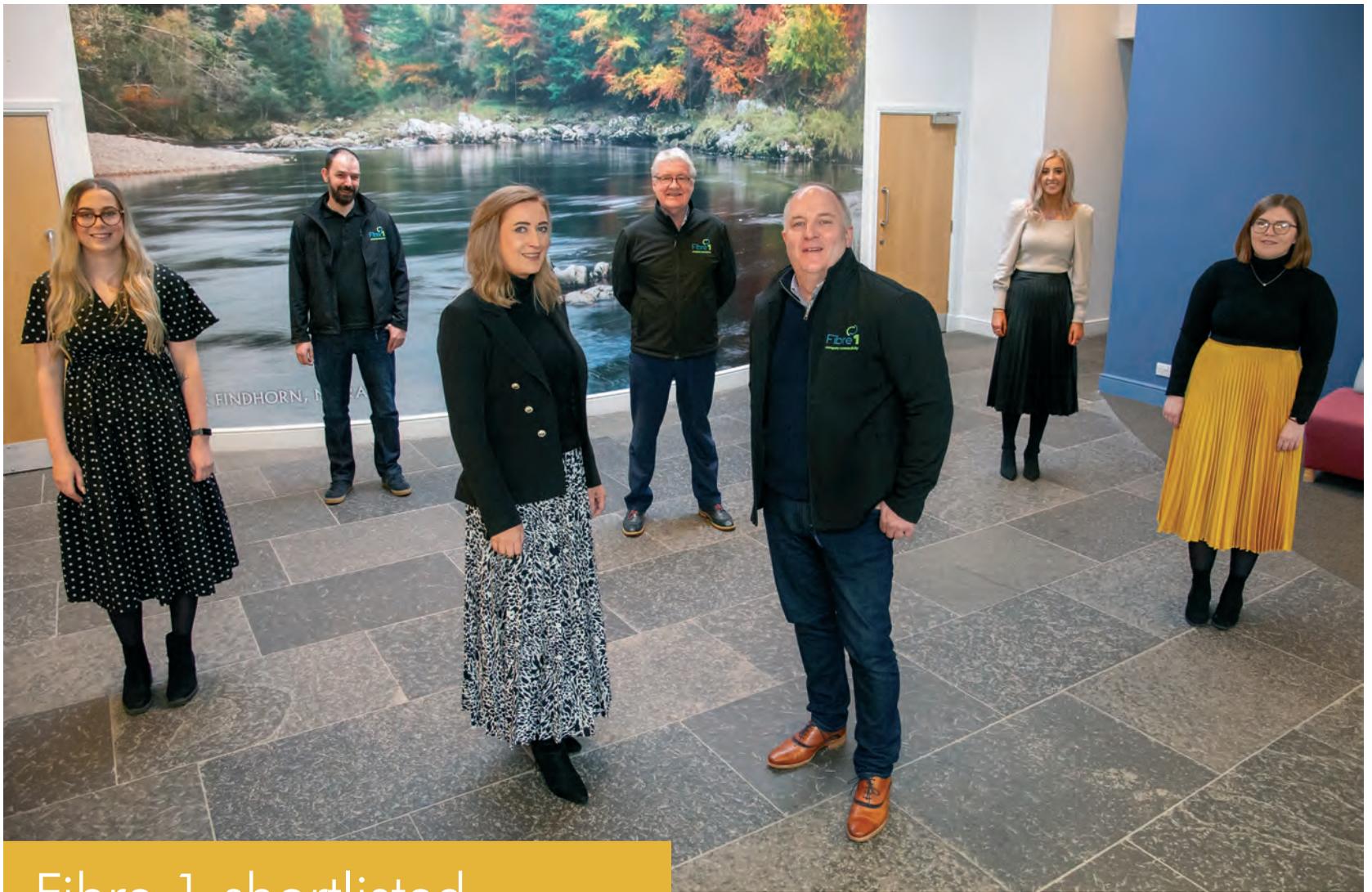
Strathnaver Museum have received a major boost to their fundraising appeal to realise their vision of creating a world class visitor attraction on the North Coast 500. National Lottery Heritage Fund have awarded the group £650,000 while Museum Galleries Scotland have pledged £113,157 towards the project. This brings the current funding pot to £1.7m of a total funding requirement of £1.9m.

The project will safeguard the condition of the regionally important historic building, improve the visitor experience and secure the future of the collection in the area in which it was collected.

Supported through the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the project will also explore the impact of the Highland Clearances through a series of creative community research projects. An extensive three-year activity programme will provide opportunities for everyone to get involved in exploring the local heritage through arts and crafts, traditional skills, language and Gaelic culture.

Strathnaver Museum is a popular visitor attraction on the North Coast 500 which delivers museum services to the local community and welcomes over 6,000 visitors every year. The museum has run a number of innovative community curated research projects over the years which has added valuable information to their extensive archive.





Fibre 1 shortlisted for national award

Among many achievements in 2020, fast-growing Moray-based digital telecoms company Fibre 1 has recently been shortlisted for Reseller of the Year at the Comms Business Awards. The team are delighted to be recognised for their hard work through tried and testing times and look forward to more success in 2021.

The firm moved to Horizon Scotland offices; Forres in October 2018 due to increased development. They recently announced growth, with two new members joining the company, each bringing their own strengths which is invaluable to the growth of the business. Summer Liddle has joined as Accounts Executive and Aimee Walker as Office Coordinator. Now employing seven full-time staff members, they're actively looking to add to this in 2021.

"We work with businesses of all sizes and only offer services that we are in no doubt that we can successfully deliver. We have been able to successfully provide services to customers who have been advised previously that these were not available due to location. We believe that no job should be impossible providing you have a strong relationship with suppliers, an excellent project management team and exceptional level of customer care." - Stewart Macdonald – Managing Director.

Due to this, Fibre 1 have been approved as a registered supplier for the Scottish Broadband Voucher Scheme, The SBVS will provide funding of up to £5K to help homes and businesses not in the range of either R100 contracts or planned business investments to obtain superfast broadband where providers may not typically go. The firm take pride in their fantastic customer service, providing the best possible support throughout projects whilst meeting deadlines, coming in under budget and exceeding expectations.

BBM Solicitors fundraising to mark the firm's 10th anniversary

BBM Solicitors have been fundraising to mark the occasion of the firm's 10th anniversary. Teams from both the Wick and Edinburgh offices have been involved in the effort, and have managed to raise over £4000 so far.

BBM is a boutique law practice with offices in both Wick and Edinburgh. With this, the firm is able to offer the best of local knowledge and traditional values of a local practice, paired with expertise of a national leader in our specialist areas of practice.

Throughout the month of December, members from both offices have been fundraising for local Caithness charity Home Start. The Marcothon challenge saw eight members of the BBM team running either three miles or 25 minutes every day of the month.

The money raised will help Home Start Caithness to work alongside families who require support or practical help in the local community. The team of volunteers at the Caithness branch visit families at home each week, supporting parents and provide non-judgemental, practical and emotional support and help build the family's confidence and ability to cope through various challenges.



GMR Henderson inspires next generation

With 30 years' experience as a principal contractor, GMR Henderson Builders Ltd has built up an outstanding reputation in all fields of construction and civil engineering.

After the completion of the new Nursery Building in Tongue and Keiss Primary School, GMR Henderson Builders Ltd were awarded the million-pound contract to construct a new Nursery at Miller Academy in Thurso.

During works the pupils are given site visits and talks about the works being done with the hope that this will encourage an interest in Construction as a future career for them.

Below is a photo of staff and pupils from Miller Academy in Thurso. The teachers have said that the children have built up a fantastic rapport with our tradesmen. They know them by name, and they are always commenting on our progress. A few children came up to watch



the crane transporting the cement from the canteen windows and they were all excited to see this happen.

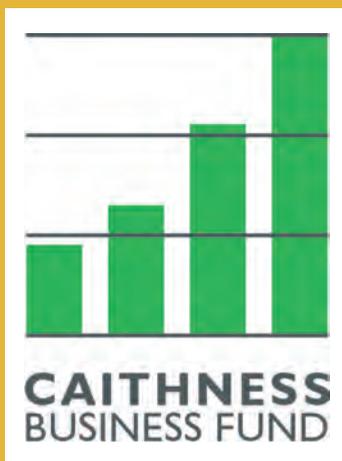
GMR Henderson Builders Ltd take on apprentices every year and were recently awarded the SME Apprentice Employer of the Year for Scotland from the Construction Industry Training Board in London and one of our employee's won the UHI Bricklaying Winner 2020 award.

Caithness Business Fund offers support for staff retention

The Caithness Business Fund is pleased to announce that some eligibility requirements have been altered in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Understanding that retention of existing staff is currently of significant concern to local businesses, the criteria for training grants have now been expanded to consider job retention as well as growth.

The Caithness Business Fund is a private sector fund, created after discussions between Caithness Chamber of Commerce and Baillie Wind Farm Ltd to distribute grants of up to £5,000 to small businesses within the Caithness and North Sutherland area.

The Fund hopes that the change to eligibility will allow businesses to continue to diversify and adapt to the ever-changing situation while retaining staff and preserving jobs. Applications under the new eligibility criteria will need to demonstrate how the training will help the business explicitly retain staff. Anyone considering an application to the Fund is encouraged to make an initial informal enquiry - contact details and full eligibility criteria can be found at caithnessbusinessfund.com



FORTHCOMING EVENTS

18th February

Maximise Your Membership

29th April

Coffee and a Chat

27th May

Maximise Your Membership

Keep up-to-date with the latest news and events: visit caithnesschamber.com, follow us via Facebook.com/caithnesschamber or Twitter @CaithnessCoC

Alternatively, email the team to be added to our mailing list.