

## BUSINESS NEWS

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## Highlands double joy at wedding awards

TWO Highland businesses collected national accolades at the Scottish Wedding Awards.

KK Timeless Classics of Inverness, which hires chauffeur driven wedding cars, collected the Transport provider of the Year and the North West Home &amp; Holiday Planner of the Year crown went to the Highland capital's branch of Travel Counsellors, which offers bespoke holidays and travel.

More than 500 people attended the annual event in Glasgow, where several regional titles also came to the Highlands.

Quirky Cake Company in Aviemore won the Cake Designer of the Year North East section, adding this to the Business Bespoke Retailer of the Year North West category win at the Scottish Independent Retail Awards earlier this month.

Other regional winners included Captivating Photography of Inverness (Photographer of the Year North West winner); Fairy Tale Productions, which has



The Flower Company was a regional winner.

bases in Fort William and Inverness (Videographer of the Year North West winner); The Flower Company of Inverness (Florist of the Year North West winner); and Wedding Daze in Nairn (Wedding Planner of the Year North West winner).



Guest speakers and members of Moray Chamber of Commerce at the Laichmoray Hotel, Elgin. Picture: Eric Cormack.

## Search beyond the obvious for funding

BUSINESSES should not be deterred if they are refused funding on more than one occasion according to Hamish Malcolm, Inverness-based business development consultant with City Financial.

Speaking at a business finance options seminar in Moray, he encouraged to look beyond the high street banks.

"Seeking business finance can be like setting a search filter on the internet," he said. "If you look very narrowly and only speak to two or three people, you are not going to find that you will only get a certain amount of results, but we'd encourage people to look wider."

By broadening the search a business may have a main lender, which is a mainstream bank, alongside two or three other niche funders.

"People could be limited in their options if they are told 'no' on a couple of occasions, but they could still throw the search in stop" Mr Malcolm advised.

"If they believe in what they are doing then business finance may be out for them for that."

More than 45 people attended the event at Laichmoray Hotel. Case studies included hotel Drummeddin's Cobbs, a firm which has a bakery and coffee shops, attracted finance through Funding Circle.

By Andy Dixon  
business@scottish.com

SALES of a wheelchair made of light-weight carbon fibre material which borrows engineering principles from Formula One racing cars could quadruple this year.

Nairn entrepreneur Andrew Slorance hopes to increase international sales of his Carbon Black wheelchair, which is currently distributed at a trade fair in the United States later this week. They would add to deals already being negotiated with distributors in the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait.

He also hopes to sign agreements for Spain and France over the next couple of months, with New York, Sweden and Norway also possibilities.

"It's a very exciting time for us," he said. "We wanted to complete a year of selling in the UK before internationalising the product and that's what we're doing now."

After six years of development, Mr Slorance launched Carbon Black, a carbon fibre, multi-measurement wheelchair for active users - on to the market in 2013.

"It's a revolutionary design that has overcome many obstacles but our biggest challenge has been letting customers know that we are here and Carbon Black is a reality," said Mr Slorance, managing director of Carbon Black Systems, the company behind the wheelchair. "But we have seen progress and it is very encouraging to be taking the product overseas."

He said sales figures are in line with his expectations and that they increase the number of full-time and part-time staff would likely increase from the current seven.

In addition to overseas



Andrew Slorance

## Plan to re-design the wheelchair

AFTER breaking his back falling from a tree at the age of 14, Andrew Slorance vowed he would one day re-design the wheelchair.

Ten-and-a-half years later he left his career in television production and founded Carbon Black System.

"The vision was to create a sexy wheelchair that empowered the user with ability, confidence and style and was a world apart from the typical wheelchair as we knew it," he said.

"I had a desire to make a difference and couldn't understand why companies didn't advance their wheelchairs."

"By the time I was 16 I had decided that one day I would re-invent the wheelchair. In reality I assumed the industry would do it long before I did, but year on year wheelchairs remained static in design so I embraced the challenge myself."

plans, the company has also opened a sales office in Bicester, Oxfordshire, which arrange demonstrations for customers in the south of England.

"We expect to increase our UK sales numbers and with dedicated distributors working in the Middle East, US and Europe hopefully by the end of the year, I

would expect our numbers to increase considerably," Mr Slorance commented.

The wheelchair made its international debut at the Arab Health exhibition in Dubai last month. It is expected that deals with distributors from UAE and Kuwait will also help make the product available in Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

"It's very difficult to forecast what the level of demand will be," Mr Slorance said. "My understanding that there is not a funding cap on equipment for people with disabilities, open up a big opportunity for us, but we don't necessarily have in the UK."

The appearance of the wheelchair is very important for the user and for us. A wheelchair can be a medical device but that doesn't mean that it has to be nosy or ugly."

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All the wheelchairs will come to be made in the UK.

Mr Slorance will exhibit the product at a trade show in Los Angeles from Friday to Sunday. The trade will also include two days of demonstrations in San Francisco.

"This will be our first foot into a potentially very significant market for us," he added. "I would hope that we will sell a few chairs, get signed up by a few of the distributors and then seen by lots of Americans who want to be involved with, having or telling people about this wheelchair. But I'd expect we'll need to go to more events like this to get at least six distributors on board because we can't treat the US as a single country with a couple of outlets, it is too big for that."

"In five years' time I'd like Carbon Black to be recognised as the best wheelchair in the world."

and also leadership.

Cobbs Group represents all of these key business values and as a local business with local origins, we should be extremely proud of their achievements. I am delighted to invite you to join us for our first networking evening, which will include a networking buffet supper.

I'd also like to remind you about our biggest celebration of the year, besides the Highland Business Awards, our Highland Business Outstanding Performer Business (25-plus employees) and Highland Business of the Year.

Launched two years ago by Inverness Chamber of Commerce as part of our annual Highland Business Awards, the Highland Business Awards

show commitment to growth, innovation, staff development

which Fraser and his wife set up in 2009. Since then, the quality of the product and the strength of the Cobbs brand have enabled its portfolio to continue to grow. It now extends to three hotels, seven coffee houses, restaurants and bars and the Cobbs Bakery employing a present total of 150 staff.

Because of Cobbs Group's impressive growth and inspiring story, the company was awarded two titles at the 2014 Highland Business Outstanding Performer Business (25-plus employees) and Highland Business of the Year.

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## Legal help when it matters...



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To find out more, either visit our website or call us on:

01463 641201

Moray House, 16 - 18 Bank Street, Inverness, IV1 1QY

## Sometimes It Pays To Look At Things From A Different Angle

## Take underfloor heating for example - an off the wall solution to radiator systems.

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- Adding a renewable heating source is fairly easy, there is no hassle of resizing radiators

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01463 246600 info@begetube.co.uk

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