



# Halloween biscuit takes the cake!



The winning Inverurie Academy team of student bakers with representatives of North-east bakers, J G Ross: George Ross (centre) with sons Cameron (left) and Graeme. Team from left are: Emma Sangster; Frankie Ferguson; James Mitchell; Leanne Anderson; Beckie Mennie and Andrew Ritchie. (picture by Grant-Photo).

A special biscuit for Halloween took the honours at an unusual business/schools challenge sponsored by local bakers J G Ross.

Teams of pupils had to create a seasonal biscuit and take it to market. To make the competition even more tasty the winning biscuit would be added to the wide range of J G Ross products on sale across the North-east.

The challenge covered everything from baking the biscuit to package design and planning a marketing campaign. Each team had an external facilitator to help them and the judging panel also toured the groups giving valuable business advice.

Inverurie Academy Rector, Doug Milne said, "By taking part in this challenge our pupils were given an exciting opportunity to gain hands on experience of what is involved in a career in the food and drink industry, while developing core skills such as problem solv-

ing, communication and team working, as well as enterprise and entrepreneurship skills."

The community facilitators were Linda Singer, IBA; PC Jim Mitchell; Jim Hatter, Inverurie Rotary; and J G Ross managers, Suzie Laird, Jim Sinclair and Michelle Lorimer.

The judges were Charlie Taylor, Bob Minto, Cameron Ross, with J G Ross chairman, George Ross, and IBA chairman, John Glover.

The event was organised by Susan Miller, organisational development manager for J G Ross and Kate Wood, head of home economics at Inverurie Academy.

The challenge was developed by Create Interest, a Scottish Food and Drink initiative to help raise awareness of career opportunities in the industry.

IBA chairman, John Glover, said, "This type of initiative positively enforces the local business-school relationship."

## INSIDE

### You can help town get high-speed service

Inverurie is losing out on internet speed.

Business and domestic users have to settle for slower connectivity because BT have not yet made broadband services available to the town. Find out what broadband could mean to your business and how you can put pressure on BT to make the service available.

[See page 4](#)

## Inverurie in bloom

Floral displays are colourful, cheerful and brighten up any town. Inverurie Rotary and the IBA think Inverurie could bloom with the best. The next IBA meeting on October 31 will focus on the issue.

[See page 12](#)

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IBA chairman, John Glover, third from left, invited a class from Inverurie Academy to the recent IBA tourism discussion. The pupils were studying for an SOA in Travel & Tourism. Their teacher, Irene Bates, is fourth from the right. Murray Matthews, principle teacher of guidance is in the centre of our picture.



## 'Business & school links are so important'

Welcome to the second edition of *Connect*.

It has been very satisfying for me to see our publication grow and develop. Committee member Ranald Allan has put tremendous effort into making this a success and our main priority is to make it a regular and sustainable feature of the IBA.

Advertising will play a key role in achieving this, and with a circulation of 1000 copies, it offers an ideal opportunity for you to market your business to other businesses in the area.

Our events continue to attract a good cross-section of businesses, with 34 participants at our Local Plan consultation at the Barn & Bushel on 26 September.

### By John Glover IBA chairman

With objections and observations due in to Aberdeenshire Council by 10 October, this event was an excellent opportunity to get a feedback to help the IBA put forward an informed response.

Committee member Colin Hepburn, D M Hall, has facilitated this and our main concern is that sufficient allocations of good quality industrial and business land are available over the next 10-15 years.

Steven Grey, Planner Projects, Aberdeenshire Council, also gave a presentation on the Town Centre Master Plan.

On Thursday 3 October, I had

the pleasure of joining George Ross as a judge at the J G Ross bakery challenge for 4th years pupils at Inverurie Academy.

J G Ross are to be congratulated on the effort and commitment they put into organising this challenge. I hope that some of the students taking part will see future career prospects in the bakery and catering industry.

It is so important that businesses continue to build links with Inverurie Academy.

**All businesses will face skill shortages in the future, so why not try to influence and encourage the career opportunities that could be available to our local student population.**

## Towns talking together

The Aberdeenshire Towns Partnership (ATP) covers five towns in the Aberdeenshire area - Inverurie, Ellon, Stonehaven, Peterhead and Fraserburgh.

The ATP supports initiatives in the towns to improve, among other things, quality of life, the environment and business growth. The IBA publication, *Connect*, is one such initiative.

The recent IBA business survey was another initiative supported by ATP funding.

Now the five towns, with rep-

resentatives from other North-east towns, are meeting regularly as "Towns Together" to exchange experiences, ideas, lessons learned and to discuss areas of mutual interest and concern.

"These meetings should cement relationships and, hopefully, lead to efficiencies in moving forward as each town can learn from the others' successes and mistakes," said IBA chairman John Glover.

The meetings rotate round the various towns.

**william lippe architects**

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# The twelve months of Christmas *(well five of them anyway)*

Christmas for most, is a once-a-year event, however, for the members of the Help Light-up Inverurie Committee, we are lucky enough to have Christmas on the agenda every month. One of our most significant months has just passed and another is almost upon us.

September is the main period for our fundraising efforts, with two major events. A Casino Dinner was held in The Town Hall on Friday 13th. This was a very successful night with Steve Innes as master of ceremonies and Mitchell's providing an excellent buffet dinner. Inverurie Rotary staffed the bar and members of Inverurie and Ellon Round Table were croupiers at various gaming tables. Thousands were won and lost during the evening, albeit of the Monopoly variety.

Saturday, the 21st, was the date for the second Paddy's Market in The Square and surrounding area. Participants, too numerous to mention here, provided a range of games and activities suitable for young and old, food and refreshments, and a variety of music. The weather was not as kind as last year, reducing the numbers in the morning but a brighter afternoon helped increase numbers considerably.

October and November - will see us planning, organising and then installing the Christmas Lights. New lights have been ordered for the Christmas tree and for some of the lamp-posts in Market Place. We hoped to have floodlighting for the Town Hall and Memorial Monument in place for this Christmas but are still at the planning stage as this project is more complex than anticipated.



Lights, cameras, action. This was the moment Inverurie Town Hall was floodlit, but only for an hour. Our picture shows the full "set". In the foreground a Press & Journal photographer shoots Help Light-up Inverurie chairman, Mike Hobenton, against the Town Hall backdrop. The Aberdeenshire Council cherry-picker simulated a lamp standard with floodlights picking out the lion and cupola on the roof.

There are currently three proposals from different suppliers being considered. Two of those for the Town Hall involve attaching lights to the building, which due to its listed status, will not be easily achieved.

The third suggestion is for lighting up

**Don't miss the Christmas  
Lights Switch-on event:  
Sunday, December 1**

The Town Hall from the pavement and lamp-posts in the small car park. This option was the one demonstrated on the 27th August and met with considerable approval from those who saw it.

December - switch-on! On the afternoon of Sunday 1st, there will be music and refreshments available in The Square and at 4pm the lights will be switched on by cast members from Inverurie Pantomime. After that the committee can have a break and fit in time for such relaxing activities as Christmas shopping.

January - the lights come down and the twelve months of Christmas begin all over again...

**If you'd like to have Christmas on your agenda every month then the Help Light-up Inverurie committee would like to hear from you. Contact Linda Singer at Thainstone Business Centre on 01467 672528.**

*Nobody can hold a candle to the Christmas Party  
Nights at the Barn and Bushel at Thainstone!*

Book & Buffet Christmas party from £119 per couple (seating for 2). One includes  
up to 4 courses, drinks, party entertainment and music, and dancing until 11.30 pm in our outdoor barn.

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# Broadband has landed - but not in Inverurie

Most people by now will have watched BT's national TV campaign for Broadband high-speed Internet access - you know, the one where the animals escape from the pipe in the ground. Impressive advertising but not much good to Inverurie because we won't be getting Broadband - unless we decide to do something about it.

The fact (and what the adverts fail to mention) is that BT will only be upgrading their telephone exchanges to accept Broadband for towns where there is a sufficient demand. And that demand has to come from businesses and households.

Broadband is a very fast connection to the Internet that is always 'on'. No need to dial-up using a modem and no waiting for a connection. The extra bandwidth means that large files, such as engineering drawings, graphic designs, videos and animations download much more quickly - up to 10 times faster than with a standard modem.

Broadband enables businesses to take advantage of being permanently connected to the Internet. Savings can be made by communicating and trading online. Marketing can be more efficient and effective. Customer service can be enhanced through real time interaction and your ability to respond speedily to email and web enquiries.

If you work from home, you will be able to gain fast, reliable access to business information and online services.

Your email will arrive throughout the day. You may even decide to use video-

**The internet has opened up world markets and created new sales opportunities.**

**Business and public demand is now for a faster and more efficient internet service. BT has the answer in broadband but will not take it to Inverurie unless there is evidence of demand.**

**Gordon Murray explains what broadband can do for you and what you can do to help Inverurie get broadband services.**

conferencing to keep in touch with your colleagues and customers. It all helps to break down the boundaries between office and home, allowing you to enjoy the advantages of home working without the hassle.

At home the whole family will be able to take advantage of Internet content designed for broadband and improve their on-line experience whether studying, communicating, shopping or being entertained.

Although 75% of UK Internet users already have access to the service BT are

**If you are interested in Broadband for your business or home then please follow these simple steps**

1. Find out more at: [www.workingwithyou.co.uk](http://www.workingwithyou.co.uk)
2. Choose a service provider (listed on the above site)
3. Register your interest in broadband through your chosen provider, probably via their web



prioritising the remainder of their installation programme according to the level of pre-registrations for each town.

In the case of Inverurie (01467 code), provided 400 households and businesses pre-register an interest BT will proceed to upgrade the Inverurie exchange. Remember that BT are providing the wholesale connections but you can purchase a broadband service from any one of a range of ISPs, including BT.

\* Gordon Murray is a director with Inverurie-based IT service company, First eBusiness

site. This registration will be passed on to BT who monitor the overall level of interest for the 01467 area code

4. Monitor the progress towards the target by visiting: [www.workingwithyou.co.uk](http://www.workingwithyou.co.uk) and checking registration Levels
5. Encourage work colleagues and friends to do the same

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## Tell the IBA about any issues

If you are in business in Inverurie and have any issues of concern which you would like raised by the IBA then please contact a member of the committee - see names and contact numbers on page eight.



## New IBA stand shows it's all about people

Business is about people and the new IBA display stand reflects this featuring dozens of faces from various recent meetings - and the local committee. The stand had its first outing at the ATP event in Inverurie Town Hall on Sept 9.

Our picture show IBA member, Willie Lippe, checking it out with Laura Black who recently joined ANM Group, Thainstone, as events manager.



# Social economy thrives in Garioch

The social economy is a thriving and growing collection of organisations that exist between the traditional private sector on the one hand and public sector on the other.

The term Social Enterprise has become a generic term used for those enterprises or organisations which have a clear social purpose and which are non-profit distributing. Their key distin-

Funding from the Aberdeenshire Towns Partnership has enabled a Social Enterprise Network to be set up locally. Linda Singer reports on the social economy and the impact on the Garioch.

guishing features are their social aims and social ownership combined with trading viability.

The activities of social enterprises are financed by a combination of earned income for the sale of

goods or services (market resources) government subsidies and private donations (non-market resources) and voluntary work (non-monetary resources).

The scale of such activity in Scotland is significant. They are estimated to generate a turnover of over £2bn (about 3% of Scotland's GDP) employ 100,000 people (4% of Scotland's labour force) and attract the support of about 600,000 unpaid volunteers.

There is a cluster of Social Enterprises in the Inverurie area providing a range of services.

The Social Enterprise Unit established by the DTI in 2001 aims to create an enabling environment, ultimately making social enterprises better businesses, while also establishing the values of a social economy.

## Local SE groups make their mark

Here are some of the Social Enterprise groups operating in the Inverurie area.

**Computers and Integration**, set up to provide access to computers and computer learning for disabled people. They are now an approved test centre for the European Computer Driving Licence and can provide IT training for all sectors of the community. Contact tel: 01467 623600; email: cai.inverurie@zoom.co.uk

**AWARE Consultancy Ltd** provides training and consultancy on equality issues. They can assist you to develop inclusive customer care, plan reasonable adjustments and avoid unnecessary expense, which will help you comply with the Disability Discrimination Act and avoid costly litigation. Contact tel: 01467 629367; email: awareltd@aol.com

**Gordon Dementia Day Care Group** is a working example of the community caring for people with dementia. A committee of local people employ a paid coordinator to support volunteers provide a range of activities for people with dementia giving carers and family a period of respite. Contact Evelyn Collie tel: 01467 629046; email: gddcc@msn.com

**Fly Cup Catering** provides training for people with disabilities in an industrial kitchen, covering production and service skills working towards employment. Contact tel: 01467 625645

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S is for strong, self-organised members  
E is for each one of us making a difference

N is for not for profit organisations  
E is for empowerment  
T is for taking control  
W is for working together  
O is for our community  
R is for risks  
K is for knowing the support is there

## FOUR PAGES ON INVERURIE LOCAL PLAN

COLIN HEPBURN on the housing debate - over the bypass or over the Ury?  
RAYMOND BISSETT gives his vision for the future & how to get there?  
KEY PROPOSALS - location of proposed housing & employment land.  
WILLIE LIPPE on planning gain - what it is & how it works for you.

# East or west - which is best?

The finalised version of the Aberdeenshire Local Plan is now out for consultation, and by the time this article has reached the printing presses, the opportunity for objecting to the content of the plan, will have passed.

However this document will undoubtedly be the subject of a public inquiry during 2003. Insofar as Inverurie is concerned, the main proposals by Aberdeenshire Council will involve the development of around 250 houses North East of Inverurie beyond the Ury floodplain, with possibly 465 additional houses in the years ahead.

The proposal would also include the provision of a substantial area of employment land at the northern end of the site identified with a new link road to be built from the Oldmeldrum road across onto the Rothenorman road.

The alternative proposal supported by the community council, comprises the Calabancon development west of the bypass. The development, would comprise around 750 houses, with some associated retail and commercial land provided.

The consensus view by the members present at the recent Business Association meeting on 26 September 2002, was overwhelmingly in favour of development East of the Ury.

Although the development would be divorced from the existing town by the Ury floodplain, it was felt that this large area could be developed to accommodate a large amount of public open space and development East of the Ury, would help to foster a more rounded feel to the whole town, whilst retaining the exist-

**Colin Hepburn, a partner with D M Hall, Inverurie and a member of the IBA committee discusses Inverurie's future development options**



ing town centre as the commercial heart of Inverurie.

Development of a northern link road, which would hopefully eventually join up with the old A96 and ultimately onto the by-pass, would ease traffic congestion in the town centre. The key however to this proposal, is clearly the construction of the northern link road.

The community council, in favouring development to the West suggests that this would allow traffic to travel to Aberdeen without travelling through the town centre.

Surely, however, as a community, it should be our goal to strive to develop our economic base to allow existing companies the space to expand and indeed for new companies to come to Inverurie and bring their jobs with them.

The only way to address the problem of commuting, is to bring the jobs to the people. It is our view, as a Business Association, that Inverurie has tremendous potential, both for commercial, industrial and retail development.

It must be a goal of the Local Plan to ensure a consistency of supply of the basic raw ingredient for development, which is land, otherwise there is a very real danger that economic development could be stifled as it has been for the last 10 years or so through the lack of supply of land for com-

mercial and industrial purposes.

At the present time a planning and development framework brief has been prepared by the Local Authority for Inverurie Town Centre, to ensure that the vitality of the town centre is continued and enhanced. At the centre of these proposals, are transport and infrastructural improvements as well as redevelopment of the area to the north of the Town Hall.

In addition to commercial developments, the Business Association strongly support the development of new leisure and recreation facilities within the town centre, and the provision of a caravan site which is not, so far, included in the plan proposals. Improving tourism in the area is also vitally important.

The proposals for commercial development, however, are unlikely to be satisfactory as some of the land identified may not be marketable owing to various factors.

The Local Plan is our opportunity to influence the Planning process, so let us be bold in making these decisions.

Inverurie has a vibrant future. It is the place where a growing number of people want to come to live, work and play.

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## Contact Inverurie Business Association

The central point of contact for the IBA is Linda Singer, network development officer, Enterprise North East Trust, Thraistaine Business Centre, on 672528. E-mail: linda.singer@enetrust.com

Individual committee members may be contacted on the numbers listed.

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# 'My vision for our town's future'



By Cnclr Raymond Bissett

The Aberdeenshire Local Plan (A.L.P.) which sets out the detailed guidance for new development in Aberdeenshire up until 2015 is now "on Deposit". Regardless of whether Inverurie expands East or West I believe that a successful Inverurie will require the following to be put in place.

### ADEQUATE INDUSTRIAL LAND

This has been lacking since 1992, resulting in a number of firms going elsewhere. Such land must be easily accessible and with the owner prepared to sell as this has been a problem in past years.

### AN EXPANDED & VIBRANT TOWN CENTRE

Inverurie presently bucks the trend of many other similar North-East towns and continues to be a popular shopping centre. Inverurie's success could well be down to the mix of provision (specialist shops and nationals) available, and it is important to try and maintain such a balance, although the market will decide.

### EFFECTIVE TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

A mix of strategies - better public transport facilities (an enhanced commuter rail link with Aberdeen and Stonehaven which meshes with a modern bus system) with reasonable parking facilities adjacent, to make it easier for the car driver to use public transport.

A Traffic Management System for the Town Centre to reduce congestion is important although I have no hesitation in saying that congestion is preferable to an economically dead Town Centre anytime!

It is important, however, to obtain and reduce the amount of heavy industrial traffic using the middle of town except where necessary.

### HEALTH & EDUCATION FACILITIES.

A new Health Centre catering for the promotion of Health and Healthy Living as well as treatment of illness and providing appropriate integrated Social Services provision.

A new Primary School depending on where Housing Development is finally located with plans being developed for the provision of a new Academy either on the present site of the school or on a new site in the area, to provide Educational facilities appropriate to the Technological advances of the 21st Century.

**'All avenues must be pursued so that the jigsaw pieces that form a successful community are fitted together in a smooth and planned manner'**

### NEW LEISURE & CULTURAL FACILITIES.

Better Library provision, an Arts Centre as envisaged by the Inverurie Cultural Strategy and Town Hall group, a new or enhanced Swimming & Fitness Centre, are all extremely desirable developments for an expanding Inverurie with a modernised Town Hall building providing a magnificent focal point for a magnificent town.

### FUNDING

All very fine but I can hear the question now: How is all this to be financed and how much longer do we have to wait? The answer, quite bluntly, is that nobody knows.

One thing that is certain is that it will not just happen. A successful conclusion will necessitate a corporate effort from all or some of the following:

- + Public Agencies including both the Local Authority and Health Board - both limited nowadays in what they can provide.
- + Developers through the Planning Gain process.
- + Grant Aid bodies particularly these funded through the National Lottery
- + The Scottish Executive and various Government Agencies including Scottish Enterprise Grampian and Community Scotland.
- + Certain Voluntary Organisations.
- + Private Investment.
- + The Business Community.
- + The General Public.

All avenues must be pursued and, in many cases, coordinated so that the jigsaw pieces that will form a successfully expanded community are fitted together in a smooth and planned manner. This will require **commitment, determination, trust and faith** from all those involved. **The Challenge** is there and the **Inverurie Business Association has a large part to play.**

## Key proposals for Inverurie in the local plan



The schematic above shows the key sites for proposed development of business interest in the local plan. The deadline date for objections to the proposals was the second week in October.

Full details of the plan proposals are available at the Garioch Area Office, Aberdeenshire Council, Gordon House, Blackhall Road, Inverurie, or from the council website (see page 16).

### Key to schematic:

1. Conglas: Employment land & housing land.
2. Town Centre Extension

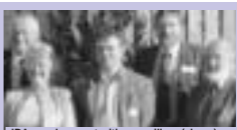
3. Uryside: Housing and employment land (Barratt development); Riverside Park; Northern Link Road (Stage 1).
4. Souterford Road extension: Employment land.
5. Employment Land.
6. Thainstone: Employment Land.
7. Upperboat: Housing Land.
8. Golf Club Road: Housing Land.
9. Blackhall Road: Housing and Employment Land (Malcolm Allan development).

\* Drawing and key supplied by Aberdeenshire Council



Inverurie architect, William Lippe, explains the term 'planning gain' and the related issues

## Dangers of a local wish list



IBA members met with councillors (above) on June 13 to ask questions on Inverurie's future.

When planning permission is granted for development of any significant scale – housing, commercial or industrial uses, for instance – it is increasingly common to find that planning gain is involved.

Either as applicants for planning permission on which planning gain is levied or as beneficiaries in a community on which elements of planning gain are bestowed, we should all know what it is, what it is not and how it can be used.

### 1. What is planning gain?

The term refers to various kinds of infrastructure which developers should provide in association with planning permission. Some typical examples which could be associated with residential or business development might include:

- affordable housing
- community centre

- sports/leisure facilities
- toddlers play areas
- cycleways
- local shops which would otherwise be unviable during the development period
- education facilities
- roads
- contributions to other public transport facilities

The above are only indicative suggestions. Other items can be justified in certain circumstances, while many of the above will not apply in every case. The most important thing is, normally, not the number of items, but the amount of gain.

### 2. Why is planning gain required?

It is required because new development must be properly serviced, and capital finance, from both central and local government, has been restricted in recent decades.

Moreover the standards of what is required have risen, for example as regards the type of community centre to be provided for new housing. These include a far wider range of facilities than was common even a decade ago.

### 3. The justification for planning gain

Planning gain is designed to compensate, directly or indirectly, for the impact of new development. Thus, if it causes congestion on the roads, or in facilities such as existing community centres, then there is likely to be a basis for a claim for planning gain.

### 4. Unjustified gains

It is common for the existing community, through its elected councillors, to hope that new development will solve existing problems. This is unlawful.

Such things as 'a wish list' of desired items (play areas, swimming pools etc) are dangerous, as they are likely to be generated by current shortfalls in the provision of services. Such lists are not justifiable as planning gain.

However it is perfectly all right to locate new development in such a way that it triggers infrastructure which, indirectly, may be of use to existing communities.

This is part of the wider job of land-use planning. Hence, a new development may be located in such a way as to generate a requirement for community facilities which can, incidentally, be of use to

an existing community.

The planning gain must be linked to the impact of the planned new development and not the existing shortfalls.

### 5. Affordable housing

As with other planning gains, the main need for this arises through increased government controls on funding (cessation of council house building).

Unlike the others, however, it is not the direct result of the impact of new development.

Instead, the government has said that councils can seek affordable housing where there is demonstrated housing need, and where the development can afford the subsidy (usually a land subsidy) involved.

Hence, the viability of the development affects the amount of affordable housing, where it does not in the same way affect the provision of other planning gains.

### 6. How to ensure the optimum level of planning gain

The best approach is to ensure that the Local Plan (see Colin Hepburn's article in May 2002 Connect) has relevant policies in it, and that each site likely to generate planning gain is approached in a deliberate way.

This means that assessments of planning gain are made before any detailed negotiations with the developers take place.

**Planning gain is a complex issue. Although large amounts of infrastructure can properly be obtained as planning gain, the penalties for getting it wrong can be quite severe.**

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Stress is part of the human condition – in order to survive and be alert, everyone needs a certain amount.

Positive stress or pressure can stimulate and enhance performance. However, long term or excessive stress is counter productive and has a negative effect on creativity, achievement and health.

Everyone has a threshold at which the pressure becomes too much. This threshold varies between individuals and in different situations and at different times.

Research has shown that stress is one of the most common reasons behind sickness absence and that stress may be experienced as a result of an exposure to a wide range of work demands and in turn can contribute to an equally wide range of health outcomes.

#### So what is stress?

Stress is the reaction that people have to excessive pressure or other types of demands placed on them. It arises when they worry that they cannot cope.

The feeling of "not being able to cope" is a common denominator in any definition of stress and it is important for employers to note that stress is not confined to managers, it is common among all levels of workers.

Pressure can be a good thing when it helps to provide motivation and stimulation. It becomes a problem when it leads to stress, resulting in ill health or an employee's poor performance, and sickness absence can mean lost productivity. That's why stress is bad for business.

As organisations change and take

# Stress is bad for business



HR practitioner, Jane Hepburn, explains how stress can damage your business.

action to remain competitive employees can be placed under considerable pressure.

It may not always be possible to prevent stress associated with job insecurity and work intensity but employers must become more aware of factors they can control in the workplace that can lead to stress

If left unaddressed the impact on the

## NEGATIVE INFLUENCES

- Long working hours
- Management style
- Insufficient resources
- Inadequate training
- Poor communication
- Lack of control

## POSITIVE STROKES

- + Improve the physical environment
- + Training to meet individual needs
- + Changes in job design
- + Involve employees in decision making
- + Make time for face to face meetings
- + Improve communication channels

organisation can include higher absenteeism, staff turnover, low production and missed targets, poor decision making and frequent mistakes.

There is no single solution to preventing harmful levels of stress in organisations. Solutions will be unique to the culture and practices of organisations. At the heart of any intervention is good management which shows a consideration and respect for the people who work in the organisation.

More information from the Health Education Board for Scotland ([www.hebs.com](http://www.hebs.com)) & Health & Safety Executive ([www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk))

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## Inverurie can be a blooming town

During the summer of 2002 flower baskets and window boxes once again adorned the front of Inverurie Town Hall and not before time some would argue!

With the moves to light up the square for Christmas, it seemed a logical step to restore the summer display.

In the main thanks are due to members, family and friends of the Rotary Club of Inverurie who organised, financed and maintained the displays. Particular mention must be made of Pat Mitchell, once again the driving force behind the project.

Indeed, the old saying about 'leading from the front' surely applies in his case; the front of the Mitchell family shop in the corner of the square is always a great riot of colour in summer. It's not easy to say 'no' to Pat!

Where two or three of like mind are gathered together, much can be achieved. We see that each year as the Beechgrove Garden team travels round Scotland getting involved in Community Garden projects from the Borders to the Northern Isles.

They are most enjoyable experiences characterised and made memorable by the people who work tirelessly on behalf of their fellow citizens to better the environment in which they live and work.

The fact that we are there and can bring a bit of recognition to their efforts is a bonus and not only rewarding but surely when shown on the TV, it will encourage others to try to emulate that success.

And so to Inverurie

By Jim McCall of the BBC's Beechgrove Garden

and the drive towards not only repeating the exercise at the Town Hall but perhaps increasing the number of displays along some of the main shopping streets which radiate from the square.

Following on from the experiences of other towns and villages, the way to proceed could be to form a 'Bloom Committee' to co-ordinate and run the scheme.

Just think, in a year or two's time, Inverurie might just feature in the Britain in Bloom Awards!

Euna Scott, chairman of Perth in Bloom which, once again, won the 'Large Town' category in Britain in Bloom will be the main speaker at the next meeting of Inverurie Business Association at the Barn 'n' Bushel at 7.00pm on October 31.

Such a committee would be non-political, voluntary and self-financing. It would organise the acquisition of baskets, the displays and maintenance, financed by grants and sponsorship from individuals and traders in the area.

The committee would control the purchase of materials, plants and all equipment and it would organise the initial annual planting.

The major commitment through the season is watering and tidying up the displays.

It would therefore be necessary to draw up a budget to be able to acquire the equipment necessary to streamline this operation. In addition, a rota of competent and conscientious individuals would be necessary to carry out the work.

At the outset, discussions with Local Authority representatives would seek support for the initiative and agree potential sites for displays.



## Are we selling a vibrant 21st Century town?

By Jackie Allen of Bee's Knees

of service, cultures, individualism etc. and expect much more from the retailers in this country in terms of style, presentation and service.

A large majority of people automatically opt for Aberdeen as their main shopping option and only when they can't find it do they come out to Inverurie and wonder why they didn't try us first!

It is our responsibility to make them aware of the wide range of modern products and services and events we have on offer.

Shopping in Inverurie has its drawbacks, the parking situation is still a major problem, and there is a case for pedestrianisation adopted in so many town centres across the country.

Safety, family friendliness and access for the disabled are all areas where even small improvements could encourage new customers.

Looking to the future, shopping patterns are changing as peoples lives and routines change. The fact that so many women work, shift work, job sharing, flexi time, and the huge shift to families shopping on Sundays have all influenced changes on the high street.

The population in the UK is an ageing population so simple changes such as more seating in shops, areas for leaving shopping etc. may all be accepted services in the future.

If we work together we will all benefit, the customers, the employees and, in turn, the businesses of Inverurie will be successful.

Shopping is an experience so lets make shopping in Inverurie "an experience for the better".

Marketing is often regarded by businesses as an unnecessary principle, but marketing is about finding your niche or unique selling point (USP).

The idea is then to get your message across in a style that will attract new customers or pitched in such a way as to make your existing customers see you in a different light.

Marketing Inverurie in the past as been based on the "town comes to the country" principle.

Our USP was good old fashioned country service, reasonably competitive pricing and the relative proximity made coming to Inverurie a nice "wee jolly for the tooners"!

I believe the Inverurie of today, while importantly still maintaining these strengths and characteristics is very much a busy thriving town of the 21st Century.

We must move with the times when marketing Inverurie, as Inverurie itself is changing and growing and the lifestyles and shopping patterns of our customers are also changing.

Whether working separately or combining, through vehicles like the IBA, if we capitalise on our strengths for our core customers and by using a different marketing emphasis, we can attract new custom to the town.

We must not forget either that a large number of customers travel to work in Inverurie and as a relatively captive audience are we doing enough to attract them to shop not only in their lunch hour but to come back as a family in their leisure time?

Consumers today are very streetwise and are sophisticated shoppers. They are travelling all over the world, experiencing different shopping environments, styles

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# Ten local businesses to get growth advice

Independent development reviews are now available for the Inverurie businesses with the greatest potential for growth.

The IBA/ATP Inverurie business survey showed that many businesses are experiencing high growth levels and are forecasting future expansion. History has shown that managing growth can be as problematic as managing downturns in trade.

Funding has been secured from ATP to provide up to 10 Inverurie businesses with reviews of their operations. This is a programme, which is being trialed first in Inverurie as a result of interest shown by the IBA.

The review consists of a consultant visiting the business for four days, spending time looking at many aspects of the operation and if requested focusing on a particular area which the business deems to be of particular importance.

After the review is complete, the business will be issued with advice and an action plan in order to help focus future efforts.

Most large corporations use outside consultants on a regular basis but it is recognised that some businesses may have some reluctance and see an outsider coming onto their premises. It is important to try to dispel these fears.

The value of the review is that the independent consultant has no 'baggage' and can often get a more accurate picture than company insiders can. Professional consultants should

Aberdeenshire Towns Partnership has created a fund to provide free development reviews for companies with strong growth potential. Graeme Rigg, senior business development executive, explains.

know their place and recognise that it is the businesses management who clearly know much more about their business than they will after 4 days.

The consultant has however seen many previous businesses and is therefore in a position to advise on best practise and can be an effective sounding board.

The focus on day to day operations and 'fire fighting' can often mean that businesses are forced to put long term strategy to one side and this is an area where consultants can be invaluable. It should also be said that Non-Inverurie personnel will undertake business reviews and all findings of the reviews are confidential.

Ten Inverurie businesses will be able to participate in this programme. This is a great opportunity since none of the costs of the reviews will be passed to participants.

Participant businesses must be seen to have growth potential and must be enthusiastic about being involved. If you are interested, please contact Graeme Rigg, Aberdeenshire Council 01467 672536.

## Unlocking the potential in women

Launched in April 2001 the Women into the Network (WIN) initiative aims to increase the number of women owned businesses and unlock the huge potential within Scotland's businesswomen.

A series of Business and Personal Development Seminars are planned locally to assist women in the creation and better management of their business.

The events target women thinking about or in the process of starting a business, as well as businesswomen running companies up to three years old.

Meetings take place in a friendly and relaxed environment, and open up the opportunity to network and talk to like-minded people.

Research undertaken recently by IBM showed that founders of new firms are more likely to be women than men and that employment in women-owned businesses is growing more rapidly than in businesses run by their male counterparts.

Membership of the Women Into the Network programme and participation in all seminars and training is free.

Seminars will generally be held at 6pm for 6.30pm start - 9pm. Light refreshments will be provided at seminars and full details can be found on

[www.scottishbusinesswomen.com](http://www.scottishbusinesswomen.com) or email [win@enetrust.com](mailto:win@enetrust.com)

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## Reaching out for skilled support

Voluntary organisations throughout Grampian urgently require volunteers from all walks of life with a wide range of skills. If you have business experience and time to spare, why not offer your skills to a voluntary organisation.

The charity REACH provides a free service to voluntary organisations by placing people who wish to volunteer with organisations where their skills and experience will be of benefit and help the voluntary organisation to develop and expand.

Let REACH find you an interesting part-time or just occasional placement in your home area. As a volunteer your expenses will be covered and you can expect great personal satisfaction from using your expertise to help a worthwhile cause.

REACH operates through a network of voluntary area managers and the area manager for The North of Scotland is Colin Milligan who is based in Turriff. Colin has placed volunteers with business experience with voluntary organisations such as Young Enterprise Scotland, Prince's Scottish Youth Business Trust and Advocacy North East. He has many other positions available with a wide range of voluntary organisations in the area.

If you are interested in volunteering please contact Colin on 01888 568855 and he will send you a Volunteer Registration Form and explain to you the registration arrangements. From the details you provide you will be sent details of voluntary positions which may be of interest to you and only when you confirm that you are interested will the voluntary organisation be given your name.

Being a volunteer means you decide how much time you can spare or when you are available. For more information on REACH visit: [www.volwork.org.uk](http://www.volwork.org.uk)

## Can your business help?

**Computers & Integration** (recently changed name from Computers and Integration for the Disabled) have been able to purchase the laminator they wanted thanks to a donation from the Inverurie & District Ladies Circle. A grant awarded earlier this year through the Scottish Enterprise Community Challenge Fund has enabled C & I to become an accredited training and test centre for the European Computer Driving licence (ECDL). They will be able to offer this service to disabled and non-disabled people.

Contact tel: 01467 623600 email: [cai@zoom.co.uk](mailto:cai@zoom.co.uk)

**Advocacy North East** was able to produce an induction pack for their volunteers thanks to a grant from UVAF (Unemployed Volunteer Action Fund). Philip Eden (ex Shell employee) has joined Advocacy North East's board having been introduced to the organisation through REACH.

Contact tel: 01467 622674 email: [advocacyne@btconnect.com](mailto:advocacyne@btconnect.com)

**Support from business as advisors or active board members is needed by a number of local groups.**

**Take a Break Respite Care Scheme** provides a sitter service for all ages and organises several play schemes for children with special needs. The board

needs several new members in order to develop the service.

Contact tel: 01467 625278 email: [tab@respite.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:tab@respite.fsnet.co.uk)

**Gordon Disability Action (GDA)** offers a number of activities including a Disability Information Service (currently working with Ian Will to set up a display of equipment to aid disabled people). The Information Service is kept to upgrade the computer they have and would like advice on software and setting up a database. The main organisation is kept to find someone with an understanding of finance to give advice and/or join the Board.

Contact tel: 01467 629909 email: [yvon-nemacdonald@ecosse.net](mailto:yvon-nemacdonald@ecosse.net)

**The Gordon Dementia Day Care Group** offer activities and support for people with dementia with one group member being supported to write her life story. They would like to secure funding to support other group members record their stories and their management team would like support from someone with a legal or insurance background.

Contact email: [gddcg@msn.com](mailto:gddcg@msn.com)

Groups can be contacted directly or through the Gordon Volunteer Centre:  
Liz Robertson 01467 626060 email: [office@vbivverurie.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:office@vbivverurie.fsnet.co.uk)  
or through [linda.singer@enetrust.com](mailto:linda.singer@enetrust.com)



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## Small company tax break is not quite what it seems

### To incorporate or not

Much has been printed in the Press recently regarding the new tax breaks afforded to small companies whereby companies with profits under £50,000 pay tax at Nil % on the first £10,000 profits.

However people should be aware that the effective rate of tax on profits between £10,000 and £50,000 is 23.75%. A company with profits between £50,000 and £300,000 will pay tax at 19% on all these profits.

So not as straightforward as it seems.

Trading via a company gives greater flexibility in helping to reduce the total tax bills as income can be in the form of salaries, or dividends on which there is no national insurance payable.

A planned transfer from the sole trader or partnership is essential and it is important to consider carefully which assets and liabilities



### More taxing times

Heather Cameron FCCA, a partner in Cassie & Co, highlights the latest income tax changes.

are being transferred, whether there will be goodwill on the transfer, the position with company cars and a range of other matters.

### Company Cars

The days of the company car being a "perk" of the job are effectively over.

Benefits are calculated on the list price of the car when new, irrespective of the age of the car with the percentage charged based

on the CO2 emissions.

It is worth noting that vans are still charged at only £500 (£350 over 4 years old) p.a. and a wide range of vehicles meantime qualify as a van.

There are further changes coming in the way that car fuel benefit is assessed and all company car drivers should consider whether they would be better off to supply their own fuel and reclaim business fuel from their company at Inland Revenue agreed rates rather than having fuel provided by their employer.

### Miscellaneous

Many of you will have seen the advertising campaign on television recently regarding the working family tax credits, and disabled persons tax credits.

As I mentioned in this column in May these benefits are to be paid by employers as of April 2003.

## New Arts strategy for Aberdeenshire - IBA response

The IBA has confirmed its support for the development of Arts and Culture initiatives within Inverurie and Aberdeenshire.

But the association had concerns that the new Arts Strategy proposed by Aberdeenshire Council was unnecessarily complex.

Concerns were also expressed that the new strategy might lead to slow decision making and have a negative impact on existing activities.

The IBA emphasised that 'Arts and culture' should not be seen as 'high brow' and must embrace and encourage the widest definition.

"It is important to encourage arts, crafts, music and writing in the widest sense," stated the IBA response.

"It is vital to create a favourable environment for arts, music, writing, etc to flourish. A vibrant arts community could benefit the local economy through tourism and rural employment.

"Imaginative, flexible thinking will be required by Aberdeenshire Council to encourage such rural development."

The IBA response stated that the association might provide a "bridge" between arts and business and might provide advice to arts groups in the areas of business planning and marketing.

The association feels it is important to recognise and promote cultural activities to young people and encourage their participation in imaginative ways.

The IBA also supported the idea of an annual Civic Week to promote the culture of the area.

## Offices to let: 39 West High Street, Inverurie



Situated in the heart of Inverurie, above Will Chemists, these office premises comprise the first and second floors of a traditional granite and slated 3-storey building.

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The offices can be let as a whole or as individual units. The rent will be in the region of £10 per sq foot.

Viewing by arrangement with Ian Will (Tel: 01467 620475 - business hours)

### Full details from:

Campbell Cannon, Solicitors & Estate Agents, 26 Albyn Place, Aberdeen (Tel: 01224 585585)

## Important diary dates

### October

- 11: In Service Day (Academy)
- 14 – 28: School Holidays
- 21: Community Council Meeting
- 23: WIN seminar on Presentation Skills (Portlethen)
- 29: Garioch Area Committee
- 31: IBA open meeting – Barn & Bushel 7pm (Inverurie in Bloom)

### November

- 05: Social Enterprise Network (funding application workshop Opt.In Centre 10am – 1pm)
- 15: In Service Day (Academy)
- 18: Community Council Meeting
- 19: Garioch Area Committee
- 20: WIN seminar – Christmas Fayre (Inverurie)
- IBA business meeting – Barn & Bushel 7pm (date to be confirmed - see local press)

### December

- 01: Switch on Christmas Lights
- 16: Community Council Meeting
- 10: Garioch Area Committee
- 23 – 3 Jan. School Holiday

### January

- 06: Start of school term
- 22: WIN seminar – Personal Development (Aberdeen)
- 28: Garioch Area Committee



The IBA meeting on June 24 turned the spotlight on tourism. The main speaker was Ian Dunlop (second from right), chief executive of Aberdeen and Grampian Tourist Board. He is pictured with IBA chairman John Glover, councillor Raymond Bissett and John Begg (left) of Caledonian Heritage Tours.

### February

- 18: Garioch Area Committee
- 19: WIN seminar – Networking Event (Ellon)

### March

- 11: Garioch Area Committee
- 19: WIN seminar – Stress Management (Turriff)

### April

- 01: Garioch Area Committee
- 23: WIN seminar – Creativity in Business (Banchory)

For inclusion in this section contact Linda Singer on 01467 621166

## Web sites

### An instant guide to useful web sites for business

- Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce: [www.agcc.co.uk](http://www.agcc.co.uk)
- Aberdeenshire Council: [www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk)
- Aberdeenshire Towns Partnership: [www.atap.org.uk](http://www.atap.org.uk)
- Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service: [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)
- Business Community Connections: [www.bconconnections.org.uk](http://www.bconconnections.org.uk)
- Caredata: [www.grampiancaredata.gov.uk](http://www.grampiancaredata.gov.uk)
- Careers Scotland: [www.careers-scotland.org.uk](http://www.careers-scotland.org.uk)
- Chartered Institute of Marketing: [www.cim.co.uk](http://www.cim.co.uk)
- Companies House: [www.companieshouse.gov.uk](http://www.companieshouse.gov.uk)
- Data Protection: [www.dataprotection.gov.uk](http://www.dataprotection.gov.uk)
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- Learning opportunities: [www.learnirectscotland.com](http://www.learnirectscotland.com)
- Learnirect Scotland for Business: [www.lds4b.com](http://www.lds4b.com)
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- Reach: [www.volwork.org.uk](http://www.volwork.org.uk)
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