

Young LiveWIRE winner treads lightly toward £2m turnover

Michael Welch, the Peebles-based tyre entrepreneur, is setting his sights high after carrying off the prestigious title of Shell LiveWIRE Young entrepreneur of the year. Welch was presented with the award and £10,000 by Nigel Griffiths, the small business minister and Clive Mather, chairman of Shell UK.

The company, which was set up in 2001, connects customers to independent tyre fitters through its internet site and call centre and has a turnover



Wheeler dealer: Michael Welch is aiming for £2m turnover

of £700,000. Welch, 24, who beat 1,200 entrants to win the award, says he plans to expand his network and is hoping to achieve a turnover of £2 million in 2004.

Among its existing corporate clients are Sainsburys, McDonalds, Scottish Courage and Marks & Spencer, where staff receive special deals and discounts.

Welch left school at 15 to work in the local garage in Birkenhead. After putting himself through university and

working with Kwik-Fit, Black Circles was started with a mobile phone and a loaned desk in someone else's offices and made £400,000 in its first year. The company is aiming for £700,000 turnover this year.

The company sells new tyres over the internet and through telephone orders taken at its Peebles call centre. It uses just-in-time distribution to enable customers to have these fitted at one of 700 independent retail outlets around the UK.

By next summer, Welch

expects to have expanded the network of independent outlets to over 1500, which he suggests would make Black Circles the largest such chain in the world.

"This award is massive for us. We're a retailer, and using the Black Circles product-offering is a bit of a no-brainer really, as people save money and get a great service," said Welch, who is planning a marketing campaign during the next 12 months."

www.blackcircles.com

McNee looks to the bigger picture

BY CLARE BODEL

Art entrepreneur Tracey McNee is on the move, relocating her business and extending her horizons in the international marketplace. McNee has moved from Glasgow's Merchant Square to Parnie Street in the city and used the move to re-brand Pivotal Art as Tracey McNee Fine Art. The first exhibition on the new premises is part of the The Royal Bank of Scotland Glasgow International Jazz Festival, featuring jazz-themed photographic based work.

McNee, who hosted the Glasgow Art Fair Fringe 2003 and has been expanding her marketplace with successful exhibitions in Dublin and London, said: I've felt for some time that I should put my mon-

ey where my mouth is and have my name behind the art I sell."

In September, McNee will be the only Scottish exhibitor to join galleries from Florida, Argentina, France and Australia at the Marbella Art Fair. "It's a gamble financially but Glasgow is not a big enough market for me and in order to keep growing I need to branch out to other cities in the UK and Europe."

She is in negotiations with the world's biggest art publisher, the Art Group Ltd, to publish prints of artists she represents, who include Gerard Burns and Gregory Rankine. In the near future, she plans to exhibit further afield, fusing work from cities like New York, with Scottish art. Closer to home, expansion plans include a second gallery in Edinburgh.

www.traceymcnee.com



Tracey McNee: Top drawer relocation and renaming of Pivotal signals wider aspirations

MARK SEAGER, THE PICTURE HOUSE UK

IN BRIEF

SRU out to woo new fans

Scottish Rugby has kicked off plans to bring the entertainment value of the sport to the masses. The organisation has appointed Alasdair Russell as marketing manager and his immediate aim is to woo more fans.

The national stadium at Murrayfield currently boasts crowds that outstrip the country's football stadiums.

Russell said: "Scottish Rugby attracts more fans to its live games than any other sporting event in Scotland. We have a capacity of over 67,000 compared to just 55,000 at Hampden Park and I plan to build on that. My vision is to make rugby a thriving passion of Scots and to encourage greater interaction with the brand."

Russell was marketing manager at Edinburgh Rugby for two years, and previously spent three years in marketing at Tetra Pak and four at Coca-Cola. In his latest post he will work with a team led by Scottish Rugby's commercial and marketing director, Phil Anderton.

Russell said: "We are focusing our strategy on building loyalty with existing fans, who are some of the most passionate in the world."



Junctionbox raises sites

Junctionbox Media, an Inverness-based web design and IT consultancy, has launched a range of low-cost web design packages specifically aimed at small businesses and charities. The company promises to deliver a five page website, built to an organisation's requirements, for less than £300, excluding VAT.

Chris Aves, managing director, said: "We aim to bring quality web design to businesses that expect the best but cannot afford to pay thousands of pounds for the privilege."

www.junctionbox.com

DID YOU KNOW?

A European Union Copyright Directive, passed in June 2001, became law in the UK in May. The directive tightens the law on copyright infringement and from now on anyone - from sole trader to stock market quoted company - wishing to reproduce published material for a commercial purpose, must have a licence to do so.

[MACROBERTS](http://www.macroberts.com)

Aitken demands major changes at SE

BY MICHAEL FEELEY

Hugh Aitken, managing director of Sun Microsystems and chairman of Electronics Scotland, has called for significant changes to the infrastructure of Scottish Enterprise, following the resignation of the agency's chief executive, Robert Crawford.

Aitken said: "My first impression on hearing the resignation

news was that there is something seriously wrong with the infrastructure at SE. Clearly, something's not right if a man of Robert Crawford's calibre feels that he has to walk away."

Aitken questioned the nature of the chief executive's role at SE and condemned the lack of support Crawford received during his tenure.

"It must be a hell of a job to be measured on. I mean, what

exactly are the measurements of success in that role?"

"In my view, the chairmanship at SE also needs to be rethought and re-vamped. At the moment the role seems to be little more than that of a figurehead. The chairman needs the power to get his hands dirty and lend more support to the chief executive. At the moment the CE is left out on a limb with just about everyone

from the Scottish Executive to the press."

Aitken warns that finding a worthy successor to Crawford will be problematic: "I don't believe that Robert will serve out 12 month's notice, as has been reported. Your authority is diluted if everyone knows that you are half-way out the door. Having said that, securing a replacement won't be straightforward."