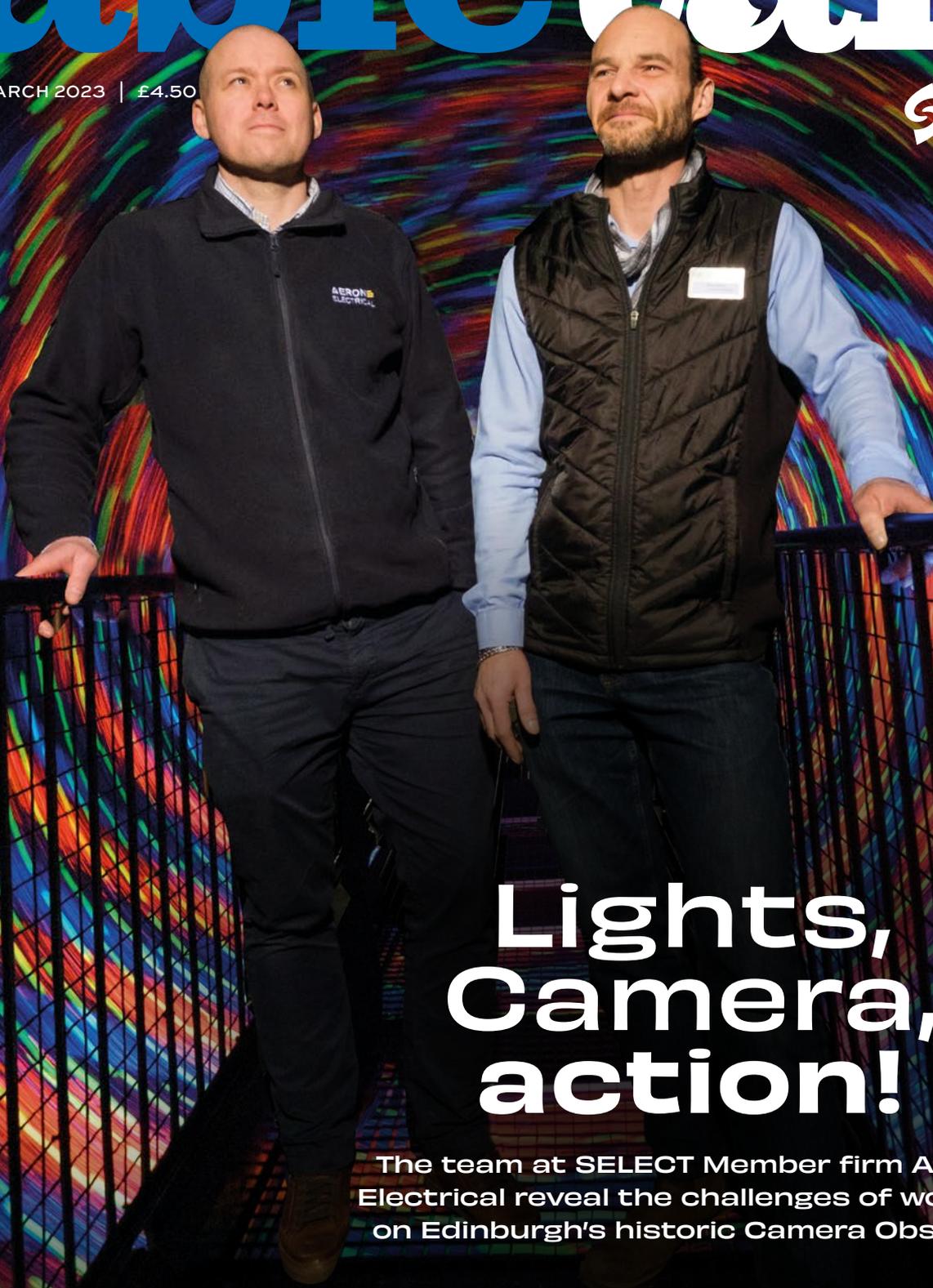


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 SELECT



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“ We can't leave it till the last minute as action needs to happen now – so let's get behind construction apprentices to ensure we have a realistic chance of meeting our green goals ”

LAST year saw the largest ever number of apprentices and adult trainees recruited into our industry, with more than 950 new entrants joining the sector in 2022.

This number is testament to the fabulous support of electrical businesses all over Scotland. It also demonstrates not just the confidence in ongoing workload opportunities in the traditional electrical marketplace but the opportunities that are now presenting themselves in technologies such as solar PV, battery storage and EV charge points.

As nations across the world grapple with the transition from fossil fuels to renewables, it's obvious that electricians will be key to this transformation as Scotland commits to becoming a net zero society by 2045.

However, sometimes words and deeds don't match up. Despite the largest number of new recruits ever, our industry finds itself in a position where the number of funded apprentice places available falls short by some 20%. Having a policy of achieving net zero is great, but who'll do the work if the workforce of tomorrow isn't being funded now?

In the past 15 years, and despite facing a global pandemic and the worst economic recession for a generation, the electrical industry has recruited more than 11,000 apprentices, averaging over 700 young people and adult entrants each year.

The majority of those who have qualified remain working in our sector, which means that, on average, they're contributing tax income approaching £42million each year – perfectly demonstrating that not only do apprentices earn while they learn, they also pay tax, adding to the government coffers.

The recent Scottish Government budget announced an additional allocation of some £46million to colleges and universities and, as you can read on **Page 7**, we've now asked that a proportion of this extra funding is allocated to apprenticeship training.

Without support, the industry faces a real challenge of supporting the industry's demand for current and future apprentices.

The Scottish Government's own *National Strategy for Economic Transformation* states: "Our vision is to create a wellbeing economy; a society that is thriving across economic, social and environmental dimensions and that delivers prosperity for all Scotland's people and places. We aim to achieve this while respecting environmental limits, embodied by our climate and nature targets."

The electrical apprenticeship programme meets this vision in full, with our apprentices at the centre of meeting climate reduction targets.

It's clear that the Scottish Government needs to step up and do more to support sectors offering apprenticeships which lead to proper jobs and lifetime careers, especially those which will significantly impact on our net zero plans.

This assistance is an investment in **OUR** future, so it's vital that support is given to the workforce – and taxpayers – of the future.

For the past 20 years, there has been an obsession among many who promote university learning over everything. While further and higher education is important, it seems to have been forgotten that we need a mix of learning – and apprenticeships are often the best start to working life for many.

As we inch towards 2045, now is the time to support those who will do the most to meet the net zero target. We can't leave it till the last minute as action needs to happen now – so let's get behind construction apprentices to ensure we have a realistic chance of meeting our green goals. The clock is ticking! ■



WORDS **ALAN WILSON**
Managing Director, SELECT

+ PAGE 8 /
Raising awareness of the dangers of people tampering with their energy meters

+ PAGE 12 /
Big-hearted SELECT colleagues cook up some tasty treats for charity

+ PAGE 13 /
Green Home Festival returns to shine a spotlight how to build a more sustainable future

+ PAGE 14 /
Warm tributes are paid to David Wright, who was a driving force for positive change



6 FIRMS HAVE BECOME SELECT MEMBERS SINCE 1 DECEMBER 2022

1. G Stewart Electrical, Bridge of Earn
2. A D Electrical, Peebles
3. Alliance Group Management Limited, Greenock
4. Nucore Group Ltd, Aberdeen
5. Kaizen Electrical, Troon
6. New Gorbals Housing Association Ltd, Glasgow

© Scottish Government



↑ John Swinney has been asked for extra funding

Branch UPDATE

BRANCH UPDATES AND AGMS MARCH 2023

1. Tuesday 7 March – Dumfries & Galloway Branch, Dumfries & Galloway College, Dumfries
2. Thursday 9 March – Glasgow & West of Scotland Branch, Glasgow Clyde College, Cardonald Campus
3. Tuesday 14 March – Inverness & North of Scotland Branch, Inverness College, Inverness
4. Thursday 16 March – Edinburgh & South East Scotland Branch, Edinburgh College, Sighthill Campus
5. Tuesday 21 March – Ayrshire Branch, Ayrshire College, Ayr Campus
6. Thursday 23 March – Aberdeen & North East Scotland Branch, Tullos Training, Aberdeen
7. Tuesday 28 March – Tayside Branch, Perth College, Perth
8. Thursday 30 March – Lanarkshire Branch, Motherwell College Campus, Motherwell



Infrared heating is a hot topic



↑ How we heat our homes will be up for discussion

Branch Update presentations will examine the future of energy as Members get the chance to meet up in-person and hear a round-up of the latest technical issues

INFRARED heating will take centre stage at our upcoming Branch Updates, as we take a look into the future of energy with a special technical update.

Craig Herriott, from our Associate Member Flexel, will be our special guest at the upcoming series of events, where

he'll deliver a presentation entitled *The Infrared Myths*.

The Flexel Regional Manager said: "I'm aiming to address a few misconceptions about infrared heating solutions and explain why they have a place in a variety of buildings as an alternative solution as we move away from fossil fuels. We believe strongly that one solution doesn't fit all, so I'm looking forward to seeing Members face-to-face and answering questions about this technology which we believe will become an important part of the electrical landscape in the years to come."

"I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING MEMBERS FACE-TO-FACE AND ANSWERING QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS TECHNOLOGY WHICH WE BELIEVE WILL BECOME AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE ELECTRICAL LANDSCAPE IN THE YEARS TO COME"

Updates on activity will also be delivered by a SELECT Director of Function and member of the Presidential Team, with a Training Officer providing the latest apprentice and adult trainee news from the Scottish Electrical Charitable Training Trust (SECTT).

Members will also have chance to ask questions, after which a short Branch AGM will be held to elect Branch Officers for 2023. Meetings will start at 6pm, with refreshments served.

SELECT President Alistair Grant said: "After Branch Updates returned in October 2022, it was pleasing to see so many Members eager to meet up again in person, and we hope to welcome more contractors to our March meetings."

"Following the successful meeting in Dundee last year, venues have also been moved to local colleges to enable Members to see the training facilities first-hand and get a clear picture of what's delivered for apprentices and adult trainees."

➡ To book a place at your upcoming Branch Update and AGM, speak to your Member Representative, email memberservices@select.org.uk or call 0131 445 5577.



↑ Craig Herriott will deliver a presentation and answer questions

Alan urges Deputy First Minister to provide essential apprentice funding

SELECT has issued an urgent appeal to Deputy First Minister John Swinney, asking him to allocate additional funding for apprenticeships to prevent a shortfall in essential training.

The association is calling on Mr Swinney to use some of the £46 million of extra money announced for colleges and universities in the recent Scottish Budget for apprenticeship training.

In a letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery, SELECT Managing Director Alan Wilson said that more funding would be essential to prevent a shortfall in essential training of apprentices, who he says are vital to the nation's transition a net zero future.

His appeal came at a time when the electrotechnical industry has achieved record numbers of apprentices for the second year in a row, from just over 800 last year to just under 1,000 this year, which he described as a "true vote of confidence in what is on offer".

Alan said: "Over the past 15 years, despite facing the worst economic recession for a generation and a global pandemic, our industry has recruited more than 11,000 apprentices, averaging more than 700 young people and adult entrants each year."

"The majority of those who have qualified remain working in our sector, which means that they alone are, on

average, already contributing tax on income approaching £42 million each year.

"Recruitment has far outstripped expectations, and most of the businesses which recruit apprentices are either micro or small-sized and are based all over Scotland – the very businesses which the Scottish Government is keen to help and assist to grow.

"In your recent budget you announced that you propose to allocate an additional £46million to colleges and universities, but you seem to have forgotten about the vital role apprenticeship training plays and therefore, I would ask that you take immediate steps to ensure that a proportion of this extra income is allocated to apprenticeship training.

"You will also appreciate that not only do apprentices earn while they learn, but they also pay tax, thereby adding to the government's total tax income."

Alan highlighted the work undertaken by the Scottish Electrical Charitable Training Trust (SECTT) on behalf of the Scottish Joint Industry Board (SJIB) to deliver the electrical installation apprenticeship.

He said that the cap of 660 places in SECTT's contract with Skills Development Scotland (SDS) originally meant that 300 places would be unfunded, placing a huge strain on businesses that wanted to give young people an opportunity.



↑ Alan Wilson

Meter cheats are dicing with death

We join forces with SNIPEF for warning that interfering with gas and electricity meters in an attempt to save money could cost lives

SELECT has teamed up with a fellow trade body to warn that illegal meter-tampering is putting people's lives at risk as they resort to increasingly desperate measures to reduce energy bills.

The association joined forces with the Scottish and Northern Ireland Plumbing Employers' Federation (SNIPEF) to issue a joint alert over the cost of living crisis, which is driving a worrying rise in potentially lethal meter-tampering.

The bodies say interfering with electricity and gas meters can have a "disastrous effect" on perpetrators and innocent people nearby – and have urged anyone coming across tampering to report it and avert disaster.

Alan Wilson, Managing Director of SELECT, said: "It is a distressing

sign of the times that an increasing number of consumers are resorting to tampering with their electrical and gas meters in an effort to reduce their energy bills.

"This is a worrying and illegal practice, often encouraged by widely shared footage on social media. But it risks lives

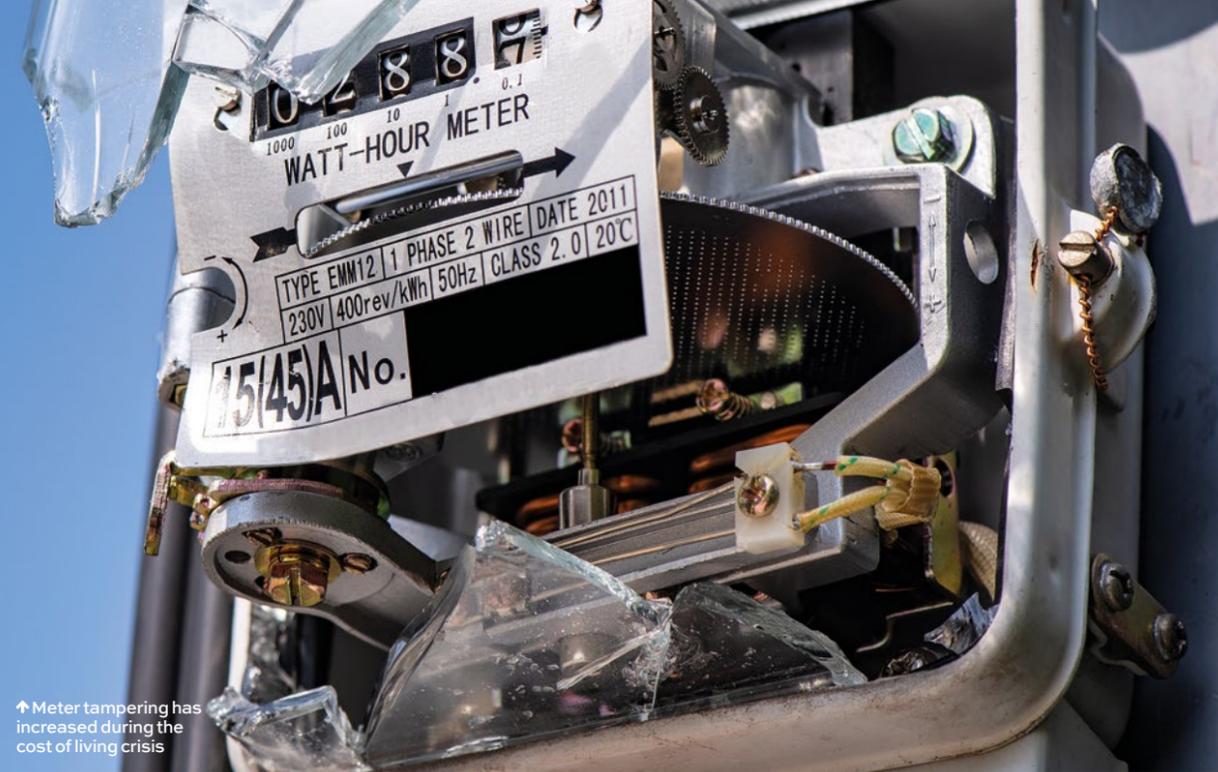
and can have fatal consequences for others who live and work close by." Fiona Hodgson, Chief Executive of SNIPEF, added: "Such services are often offered by unscrupulous individuals

who will bypass services or devices for a fee. But the methods they use are extremely dangerous and often they can have no, or very limited, knowledge of what they're actually doing.

"Like all gas and electrical work, interrupting the supply is something that should only ever



↑ Fiona Hodgson



↑ Meter tampering has increased during the cost of living crisis

be dealt with by fully-trained and qualified professionals."

SELECT and SNIPEF are now urging householders and tradespeople to keep an eye out for the tell-tale signs of meter tampering.

Alan said: "Anyone who comes across this kind of activity – be it a SELECT or SNIPEF member or a member of the public – should report it immediately to their energy provider to prevent a potentially fatal accident." The joint warning echoes a recent alert from the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), which says that meter tampering is occurring with increasing frequency as the price of electricity and gas rises.

Writing in the previous edition of *cabletalk*, Sean Smith, Fire Investigation Officers Watch Commander with SFRS, said: "SFRS is now seeing meter tampering and removal services with increasing frequency and, sadly, we have first-hand experience of the tragic circumstances that they can cause.

"We are now engaging with communities to discourage this dangerous act and make people aware of the significant risks from energy theft and meter tampering."

The renewed alert follows a warning last year from energy regulator Ofcom, which flagged the danger of social media posts claiming that gas and electricity meters could be removed as an "energy-saving hack". It also coincides with the current high-profile Stay Energy Safe

"INTERRUPTING THE SUPPLY IS SOMETHING THAT SHOULD ONLY EVER BE DEALT WITH BY FULLY-TRAINED AND QUALIFIED PROFESSIONALS"

campaign from Crimestoppers, urging contractors and consumers to contact them anonymously at 0800 023 2777 if they think a meter has been tampered with.

As part of the campaign, Stay Energy Safe highlighted the tragic case of an elderly woman who died in a house fire in Glasgow after her son had their electricity meter bypassed to save on energy bill payments.

MD MAKES THE CASE FOR REGULATION

Alan Wilson put forward the case for regulation during a special Europe-wide webinar before Christmas.

The SELECT Managing Director was among a panel of guests who discussed electrical talking points

during the two-hour EuropeOn roundtable on 2 December.

Alan outlined the importance of protection of title and why regulation was essential, as well as updating delegates on the progress of our Wall of Support campaign.

The session – entitled *Demonstrating Electrical Contractors' Competency* also included presentation from electrical organisations in Finland and France, as well as our English counterparts in the ECA.



IMPORTANT FACTS AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

SELECT has released its final infographic of quarterly statistics for 2022, showing the activity carried out by the association in the last three months of the year.

Covering the period October to December, the fourth update of the year shows SELECT's many achievements in technical, training, membership, communications, employment and skills.

Iain Mason, SELECT Director of Membership & Communications, said: "This graphic continues to be a handy signpost of activity and achievements and helps Members, staff and the wider industry see how the association is performing at a glance."

BOXER CHRIS IS KING OF THE RING YET AGAIN

SELECT Branch Officer Chris Liddell has continued his successful boxing comeback with another hard-fought victory.

The 30-year-old, who is 3rd Representative for the Lanarkshire Branch, overcame Namibian Gabriel Jamba in a bantamweight bout at Glasgow's Crowne Plaza on 20 January.

After eight rounds of non-stop action, with both men trading and landing big shots, the referee awarded the contest 78-75 in favour of Chris.

It was the third fight for the SELECT Member since he resurrected his professional boxing career last June after eight years out of the ring.

We told in previous editions of *cabletalk* how Chris had started his comeback by beating Luke Merrifield and Scott McCormack in June and October respectively last year.

→ Chris in action in Glasgow



RECOGNISING TOP INDUSTRY TALENT

The Fire and Security Association (FSA), in which SELECT plays a major role, will once again be rewarding two worthy winners as part of the ECA Industry Awards 2022/23.



The association, which is the specialist fire and security group within SELECT and the ECA, is presenting two awards for outstanding contribution to the fire and security industries during the event:

- Outstanding Contribution to the Fire Detection and Alarm Industry, in memory of Ian Marsh, recognising individuals who demonstrate enthusiasm and selfless concern for the fire and emergency systems industry.
- Outstanding Contribution to the Security Systems Industry, in memory of Peter Greenwood, recognising individuals who have made an outstanding contribution to the security systems industry.

SELECT's former President Kevin Griffin is a past winner of the Ian Marsh award, scooping the gong in 2018. Award winners will be announced at a dinner at the Hilton Bankside Hotel in London on Friday 9 June, supported by headline sponsors Electrium and Ledvance.

SELECT Director of Technical Services Bob Cairney said: "As a key part of the FSA, we are delighted to once again be playing a leading role in these special awards. For the individual winners, these awards present a perfect opportunity for them to showcase their achievements."

Entries for this year's awards close on Friday 31 March and are open to all SELECT/FSA Members.

For more details on how to enter, visit www.eca.co.uk/ecaawards and complete the website nomination form with you and your nominee's details.



↑ L-R Alan Wilson, Eric Rae, Alick Smith, David Smith, Kevin Griffin, Donald W Orr, Douglas Kelly, Riki Wilson, Alistair Grant

Christmas get-together was a cracker

Past Presidents' event was the perfect chance to meet up and have fun after the pain of the pandemic

AFTER an enforced absence due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the SELECT Past Presidents' Christmas Lunch returned in style to Edinburgh.

More than 20 staff, office bearers and other guests gathered at The Balmoral hotel in the heart of the capital on Wednesday 7 December for the first get-together in three years.

As well as current SELECT President Alistair Grant, seven Past

Presidents attended the festive event – Kevin Griffin, Douglas Kelly, Donald W Orr, Eric Rae, Alick Smith, David Smith and Riki Wilson.

SELECT was represented by Managing Director Alan

Wilson and Directors of Function Bob Cairney, Fiona Harper, John McGhee and Iain Mason, who joined their guests for a traditional Christmas lunch in the historic railway hotel. Also

in attendance were Central Board members Graeme Anderson, Stewart Anderson, Donnie Calder, David Harris, Craig McGowan and Keith Smith, along with SECTT CEO Anne Galbraith.

Alan Wilson said: "After three years, it was excellent to meet up with former and current colleagues from across the association and show our gratitude for all their hard work and dedication."

"It was also fitting that Alistair delivered a special SELECT grace before the meal, helping to set the scene on a memorable festive occasion."

The lunch was preceded by a meeting of SELECT's Central Board, which reviewed the association's achievements over the past 12 months and outlined plans for 2023.

The meeting also saw Events, Marketing and Communications Coordinator Linda Rolfe deliver a presentation about her recent fundraising trip to Peru in aid of the Electrical Industries Charity.



↑ SELECT's Central Board met before the lunch



↑ The Balmoral in Edinburgh was the setting for the festive lunch



↑ Kevin Griffin, right, with his award in 2018

Late payments are still a major issue for businesses

Construction businesses in Scotland are still suffering the scourge of late payments, outstanding retentions and unexpected charges, a new survey by the Construction Industry Collective Voice (CICV) has revealed.

Some 68% of respondents to the poll said their payment terms were altered negatively, with 60% claiming adjustments to payments were made with little or no explanation.

And 69% of those surveyed said the time and cost of chasing

outstanding monies was their most significant problem when it came to payment.

The collective's survey on cashflow and payments was undertaken to help get an accurate picture of the current financial landscape in the Scottish construction industry.

Answered by those businesses which operate both as main and sub-contractors in the public and private sectors, its key findings included:

- 75% of respondents saying they

68%

of respondents to the poll said their payment terms were altered negatively

don't receive the applied value of their final account

- 52% reporting that they still have problems getting retentions paid
- 44% revealing that they had been hit with unexpected charges
- 40% disclosing that they "always or often" had payments reduced
- 30% saying payment delays have

a "major impact" on their company.

Some 50% of respondents said they required external assistance to deal with payment disputes, with 54% saying they had referred a dispute to adjudication.

And 62% of those surveyed also said they were aware of project bank accounts, but only 17% had actually used them.

Len Bunton, Chair of the CICV's Pipeline & Commercial sub-group, said: "From these findings, it is clear – and also rather depressing – that cashflow and payment issues are still major problems in the construction industry in Scotland."

"It is especially frustrating to see so many financial disputes still going to costly adjudication and so little take-up of solutions

like project bank accounts and the Conflict Avoidance Process – despite evidence that they do work and help to improve all-important cashflow."

The CICV is now devising a series of measures to help combat issues highlighted in the survey, including a best practice guide and webinar.

Len's column: Page 45

"IT IS ESPECIALLY FRUSTRATING TO SEE SO MANY FINANCIAL DISPUTES STILL GOING TO COSTLY ADJUDICATION"



↑ Our staff took on starring roles

FESTIVE FILM WAS PACKED FULL OF FUN

SELECT Members joined in the festive fun as they played a starring role in this year's SELECT Christmas film.

Graeme Anderson, Stewart Anderson, Craig McGowan, Donald W Orr and Eric Rae all took part in the Yuletide flick, which saw staff passing a star across Scotland at locations including Rugby Park, Loch Ness and Rowallan Castle Golf Club.

The film was put together by Events, Marketing & Communications Coordinator Linda Rolfe, with a special soundtrack composed by SELECT IT Coordinator Alan Paul.

Linda said: "The SELECT Christmas film has become a good way of bringing staff together and having a bit of fun. We were delighted to involve Members this year and hope more will take part in 2023!"

➔ Watch the film at bit.ly/XMAS-FILM-22



Baking sweet moments for charity

SWEET-TOOTHED SELECT staff were cooking up a storm in December as they took part in a special festive baking bonanza which raised £1,000 for charity.

The Great SELECT Bake Off saw colleagues serve up a feast of homemade goodies at The Walled Garden on 6 December, with all proceeds going to Cancer Research UK.

The winning creation was made by Receptionist Adrienne Thompson, who was voted Star Baker for her delicious Biscoff cheesecake.

The competition was organised by Employment & Skills Administrators Alice McCaskey and Sam Moore, who said they were delighted with the response.

Alice said: "We'd like to say a massive thank you to everyone who supported our fundraising efforts. The charity is close to both our hearts, so we're incredibly grateful for everyone's generosity."



↑ Sam Moore, winner Adrienne Thompson and Alice McCaskey



↑ Sam and Alice with some of the homemade goodies

DONATIONS MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

Bighearted SELECT staff dug deep to donate much-needed Christmas gifts to two local causes in December.

Staff donated presents for children and young people, including dolls, teddy bears, games, stationery, books and clothing, which were handed over to The Salvation Army in Loanhead, near The Walled Garden.

Colleagues also collected selection boxes which were donated to the Food Facts & Friends Community Hub in nearby Penicuik. The giveaways



were organised by Training Administrator Laurie Burns, Benefits Manager Michelle Courtney and Events, Marketing & Communications Coordinator Linda Rolfe.

Laurie said: "SELECT staff decided not to do Secret Santa this year

and instead donate Christmas gifts to deserving local charities.

"The Salvation Army and community hub were delighted with the donations and said they would help a lot of children and youngsters enjoy Christmas."

GREEN HOME FESTIVAL 2023

Festival will be great and green

SELLECT will once again be playing a leading role in this year's Green Home Festival – with greener kitchens, renewable funding and preventing heat loss among the main topics currently being planned.

Air source heat pumps, effective insulation and electric vehicles will also be high on the agenda at the second five-day event being organised by the Construction Industry Collective Voice (CICV), of which SELECT is a key member.

Running from 14-18 August as part of the official Edinburgh Festival Fringe and delivered via a mix of in-person and virtual presentations, the festival will once again deliver practical assistance and advice to help Scotland become a net zero nation.

With a focus very much on consumer issues, organisers have followed up on the

success of last year's inaugural event with another line-up of topical talking points, including:

- Garden rooms and garden offices
- Practical consumer guidance on heat pumps
- Efficient use of gas central heating
- Hybrid heating and boiler types
- Converting disused buildings into smart homes
- Insulation and fabric of buildings in domestic retrofitting
- The future of low-carbon heating technologies, such as microwave
- Webinars on retrofit skills and heat programmes
- Solar panels, including battery storage options.

The festival is again likely to attract Ministerial attendance from the Scottish Government, with other special guests also being pencilled in to appear.

One of the CICV organisers, John McKinney, Secretary of the National Federation of Roofing Contractors, said: "Last year's inaugural Green Home Festival delivered a wealth of demonstrations and hands-on guidance about efficient use of energy and smart interaction with the built environment.

"As we all try to minimise carbon emissions and do our best to mitigate the effects of the cost of living crisis, it is likely that interest this year will be even greater, and the proposed programme is designed to have a greater focus on consumers and practical domestic advice."



↑ The SELECT team at last year's Green Home Festival

ALAN TAKES PART IN BUTE HOUSE EVENT

Alan Wilson recently joined other industry leaders at a special networking reception with First Minister Nicola Sturgeon.

The SELECT MD attended the Industry Leadership Group (ILG) Chairs' Roundtable Reception at Bute House in Edinburgh on 2 February as chair of the CICV.



↑ Alan (third from left) with the First Minister

WELCOME TO NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

SELECT has welcomed two new market-leading organisations as Associate Members as our successful partnership scheme continues to grow.

Lighting and fire detection specialists Hispec have joined the scheme,



which was launched last year and saw 22 manufacturers and industry organisations sign up. Established in 2002, Hispec offers a wide and extensive range of domestic fire and carbon monoxide detection products. They are currently one of the fastest growing brands in the UK fire detection market.

They have been joined by V-TAC, who manufacture and supply a diverse range of high-quality LED lighting, smart home and audio products.



Boasting a portfolio of more than 4,500 products, V-TAC has utilised its brand value and R&D efforts into innovating beyond lighting solutions into categories such as smart home solutions.

Iain Mason, Director of Membership & Communications, said: "We are delighted to welcome Hispec and V-TAC as our latest SELECT Associate Members and hope they will enjoy a successful partnership getting to know our Members."

➔ Associate Member news: Pages 56-61

Tributes are paid to David Wright

Popular former colleague was a driving force for positive change in SELECT as he raised our profile among politicians in Scotland

SELLECT staff have paid tribute to former colleague David Wright, who passed away recently aged 72.

David joined SELECT in 1996 and retired in 2017 after a successful spell as Head of External Affairs.

During his two decades at The Walled Garden, he was instrumental in the name change for the association, moving us from The Electrical Contractors’

Association of Scotland (ECA of S) to SELECT. David was also involved in a great deal of our lobbying activities at the Scottish Parliament and helped raise our profile among a number of influential politicians.

SELECT Managing Director Alan Wilson said: “David brought much positive



↑ David was welcomed back to The Walled Garden last year



↑ David, far left, was a key member of the management team at SELECT



change to SELECT and helped raise our profile significantly, paving the way for subsequent achievements.

“Our sympathies are extended to his wife Màiri and his son and daughter.”

Fiona Harper, Director of Employment & Skills at SELECT, said: “David was a valued colleague who worked hard to modernise the association and help establish our position in the industry.

“He will be much missed by all who knew and worked with him.”



↑ David was a regular in the pages of cabletalk

“DAVID BROUGHT MUCH POSITIVE CHANGE TO SELECT AND HELPED RAISE OUR PROFILE SIGNIFICANTLY, PAVING THE WAY FOR SUBSEQUENT ACHIEVEMENTS”

David was welcomed back to The Walled Garden last June when he was among the former colleagues who attended the Memory Day for Training and Development Adviser Malcolm Duncan.

MAILBOXES WILL MAKE LIFE EASIER

SELECT’S Technical and Training teams have created a number of centralised mailboxes to streamline operations and improve service to Members. The following mailboxes are now available:

- **Technical Help Mailbox** – technicalhelp@select.org.uk for any Technical Helpline enquiries
- **Technical Mailbox** – technical@select.org.uk for any technical administration queries
- **SBSC Mailbox** – sbsc@select.org.uk for any Scottish Building Standards Certification renewal enquiries
- **Orders Mailbox** – orders@select.org.uk for stationery order enquiries
- **Training Mailbox** – training@select.org.uk for any training enquiries, including training required for the SBSC scheme.

Training Manager Jenny Cryans said: “We have created centralised mailboxes instead of personal emails to ensure that emails still get picked up and actioned quickly if someone is on holiday. We would ask Members sending emails to these mailboxes not to copy in personal staff emails as this could result in the same email being actioned twice.”

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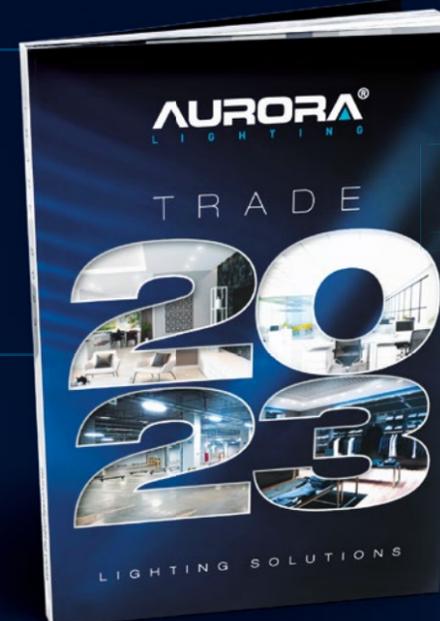
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A DIFFERENT FOCUS

Winning the contract to work on Edinburgh's Camera Obscura has meant new challenges for the team at SELECT Member firm Aeron Electrical, but it's proved to be an unusual and fascinating project

WORDS
TIM POWER

IMAGES
MIKE WILKINSON

W

WINNING the periodic inspection and testing (PI&T) contract for Edinburgh's iconic Camera Obscura & World of Illusions attraction has given the team at SELECT Member firm Aeron Electrical a new perspective on electrical work.

Unfortunately for them, there's no time for fun with the mind-bending optical illusions at the world-famous venue as the team is working heads down during the night, busy checking circuits, sockets and fuse boards in a race against time to finish their inspections before the first visitors arrive to enjoy Edinburgh's oldest purpose-built tourist attraction.

Camera Obscura was established on its current site at the top of the Royal Mile in the early 1850s and drew the crowds to see the panoramic view of Edinburgh projected onto a table from an installation of lenses and mirrors. Today, it's still going strong with visitor numbers predicted to be 350,000 this year, attracted by its fascinating optical illusions and fun interactive exhibits – that's why the venue is open every day except Christmas, sometimes from 8am until 10pm in the summer.

Aeron Electrical won the contract for the building in 2019 as Camera Obscura's Technical Manager, Ross Boon, was looking for a new approach to providing a continuous PI&T programme. Aeron Electrical's Managing Director, Robert McShane, suggested to Ross the idea of breaking the three-yearly inspection down to three annual visits where his three-man team would check on a third of the circuits at each inspection and also draw attention to electrical maintenance issues.

Robert said: "We have carried out a lot of PI&T on commercial properties direct to clients or sub-contracting to facilities companies, and one of the things we have found on our many electrical installation condition reports (EICR) produced over the years is the overuse of the abbreviation 'LIM,' which stands for limitation and is something that is either not part of the inspection or there is limited ability to inspect.



↑ Ross enjoys one of the illusions

"In my opinion, this is too much of a 'quick and easy' approach to not carrying out the necessary tests and Ross, who has an electrical background gained from serving an apprenticeship and working with ScottishPower, was of the same opinion. As a result, he decided that with our experience in testing commercial installations – along with the diligent and safety conscious approach we both hold for our work – we were given the opportunity to carry out the rolling PI&T by carrying out 33% each year and associated remedials."

Ross agreed about the benefits of their approach. He said: "The three annual inspections help us to pick up

on any anomalies more frequently, allowing us to be more proactive in our maintenance programme. Robert's team have worked through the building as part of the inspection and testing regime and identified areas for upgrades. We tie this in with testing periods so we can get our maintenance, upgrades and testing done at the same time.

"The annual 33% PI&T can also be completed in a shorter time than once every three years. This is better for us in such a busy venue as it limits downtime when they are testing."

The inspections take careful planning, as Robert explained: "The main complication about working at the Camera Obscura building is the opening hours, so we always plan the work for the least busiest times, which is either in the lead-up to Christmas or through January and February. Obviously, we have to work around the visitor hours so it's either a night shift or back shift over a few days. Last year we were working from 6am-9am but this year we are working a back shift starting at 7pm and working through to 4-5am but sometimes to 7am – we are really working against the clock to be out of there before the visitors start to arrive."



↓ The Camera Obscura is a popular tourist attraction

"WE BREAK IT DOWN CIRCUIT BY CIRCUIT, AND WHEN WE FINISH ONE WE GO TO THE NEXT FUSE BOARD"

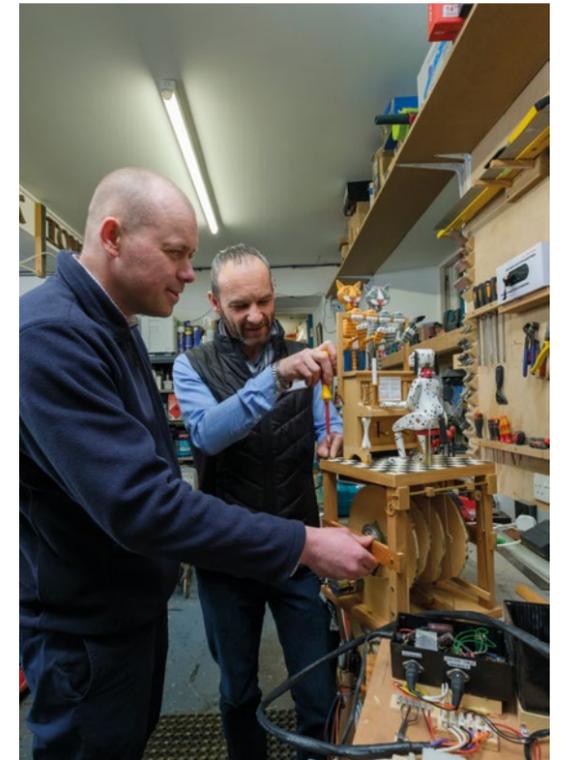
At each visit, the Aeron Electrical team inspects a third of the building's circuits, checking on the integrity of the installations, any damage to sockets and switches and ensuring the property complies with the relevant regulations.

Robert said: "We break it down circuit by circuit, and when we finish one we go to the next fuse board. The building has a total of 14 fuse boxes so we test 33% of the circuits on each one during year one, and continue over the following two years until we have tested all the circuits.

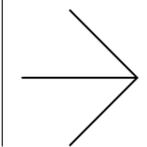
"It's a good way for the client to spread the cost over time and to minimise the potential disruption to the visitors, plus it helps us to identify any non-testing or maintenance issues with the electrical supply that can be fixed rather than not picking them up for three years."

Another challenge for the Aeron Electrical team is parking: it's impossible during the day but also an issue in the evening, so that means the team has to take all the tools and supplies they need for a night's work with them because there is no going back if they forget something.

Robert said: "There is a lot of walking the guys need to do, carrying heavy tool boxes and equipment up and down five flights of stairs. They are also

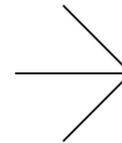


↑ Robert, left, and Ross at the Camera Obscura





↑ Suman Shrestha is part of the team working at the site



working in relatively cramped conditions and they've also got to be careful not to damage the exhibits as well as being very security conscious.

"When we are working at night, the building has to be locked at all times and we are very much trusted with the keys and codes to ensure that we lock up behind us."

When the pandemic hit and the country went into lockdown, Ross and his team at the Camera Obscura took the opportunity for catching up on major and minor maintenance issues and, when the restrictions were lifted, Aeron Electrical found there were many jobs waiting for them to complete before the venue could open again. This work included the wiring and fitting out of new office space located in the basement, the wiring of air con supplies and the supply install and commission of electromagnetic door closures.

Some of Ross's maintenance plans involved the replacement of old domestic boards with new industrial units, but Robert suggested that they put this work on hold until Amendment 2 to BS7671:2018 (IET Wiring Regulations 18th Edition) was published so they could be fully compliant with the most up-to-date regulations. Robert explained: "In advance of Amendment 2, Ross approached us to ask if he had to be made aware of any changes.

"As part of our 2021 remedial work, we advised him to change four fuse boards within the building so I had suggested we re-cost the work to include arc-fault detection devices (AFDDs) incorporating



↑ Robert adapted his approach to inspection and testing

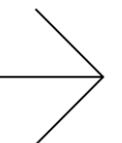
"ALTHOUGH THE REGULATIONS DID NOT INSIST ON THE VENUE USING AFDDs, WE HAVE CIRCUIT BREAKERS ON THE HIGH LOAD AREAS AS WELL AS RCBOs IN AREAS WHERE THERE ARE MORE ISSUES WITH THE OLD WIRING IN PLACE"



↑ Ross and Robert try out one of the illusions

RCBOs on all circuits, as this will be our third and final year of our 33% per year PI&T being carried out. However, from our training and the literature we received from SELECT regarding the Amendment 2 changes, we both decided to proceed with the fuse boards as planned without the AFDDs as these units were not required in this venue under the new regulations."

Ross added: "I was



very interested to see how Amendment 2 would affect us. From my ScottishPower background, I was very involved with notifications of what was going on in the network so I like to be forewarned of any issues. Although the regulations did not insist on the venue using AFDDs, we have circuit breakers on the high-load areas as well as RCBOs in areas where there are more issues with the old wiring in place.”

“YOU NEED TO ORGANISE WORK SHIFTS TO FIT AROUND THEIR AVAILABILITY, ENSURE THE TEAM HAS ALL THEIR EQUIPMENT AND MORE TO PLAN FOR EVERY EVENTUALITY, AND YOU HAVE TO STICK TO DATES SO NOTHING CAN SLIDE: IT’S VERY REGIMENTED”

The original Camera Obscura building dates back to the 17th century, with the fifth and sixth floors added in 1850, so the building is listed and, as such, alterations to the exterior and structure are not permissible. This presents challenges for updating electrical



↑ Ross and Robert inspect the attraction

circuits as Robert explained: “There are no dry risers and we are not allowed to drill through the stone work so we have to be creative: in one situation we had to drill through a window pane to get access for a new circuit.”

Ross is keen to replace some of the older wiring circuits that were put in 20-30 years ago and has developed new ways of recircuiting without affecting the fabric of the building. He explained: “When we renovated the fifth floor, we completely replaced the circuits but instead of cutting into the walls and replacing all the low-level socket-outlets, we put a whole new ring main into the gap between the fifth and sixth floor and then dropped sockets at high level, which has the added benefit of keeping them out of the reach of the public. This was ideal as we don’t have any unsightly wires or additional work of ragging and re-plastering. For us, time is of the essence so everything is in order for our visitors to have a great experience: no down time, no mess – that’s the way we like it.”

The electrical revamp of the building is a costly exercise but Ross appreciates the benefits of the investment against potential repercussions of not having it done: “If we had a board down it could close one of the floors for a couple of days or more, and that becomes very expensive very quickly. To minimise anything like this, we try to pre-empt anything like that happening, so good preventative maintenance is always the better option.”

Robert’s team has finished the last of their 33% PI&T testing programme at the Camera Obscura and he is looking forward to starting on a new three-year rolling programme in January 2024.



↑ The attraction is located on Edinburgh’s Royal Mile

He added: “The valuable lesson from working on this project is the degree of planning you have to do. You need to organise work shifts to fit around their availability, ensure the team has all their equipment and more to plan for every eventuality, and you have to stick to dates so nothing can slide: it’s very regimented.

“I’m proud that we’re associated with this iconic building, particularly as you can see it for miles around. It pleases me that I’ve got a personal connection with a building I’ve visited as a kid and that thousands of visitors to Edinburgh also get to enjoy.” ■

QUICK FACTS

AERON ELECTRICAL LIMITED

BRANCH: Edinburgh and South East Scotland

PHONE: 0131 202 6757

WEBSITE: aeronelectrical.com



Talented Suman's got the knowledge

Robert McShane takes pride in the training that his 10 electricians have received under his guidance since he started Aeron Electrical in 2011.

Over that time he has instilled high standards in his team; some of them joke about his obsession with producing neat and exacting electrical installations where every wire and socket is level and true. His ethos is all about getting it right first time.

Robert has aimed to take on a new apprentice each year and in 2022 his latest recruit was 41-year old Suman



↑ Suman is a welcome addition to the team

Shrestha, who knows the Camera Obscura like the back of his hand as he was a former Maintenance Assistant working for Robert’s client Ross Boon until last summer.

Suman has electrical knowledge from working with transformers and telecoms

“THE APPRENTICESHIP CAN BE CHALLENGING AT TIMES AS I’M BOTH LEARNING NEW TECHNIQUES AND ALSO THINGS I ALREADY KNOW ABOUT BUT I’M LEARNING TO DO THESE IN A DIFFERENT WAY”

in his homeland of Nepal and moved to Scotland in 2011 with his Spanish wife, who works as a research scientist at the University of Edinburgh. He had been working for Ross at Camera Obscura for the past five years but had always harboured an ambition of becoming a qualified electrician in the UK.

This opportunity came after Aeron Electrical took on the PI&T contract, as Robert explained: “While we were working at Camera Obscura, Suman shared with me that it was his lifelong

dream to become a fully qualified electrician. At the time, I did not have an opening for an apprenticeship and, even if I did, I was a bit wary of taking an employee from a client. However, Ross knew of Suman’s desire to get an apprenticeship and told me he would not stand in Suman’s way of realising his dream.

“I was keen to help him as he was a good guy and really knew his stuff, so last year I approached SECTT about getting a space on their apprenticeship course.

“Luckily there was a late cancellation and I went to Ross to explain about the opportunity for Suman as an apprentice with us, and he said that’s fine, even though that left him short staffed for a while.

“One of the reasons I was keen to take Suman was his extensive knowledge of the Camera Obscura building.

“One of the challenges is finding your way about the building and the electrical

infrastructure, so Suman is very much part of our team for the PI&T work at the venue.”

Suman is delighted with the opportunity. He said: “The apprenticeship can be challenging at times as I’m both learning new techniques and also things

I already know about but I’m learning to do these in a different way. I’m keen to complete my apprenticeship as I can see there is a great future as a career as an electrician especially with new developments in electric vehicle technology and renewable energy.”



↓ The Aeron team at Camera Obscura

Roadshows ready for heated debate

- Save the date now for our FREE 2023 Toolbox Talk roadshows
- Technical presentations on heat pumps and battery storage
- Exhibitors on hand to demonstrate their products and services

WORDS
LINDA ROLFE
Events, Marketing & Communications Coordinator



H **EAT** pumps and electrical energy storage will be the hot topics when our 2023 Toolbox Talks hit the road later this year.

Delegates will enjoy an in-depth technical insight into the rise of renewable energy systems – and the role Members will have to play in their design, installation and maintenance.

Our invaluable **FREE** update sessions will once again be touring 12 venues across Scotland in May and June, kicking off at Murrayfield in Edinburgh on 2 May.

And as always, our experts will be on hand to discuss the burning issues via two presentations:

- **Presentation 1:** An overview of the technology and electrical requirements for air source heat pumps (ASHPs), outlining how electrical contractors can get involved and what to consider when installing the technology.
- **Presentation 2:** Electrical energy storage systems (EESS), focusing on the technical implications of storage in domestic and commercial environments.

↓ Our experts will be on hand to discuss the issues that matter



Members will have the chance to ask questions and discuss topical matters face-to-face with our Technical Advisers, with other SELECT staff on hand to answer other queries.

Representatives from the Scottish Joint Industry Board (SJIB) and Scottish Electrical Charitable Training Trust (SECTT) will also be attending selected shows, along with the team behind our SELECTcerts service.

Bob Cairney, Director of Technical Services, said: “Last year’s Toolbox Talks were a huge success and we are looking forward to meeting up face-to-face with Members once again.

“The role of the electrical contractor in installing ASHPs is a subject that is becoming increasingly topical, and we’re keen to explain to Members how the landscape could look in the

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coming years. We will be inviting representatives from the Scottish and Northern Ireland Plumbing Employers’ Federation (SNIPEF) to give their view to help everyone gain a better understanding of how the two disciplines will work together on such technology.

“We’re also keen to discuss EESS as part of the wider conversation on renewable technology, with practical advice and information about the latest developments in battery storage.”

Each event will feature exhibitors from a range of leading manufacturers and service providers, including SELECT Associate Members Aico, Electrium, Luceco, Megger, Scolmore and TIS, so you’ll have plenty of opportunity to see the latest technology first-hand.

Events kick off at 9.30am with coffee and rolls, with lunch at the end of each session and goodie bags that will include the day’s presentation. Toolbox Talks are free to attend for all SELECT Members. So check the map for this year’s dates and venues and sign up **NOW** – it’s bound to be busy! ■



Where you can meet our experts

Our team will be visiting 12 locations across Scotland. This handy map will help you find the one nearest to you.

- Wed 14 June**
Shetland Arts Development Agency, Lerwick, Shetland
- Tue 13 June**
The Pickaquooy Centre, Kirkwall, Orkney
- Wed 21 June**
Caladh Inn, Stornoway
- Tue 6 June**
Drumossie Hotel, Inverness
- Wed 7 June**
Pittodrie Stadium, Aberdeen
- Wed 10 May**
The Apex Hotel, Dundee
- Wed 24 May**
Falkirk Stadium, Falkirk
- Thu 11 May**
Hampden Park, Glasgow
- Wed 17 May**
Rugby Park, Kilmarnock
- Tue 2 May**
Murrayfield Stadium, Edinburgh
- Wed 3 May**
Macdonald Cardrona Hotel, Peebles
- Tue 16 May**
Easterbrook Hall, Dumfries



Into the DIGITAL future

SELECT Member firm John Noble Electrical reveals how it's taking advantage of technology and embracing new ways of working to move its operations online and streamline the business

THE world is changing and SELECT Member firm John Noble Electrical is changing with it. According to Director Alasdair Noble it's on a journey that has seen most of the company's back office functions go digital.

He said: "The nature of our industry has been evolving over time with the introduction of LED lighting and EV chargers, as well as regulations around connected smoke alarms/heat detectors and so on.

"Our main transition to digital came eight or nine years ago when we decided to reduce paperwork by going over to a job software system that allowed our guys to carry out tasks using smartphones. There was some initial adjustment, but after a few months we all realised that this new approach was much better than before."

Since then the company has outgrown that original server-based software. "It meant having hardware on site that had to be maintained," added Alasdair. "If the server had an issue the job system crashed. It was starting to get clunky and dated."

WAY FORWARD

Attending a Toolbox Talk at The Walled Garden last May, he met a representative from SELECT Associate Member simPRO, whose system

"THERE WAS SOME INITIAL ADJUSTMENT, BUT AFTER A FEW MONTHS WE ALL REALISED THAT THIS NEW APPROACH WAS MUCH BETTER THAN BEFORE"

appeared to offer a way forward. Alasdair said: "We'd replaced Sage with Xero software, which is a cloud-based system. Previously, I was a little wary about the cloud because you never really felt like you ever owned anything. I knew the data was there, but I was worried about its safety and security."

Despite these reservations, Alasdair now believes cloud-based systems are the way to go for businesses like his and they have recently added a cloud-based HR system. He said: "This helps with issues like GDPR compliance and file storage space. It also allows our guys to use their phones to add holiday requests as well as see their shifts, on-call dates and so on. "Adopting all these digital tools has opened our eyes and when we saw what simPRO could do we were excited."

The system's simplicity and ease of access are big advantages for Alasdair. He can be anywhere in the country, log on to a computer, see all of the firm's jobs and organise his team accordingly.

It complements other digital tools like SELECTcerts which the company uses for all its certification. "SELECTcerts is brilliant," he said. "Rather than trying to scribble information down our guys can use the tablet to access the necessary certification. That includes previous certificates."

"Traditionally, we'd send someone out to a job and they'd bring back the necessary information. Someone in the office would then type up the certificate or write it all out in hand. It could take up to a week to issue the documentation to the customer. With SELECTcerts, the guys can phone me up from the site, ask me to check what they've done and send the customer a digital certificate before they leave."

Other procedures have been made simpler too. Alasdair continued: "We've been able to eliminate paperwork associated with the monitoring of our vans. Obviously, our guys need to carry out regular checks on tyres, oil, brakes and other items. Previously, that involved completing a tick sheet with about 20-30 boxes. Now, as soon as they log on to the system, they'll be asked, 'Is your van safe to drive?'. After checking, they only need to tick one box before getting on with their day."

"SIMPRO ALLOWS US TO FACTOR IN DYNAMIC RISK ASSESSMENTS, WHICH MEANS OUR ELECTRICIANS CAN ASSESS THE PROBABLE RISKS ON A JOB BEFORE THEY EVEN GO TO IT"



↑ Alasdair and John at last year's Toolbox Talk where they met simPRO



© Thames/Op/Shutterstock

↑ The company has switched to using Galaxy tablets

"SimPRO allows us to factor in dynamic risk assessments, which means our electricians can assess the probable risks on a job before they even go to it. And it offers other tools we've still to explore. They include a customer login where clients can create jobs, meaning they don't have to go through the process of calling us to arrange them."

TABLETS AND TOOLS

Just as software can become dated, so can mobile phones. Through time, the original work phones Alasdair had issued to his team had become less efficient and were not being used as regularly as before. As a result, they have been replaced with G5 Samsung Galaxy tablets to take advantage of the latest high-speed network. "The larger screens make it much easier to access the online tools," Alasdair said.

While simPRO is a straightforward system that leads you through its functions, the company has taken full advantage of training that's part of the implementation. "Some members of the team have gone through the training process and they'll pass the knowledge they've gained on to others," he said.

In terms of budget, the firm's first software involved an initial lump sum to buy it, plus installation costs. With simPRO and other modern apps you pay a monthly subscription and can cancel whenever you like. Alasdair said: "There are costs that are difficult to calculate,



such as training and downtime while you're transitioning between systems. But to be honest, the budgetary implications are probably less than when you're having to buy the software outright.

"It all seems to work so much better. The time you save by using things like SELECTcerts makes you money rather than costs you money."

EASIER ADMIN

Even though it's a relatively small operation with just eight electricians, the company generates a great deal of admin through risk assessments, method statements, compliance and audits for

RON HELPS FIRM ON ITS DIGITAL JOURNEY

When you're on a trip that takes you into unfamiliar territory it's good to have a reliable and wise guide. For John Noble Electrical that adviser has been Ron Skirving of Delta Digital. Alasdair explained: "Ron has been brilliant. Since he's not an electrical contractor he has a totally different way of looking at things. He's opened our eyes to new ideas and ways to improve our services."

"Many consultants come in and simply look at ways of increasing hits for your website and increasing the number of calls you receive. However, we want to help our existing customers make the most of other services they may not be using. Ron understands that."

For his part, Ron brings a great range of experience, a background in technology and a track record of helping businesses of all types and sizes. He said: "When I first approached Alasdair and John, the company's digital profile was confusing for customers."

"They had two websites, one of which wasn't mobile friendly and the other was not providing any enquiries nor was it a true reflection of the business. We built a new website from scratch on a new hosting platform and removed the need for BT and Yell in one go. This reduced costs and increased enquiries."

"No matter the size of the business, when it comes to delivering digital change the approach can make use of a model known as SOSTAC that considers factors such as: 'Where are we now? Where do we want to be? How do we get there? What is our plan? Did we get there?'"

Ron appreciates the opportunities that exist within a firm's customer base. He said: "In this industry, the 'Pareto Principle' suggests that 80% of a firm's business comes from 20% of its customers."

"It was interesting to discover that many of John Noble's customers were not fully aware of what the company could actually do for them. There's scope now to introduce initiatives like a regular mailshot to customers, making full use of the data that they already have and are moving from one system to another."

"Crucially, I think there's a real enthusiasm in the team and a willingness to change. Technology can be a dry subject at times. I like to keep things upbeat with real life stories that help describe the benefits of going digital."

"Within any change process, if you have the people on board there's a greater chance of success."

"WE SAVE ON PAPERWORK AND TIME BY USING DIGITAL SYSTEMS, AND WE CAN ALLOCATE THAT TIME ELSEWHERE"

schemes like SafeContractor, ISO9000 quality assurance and so on. Alasdair said: "We save on paperwork and time by using digital systems, and we can allocate that time elsewhere."

"Even a one-man band would benefit greatly from things like SELECTcerts and simPRO. If I were to give advice to another business thinking of doing something similar I'd say: 'Don't be afraid of change and don't discount yourself.'"

He believes it's easy for firms to fall into the mindset of 'If it ain't broke don't fix it'. However, he said: "Digitalisation makes your life so much easier. It affords you time to look at other aspects of your business. Change is always difficult to implement, but our team members can see that this technology helps them do their job more effectively as much as it helps our business."

Following the introduction of simPRO, Alasdair said he and his colleagues will look to better utilise some of the systems it has in place. "Sometimes it seems we're just scratching the surface of what's possible," he noted.

"It's very important to grasp that everything we're doing doesn't just benefit us as a company. Ultimately, it gives our customers a better experience." ■



↑ John and Alasdair are embracing digital technology for their business

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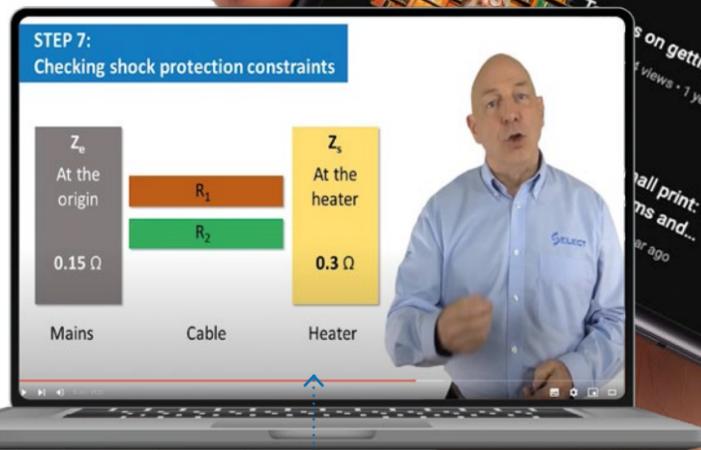


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Supporting the stars of tomorrow

Government Minister Jamie Hepburn was once again the guest of honour as the CABEC contest returned to showcase engineering innovation and teamwork among school pupils

WORDS ANNE GALBRAITH
Chief Executive, SECTT



AFTER an absence of three years, it was marvellous to see the talent of tomorrow in action once again as the Construction and Built Environment Challenge (CABEC) made a welcome return.

The annual contest has inspired thousands of S2 pupils since 1999 thanks to its series of construction, engineering and building services challenges.

Devised and run by colleges, university staff and training providers, CABEC aims

to highlight the exciting careers in the sector to pupils at a vital stage in their education, with schools in Edinburgh and the Lothians invited to put forward a team of 10 youngsters aged 13 and 14.

After a three-year break due to COVID-19, we were keen to make up for lost time – and this year's final certainly didn't disappoint!

Gathering at the Edinburgh Corn Exchange on Thursday 19 January, the

"I HOPE EVERY PUPIL TOOK SOMETHING VALUABLE FROM THIS EXPERIENCE THAT THEY CAN USE IN THE FUTURE"





CHALLENGE PROVIDERS

- Scottish Electrical Charitable Training Trust (SECTT)
- Edinburgh College
- SRUC Oatridge Campus
- West Lothian College
- Napier University
- Heriot-Watt University

VALUABLE SKILLS

I was delighted that Jamie Hepburn, Minister for Higher Education, Further Education, Youth Employment and Training, was able to take time out of his busy schedule to present the prizes.

Afterwards the MSP said: "CABEC is a unique and valuable learning experience for young people.

"It is great to see the 100 finalists undertaking challenges and developing skills and knowledge related to the construction sector. I hope every pupil took something valuable from this experience that they can use in the future.

"The construction sector is upskilling its workforce to deliver a decarbonised built

↑ The teams with Jamie Hepburn MSP

event was the culmination of a number of heats which saw 300 pupils put their skills to the test.

Whittled down to 100 pupils from 10 schools, the final saw each team undertake more practical challenges, which were marked on a number of criteria including teamwork, understanding and carrying out instructions, working safely and completing tasks.

The 100 finalists arrived with plenty of enthusiasm and, after a close-fought contest with some excellent feedback, the coveted winner's trophy was lifted by George Heriot's School from Edinburgh.

Runners-up spot went to Firrhill High School, also from Edinburgh, while bronze went to the pupils at Beeslack High School in Penicuik. Each team member won gift vouchers, with the schools also receiving a cheque for their CDT department.

"THE PUPILS ENJOYED THE DAY FROM START TO FINISH AND WERE DELIGHTED TO WIN CABEC 2022/2023"

THE FINALISTS

- Armadale Academy
- Beeslack High School
- Castlebrae Community High School
- Firrhill High School
- George Heriot's School
- James Gillespie's High School
- Lasswade High School
- Leith Academy
- Linlithgow High School
- Stewart's Melville College

"CABEC IS A FANTASTIC OPPORTUNITY FOR PUPILS TO GET HANDS-ON WITH A WIDE RANGE OF ACTIVITIES AND CHALLENGES AND INTRODUCE THEM TO STEM-RELATED CAREERS"



environment, making it a critical sector as we move towards our net zero ambitions.

"We therefore need enthusiastic and passionate young people to take opportunities like CABEC and consider construction as a career path."

Christie Wilson from George Heriot's School added: "The pupils enjoyed the day from start to finish and were delighted to win CABEC 2022/2023. I was also extremely proud of their teamwork and communication throughout.

"CABEC is a fantastic opportunity for pupils to get hands-on with a wide range of activities and challenges and introduce them to STEM-related careers.

"The competition is set at the right time for S2 pupils as it encourages them to pick STEM subjects, particularly design and technology."

AN INSPIRING EVENT

From a personal point of view, I thought it was an excellent event and the SECTT team did

a magnificent job. As always, the day went in a flash and the feedback I received from the teachers was heartwarming.

For many, the original CABEC heats had been the first time that classes had been out of college since the pandemic and I was very impressed by all the teams, who worked very hard.

I found the pupils to be extremely engaged and interested and I'm always inspired by their thought processes and how they find ways to approach each challenge and work together to find solutions.

CABEC also shows that we're fortunate to have a fantastically diverse group of challenge providers who are only too willing to share their knowledge and expertise with pupils and teachers.

I'm already looking forward to the heats for the 2023/24 challenge later this year when we can do it all over again! ■



EVENT SPONSORS



This issue's guest columnist says there are plenty of reasons for optimism in the year ahead – and those electrical businesses that have an effective strategy in place will do best when it comes to avoiding any obstacles and reaping the rewards

We've got reasons to be cheerful

WORDS
PAUL McDEVITT
Managing Director,
McDevitt & Co



Paul McDevitt is Managing Director of McDevitt & Co, an experienced business consultancy that helps to inspire people, improve productivity and increase profits in the construction industry. Find out more and contact him at www.mcdevitt.co

In my role as a business improvement consultant in the UK construction industry, I spend a significant amount of time looking at economic forecasts to get a handle on where the economy is heading and how it will impact the industry and my clients specifically.

At this time of year, all business owners and leaders want to look ahead with certainty and optimism, but recent economic reports such as the S&P Global/CIPS UK Construction Purchasing Managers' Index don't make for encouraging reading.

With December's activity slipping below the crucial 50 no change mark to 48.8 for the first time since last August, December saw the steepest fall in activity since the beginning of the pandemic in May 2020 and a similar plummet in pipelines of new work.

Poor demand has seen supply chain managers reducing spending on materials, resulting in the sharpest fall in buying activity for more than two-and-a-half years.

Recent months have also seen construction companies reining back on

recruitment, unconvinced about economic growth prospects in 2023.

Understandably, these headwinds have a significant impact on optimism for the year ahead, but despite all the above I would encourage you **NOT** to be despondent.

DON'T PANIC... STRONG BUSINESSES WILL SURVIVE

I've been around this industry long enough to have come through the great recession of 2008 and the resulting decade of austerity, quickly followed by a pandemic which sent the world economy into a tailspin and from which we are still trying to recover.

However, throughout all these challenges, construction has shown itself

to be incredibly resilient. This industry employs some of the smartest and most innovative people that I've come across in my working life, who always seem to find ways to overcome the obstacles put in front of them.

This shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone, certainly not those SELECT Members who work in the industry and who see the practicality, creativity and technicality that the sector processes.

Yes, there are challenging times ahead and some companies will inevitably struggle and fail, but let's be honest, many of those companies have been poorly run. They have failed to adapt to the new reality, buried their heads in the sand and hoped that everything will turn out alright. Unfortunately, it seldom does.

Economic recessions are like droughts in the animal kingdom – they affect the weak. Those who can anticipate change on the horizon and

plan and adapt accordingly not only tend to survive, they can also thrive.

They don't rely on luck and have instead developed strategies that optimise their resources. They fully understand what the market and their clients want and they consistently and efficiently deliver.

None of this happens by accident. The owners and leaders of these companies make the necessary investments in time to strategise, they develop efficiencies, they're financially prudent, build lasting relationships with their customers and supply chains and, most importantly of all, they look after and invest in their people.

TRAINING AND MARKETING ARE TOO IMPORTANT TO BE CUT

From experience, the first thing that invariably happens is that businesses stop investing in marketing and training, with these two areas always getting cut. My advice is that these are the **LAST** two areas you should be looking to cut back on. If anything, you need to maintain at the very least, but preferably you should be investing and here is why.

In a recession there are still opportunities to be found – you just need to work a little harder to find them. Investing in your marketing helps you reassure current and prospective clients that you're open and ready to do business. While others are cutting back, you're

"POOR DEMAND HAS SEEN SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGERS REDUCING SPENDING ON MATERIALS, RESULTING IN THE SHARPEST FALL IN BUYING ACTIVITY FOR OVER TWO-AND-A-HALF YEARS"

building your profile, which gives clients confidence. The last thing you want to be in this circumstance is anonymous, yet that is exactly what most do.

If you increase your business development activity, i.e. prospecting, you'll be able to identify more opportunities to win work.

There are clients that irrespective of the economic climate need to spend money. A good example of this was through the recent pandemic, the domestic sector saw massive growth as people invested in their homes. Supermarkets and distribution centres etc all saw an upturn in business, and the same is now true of the big oil and energy companies.

The drive towards net zero is another area that will see growing investment over the coming year and beyond as the UK strives to meet its legal obligations. The opportunities are there, you just need to be looking for them.

INSPIRE YOUR TALENTED PEOPLE

The same is true with training. The last thing you want to experience if you find your business in challenging circumstances is realising that your staff aren't fully engaged.



Talented people will always find or create opportunities for themselves and they're usually the first to jump ship if your business shows the first signs that it might be in difficulty.

In times of adversity, you want and need your best people to come to the fore; they're the ones that can best adapt to the new changing environment and can show creativity to make the most out of the situation.

With the current skills shortages and an ageing workforce, **ALL** businesses need to be investing in their people. If you don't commit to their development and show that you value them, one of your competitors certainly will!

The same is true about your working arrangements. The pandemic proved that most staff could work effectively from home, with little or minimal supervision and that productivity doesn't necessarily have to suffer.

That genie isn't going back in the bottle and staff now expect employers to offer flexible working arrangements. If you can't, then your competitors will – or alternatively your people will leave the industry to find one that offers a better work/life balance.

There's no doubt that 2023 will be a challenging year for the construction sector. However, with the right strategy in place, there's no reason why your business can't thrive as others falter. ■

"THE LAST THING YOU WANT TO EXPERIENCE IF YOU FIND YOUR BUSINESS IN CHALLENGING CIRCUMSTANCES IS REALISING YOUR STAFF AREN'T FULLY ENGAGED"

Looking ahead to a year of change

Alan Wilson has joined fellow members of the Construction Leadership Forum (CLF) in a special video to outline their hopes for the industry in 2023.

The SELECT Managing Director is among leaders from across the sector who have revealed their potential improvement areas in the year ahead, driven by the Scottish Construction Accord.

Alan says improving the procurement process is his top of his wish-list for 2023 – and believes the new Accord can help make it happen.

He says: "This will be a really exciting year because it will see the first part of the Accord working in practice, and the important part of that for me is the procurement sector."

"It's really important that we all work together and collaborate to ensure that everyone from specialist sub-contractor to main contractor



client gets together properly and we all ensure that payment retention and good work is shared throughout the whole process."

Ivan McKee, CLF Chair and Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism and Enterprise, also outlines his vision for 2023, revealing:

"Wide-ranging changes are needed across the industry to prepare for the transition to net zero and the new decarbonisation workload, including upskilling the workforce and embedding a fair work culture."

Peter Reekie, CEO of the Scottish Futures Trust, uses the video to reinforce his wish for a greener industry, and says he believes the Accord can be a force for positive change.



He tells viewers: "We have to do things differently and show real leadership on climate change. We need more retrofit, more modern methods of construction, more digitalisation, more and different skills for energy efficiency and embodied carbon resilience and productivity."

Stephen Good, CEO of Built Environment Smarter Transformation (BE-ST), also echoes the need for a greater focus on renewables.

He reveals: "My vision for 2023 is of a built environment that's focused on our net zero transformation, delivering an inclusive and sustainable economic, social and

environmental impact that benefits all the citizens of Scotland.

"I'd like to see us more rapidly adopt and scale up some of the amazing innovation products, processes and systems that already exist in Scotland. We must also work together and collaborate more closely than we've ever done before."

"We also need to move at pace because the climate clock is ticking and we've got a lot of work to do. We need to speed up our efforts and actually treat the climate crisis like a crisis."

Meanwhile, Lynsey Brydson, Head of Digital at BE-ST, says equality and inclusion is also a key priority for 2023.

She said: "We have to address the issue of how we make the industry better for everyone."

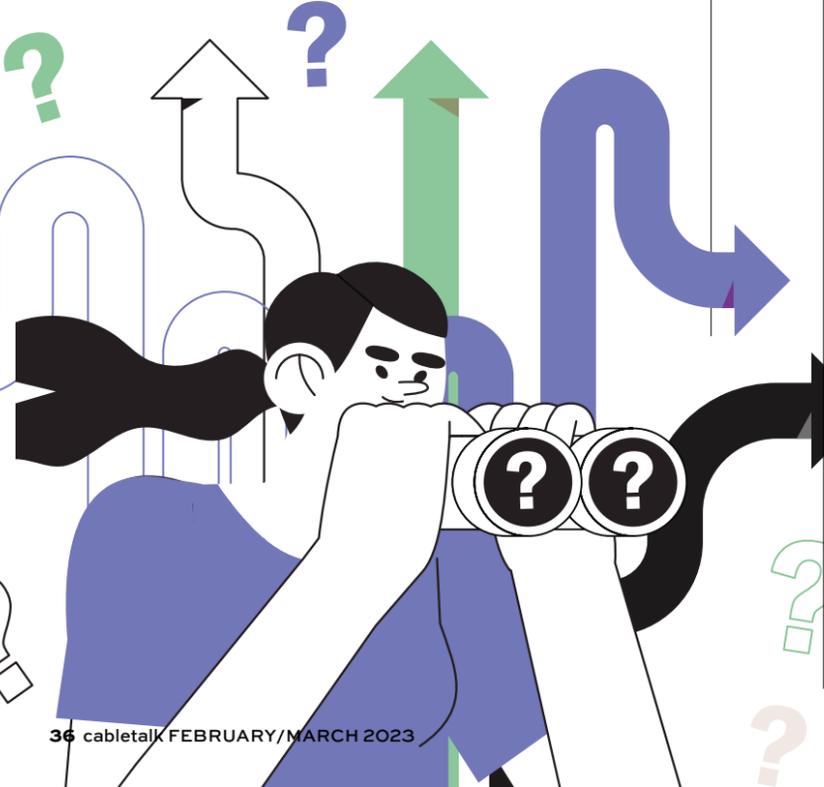
"We know where the issues are and understand the problems and barriers we face, so by working together we'll address them much quicker."

Watch the videos at www.constructionforum.scot



A FOCUS ON IMPROVEMENT

Launched by the CLF last October, the Scottish Construction Accord is a shared commitment to help businesses thrive, enhance working conditions for employees, improve the delivery of construction quality and assist with net zero goals. Driven by a Transformation Action Plan, it highlights the need to improve the "capability and diversity" of the construction workforce, reform procurement practices and increase the use of digital technology and modern methods of construction.



Technical

MORE INFORMATION

For further information and advice please
call our Technical Helpline on 0131 445 9218
or email technicalhelp@select.org.uk

A modern way of training

Technical Advisers try out the new touchscreen technology that will change how we educate people and make courses at The Walled Garden more interactive and fun

WORDS
IAIN MASON
Director of
Membership &
Communications

S ELECT'S Technical team welcomed in the New Year by getting to grips with the early Christmas present that will help transform the way we deliver training.

We told in the last issue of *cabletalk* how the association has invested in a Clevertouch Technologies UX Pro 2 smart screen to enhance our in-person courses.

The technology will see fully interactive courses being delivered in high-definition via the giant 4K touchscreen – and our

Technical experts were only to keen to road-test it in person during a training day at The Walled Garden.

Technical Advisers (TAs) Bruce Findlay, Keith Hagan, Robert McGoogan, Mark McLaughlin and Neil Sim and Consultant Technical Adviser Billy McRobert all put the screen through its paces on 5 January.

Also attending the session were Director of Technical Services Bob Cairney and Training Development Adviser Stuart McKelvie, who had already tested the tech and given it an enthusiastic thumbs-up.

"THE SCREEN IS VERY EASY TO USE AND WILL MAKE TRAINING COURSES MUCH MORE INTERACTIVE AND ENGAGING FOR DELEGATES"

On hand to guide the team through any technical queries were SELECT's IT Systems Administrator Alan Paul and Peter Brown, Product Development Manager at Clevertouch Technologies.

The TAs were given basic training in the technology, which will be used to deliver SELECT training programmes at The Walled Garden over the coming year.

Keith said: "The screen is very easy to use and will make training courses much more interactive and engaging for delegates."

Colleague Robert agreed, adding: "The size, speed and responsiveness of the screen will make presenting much easier and puts next-level training at our fingertips – quite literally."

As well as practising with the screen, TAs also discussed some potential



topics for this year's Toolbox Talks, which will be delivered by the wider team across Scotland in May and June.

Bob said: "The day was a big success and we made significant progress in terms of learning what the touchscreen can do and familiarising ourselves with its many features."

"It was also good to discuss this year's Toolbox Talks and identify the relevant topics that Members will find useful when we hit the road later this year."

Designed by teachers for teachers, the award-winning Clevertouch technology features a host of built-in apps that help to make note-

↑ Familiarisation session attendees (left to right) Alan Paul, Robert McGoogan, Bob Cairney, Bruce Findlay, Peter Brown, Billy McRobert, Stuart McKelvie, Mark McLaughlin, Keith Hagan and Neil Sim

taking, brainstorming and presentation-building simple and intuitive.

The next generation training tool works like a giant whiteboard, and also allows us to screen videos and webinars and deliver traditional PowerPoint presentations – all in high-definition 4K. ■

Guides will help to gauge risk levels

SELECT has produced two new downloadable resources to help Members complete digital risk assessments.

Developed by our Technical team as editable PDFs, the first resource is entitled *Risk assessment for the omission of a surge protective device (SPD)* as permitted in Regulation 443.4.1 and acts as a formal record where the inclusion of protection against transient overvoltages by the installation of an SPD has not been provided because the owner of the installation has declared that any



↑ The resources are available to download

subsequent loss or damage is tolerable and accepts the risk of damage to equipment and any consequential loss.

Also available to download is *Risk assessment for the omission of additional protection by 30mA RCD for socket-outlets with a rated current not exceeding*

32A, which will also help Members keep a record of installations where the exception to Regulation 411.3.3 (ii) has been applied.

Director of Technical Services Bob Cairney said: "These PDFs are designed to be easy to use to help Members compile effective risk assessments. We will continue to respond to feedback and provide further resources as needed."

Both forms can be downloaded from the SELECT website at bit.ly/SPD-RCD

"THESE PDFS ARE DESIGNED TO BE EASY TO USE TO HELP MEMBERS COMPILE EFFECTIVE RISK ASSESSMENTS"



↑ Stuart McKelvie tries out the screen

Training

MORE INFORMATION

To enquire about SELECT's range of training courses, please call 0131 445 5577 or email training@select.org.uk

You've got the option to go online

As part of our commitment to modern learning, our ever-popular Requirements for Electrical Installations programme – AKA course 218 – is now available online as an e-learning module

WORDS
JENNY CRYVANS
Training Manager



DURING the recent Amendment 2 updates, we took into account the positive feedback we'd received about our online training service. It meant that when we updated our programmes, we decided to develop a digital version of course 218, or to give it its full title, SQA Requirements for Electrical Installations to BS 7671:2018+A2:2022 (18th Edition).

Consultant Training Adviser Billy McRobert has duly been working alongside online platform developers Learning Pool Ltd to create an e-learning course that can sit alongside our classroom-based sessions.

This Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) approved

training programme has been designed for qualified electricians looking to update their BS 7671 training.

Suitable for electricians who are responsible for ensuring that electrical installations are installed and commissioned in accordance with current requirements, it's been accredited to Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Level 7 by the SQA.

AIM AND CONTENT

The course aims to provide detailed information on the particular requirements of BS 7671:2018+A2:2022.

To complete it, you must be able to demonstrate knowledge of the standard by completing all the course assessments.

The course is split into two parts – Introduction to BS 7671 (Modules 1-8) and Requirements for Electrical Installations to BS 7671:2018+A2:2022 (Modules 9-12). Modules 1-8 provide a basic introduction to BS 7671 to ensure you can successfully navigate and find key information. This will take around four-and-a-half hours and can be completed in stages.

The second half of the e-learning course covers:

↑ We are making it easier for you to learn and update your knowledge

"YOU MUST BE ABLE TO DEMONSTRATE KNOWLEDGE OF THE STANDARD BY COMPLETING ALL THE COURSE ASSESSMENTS"



COURSES THAT YOU CAN COUNT ON

All our updated BS 7671 courses are credit rated and have been placed on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). This allows us to compare them to similar qualifications throughout the UK. Find out more about the SCQF at www.scqf.org.uk

- **Module 9** – Scope, object and fundamental principles, definitions and assessment of general characteristics
- **Module 10** – Protection for safety
- **Module 11** – Selection and erection of equipment
- **Module 12** – Inspection and testing, special installations or locations and functional requirements.

These modules should take around eight hours to complete and, again, can be done in stages.

FURTHER DETAILS

The course doesn't cover the detailed requirements for inspection and testing of new or existing installations. To complete it, you'll need access to Requirements for Electrical Installations (18th Edition Wiring Regulations) BS 7671:2018+A2:2022, i.e. 'the brown book'.

The course must be completed within one month from the date of booking and you'll have two attempts to successfully pass each module.

There are multiple-choice assessments at the end of each module which you must pass before the next one unlocks. If you don't pass any of modules 9-12, the course will take you back to revise the sections you failed.

The course fee for SELECT Members is £150 + VAT per person. To book, visit www.select.org.uk and search for 'BS 7671 training'. Alternatively, e-mail training@select.org.uk or you can call us on 0131 445 5577. ■

What's happening in 2023

SELECT'S Training team has been busy preparing a range of new activity for 2023. Here's a quick overview of what's coming up in the next few months:

Electric vehicle charging course

SELECT is currently developing its own electric vehicle (EV) charging course which will include a brief overview on the maintenance of EV charging units. This will be an SQA Customised Award and will be delivered over one training day, with pre-study time required prior to the course date.

Scottish Building Standards course

This course is being reviewed to take account of updated Building Standards Division guidance resulting from the consultation on Section 6 of the Technical Handbook. Information about the recently updated Certificate of Construction available through SELECTcerts will also be incorporated into the course.

Solar PV training

Due to a high volume of demand, SELECT is exploring the possibility of providing solar photovoltaic (PV) training for Members. This will be delivered through an external training provider, with further information available shortly.

Heriot-Watt short courses and masterclasses

A meeting took place at the end of 2022 with Heriot-Watt University to discuss a short management course to replace the Effective Manager Programme previously run in partnership with Edinburgh Napier University. We hope to issue an update soon.

Fire, Emergency & Security Systems (FESS) course

Suitable training is being developed to support those undertaking the new Level 2 Fire, Emergency & Security Systems (FESS) assessments for the awarding of an ECS Skills Card. An e-learning course has been created by an external training provider and is currently under review.

↑ If you have any questions about these or other SELECT Training matters, please email training@select.org.uk or call the team on 0131 445 5577.

Industry insight

It's time to plan your digital tax destiny

HMRC has announced a delay to the launch of Making Tax Digital for Income Tax Self-Assessment, which has now been pushed back to 2026. So what could it mean for your business?

THE further delay to making tax digital (MTD) for income tax self assessment (ITSA) has come as no great surprise.

The plan for the self-employed and small businesses to file their tax returns digitally was initially meant to be implemented in April 2023, and was then delayed due to the pandemic.

Given the lack of available software and proper testing, it was always going to be difficult to introduce it in April 2024, and no doubt many Members will be relieved they now have more time to prepare.

To help you lay the groundwork when things do change, here are a few helpful pointers...

WHAT IS THE NEW MTD START DATE?

The scheme will be launched in a phased approach based on two new income thresholds. So businesses and self-employed individuals with income over £50,000 will join first in April 2026, with those earning between £30,000 and £50,000 phased in from April 2027.

This gives smaller businesses with lower incomes an extra year to prepare for the switch, with individuals able to join voluntarily beforehand to eliminate errors and save time managing their tax affairs.

WHY HAS IT BEEN DELAYED AGAIN?

HMRC says the main reason is to relieve pressure

WORDS
JOHN MCGHEE
Director of Finance &
Operations, SELECT



↑ It's important to be prepared for the tax changes that are coming

on businesses caused by current economic uncertainty. HMRC believes a more gradual implementation will give taxpayers, accountants and the UK Government more time to prepare for digital working methods.

It also says the phased approach takes into account the difficulties faced by those with lower incomes.

SHOULD I STILL WORRY ABOUT MTD?

Most financial experts are advising that you should be making changes now, rather than waiting for when MTD is legally required from April 2026 onwards.

"BUSINESSES AND SELF-EMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS WITH INCOME OVER £50,000 WILL JOIN FIRST IN APRIL 2026, WITH THOSE EARNING BETWEEN £30,000 AND £50,000 PHASED IN FROM APRIL 2027"

e.g. more effective tax payments or minimising the impact of seasonal fluctuations. The change aims to address criticism of the existing rules and reduce confusion by ensuring that all businesses work to the same system.

HAS THE NEW MTD PENALTY POINTS SYSTEM BEEN POSTPONED?

This system aims to make penalties fairer and simpler for taxpayers by bringing together penalties for late submission and payments for both ITSA and VAT.

This was set to begin in January 2023, but is now only in place for MTD for VAT, with the MTD for ITSA system beginning in either April 2026 or 2027, depending on the taxpayer's income.

Once the scheme is live, HMRC also plans to introduce a new penalty system for taxpayers outside of the scope.

WHAT ABOUT MTD FOR CORPORATION TAX?

HMRC ran a consultation with companies, agents, professional bodies and software developers, but no announcement has been made about MTD for Corporation Tax (CT).

However, it is expected that businesses will be expected to keep digital accounting records about CT, make quarterly summary updates of income and expenditure to HMRC and eventually submit CT returns digitally.

IN CONCLUSION

Those Members affected by MTD for ITSA now have longer to go over their accounting processes and see how the legislation could improve the way they work.

But don't let the postponement make you complacent – it's better to take control over your digital destiny **NOW** so you're well prepared when the taxman does come knocking. ■

➔ Find out more at www.gov.uk by searching for 'making tax digital'.

WHAT IS MTD FOR ITSA?

When it does come into effect, MTD will see 4.2 million self-employed workers and small businesses filing tax returns multiple times a year.

Designed to increase efficiency and cut fraud, the scheme was first announced in 2015 and will require quarterly, rather than annual reporting of self-assessment tax returns through MTD-compatible software.

Firms will then have an estimated tax calculation based on the information provided to help budget for tax. At the end of the year, any non-business information can be added and then finalise tax affairs using MTD-compatible software. This will replace the need for a self-assessment tax return.

The scheme is part of the UK Government's wider ambition to fully digitalise the tax system and HMRC claims it will reduce the burden of tax returns for small businesses.

THE need to serve notices during construction projects is very much the norm, and indeed a necessity. Take payment – the legislation governing the payment in construction contracts means that a contractor’s entitlement to payment tends to flow from the payment notice issued by an employer. A notice not issued correctly can result in the employer being automatically liable for whatever sum is claimed by the contractor, whether they agree it is due or not!

It is not just employers who can find themselves in trouble as the result of a defective notice. In most contracts that I see, there will be a requirement of some sort of notice (e.g. an early warning) to be served before the contractor is entitled to, for example, a variation or an extension of time. A failure to comply with such notice requirements can result in contractors being denied their entitlement.

So how do you make sure your notices don’t cause you trouble? Here are my top tips:

- **Get to know your contract:** make sure you fully understand the requirements of your contract. Particularly consider when notices are required, who they should be sent to (including the correct addresses/ emails) and from, and any time limits.
- **Highlight the sum due and how it is calculated:** to avoid falling foul of construction legislation, all payment notices must show the “sum considered to be due” and “the basis on which it is



↑ Make sure that you get the legal side right when you’re taking on a project

Take notice of what the law requires

When it comes to serving notices, there are steps you can follow to make sure you don’t end up out of pocket

WORDS
REBECCA BARRASS
Senior Associate



MACROBERTS
LLP

“A NOTICE NOT ISSUED CORRECTLY CAN RESULT IN THE EMPLOYER BEING AUTOMATICALLY LIABLE FOR WHATEVER SUM IS CLAIMED BY THE CONTRACTOR, WHETHER THEY AGREE IT IS DUE OR NOT!”

calculated”. It is not enough to say “you are due £1,000”, it must be clear how you calculated that figure.

- **Clarity is key:** The court will judge a notice by looking at how it would be read to the “reasonable recipient”. Is the notice clear and unambiguous?

- **Don’t rely on day-to-day communication:** most contracts require notices to be issued in a particular way (i.e. by post or to a specific email address). Don’t rely on general statements in day-to-day correspondence to act as notices. Notices should be clearly identified and unambiguous. ■

Rebecca Barrass is a Senior Associate in MacRoberts’ Construction Department. MacRoberts advises on all elements of construction contracts and disputes.

LEGAL HELPLINE
0141 303 1111

As a Member of SELECT, you have access to the Legal Helpline operated by MacRoberts LLP. This helpline covers advice and assistance on commercial, contractual and employment matters under Scots law which concern your business.



A FRESH LOOK AT RETENTIONS

Everyone is aware of our failure as an industry to get to grips with the issue of retentions. However, there now seems to be a clear determination to find a solution – or at least some compromise.

The Scottish Government has released Policy Note CPN 3/2022 as part of the *Client Guide to Construction Projects*, which is an attempt to get the public sector to take a more pragmatic approach to retentions, e.g. by looking at amounts and periods of time.

Take a look at Chapter 17 at bit.ly/gov-book and you’ll see the steps being taken to ease the retention burden, which you should discuss with public sector clients. One of the guide’s good suggestions is that it’s unfair to hold on to retentions for the early packages on a major project, like groundworks or steelwork, when completion might be 24 months after these packages are completed on site.

Despite this encouraging move, do I think any local authority in Scotland will have the motivation to drop retention completely? Unfortunately my answer is still no.

A GUIDE TO GOOD MANAGEMENT

Thank you to all Members who took part in the recent CICV cashflow and payments survey, which will help us work with the Scottish Government to look at ways to deal with these issues.

The next big task is developing a Best Practice Guide for construction organisations. A number of experienced colleagues have helped put it together and we hope it will be published by the time you read this. The guide is aimed at improving the commercial management of your projects, and I’m convinced that a number of issues that result in construction and payment disputes can be resolved. Watch this space!

How to solve payment problems

WORDS
LEN BUNTON
FRICS FCI Arb,
HON FRIAS
Contract Expert



Cashflow concerns are a major issue for our industry, but don’t let your mental health suffer. Support is available right now

A SELECT Member recently asked me about my work as a consultant and specifically how I deal with the continual stream of payment and cashflow issues. Well, for a start it’s my job and is what I’m trained to do, backed up by more years of experience than I care to think about!

But above all, I’m a great believer in trying to get matters resolved without recourse to adjudication and in the past few months I’ve been encouraged by the increasing willingness of parties to use third-party involvement to work out a compromise.

However, before Christmas, I was disappointed to encounter

a real build-up of payment issues – or more accurately non-payment issues – and regrettably I feel this situation is only going to get worse. The level of insolvencies in England and Wales is absolutely shocking and one incredibly sad and worrying side effect of payment issues is the impact it can have on mental health.

If you’re currently going through money worries, it’s important to know that help **IS** out there – try the brilliant people at www.electricalcharity.org for a start.

A whole wealth of support is also available in the resource from the CICV called *Where to find a helping hand*.

You can download the advice guide now for free at www.cicvforum.co.uk/downloads and you’ll soon realise that you’re not alone. ■

↓ The guide can help you through tough times



AND FINALLY...

I make no apologies for hammering this home but

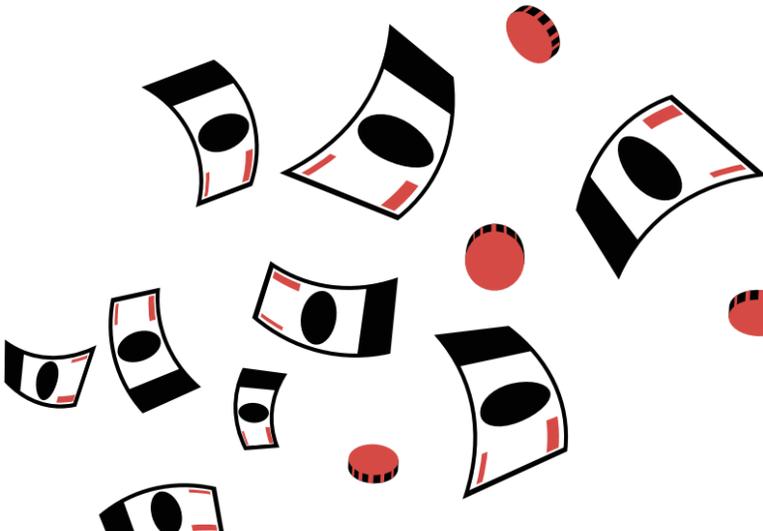
PLEASE ensure you have a payment schedule in your contract for **EVERY** project in 2023. This is the

agreement with an employer or contractor for when you put in your application, the due date, the final date for

payment and the date when a payless notice has to be issued. It’s not rocket science – just common sense!

If you or your staff overspent during the festive season, our Associate Member is here with some advice to help you beat the New Year financial blues...

Don't be crushed by cash



COST OF LIVING SQUEEZE CONTINUES

Festive overspending can really test household budgets that were already spread thin. The ongoing cost of living crisis, with rising rent and mortgage payments on top of energy bills and the cost of food, means it's easy to see how many of us find ourselves in debt.

A report by independent think-tank the Resolution Foundation suggests that the current cost of living crisis will continue in 2023.

The Foundation warned that despite expectations for the rate of inflation to start falling in 2023, this would be offset by a range of living standards challenges, including higher energy bills, rising personal taxes and soaring mortgage costs.

As a result, typical after-housing costs incomes for working-age families are set to fall by 3% in 2022-23 and by 4% in 2023-24 – a 7% fall over two years. This fall in income will be equivalent to £2,100 for a typical family.

DEBT AND MENTAL HEALTH

According to the mental health charity Mind, money worries can impact mental health and affect how people manage their money.

Worrying about cash can lead to mental health

issues like stress and anxiety. At the same time, the stigma around debt may make people feel isolated.

Furthermore, people suffering with their mental health can experience increased impulsivity and memory problems, which makes it harder for them to keep on top of their finances, increasing the likelihood of financial difficulty. So it can all start to feel like a vicious circle.

It may all sound negative – but this is where the good news and the support available comes in.

GET YOUR FINANCES BACK ON TRACK

Sorting out your finances can feel like an overwhelming task. But by following some simple steps, things can start to get under control:

- Put a budget in place – understand what money there is coming in and going out.
- Cut back on the luxuries – spending more money than is coming in doesn't work, so identifying areas where cutbacks can be made can be really effective. Simple actions like making lunch at home can make a difference.
- Find cheaper alternatives – save money by shopping around for a new mortgage and utility deals.
- Manage debt – set up a standing order to pay off debts each month, focusing on the debts with the highest interest rates.
- Add money management as part of a routine – allocate a set amount of time to think about any financial tasks like monitoring the budget or paying bills.

There are several free, debt advice charities such as Step Change that can help with getting finances back on track – check them out at www.stepchange.org

SUPPORT FOR YOU AND YOUR TEAM

Financial worries can affect your employees and lead to absence or presenteeism, but often sympathetic, impartial support and advice may be all that's needed.

"PEOPLE SUFFERING WITH THEIR MENTAL HEALTH CAN EXPERIENCE INCREASED IMPULSIVITY AND MEMORY PROBLEMS, WHICH MAKES IT HARDER FOR THEM TO KEEP ON TOP OF THEIR FINANCES"



Employees of SELECT Member firms who are on the ECIS Private Medical Insurance (PMI) scheme with Bupa can access the Employee Assistance Programme, a free, confidential telephone service to support staff with issues impacting their wellbeing and work performance.

The service is available 24/7, with qualified experts able to assist employees with practical advice and an online resource offering self-help topics to manage a range of issues.

HOW ECIS CAN HELP

ECIS has been helping people get great healthcare cover for their needs since 1980 and is committed to helping SELECT Members and their businesses.

Its independence means ECIS is not tied to just one insurer. So, for example, if the Bupa scheme isn't the right fit for you and your staff, ECIS will search for a PMI product that is.

If you're thinking of a PMI policy for your employees, or if you would like ECIS to review your current arrangements, speak to the ECIS team by calling **0330 221 0241**, visit them at www.ecins.co.uk or email ecis@ecins.co.uk

WORDS
VICKI LESLIE
Client Relationship
Manager, EC
Insurance Services



The devils in the detail

HMRC has published draft guidance ahead of the implementation of reforms to research and development (R&D) tax relief later this year. As is often the case, it pays to read the small print, which is why our Associate Member has flagged up five points to keep in mind come April...

WORDS
JENNY TRAGNER
Director & Head of
Policy, ForrestBrown



ForrestBrown
R&D tax credit consultancy

THE reforms to R&D tax relief that come into effect on 1 April 2023 include things like bringing pure mathematics

research within the scope of relief and including data and cloud computing as qualifying costs.

Other changes include restricting expenditure on some overseas R&D activities and a package of measures to target abuse and improve compliance.

HMRC's draft guidance seeks to clarify some technical aspects of how the reforms will work in practice – so here's five things to flag up before the final legislation is taken forward in the Spring Finance Bill.

'WHOLLY UNREASONABLE' OVERSEAS R&D

The first section of the guidance sets out what will qualify as UK expenditure and qualifying overseas expenditure (QOE) in future. Three factors must apply for an activity to be QOE:

- That conditions necessary for the R&D are not present in the UK
- That the conditions are present in the location where the R&D is undertaken
- That it would be wholly unreasonable to replicate the conditions in the UK.

The guidance explores in more detail what might constitute 'wholly unreasonable' with the use of some interesting examples. One scenario would be where there is a relevant testing facility in the UK, but capacity isn't available in the

timeframe required so the company chooses to test overseas.

This example is extended later to explain one of the excluded factors (cost): if time pressures mean that R&D cannot wait until a new facility is developed in the UK, the theoretical possibility that – at great cost – the facility might be developed to enable activity to take place in the UK, will not prevent the expenditure being QOE.

But the first of our draft guidance 'devils' is to be found in the discussion of externally provided workers (EPWs).

It is not just overseas EPWs who may be caught and excluded when this legislation is introduced. Whether UK or overseas, companies will first need to check whether the amounts to be included for each EPW are subject to UK PAYE and NIC.

If not, the EPW expenditure may still qualify if the amount is QOE, as determined by the 'wholly unreasonable' test outlined above.

For unconnected EPWs, in the case of a UK-based EPW operating via a personal service company and extracting funds by way of dividend rather than a PAYE salary, it is likely that expenditure would be excluded.

CLAIM NOTIFICATIONS FOR REPEAT CLAIMANTS

The section of the draft guidance tackling claim notification includes examples to show when this new requirement

will apply. This turns up something new as the guidance refers to calendar years, not accounting periods as many may have assumed. This makes the actual filing dates of R&D tax claims very important for determining whether a notification is required, rather than simply the financial year to which it applies.

Another notable detail on notification is confirmation that, if an R&D claim is submitted for a period before the notification date, no separate notification will be required, i.e. if a company files their claim within six months of their year-end, they don't need to notify.

BEWARE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OVERLOAD

Additional information required because of the changes will be submitted via a form to be made available on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) from April 2023. But in advance of unveiling the form itself, the guidance includes a lengthy list of information fields which will need to be filled out.

The list includes a separate figure for qualifying indirect activities (QIAs),

stipulations on the number of case studies required based on a sliding scale of projects and total expenditure covered, and PAYE scheme references for EPWs.

DON'T LET YOUR JUDGEMENT BE CLOUDED

The guidance confirms that for accounting periods starting on or after 1 April 2023, data licence and cloud computing services costs can be qualifying expenditure when employed in activities which directly contribute to the resolution of scientific or

"HMRC'S DRAFT GUIDANCE SEEKS TO CLARIFY SOME TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF HOW THE REFORMS WILL WORK IN PRACTICE"

technological uncertainty. There are some useful examples of when the general exclusions for reselling and/or publishing data would not apply.

On data licences, the guidance clarifies that data that has been gathered by a business – rather than licenced – is not qualifying expenditure. However, it is worth remembering that the staff costs of gathering the data are likely to qualify under the staff costs category.

DELETION POWER IS HIDDEN DEVIL

Even worse than the devil in the detail is the devil that is nowhere to be found in the guidance – in this case, the absence of any reference to HMRC's new deletion powers.

These were included in the draft legislation published on 'L-day' last summer and give HMRC the power to remove R&D claims made in error. This falls outside the existing enquiry process, leaving companies with no recourse or right of appeal. More detail is still required here, including examples of when and how this power will be exercised. ■

As a valued Associate Member, ForrestBrown is the UK's leading specialist R&D tax consultancy. Find out more at www.forrestbrown.co.uk



SJIB Bulletin



↑ The holiday will fall in May and it will be paid at basic rate

CORONATION MEANS AN EXTRA BANK HOLIDAY

The UK Government has proclaimed an additional bank holiday to mark the coronation of King Charles III later this year.

This holiday will fall on Monday 8 May 2023, following the coronation itself on Saturday 6 May.

To accommodate this, the SJIB National Board has agreed that this day will be acknowledged as an additional holiday for all operatives and that it will be paid at basic rate in accordance with the provisions of SJIB National Working Rule (NWR) 11.1.

This NWR means that, in order to qualify for payment, operatives must work a full normal day on the working days preceding and following the holiday.

For more information, scan the QR code (below).



ECS Card renewal is made easy

In the near future, the SJIB will send you an email six months prior to your ECS Card expiring, advising you that your card will be due for renewal soon.

The purpose of this is of course to remind you, and also to give you a heads-up ahead of time to allow you to complete any training that may be required in order to renew your ECS Card.

The notification email will go to the email address that we have on our system for you – most likely the one you used for your prior application.

If you think that we may hold an old email address and wish to inform us of a new one, please email

generalenquiries@select.org.uk with your name, National Insurance number and current email address.

Please be aware that the maximum turnaround time for ECS Card applications is 21 days upon receipt of application and payment.

If applications are completed online and you meet all of the criteria before applying for the ECS Card, turnaround times are usually much quicker. ■

ABOUT SJIB

SJIB regulates relations between employers and employees engaged in the Scottish electrotechnical industry. To find out more about SJIB and its work, visit our website at www.sjib.org.uk

WE'RE HERE TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS

We'd like to remind Members that ECS Card applications are non-refundable, so please make sure to read the criteria

of your chosen card before applying. If in doubt, or if you require any more information, please contact our friendly

team using the contact form on our website by scanning the QR code (right) or give us a call on **0131 445 5577**.



National wage rates are increased

THE UK Government has announced that the National Minimum Wage (NMW) and National Living Wage (NLW) rates will increase on 1 April 2023.

These new rates are as follows:

AGE	PAY PER HOUR
23 and over	£10.42 (NLW)
21 to 22	£10.18
18 to 20	£7.49
16 to 17	£5.28
Apprentice	£5.28

The SJIB has agreed contractual rates which electrical installation apprentices should be paid.

The current SJIB rates of pay can be viewed by scanning QR code 1 (right) and have been effective from 2 January 2023. For more information, please scan QR code 2 (right).



↑ It's important that you keep up to date with the correct wage rates for workers

WEBSITE PAGE WILL KEEP YOU RIGHT ON LEVELS OF PAY

A new dedicated page has been created on our website which details the wage rates and allowances for 2023.

To view this page, please scan QR code 3 (right). Please pay particular attention to the Apprentice Rates as some of them have been adjusted to take account of the impending changes to the National Minimum Wage rates.

SHORT CUTS

01



↑ Current SJIB rates of pay

02



↑ SJIB circular on rates of pay

03



↑ Wage rates and allowances for 2023



↑ Our staff deserve respect as they deal with your queries

NO PLACE FOR BAD BEHAVIOUR

A reminder that aggression towards SJIB and SELECT staff will not be tolerated and any such behaviour will be escalated to employers.

We issued an alert before Christmas following a number of abusive calls from operatives, including one where a young staff member was left extremely upset after being sworn at.

Calls to both the SJIB and SELECT are now monitored and staff will end conversations if they consider the caller to be aggressive or offensive.

Fiona Harper, The

Secretary of the SJIB, said: "While most callers are pleasant and appreciate the hard work carried out by staff, we have still encountered some unpleasant incidents.

"Our staff have the right to carry out their job in peace and any instances of swearing, threats, personal verbal abuse and derogatory remarks must be addressed. If abuse from an individual persists, the SJIB and SELECT will consider escalating the matter to their employer."

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SECTT Update



↑ L-R Barrie McKay, Craig Johnston, Craig Fairweather, Miguel Gomez and Iain McBean

Talented Craig picks up some top prizes

S KILL ELECTRIC winner Craig Fairweather picked up more prizes from the SECTT team at a special presentation day also attended by his lecturer and employer.

The 4th year electrical apprentice, who scooped gold in this year's prestigious competition in November, was presented with his prizes at Linkwood Technology

Centre at UHI Moray on 7 December.

Among the goodies was a Megger multi-function tester, a full-quality toolkit with pliers, screwdrivers and cable rod set, an iPad and an Amazon voucher for £250 from SECTT.

The gifts were handed over by SECTT Training & Development Manager Barrie McKay, SECTT Senior Training Officer Craig Johnston, UHI Moray lecturer

↓ Craig in action at the SkillELECTRIC contest in November



Iain McBean and Miguel Gomez from Craig's employer, McDonald & Munro.

After receiving his prizes Craig, 23, said: "I'm delighted to have won the gold medal against some really top quality contestants and want to thank UK Skills for putting on a great event which was great to be part of."

"I also want to thank Iain and everyone at McDonald & Munro for giving me the

"TO BE CROWNED THE BEST ELECTRICAL APPRENTICE IN WHOLE OF THE UK AND NORTHERN IRELAND IS A GREAT ACHIEVEMENT AND CRAIG SHOULD BE VERY PROUD"

WE CAN ALL BE PROUD OF THESE SCOTTISH SUCCESS STORIES

Craig's recent victory comes hot on the heels of other Scottish successes in the SkillELECTRIC competition.

In 2019, the silver medal was clinched by Lewis Sim, who was an apprentice with McDonald & Munro and attended Moray College Technology Centre.

Bronze went to Darren Kerr of Prime Electrical Group, who

learned his trade at New College Lanarkshire, Motherwell Campus.

The year before, Rhys Boni took gold, much to the delight of employer John Hogarth Ltd and lecturers at Borders College.

The runner-up was another Scot, Paul Anderson, who was employed by McGill & Co Ltd and attended Dundee and Angus College.



confidence to believe I had a chance in the competition."

Iain, Lecturer in Electrical Installation at UHI Moray in New Elgin, added:

"We're very proud of Craig's achievement. From day one, he's been dedicated to his studies and his attitude and commitment have been second to none."

"To be crowned the best electrical apprentice in whole of the UK and Northern Ireland is a great achievement and Craig should be very proud, as are we all at UHI Moray."

Craig, who was educated at Elgin Academy and has worked for SELECT Member firm McDonald & Munro since February 2018, won the top prize at the final at

"THE OVERALL QUALITY PRODUCED WITHIN THE SCOTTISH HEATS WAS OUTSTANDING THIS YEAR"

↑ ABOUT SECTT
SECTT manages high-quality training on behalf of the SJIB. To find out more about SECTT and its work, call **0131 445 5659**, email admin@sectt.org.uk or visit www.sectt.org.uk

Middlesbrough College on 16 and 17 November.

Organised by National Electrotechnical Training (NET) in partnership with WorldSkills UK, SkillELECTRIC sees the UK's best electrical students and apprentices compete for the chance to represent their country at EuroSkills and WorldSkills events around the globe.

We told in the last issue how Craig held off the challenge from seven other competitors, including three fellow Scots, with the runner-up spot going to Andrew Horne from SELECT Member firm A Campbell Electrical Services in Stornoway, Lewis.

Craig Johnston, who is

also a judge at UK Skills, said: "The overall quality produced within the Scottish heats was outstanding this year."

"Craig approached the competition in an organised and methodical way and this resulted in an excellent standard of work. He was a well-deserved winner and we'd like to wish him all the best for the future."

Miguel Gomez, Director at McDonald & Munro, which is based in Moray, added: "We'd like to congratulate Craig on his amazing achievement."

"We knew it was in his ability to do well in the competition and everyone is delighted that he came home with the gold medal." ■

TOOLKITS ARE A GREAT GIFT

SECTT has once again teamed up with the generous folk at Edmundson Electrical to distribute free toolkits to 1st Stage apprentices.

SECTT Training & Development Manager Barrie McKay recently met up with Edmundson Branch Manager Alan Angus to hand out the essential equipment at UHI Moray, under the watchful eye of lecturer Iain McBean. The giveaway is just one of many being carried out as part of the partnership, which is being run for the second year and will see SECTT and Edmundson deliver more than 950 toolkits to this year's intake to set them up for their careers.

Barrie said: "This gift is a great starting toolkit for all our new starts and fits with the Scottish Joint Industry Board (SJIB) tool list that all learners should aim to achieve over their apprenticeship."



↑ The apprentices received their free toolkits

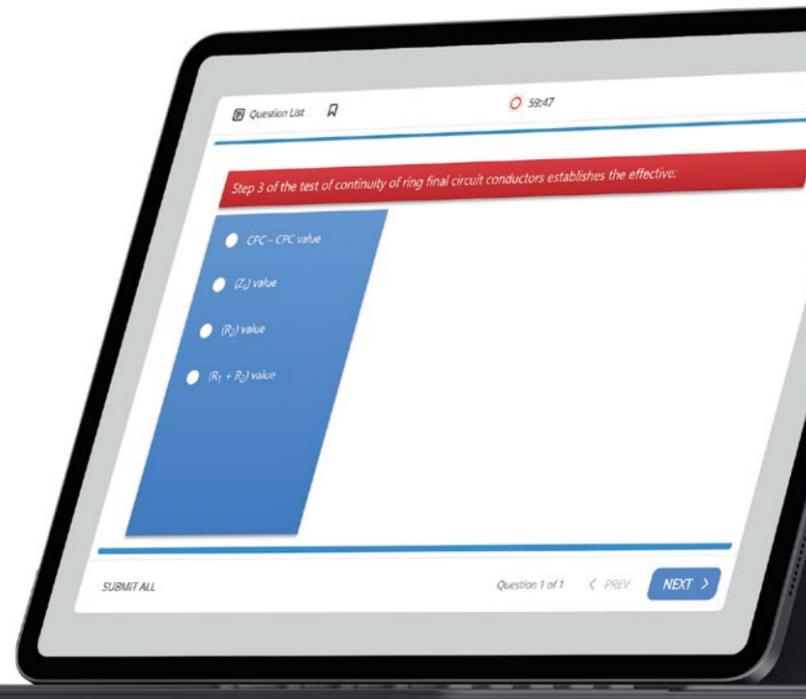
Reviews are changing for the better

SELECT Members may have seen a change in the way SECTT Training Officers now review apprentices and adult trainees. The new process has come into effect after Skills Development Scotland (SDS) reduced the maximum permitted time between progress reviews from 26 weeks to 13 weeks. Barrie McKay, SECTT Training & Development Manager, explained: “Although SECTT always conducted more reviews than were mandated, we decided to use this enforced change to reinforce our commitment to providing the highest quality of training and support for all apprentices and adult trainees. “We will still be carrying out all progress reviews that we conducted previously. However, for the additional reviews we will be providing some additional information to ensure that all reviews are as meaningful as possible to the apprentice, adult trainee and employer.” The changes mean that a scorecard will now be

introduced in 1st Stage to evaluate the development of the apprentice and adult trainee and measure their performance against specific tasks and criteria. Training Officers will also request that each learner completes a scorecard at specific times throughout their training. This scorecard will track the apprentice and adult trainee from the start of their training right through to the Final Integrated Competence Assessment (FICA) and provide employers with a comprehensive overview of potential training gaps. During the 2nd and 3rd Stages of training, information will be documented on progress reviews, including evidence from the learners’ site work, which will be documented in the Site

“FOR THE ADDITIONAL REVIEWS WE WILL BE PROVIDING SOME ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TO ENSURE THAT ALL REVIEWS ARE AS MEANINGFUL AS POSSIBLE TO THE APPRENTICE, ADULT TRAINEE AND EMPLOYER”

SECTT is committed to high quality training and assessments



The new process will help manage and monitor performance

ePortfolio. This will highlight any areas of gaps in experience.

Barrie added: “In the third year of training, the SECTT Training Officer will provide the apprentice or adult trainee with a presentation on FICA and explain what they must achieve to progress through the electrical programme.

“This will provide them with the opportunity to accumulate critical experience and knowledge.

“Upon successfully passing inspection and testing and finishing all relevant site ePortfolios during their third year of apprenticeship, apprentices and adult trainees will then become eligible to take the FICA.

“The SECTT Training Officer will then host a more in-depth presentation on FICA and ask the apprentice to discuss with their employer where any gaps in training may lie. This will allow enough time for employers to organise suitable training before taking the FICA.”

To ensure adequate preparation for the FICA, SECTT has also developed specific coursework to help apprentices and adult trainees consider potential issues.

This, combined with the ongoing Skills Scan scorecard, will allow learners and their employers to determine if they are ready for going forward to the FICA.

For further details, contact your local Training Officer. ■

THE TALENT OF TOMORROW

Callum Wallace

NAME: Callum Wallace
AGE: 20
POSITION: 3rd Stage apprentice
WORKS: Grande Solar and Electrical within Grande Construction
STUDIES AT: Fife College, Glenrothes
HOBBIES: Football

WHAT MADE YOU THINK OF BECOMING AN ELECTRICIAN?
 I did a bit of electrical engineering at college but at 16 I felt I was a bit young to do that. I wanted to go into the electrics trade though so I got an apprenticeship instead, which I really enjoy. I love being out and about and seeing a job well done – I wouldn’t want to be in an office. It’s also great financially because you get paid while going to college.

WAS IT DIFFICULT TO GET AN APPRENTICESHIP?
 No – my grandad owns the construction company! He advised me to do the engineering course, but I preferred an apprenticeship.

HOW HAVE YOU FOUND IT?
 It’s been great. I like the mix between work and college, and actually it’s a bit of a break when you go to college. There’s an extension going on at the hotel where we’re currently working in Kirkcaldy, so we’re going through the stages of a new build, planning it out and



seeing it through. We do solar panels and put up to 200 panels on the hotel roof. There’s me, my journeyman and another apprentice and it’s great working together.

WAS THE COLLEGE TRAINING WHAT YOU EXPECTED? WHAT DO YOU ENJOY THE MOST AND WHAT’S THE MOST CHALLENGING?
 I knew we’d be in the workshop at times, but I didn’t really come in with any expectations. I enjoy college a lot. First year had quite a lot of variety and second year was mostly the project and learning to do things properly and understand the sites. Maths wasn’t my favourite part because it’s harder.

HOW ABOUT WORKING ON SITE?
 I already knew most of the people who worked for my grandad – they’ve known me since I was a child! As for the work, the things you do every day are obviously easier. Things like diagrams and more technical stuff are where you need more help, but when you’re running your normal lights and sockets, it’s pretty easy.

HOW HELPFUL HAVE SECTT AND YOUR TRAINING OFFICERS BEEN?
 Me and Davey Frew, my Training Officer, support the same football team, so we get on well! If I ever need help with anything work-wise, I can text Davey or phone him and he always replies. The lecturers at the college are great as well and everyone has been really helpful.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?
 Hopefully I’ll have my own company and do well. ■



ProZone

Medal for sustainable success

The Scolmore Group has been recognised for its sustainability efforts with a bronze medal awarded by EcoVadis.

Scolmore ranked in the top 50% of all participants in the global initiative, based on its aggregate score across four key appraisal areas – environment, labour and human rights, ethics and sustainable procurement.

Manuela Rubino Courtney, Group Legal and Compliance Manager, said: “We are honoured to have been awarded a bronze medal in recognition of our achievements.

“To have earned this status in our first-ever submission is testimony to the commitment and efforts of our teams to embed corporate sustainability into the culture, strategy and day-to-day operation across the Scolmore Group of companies.

“This achievement also signals to our customers that we are the right partner to support their own sustainability drive.”

Find out more about The Scolmore Group at www.scolmore.com



The firm has been rewarded for its efforts

SPRITE GETS LIGHTS RIGHT

Sprite is a range of recessed TRIAC dimmable LED downlights with CTA switch from Ovia.

These IP54-rated aluminium downlights

are supplied with TRIAC dimmable drivers which are pre-wired with a Fast Fit Flow connector or three-in-one multi-function dimming option for quick installation.

There are four sizes available – 3”, 5”, 6” and 8” diameter – and a choice of 10W, 13W, 18W,

25W and 35W versions, to cover a wide range of installation types and requirements. They have a five-year warranty.

The E-Sprite range of recessed LED downlights with CTA switch are eco commercial downlights that are available in 9W,

15W, 25W or 30W. These IP20 rated downlights are supplied with a CTA switch as standard.

The full range is in the Ovia Issue 4 catalogue which can be downloaded at www.oviauk.com and the Scolmore Group app. Watch the video at bit.ly/ct_ovia



More than 300 streetlights have been replaced

New lighting saves cash for university

SIGNIFY has partnered with a university to replace more than 300 streetlights with energy-efficient outdoor LED lighting, generating significant cost savings.

The world leader in lighting teamed up with the University of Cambridge’s Estates Division to illuminate its West Cambridge site with Philips TownTune luminaires.

With more than 300 new and upgraded lights, the project was delivered in six months and will provide an improved night-time experience for the users of the site. In addition, the new LEDs require less maintenance time. Philips TownTune luminaires now light the campus’s roads, paths and car parks as part of a site-wide development to

provide consistency of design, improve wayfinding and reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions. In addition, the luminaires have an upward light output ratio of zero, minimising sky glow and the impact on the night sky.

Each of the new luminaires is equipped with a unique QR code connected to the Signify Service Tag application. Site managers can scan this code to access documentation and data, configure the luminaire directly at the installation site, and access the latest spare part information. The Service Tag application also supports asset management data, allowing organisations to document information to better manage lighting assets.

Find out more about Signify at www.signify.com

CONTACT OUR TEAM TO SHOWCASE YOUR GREAT NEW PRODUCTS HERE

David Hughes: 07767 407 402
davidh@connectcommunications.co.uk

BECOME AN ASSOCIATE MEMBER

To inquire about becoming an Associate Member, email memberservices@select.org.uk

Solar power solutions made simple

OUR latest Associate Member, V-TAC, offers a complete solution for solar power installations all under one roof, with its new *Energy* catalogue including a range of top-of-the-line solar equipment at market-leading prices.

The brand aims to promote the shift to clean energy by building efficient and specialised solar systems to sustain growing global energy demand.

V-TAC offers monocrystalline solar panels made of a single silicon crystal, with the electrons that generate electricity having more room to move, making them more efficient than their polycrystalline counterparts.

Engineered for a positive power tolerance, they produce power equal to or greater than their rated power, plus potential-induced degradation (PID) resistance ensures that they maintain their power efficiency despite high voltages, temperatures, humidity and other potential factors. Offering excellent performance even in low-light

environments, they also come with a 25-year linear output warranty.

V-TAC also offers single and three-phase inverters to accommodate a range of load requirements, with both off-grid and on-grid models available to meet the property owners’ preferred set-ups. Time-of-use optimisation improves efficiency with the zero export function ensuring stability and avoiding unnecessary surcharges. Additional safety features include smart fault detection, arc-fault circuit interrupter and anti-islanding protection.

Finally, V-TAC’s solar batteries are designed with smart monitoring controls, with performance analysis monitored via a mobile app. The battery management system (BMS) protection board ensures longevity, while the lithium iron phosphate batteries have greater thermal stability and incombustibility, making them more reliable when it comes to safety.



The solar power installations are priced to suit your pocket

To find out more, call 0207 2991 212 or visit www.vtacenergy.com or www.vtacexports.com

CLOTHING TO KEEP YOU MORE COMFORTABLE

Effective garment waterproofing is a hallmark of Snickers Workwear’s winter clothing.

Whichever Snickers Workwear jacket you choose, you can count on real comfort and protection from rain and foul weather.

Stay dry, warm and comfortable by choosing from a range of water-repellent jackets with welded seams that will keep you dry in light showers and deliver great breathability to ventilate your body when you’re active on site. But if you need 100% waterproofness for long periods,

check out the GORE-TEX® jackets. These highly technical garments are waterproof to keep you dry, windproof to keep you warm, and breathable to keep you comfortable all day long.

There’s a host of AllroundWork and FlexiWork jacket styles and extensive size options available for tradesmen and women, so you can layer your working clothes properly.

For more information on Snickers Workwear’s winter working clothes, call the Hultafor Group UK Helpline on 01484 854788, check out the website at www.snickersworkwear.co.uk or email sales@hultaforgroup.co.uk



OUR ASSOCIATE MEMBERS





Sign up for installer training scheme

AICO'S award-winning Expert Installer training scheme is available across Scotland in 2023.

The free scheme is CPD-accredited by the Fire Industry Association and designed to ensure installers have all the information they need to correctly install domestic home life safety systems.

Delivered by Aico's Regional Specification Managers, the core one-hour module covers key information about correctly installing domestic fire and carbon monoxide (CO) alarms and environmental sensors, with standards and legislation also covered. Sessions are

delivered in Aico's state-of-the-art mobile training and demonstration units, with courses suitable for electricians, apprentices and social housing providers.

Upon completion of training, Expert Installers are encouraged to become members of the Aico Installer Community Online – a connected platform that supports them with educational challenges.

Expert Installers who join the community are also eligible to participate in Aico's free City & Guilds Assured Training, designed to give a detailed understanding of the design, installation, maintenance, interconnection, siting and electrical connection of domestic fire and CO alarm systems.

➔ Find out more and sign up at www.aico.co.uk/our-services/expert-installer-training/



↑ Training is delivered in modern surroundings



MAKE THE SWITCH TO QUALITY PRODUCTS

The demand for matt black wiring accessories has been on the rise in recent years, as installers working on domestic and specification projects look for an alternative premium finish for interiors. Scolmore has taken this feedback on board and has extended the popular matt black finish to its Deco and Deco Plus wiring accessories collections.

Adding the perfect contemporary look to any interior space, the new matt black finishes are available across all products in the extensive Deco metal and Deco Plus premium metal ranges.

Deco Plus is a comprehensive range of premium decorative metal wiring accessories that was first launched in 2003 to build on the huge success of the classic Deco range and introduced smooth,

contemporary curves that have had wide-ranging appeal with contractors, specifiers and end users alike.

Deco and Deco Plus switch plates are all modular as standard allowing the creation of virtually any switch plate design required. With a wide range of MiniGrid and New Media products also available in the range, this will give contractors and installers total flexibility to customise bespoke designs and solutions quickly and easily on site.

The full Deco and Deco Plus ranges can be viewed on the Scolmore website and the product brochures can also be downloaded from the website as well as from the Scolmore Group app.

➔ The new matt black wiring accessories can be viewed at bit.ly/ct_deco

Sounds like a good idea for schools



CREATING the perfect learning environment is key to maximising students' potential, and controlling and

optimising the lighting and acoustic properties can help stimulate learning.

Good quality lighting increases student communication and participation and makes it easier to see the whiteboard. At the same time, effective acoustic control makes it easier to listen and understand while removing the need for shouting.

Arena Symphony, from Thorn Lighting, is specifically designed for primary and secondary school classrooms with poor sound absorption.

It is suspended to ensure optimum acoustic performance, with both sides of the luminaire benefiting from acoustic material for maximum sound absorption efficiency.

For a 56m² secondary school classroom, Arena Symphony achieves acoustic and lighting standards with just six fittings. This makes the luminaire easier, faster and cheaper to install and reduces overall costs by using fewer luminaires.

To make ordering and installation quick and straightforward, the luminaire is supplied as a complete out-of-the-box product, including the raft, luminaire, four suspension wires and two joining bars and screws.

Fully compliant with European acoustic regulations and lighting requirements, EN 12464 Arena Symphony is a complete, single solution for absorbing sound.

➔ Find out more at bit.ly/thorn-school

TAKE CHARGE OF THE SITUATION

ESP has taken the recently-developed concept of the smart plug and incorporated both USB Type A and Type C charging facilities.

Part of the Fort Smart Security range, the new smart plug provides a mains three-pin 13 amp socket that can be remotely controlled and scheduled via an app and used to control a range of appliances and devices – lamps, electric heaters and radios, for example.

In addition, the plug provides 2 x Type A USB and 1 x Type C rated at 2.4amp in total. This provides two options to control devices – via the plug socket or USB/Type C connection.

The smart plug is controlled via the 'Click Smart+' app from Scolmore, which is completely subscription-free, with no additional fees incurred. The smart plug requires a 2.4ghz Wi-Fi connection with no additional hub required.

We are living in an age where multiple devices need powering and charging through USB ports, especially the Type C which is required by many modern smart tech devices. The three USB ports on



ESP's new smart plug can be controlled as one by the app, with remote control and scheduling via the app applying to all three USB ports, while the three-pin socket is independently controlled.

The smart plug can be used to operate lamps in dusk and dawn modes or at specific times of the day or week to suit the user's lifestyle requirements. If used in conjunction with the Fort smart alarm, the socket can be activated through alarm, arm and disarm modes.

➔ Find out more at www.espuk.com

Ceramic heaters are hot property

With increasing UK sales of its UB and GS radiant far infrared heaters for use in domestic settings, Flexel has now launched the EcoSun CR (Ceramic) range, giving your customers more choice when it comes to the look of their heaters.

Available in the usual popular sizes, the panels are made from sintered

ceramic material, with trendy textures to suit houses, hotels, offices and restaurants. Panels can be fitted with optional towel rails for the bathroom and thanks to the side bar, any number of rails can be added.

The CR panels are designed to emulate four textures – basalt black, calacatta, beton and mirage – and are available in four sizes: 300w, 500w, 700w and 1,050w. The units are all IP44 rated and due to the

weight are only recommended for wall mounting, either landscape or portrait.

Due to high demand there will be a wait period from ordering but Flexel can confirm a timescale when requested at the time of design and discussion. It is also looking at other materials to increase the range.

➔ For further details or a free quotation for your clients, please email ch@flexel.co.uk





LED range is a first class idea

DESIGNED with school applications in mind, LED lighting specialist Aurora Lighting now offers the Princeton linear range.

Featuring a collection of surface-mounted LED linear battens, these luminaires offer up to 50% energy savings in comparison to traditional fluorescent alternatives, helping schools that are struggling to manage rising energy costs.

With a high-quality polycarbonate diffuser, the Princeton linear battens ensure uniform

light distribution and the elimination of hot spots. By matching the footprint of traditional fluorescent lighting, the range is also perfect for retrofit applications.

Fitted with a push-fit terminal block, the Princeton offers a straightforward and faster installation, with multiple BESA mounting points also adding to the hassle-free fitting.

With an IK06 rated impact resistance, the Princeton range can withstand environments where it may get knocked and bumped. Added peace of mind is offered thanks to Aurora's five-year warranty and lifetime of 50,000 hours.

The Princeton linear luminaires are available in a range of lengths – 1,200mm, 1,500mm and 1,800mm, which allows for the right size to meet the demands of each individual setting. Different wattages are available across the various lengths, with an impressive 110lm/W.

↑ The lighting has been designed to suit schools' requirements

→ Find out more at www.auroralighting.com/gb/trade/products



↑ The portfolio of products continues to expand

Unicrimp adds new category to cable accessories range

UNICRIMP, part of the Scolmore Group of companies, continues to expand its comprehensive range of cable accessories and has introduced a brand new category of products to its portfolio.

Marketed under the new Q-NECT brand, the range comprises lever connectors and connection boxes.

The aim of the launch is to bring together a selection of products that work in conjunction with each other to provide installers with strong, quick and reliable solutions that will offer them versatility when they're carrying out their everyday tasks.

A total of ten products make up the full Q-NECT range, which comprises:

- Two, three and five-way lever connectors – suitable for solid, stranded and flexible cable types. They use screwless spring clamp technology, which means

there is no need for any tools.

- IP66 weatherproof junction box – designed to make installations more efficient. It can house four of the three port lever connectors using the 360° detachable cradle and, with a curved lid, it provides additional space for wires.
- IP connection boxes – a four-pole two-way 24A IP68 inline connection box, four-pole three-way 24A IP68 (M16+M20) connection box, and three-pole two-way 16A IP66 connection box.
- Five-pole three-way IP68 'T' and two-way inline connectors – boasting high quality and robust materials to ensure connectors can withstand the harshest environment.

→ A comprehensive Q-NECT brochure can be downloaded from the Unicrimp website as well as from the Scolmore Group app. View the video at bit.ly/ct_unicrimp

UPDATED BS 7671 COURSES AVAILABLE



Online 218 course now available! See page 40

All training modules now revised in line with Amendment 2 of the IET Wiring Regulations

- REQUIREMENTS FOR ELECTRICAL INSTALLATIONS (218)
- INSPECTION AND TESTING, INCLUDING PERIODIC INSPECTION (214)
- INITIAL VERIFICATION (209)

TO BOOK, CALL

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www.select.org.uk



Excellence in Skills



New TIS brochure passes the test

Test Instrument Solutions (TIS) is pleased to announce the launch of its new dedicated renewables test equipment brochure.

Already known for safe isolation equipment, fixed electrical installation testers, power quality analysers and environment measuring devices and accessories, TIS is now focusing on a range of products to test solar photovoltaic (PV) and electric vehicle supply equipment (EVSE) systems.

For instance, although standard fixed installation test equipment is good for verifying the AC side of a solar PV system, certain other tests should be carried out on the DC part in accordance with BS EN 62246.

Of course, when a solar panel is subjected to light, it becomes live, which therefore prevents a standard insulation resistance tester from being able to carry out the test.



Specific solar PV commissioning testers therefore allow insulation tests to be carried out on energised panels – one of which, uniquely available from TIS, will operate live up to 1,500V.

Other requirements of BS EN 62246 are to perform string open circuit voltage and short circuit current tests in order to ascertain power output.

→ The TIS renewables brochure can be downloaded at bit.ly/tis-renew and all other TIS products can be viewed at www.testinstrumentsolutions.co.uk



FIVE MINUTES WITH...

JAYNE CHRISTIE

EMPLOYMENT & SKILLS ADMINISTRATOR



HELLO JAYNE. HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN AT SELECT?

I started at The Walled Garden at the beginning of October, so it's been a smidge over four months. But as I started 'last year' I feel like it's been longer.

cabletalk and am looking forward to possibly meeting contractors at the 2023 Toolbox Talks in May and June.

TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOUR WORK LIFE SO FAR AND HOW YOU ENDED UP AT THE WALLED GARDEN.

I worked in the business department of a well-known Swedish furniture store for 16-and-a-half years, dealing with large business clients and smaller remote customers from Shetland or the Orkneys. Before that, I was a purchase ledger clerk in a tannery for three years.

WHAT HAVE YOU MOST ENJOYED ABOUT YOUR JOB SO FAR?

I've really loved getting to know lots of really nice people – both at SELECT and among the membership – and learning all about the association and the work it does across the industry and beyond. It's also been nice when I've had those answers to questions – I'm definitely learning fast!

WHAT DOES YOUR JOB ENTAIL? TELL US MORE ABOUT WHAT YOU DO.

I issue results to people who have just sat their FICA and I process applications and Craftsman Certificates to newly-qualified electricians. I also help with the administration of SJIB apprentice and adult trainee registration, along with processing grade cards and answering general enquiries.

Quickfire questions:

- Cheese or chocolate?**
A cheese chocolate sandwich would be ideal, but if I was really pushed then it would have to be chocolate
- Dog or cat person?** Both
- First car owned?**
Ford Fiesta Mk2
- Favourite film?** *Chalet Girl*
- Favourite TV show?**
I'm not a huge TV fan but I do like *The Great British Sewing Bee*
- Favourite holiday spot?**
Austria in winter and Cyprus in the summer
- Dream date?** 25 April because it's not too hot, it's not too cold and all you need is a light jacket!
- One thing people might not know about you?** I once sang at the London Palladium with Jason Donovan

WHAT'S A TYPICAL DAY BEEN LIKE FOR YOU SO FAR?

So far, every day has been a school day! I'm continually learning but it's nice when I get asked a question that I CAN answer.

HAVE YOU BEEN ABLE TO MEET SELECT MEMBERS?

Not yet, but I've been keeping up to date with events and Member projects through

"SO FAR, EVERY DAY HAS BEEN A SCHOOL DAY! I'M CONTINUALLY LEARNING BUT IT'S NICE WHEN I GET ASKED A QUESTION THAT I CAN ANSWER"

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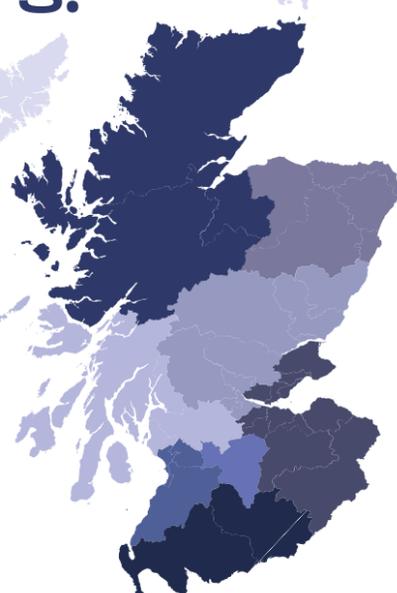
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Upcoming SELECT events:

- CENTRAL BOARD**
- Wed 29 March – NEW DATE – venue TBC
 - Thu 1 June – includes SELECT AGM, Doubletree Edinburgh North Queensferry
 - Thu 7 September – venue TBC
 - Thu 7 December – venue TBC

Branch UPDATE

- BRANCH UPDATES**
- Meetings start at 6pm
- Thu 7 March – Dumfries & Galloway Branch, Dumfries & Galloway College, Dumfries
 - Thu 9 March – Glasgow & West of Scotland Branch, Glasgow Clyde College, Cardonald Campus
 - Tue 14 March – Inverness & North of Scotland Branch, Inverness College, Inverness

Competition

Positivity wordsearch



Q	W	E	R	T	Y	U	I	O	P	L	K	J	H	G	F	D	S	A	Z
Z	A	B	F	H	G	M	T	K	P	Q	T	Y	U	I	O	P	K	P	X
A	D	E	T	E	R	M	I	N	E	D	H	M	N	D	F	H	L	R	C
S	G	L	I	F	O	J	K	L	A	E	I	O	U	M	N	M	B	O	V
D	I	I	R	G	W	S	E	R	C	A	S	G	H	O	L	M	O	U	B
F	M	E	T	H	T	T	Y	R	E	S	P	E	C	T	F	N	L	D	N
G	O	V	H	J	H	K	U	E	W	T	U	I	O	I	D	V	G	T	M
H	P	E	N	K	T	Y	U	L	D	N	B	R	A	V	E	E	E	H	L
J	J	S	M	L	S	H	J	A	K	H	F	H	P	A	W	C	F	N	K
K	M	D	L	P	M	K	L	X	L	I	B	F	S	T	R	O	N	G	U
L	E	H	D	O	I	D	C	A	O	H	J	K	S	E	R	N	J	M	I
O	Q	A	W	D	L	S	B	L	Y	T	R	T	X	D	T	F	K	F	F
M	A	P	P	R	E	C	I	A	T	E	A	R	E	K	I	I	N	D	G
F	E	P	Q	O	B	S	W	U	Q	A	D	G	H	M	O	D	L	G	H
E	A	I	E	P	N	W	E	G	Z	D	G	H	J	K	P	E	Y	L	L
R	E	N	J	O	Y	Q	R	H	U	Y	T	R	L	E	B	N	K	I	M
Y	B	E	R	I	M	T	E	R	T	Y	U	P	O	S	I	T	I	V	E
T	F	S	T	U	K	D	A	S	F	G	H	J	V	U	J	K	L	E	B
U	Z	S	E	R	G	H	J	K	S	U	C	C	E	S	S	C	B	N	V
I	O	P	L	K	J	H	G	F	D	S	A	Z	X	C	V	B	N	M	C

- APPRECIATE
- BELIEVE
- BRAVE
- CONFIDENT
- DETERMINED
- ENJOY
- GROWTH
- HAPPINESS
- LAUGH
- LIVE
- LOVE
- MOTIVATED
- PEACE
- POSITIVE
- PROUD
- RELAX
- RESPECT
- SMILE
- STRONG
- SUCCESS

Here's your chance to win £50 of Amazon vouchers with our prize wordsearch about positivity, compiled by SELECT Training Administrator Laurie Burns.

Find the words, take a pic of your finished grid and email it to memberservices@select.org.uk by 10 March. The winner will be drawn at random. T&Cs are online. Congratulations to December 2022/January 2023 winner Kevin Simpson from KS Electrics.



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