

NORTH HIGHLAND CONNECTION

FEBRUARY 2024



CAITHNESS
CHAMBER of
COMMERCE

STRONGER
TOGETHER

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Hospitality Apprentice, Carter Mackay, The Caithness Collection. The Caithness Collection was awarded a CBF apprenticeship grant in 2023 to help with the employment of two hospitality apprentices

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S INSIGHT

CAITHNESS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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Caithness Chamber kicked off the new year on a high, with the successful return of "Caithness Jobs and How to Get Them" in early February.

The event, coordinated by Developing Young Workforce North Highland, was attended by over 270 people eager to learn about job opportunities, skills, training programmes, and apprenticeships. More than 35 local and national employers participated in the event, demonstrating their commitment to supporting the workforce in the region.

Continuing with the theme of employment and future skills, the Caithness Business Fund has been instrumental in supporting 20 local apprenticeships in the Caithness and North Sutherland region through the apprenticeship grant scheme, achieving an important milestone in 2023. Half of these awards were presented in the last 12 months, providing young individuals with valuable skills and training while working locally and jumpstarting their careers ((including our cover stars, *Business Admin Apprentices Skye MacColl and Abigail Hooker, Gow Groundworks and Scaffolding Apprentice, Jack Steven, Caithness Scaffolding*).

This is a testament to the power of local businesses and communities working together to overcome challenges and create opportunities for the next generation.

Our unwavering motto of 'Stronger Together' serves as the foundation of our events programme for 2024, exclusively designed to benefit our members. We are thrilled to introduce our latest initiative, 'Member's Insight', a virtual platform exclusively for Chamber members to share their expertise and advice. The upcoming year is also marked by a significant milestone, as we prepare to celebrate our 50th Annual Dinner, a remarkable achievement and a testament to the unwavering commitment and dedication of everyone involved since the first chamber of commerce was set up in the region. So, join us in raising a glass on Thursday 12th September as we toast to triumphs of the past and look forward to the next 50 years!

Trudy Morris
Chief Executive,
Caithness Chamber of
Commerce



EVENTS

14.02.24

Members Insight: The Strategy Collective, How to Get More Visitors to Your Website.

06.03.24

Speed Networking Event, Royal Thurso Hotel

12.03.24

Members Insight: More than Motivation, Wellbeing in the Workplace

19.03.24

Focus North Conference 2024

28.03.24

Maximise your Membership

17.04.24

Members Insight: Phil Anderson Financial Services, Financial Planning for Business

24.05.24

Networking Lunch, Secret Shebeen Wick

12.09.24

Caithness Chamber 50th Annual Dinner

Visit our website for booking information or email
Fiona@caithnesschamber.com

PREMIER PARTNERS





MEMBERS SPOTLIGHT

SECRET SHEBEEN CLUB IN WICK FOSTERS CULINARY FUSION AND LOCAL COLLABORATION

The Secret Shebeen Club is a unique culinary destination nestled in the heart of Wick, making its new home in the iconic Blackstairs, which was once painted by Lowry, in the town's historic harbour. It offers exclusive pop-up supper clubs that combine global flavours and local collaboration for an immersive and authentic dining experience. David Buchanan, the visionary behind this new venture shares his insights into its inspiration, philosophy, and aspirations. David has a rich background, having grown up in Wick and he honed his culinary skills in kitchens across 75+ countries with a noteworthy career working for private clients, celebrities, and royal families, bringing a wealth of global experience to this exciting new venture.

David, captivated by the Blackstairs was inspired to create The Secret Shebeen Club concept, drawing from his vast experience and the pop-up restaurant trend in London. The goal of this Supper Club is to combine immersive lifestyle experiences and his philosophy of collaboration, providing an experience that goes beyond just dining.

CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE CONCEPT BEHIND YOUR BUSINESS AND WHAT VISION YOU HAVE FOR THE NEW VENTURE?

We have a grand vision for the Secret Shebeen Club. We plan to offer unique dining experiences and provide a platform for collaboration and community. Our goal is to bring our enthusiasm, knowledge, and expertise to create a space that goes beyond just dining.

Growing up close by in Pultneytown, I have many fond memories of Caithness, which is a magical place. We want to take the best of what is on our doorstep and connect our guests with local artisan producers, farmers, and other talented individuals. We want to help these producers get access to top clients who are interested in their products but can't navigate local markets or Facebook pages. We aim to add a degree of confidence and instil faith in small producers on the global stage.

In the future, we plan to expand our operations to cover retail, guided tours, and sea excursions, and continue to collaborate with local producers on supper club events. We will offer cookery school classes such as breadmaking and chocolate masterclasses and team-building events. Following renovation works we will open up our

accommodation in the spring and our yoga studio will be open by the start of 2025.

WHAT IS YOUR BRAND PHILOSOPHY?

At the core of the Secret Shebeen Club is a commitment to connecting guests with local artisans, farmers, and producers. The vision is to bridge the gap between quality producers and clients, creating a global platform for small-scale businesses. The Supper Club incorporates seasonality, local producers, and exclusive products, ensuring a constantly evolving and sustainable menu. I have championed Mey Select for 20 years and truly believe in the small-scale farming philosophy as the antidote to large-scale agriculture where animals are bred for profit and not for quality.

We aspire to support local artists, musicians, and clubs, providing a platform for events and community. Collaboration is at the forefront of our vision, with a commitment to nurturing the next generation of talent across Caithness.

WHAT IS YOUR SIGNATURE COOKING STYLE, AND WHAT INGREDIENTS AND FLAVOURS DO YOU MOST LIKE CREATING WITH?

I am passionate about sourcing the best quality and suitable ingredients from all over the world. In 2018, we established Vanillaism, which is the only rainforest-to-fork organic vanilla producer. Since then, we have been planting, growing, curing, and selling 100% organic vanilla beans in Bali and across Indonesia. We also provide practical, ethical, educational, and financial support to our farmers and their communities. We operate on a non-profit model and reinvest our profits to help empower communities to develop tourism and enterprise and work their way out of poverty.

As a vanilla grower, I use it a lot, but often in savoury cooking more so than in sweets. Vanilla has a complex series of volatiles, eugenols, and compounds that we are all familiar with, but Vanilla is the most intoxicating scent compound.

Caithness Chamber members can join David for an exclusive networking event, Friday 24th May.

MORE THAN MOTIVATION: A BOLD INITIATIVE UNLEASHED FOR SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS



In a groundbreaking move, Fiona Macintosh of More than Motivation is set to revolutionise the small business landscape by introducing her new “Liberating Leadership: Transforming Entrepreneurs into Extraordinary Leaders” program.

Recognising the pivotal shift from small business owner to employer, Fiona acknowledges the unique challenges that come with this transition. From navigating the complexities of employee management to fostering a culture of growth and development, the journey demands a nuanced skill set beyond the hands-on operations typically associated with entrepreneurship.

This innovative Leadership Development program is carefully crafted to address the specific challenges faced by small business owners entering the realm of leadership. Delivered online, in the evenings or at weekends, it accommodates the demanding schedules of entrepreneurs.

Fiona’s Liberating Leadership aims to empower small business owners with a practical roadmap for success. By equipping participants with essential yet often overlooked tools, the program instils the confidence needed to lead with dignity and strength. The focus on a practical process, underpinned by a set of competencies, attitudes, and beliefs, promises to guide entrepreneurs through

the intricacies of leading people.

The program’s philosophy encourages the art of nurturing employee growth, steering them from dependence to self-reliance and onward to interdependence. This transformative approach aims to cultivate proactive and capable individuals who collaborate, willingly sharing resources with others.

Investing in this program goes beyond honing leadership skills; it’s a strategic investment in the prosperity and high performance of growing teams. As Fiona boldly opens the doors to this transformative experience, small business owners now have the opportunity to evolve from mere entrepreneurs to extraordinary leaders. To find out more email fiona@morethanmotivation.co.uk

North Point Distillery

Award-winning craft spirit producer North Point Distillery has unveiled its new Highland single malt whisky brand, Dalclagie.

Co-founder Struan Mackie explained how the business’s commitment to the integrity of its ingredients, artisan processes, and exceptional team are what make Dalclagie single malt so unique.



“It’s made by special people; we use the very best ingredients that we possibly can; and we’re using processes that hark back to a time when Whisky was at its best. Not only that, but we’re using technology and sustainability, and making sure that quality is at the core of absolutely everything we do. Every single decision we make is made to create the highest quality Scotch Whisky possible.”

Located on the Caithness coast, ‘where the sea haar meets the land’s mist’ the distillery has already been internationally recognised for its small-batch expressions of Highland rum and gin. North Point Distillery has won several prestigious awards, including Craft Producer of the Year at the World Rum Awards, and Gold Medals at the International Wine and Spirits Competition and the World Gin Awards. Its most recent accolade includes winning London Dry Gin of the Year at the Scottish Gin Awards.

Co-founder Alex Macdonald added “For us it’s about the people, it’s about the place, it’s about the Whisky and I can honestly say it’s our team that makes our distillery so special. From humble beginnings, we have grown to a team of 14 amazing individuals who contribute to our distillery every single day. We might still be a small team, but our ambitions are mighty.”

“This Whiskey has been a vision for us for many years and we are excited to now share it with the world. Caithness is fast becoming a hotbed of Scotch Whisky production, a county making its mark globally, and we are incredibly proud to add to that story.”

The distillery will produce 200 casks of Dalclagie New Make every year, and its Cask Programme is now open.

ONE:**Stacks**

Stacks, an award-winning bistro that has since transformed into a coffee, deli, and bakery, led by mother and daughter owners Teresa and Rebecca Wymer, is up for sale after more than seven years of family ownership.

The destination bakery has become a firm favourite among visitors and locals alike, thanks to the dedication of the pair and their delicious savouries, cakes & bakes made daily in-house. They have successfully built up the UK mainland's northernmost bakery after renovating the previously derelict Caithness Pottery in 2015. The business was awarded "Young Business of the Year" at the Caithness Chamber of Commerce annual awards in 2017.

Rebecca commented, "Those years have been an amazing journey, but now the time has come for us to move on to new adventures."

"Stacks has been so much more than a business to us and finding the right buyer is of utmost importance. John O'Groats has expanded and improved exponentially and is an absolute gift for a business location. It's going to be very interesting to see who takes up the baton and makes good of this gift!"

Teresa added, "We're exceptionally proud to have given over 70 local people employment and it's been wonderful to see so many young folk start with us, gain valuable experience and grow into amazing adults with solid skill sets."

Teresa is planning to reduce her work commitments due to health reasons. Meanwhile, Rebecca, a certified nutritionist, will continue to develop her business, No Nonsense Nutrition. She will also continue her role as the vice chair of the North Highland Women's Wellness Hub, campaigning for better women's health care here in the Highlands and working for a better understanding of Endometriosis.

TWO:**NRS Dounreay - Dounreay Socio Economic Annual Review**

Nuclear Restoration Services (NRS) Dounreay has published its 2022/2023 socio-economic annual review highlighting the site's positive impact on Caithness and north Sutherland.

In total, targeted NDA and Dounreay socio-economic activity in Caithness and north Sutherland committed around £8.4m in socio-economic funding which leveraged £29.9m in additional private and public sector investment.

David Calder, Head of Sustainability and Socio-Economics at NRS Dounreay said: "This report highlights that decommissioning activity at the Dounreay site continues to be an important major social and economic enabler in the Caithness and north Sutherland area and beyond. NDA and NRS Dounreay's commitment to creating a positive legacy today and in the future in partnership with other public and private sector organisations continues to leverage investment,

develop capability and create opportunity. It's the vision, dedication and passion in the organisations and projects we support that continues to make our area a great place to live, work and invest."

View the full report on the NRS Dounreay website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-dounreay-socio-economic-annual-review-2022-to-2023>

THREE:**Jacobs teams up with Envision for Dounreay feasibility study.**

Jacobs has been selected by Nuclear Restoration Services to carry out a feasibility study into the decommissioning of irradiated fuel carbon bed filters at Dounreay.

The project involves working out the best way to retrieve and remediate a series of legacy carbon bed filters stored within a wet sump on the site.

Jacobs will carry out the work in collaboration with Envision Engineering & Design, based in Thurso, who will provide the mechanical design aspects of delivering the project.

"Teaming with Envision has environmental and technical benefits but it's also important to involve a locally based business in our supply chain because it helps create a sustainable regional economy by enabling jobs and skills to be retained," said Jacobs Operations Manager Matt Wightman.

"This collaboration represents a significant step forward for both Envision and Jacobs. By combining our expertise with Jacobs' extensive experience, we are poised to tackle even more complex challenges and are confident that this collaboration will unlock new opportunities," said Envision Director Liam Sutherland.

FOUR:**Venture North**

Venture North has reported a record-breaking attendance at Taste North 2023, with over 1700 people attending the event. The showcase of Highland food and drink was organised by Venture North with funding support from Foundation Scotland and NRS Dounreay.

Taste North featured more than 40 food, drink, and craft exhibitors from Caithness, Sutherland, and other parts of the Highlands. The event also included cookery demonstrations, cocktail masterclasses, and the annual Taste North Challenge, which was sponsored by Developing the Young Workforce North Highland and Mackays Hotel, Wick.

Cathy Earnshaw, Destination Strategy Manager for Venture North said, "Taste North 2023 has been a phenomenal success, and we are grateful for the community's continued support. As we look forward to celebrating future years of Taste North, we are excited about the culinary journey that lies ahead. We look forward to continuing the development of Taste North for the future."

**ONE****TWO + THREE**



Focus North Conference '24
19th March 2024,
09:30 – 14:30
Norseman Hotel, Wick

FIVE

FIVE:
Focus North

Preparations are underway for the Focus North Conference '24, which is scheduled to take place on March 19, 2024, at the Norseman Hotel in Wick. The conference follows a successful launch in 2023 and aims to bring together industry leaders to share their expertise and vision for the future of Caithness and Sutherland. The event will run from 9:30 am to 2:30 pm and will feature noteworthy speakers, insightful topics, and valuable networking opportunities. Attendees will also have the opportunity to participate in an interactive panel session and acquire knowledge about future opportunities for growing, developing, and diversifying a sustainable economy in the north of mainland Scotland. Find out more <https://www.focusnorth.scot/conference-2024/>

SIX:
West of Orkney

A number of projects in Caithness, Sutherland and Orkney are making a positive impact in their local communities thanks to support from the West of Orkney Windfarm. Last year the developer set up a small donations fund, offering up to £1000 each towards worthwhile programmes in the far north. Projects which have received a boost range from an initiative seeking to remove Pacific Salmon from the River Thurso to a group of Orkney girls selected to represent Scotland at the Dance World Cup in Braga, Portugal in July. Other recipients include Home Start Orkney, which offers emotional and practical support to parents in need, and the Dunnet Forestry Trust which aims to re-structure a local forest from its origins as a commercial conifer plantation into a mixed woodland for the public to enjoy. Fiona Carlisle, Manager at Home-Start Orkney said:

“The funds allow us to provide a weekly group, giving local families the opportunity to socialise, connect and meet other local parents facing the challenges that parenthood can present, plus they help support our volunteers, who provide the much-needed home visiting support throughout Orkney.”

Mike Hay, Deputy Project Director at the West of Orkney Windfarm said:
“Our donations programme is just one small way in which we can support some of the many worthwhile initiatives in Caithness, Sutherland and Orkney. In every case we have been immensely impressed by the passion and professionalism which each organisation brings, whether its aims are sports, the arts, social care, education or the environment, and we hope the funds we provide help them reach their goals.”
In addition to the local donations scheme, the windfarm developers have kick-started a number of other initiatives in Caithness, Sutherland and Orkney including a £1 million Research and Innovation programme at EMEC, a £900,000 pan-industry programme to support ten new STEM coordinators across the UHI partnership, and £125,000 to enable up to seven local companies to take part in the rigorous 12-18 month Fit For Offshore Renewables (F4OR) development programme.
“The donations fund will remain open throughout 2024 and we are keen to support small organisations and local initiatives based in Caithness, Sutherland Orkney in particular,” Mike concludes.
Local organisations interested in applying for a donation should fill in an online application form which can be found at <https://www.westoforkney.com/communities>



SIX



SIX



SIX

RES AND UHI PARTNER TO EMPOWER

NEXT GENERATION OF STUDENTS

RES, a British business and the world's largest independent renewable energy company, has partnered with the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) to support a minimum of 60 students through their Student Development Fund. Created with the aim of helping UHI's students to further their personal development, the fund empowers them to gain new skills, raising their aspirations, whilst also helping to build their confidence. It does this by providing financial support to students to overcome barriers to participate in learning opportunities and extra-curricular activities. RES has pledged a total of £60,000 to UHI's Student Development Fund over the course of the next three years, providing the students of UHI with the best possible opportunity to maximise their talents and future careers.

As the renewables industry continues to grow, particularly in the Highlands and Islands, the industry will require talented individuals with transferrable skills, from a variety of diverse backgrounds to enter the workforce. The growing industry will also support the wider regional economy and the jobs associated with it. The Student Development Fund, supported by RES, will therefore be open to all UHI students, studying any course, across all its campus Graeme Kerr, Development Project Manager at RES, said: "UHI serves an area and population at the very heart of the ever-growing renewable energy industry. This exciting and dynamic industry will not only provide direct jobs in the Highlands and Islands, Moray and Perthshire, but will also support a wider network of in-direct jobs across the economy.

"We're thrilled to support the Student Development Fund, helping to equip UHI students with the skills to maximise their talents and giving them the best chance to maximise their potential, whichever career they decide to pursue."



Alison Wilson, Director of Economic Development and Advancement at UHI, added: "RES' partnership with UHI is a welcome collaboration with the private sector. We can't thank RES enough for their support, as without it, we simply would not be able to provide the Student Development Fund. Last year, due to a lack of funding, we sadly had to close the fund for the first time since it was established back in 2009. We are delighted that we can now open it again, enabling our students to access unique learning experiences during their studies with UHI.

"This funding will ensure our students feel supported, encouraged, and motivated to succeed, and we hope it will inspire them to progress their future careers right here in the Highlands and Islands, Moray and Perthshire."

The Student Development Fund opens in February 2024 and the deadline for applications is 30 April 2024. A shortlisting process and award panel meeting will take place in May with successful applicants informed thereafter.

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GMG ENERGY SECURES NEW STRESS TEST WOOD CREDENTIALS FOR SCOTLAND'S CONSTRUCTION SECTOR.

GMG Energy the rapidly expanding Highland timber products specialist which contributes significantly to the circular economy in the Highlands and the Northern Isles, is set to play a bigger role in Scotland's construction sector.

The Halladale-based business has seen three of its senior employees, including Director Malcolm Morrison, sawmill manager Vasile Damian and his deputy Adrian Cegiłka, secure visual softwood structural grading credentials which qualifies the company to supply builders and joinery businesses with the stress-tested timber used in housing and commercial property construction projects.

Mr Morrison said: "As a result of securing these credentials, GMG Energy can now stress test wood to reach the highest building standards. This, in turn, will lead us into supplying market demand for structural timber from joiners, builders and architects not only in the North of Scotland but throughout the country.

"We are now accredited to apply a unique stamp on specific timber products we manufacture to assure potential customers of its quality and fitness for construction projects."

GMG Energy this year invested £150,000 in state-of-the-art sawmill equipment which takes its larger timber and processes it into posts, rail, cladding and purlins, or structural roof members.

It has also recently spent in the region of £100,000 on timber treatment equipment to help open up new markets among construction companies and farm businesses which require treated and stress-tested products.

As a major plank of its business model, the company is committed to replacing every log of timber that it uses, and plants 10,000 new trees a year, which grow to maturity in 35 years. It far exceeded this target in 2021, planting in the region of 20,000 trees.

MEET THE MEMBER

Scaffolding Apprentice, Liam Farquhar, Caithness Scaffolding. Caithness Scaffolding was awarded a CBF apprenticeship grant in 2023 to help with the employment of two scaffolding apprentices.



Bert Macleod, Managing Director of Caithness Scaffolding reflects on a successful year in 2023, highlighting several notable achievements for the Caithness firm as it heads into 2024.

HOW WAS 2023 FOR YOUR COMPANY?

Firstly, the company successfully implemented a succession plan that saw two long-serving employees taking on more senior responsibilities with the Company's Management Team. Terry Macleod Jnr has taken on the role of Operations Manager whilst Liam Crombie, in conjunction with his day-to-day duties as a Site Supervisor, has taken on the role of Asbestos Manager.

The Company has been able to employ two new full-time scaffolding apprentices, thanks to Terry and Liam's promotion to more senior roles. The Caithness Business Fund has assisted in this regard. Liam Farquhar and Jack Steven have been hired as scaffolding apprentices and are now well through their first year of a Modern Apprenticeship.

The Health & Safety Executive approved the renewal of the Company's Asbestos Licence in December. This licence allows the company to carry out scaffolding activities in asbestos facilities that are licensed. The company is among a handful of companies in the Highlands & Islands that possess this licence.

WHAT DOES 2024 HAVE IN STORE?

The company has already completed two years of a 4-year framework agreement that involves providing scaffolding services to a major client. We are optimistic about securing an extension for the remaining two years, which will help the Company to continue investing in its employees and new plant and equipment.

MOVERS + SHAKERS



SARAH PURDHAM

| Community Nuclear Power Limited

Prima Uno's Sarah Purdham has been selected as a member of the team for Community Nuclear Power Limited, the United Kingdom's sole independent developer of Small Modular Reactors (SMRs). Community Nuclear Power Limited brings together decades of experience in nuclear development and regulation with the backing of private investors. The SMR technology is crucial to fulfilling the demand for clean energy, as they are adaptable, easily investable, and well-understood. The company has recently launched a new website to showcase its services.

Prima Uno will open the doors of its Centre of Excellence to work alongside Community Nuclear Power Limited to grow our younger generation in developing the tools, skills and experience needed for this new clean energy power sector.

subsea7

Subsea7's pipeline fabrication site at Wester, is playing a significant role in making secure and sustainable energy possible.

Our latest pipeline bundle projects will commence in 2023 with launches in 2024 and 2025 taking us beyond our 90th bundle milestone.

subsea7.com
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MAKE POSSIBLE

INVESTING IN SCOTLAND



The West of Orkney Windfarm is being developed 30km off the west coast of Orkney and 25km from the north Sutherland coast.

With an expected capacity of around 2GW, and first power scheduled for 2029, the project will be capable of powering the equivalent of more than two million homes.

Over the life of the project, we aim to ensure that 60 percent of the work is delivered by UK businesses, with 40 percent from Scotland. This will be enabled by:

- **Committing to a £105 million investment initiative** to develop the supply chain, that will be enhanced to at least £140 million by match funding from third parties.
- **Direct support** for the enhancement of ports and harbour infrastructure in Caithness, Orkney, and across Scotland.
- **Working with local partners** to deliver a targeted skills improvement programme.
- **Supporting the transition of Scottish companies and workers** into offshore wind and playing a critical role in helping the country achieve its net zero targets.



The project is being developed by a joint venture comprising Corio Generation, TotalEnergies and Renewable Infrastructure Development Group (RIDG).



More than Motivation®

By | Fiona Macintosh | Owner of More than Motivation

BALANCING CHALLENGE AND SUPPORT: THE KEY TO SUSTAINABLE WELLBEING IN THE WORKPLACE

Supporting your employees is key to wellbeing... or is it?

In the dynamic landscape of leadership, we've witnessed a profound shift from the more traditional command-and-control model to a more compassionate and supportive approach that emphasises support and encouragement.

The conventional perception of a leader as an authoritative figure, entirely focused on getting the job done and pushing their team towards the end goal regardless of the pressure placed on their people, is now widely recognised as unproductive.

Instead, we've seen a monumental 180-degree shift with the evolution of leaders who now recognise the importance of fostering a workplace where individuals feel valued, needs are met, and communication flows freely. Great right? Well... not exactly. I'm going to be a little controversial here and say we've got this wrong and perhaps we've overshot the mark.

In the pursuit of prioritising employee needs, some organisations have shifted too far towards the employees' needs and inadvertently downplayed their business requirements. The prevailing narrative insists on a new way of working, emphasising employee wellbeing as the top priority. Government initiatives, mental health organisations, and societal pressures have propelled this shift, leaving businesses grappling with the extremes of the pendulum swing and their newfound responsibility and seemingly complete culpability for their employee's wellbeing.

Now, don't get me wrong—I am a massive advocate for employee wellbeing. I mean, it's what I do! All my recent articles have consistently underscored the importance of employers taking proactive steps to ensure their employees' welfare. However, there's a nuanced perspective that we must consider: **an excess focus on support, without an adequate dose of challenge, can be counterproductive for both businesses and individuals.**

Imagine a ship with a dedicated crew tirelessly



Getting the right balance between challenge and support is vital for employers and employees to achieve their best outcomes

“Reflecting on these leadership mindsets, it becomes evident that high levels of support, without an equivalent challenge, can jeopardise wellbeing. The sweet spot lies in high challenge-high support, offering the best outcomes for both employees and employers.”

tending to the sole needs of the team, oblivious to a growing hole that threatens the vessel. If the ship sinks, everyone goes down with it. It's a stark analogy I know, but it encapsulates the essence—business needs cannot be ignored for the sake of employee support alone. All employees have a job to do, and there is undoubtedly a standard that needs to be met. Let's not forget that!

In the realm of leadership, striking the right balance between challenge and support is crucial. Let's delve into **4 basic leadership mindsets** and their likely outcomes:

High Challenge-Low Support: This mindset fosters high expectations but with uneven achievement, mixed standards, competition, risk adversity, blame, fear, and low morale. While it may lead to short-term achievement, it is unsustainable and a breeding ground for stress and anxiety.

Low Challenge-Low Support: Reduce the challenge and you create an environment where low expectations, low achievement, low standards, and boredom prevail. This lack of challenge and support results in a joyless environment filled with apathy and stress and where nothing matters.

Low Challenge-High Support: Here, low expectations and achievement coexist with

complacency. You can often find the cosy club here. The comfortable position can lead to dependency, poor knowledge, low innovation, and resistance to change.

High Challenge-High Support: The ideal balance involves leaders with high expectations actively enabling growth and development. This approach results in high standards, achievement, cooperation, collaboration, innovation, and risk-taking—a recipe for a high morale environment with consistently positive outcomes.

Reflecting on these leadership mindsets, it becomes evident that high levels of support, without an equivalent challenge, can jeopardise wellbeing. The sweet spot lies in high challenge-high support, offering the best outcomes for both employees and employers.

Becoming a leader whom people want to work for requires cultivating a high challenge-high support mindset. It's about caring for high performance and individual success in equal measure. As Jack Welch wisely stated, *“Before you are a leader, success is all about growing yourself. When you become a leader, success is all about growing others.”*

The challenge lies in finding the delicate equilibrium between challenge and support. Currently, many leaders find themselves in the low challenge-high support category. If you're curious about your leadership mindset, I invite you to complete a FREE underlying beliefs questionnaire. Simply email fiona@morethanmotivation.co.uk to request yours.

■ **Fiona Macintosh is a professional member of the International Stress Management Association, holds a CPCAB-accredited Level 5 Diploma in Mental Health & Wellbeing Awareness and is an accredited Practitioner of Motivational Maps and Liberating Leadership. Fiona can help you develop a wellbeing strategy, undertake stress risk assessments to protect your workforce, and provide team and leadership development for your organisation.**



AMTE Power went into administration in early January.

Business leader hopes sale will bring stability to employees

NORTH business leader Trudy Morris has said she hopes the sale of Thurso's battery factory will bring stability and peace of mind to its employees.

Twenty jobs have been saved as a result of a deal that ensures battery cell manufacturing will continue in the town.

AMTE Power went into administration in January after experiencing financial difficulties. A deal with Dutch-owned LionVolt Ltd secured the Caithness jobs, although the remaining 15 staff, in Oxfordshire, have been made redundant.

Ms Morris, the chief executive of Caithness Chamber of Commerce, said: "It has been a worrying time for the employees with so much uncertainty hanging over them over several months.

"We are hopeful this sale to LionVolt means the jobs, expertise and site in Thurso will be safeguarded and developed for the future, giving employees the stability, confidence and peace of mind they need, while retaining the immense expertise of battery cell innovation and research in the region."

AMTE Power was founded in 2013 and became a leading UK developer and manufacturer of lithium-ion and sodium-ion battery cells for specialist markets.

Specialist advisory firm FRP announced the deal last Friday. LionVolt Ltd is a subsidiary of LionVolt BV, based in Eindhoven – described as "a battery innovator that develops '3D' solid-state batteries that aim to deliver high performance, fast charging, safety and sustainability".

FRP pointed out that in June

AMTE Power notified investors of its continuing efforts to raise extra finance to support its development of battery cell technology, but delays in raising sufficient new funds sparked the appointment of administrators in December.

On January 25, the administrators completed the sale of the business and the assets of its battery cell manufacture and production business in Thurso to LionVolt.

FRP confirmed that the deal enables the battery production facility at Thurso to be repurposed

for producing LionVolt's batteries and includes the transfer of 20 jobs based in Thurso.

It added: "Regrettably, the remaining 15 staff at Milton, England, have been made redundant."

Mr Bloomfield, director at FRP and joint administrator of AMTE Power, said: "The acquisition by LionVolt presented the best opportunity to secure jobs and fulfil our statutory duties to creditors.

"The transaction follows an exhaustive sales process and search

for new investment. Critically, it preserves a large number of jobs and provides a continuation of battery cell manufacturing in Scotland.

"We wish the team at LionVolt all the best for the future.

"We are working with the impacted staff at the AMTE Power site in Milton and will support them in their claims to the Redundancy Payments Service."

An AMTE factory in Dundee was expected to be capable of producing over eight million battery cells a year, and create more than 200 jobs.



Chief executive of Caithness Chamber of Commerce, Trudy Morris.