

CASE STUDY

Forres offers a win-win for EFC Group and its staff



35,000
and 90,000
new jobs
by 2020

By choosing to locate a key part of their business in The Enterprise Park Forres, monitoring and instrumentation specialists EFC Group have been able to expand their business, recruit skilled staff and build bespoke new facilities with plenty of room to grow. Add in reduced commuting time, better staff retention and an unrivalled quality of life, it's clear the move has made perfect business sense.

In common with many thriving companies in the oil and gas sector, Aberdeen-headquartered EFC Group has been dealing with a healthy order book and the challenges of recruiting (and retaining) skilled staff and finding room to grow.

They are not alone. Numerous reports suggest that between 35,000 and 90,000 new jobs could be created in Scotland's energy sector by 2020, and filling these positions is crucial to the sustainability of the industry.

Aberdeen's 'revolving door' has contributed to high staff turnover and the 'big crew change' with many old hands due to retire in the years ahead means forward-looking firms need to think outside the box – or perhaps 'think outside of Aberdeen' – to keep their business plans on track.

To address this, many employers are now recruiting from complementary industries where workers have transferable skills, and are opening new office bases outside of the usual areas to create vacancies for people deterred by a long commute to Aberdeen.

EFC Group has championed both of these routes, which is perfectly illustrated by their new base in Forres. The group, which is a leading designer and manufacturer of instrumentation, monitoring, handling and control systems for the global oil and gas industry, is now forging ahead with a bespoke 14,000 sq ft manufacturing plant at HIE's Enterprise Park in Forres.

In a little over a year the company's Forres operation has grown from a single person in a serviced office to a current complement of around 31, with ambitious plans for an additional 30 staff in the years ahead.





A STABLE WORKFORCE

"Our business needs to expand and we need a stable workforce that will still be with us in five years," says company CEO Bob Will.

"The stimulus to set up a base in Forres came in 2012, when we recruited Andy Burton, a former RAF Aircraft Engineering Manager who had successfully made the transition into oil and gas.

"He was keen to work close to his home in Moray, and this was the spark which led us to open a small office in Forres. Andy is now our Group Production Manager and is spearheading our expansion here in the town," Will says.

"We were quickly impressed with the quality of staff available in the area, and the positive can-do approach of Highlands and Islands Enterprise, who could not have been more helpful."

"With the Army, RAF and Royal Navy facing cuts of around 17,000 personnel by 2015, and many of these on our doorstep, there is a huge pool of people who will be considering what their next career move will be. It is crucial that companies in the energy sector turn this into an opportunity," Will says.

The company initially took space in Horizon Scotland Business and Innovation Centre, a business incubation facility provided by Highlands and Islands Enterprise, and from there expanded to include a 4,000 sq ft unit on the adjacent technology park. The firm has now fast-tracked its phase three expansion with the construction of the 14,000 sq ft manufacturing plant. The Enterprise Park offered a property solution with competitive costs, high quality infrastructure and space to grow.

"As well as being a manufacturing facility, the new unit will become our global support centre and will offer client support 24 hours a day, every day of the year," Will says.

"A key part of EFC's strategy is to recruit people with transferable skills, and ex-Forces personnel are ideal. We have recruited ten such people in the last 12 months through this route, in a combination of attending Forces career fairs and liaising with the Careers Transitions Partnership.

"Much of EFC's rapid growth is down to teamwork and recruiting ex-military personnel brings individuals who have spent years working in cohesive units.

"We are now targeting experienced personnel who are tiring of the long commute into Aberdeen. Moray has a good quality of life and we believe it offers a win-win combination for our business and our staff."

With a thriving business, a stable staff team and room to expand, the move to Forres is working well for EFC Group.

MORAY OFFERS

- Over 8,000 people employed in engineering disciplines (excluding the RAF) including manufacturing, construction and utilities.
- 115,930 working age people within an hour's drive of Elgin.
- 16 per cent with a skilled trade (Scottish average 11 per cent).
- 17 per cent employed in energy, water and manufacturing (Highlands and Islands average 9.7 per cent).

THE ENTERPRISE PARK FORRES

- Developed by HIE
- 100+ acres
- Range of high quality business units, flexibly designed for office, manufacturing and light industrial.
- Units from 3,000 to 100,000 sq ft
- Flexible size and fit out
- Tenants include: Scotland Electronics International Ltd, EFC Group and Atos

SUPPLY CHAIN

Manufacturing and production capabilities including heavy and light fabrication in all metals, ship building, pipework, electrical engineering, construction, precision engineering, R&D and design, hydraulics, coating and many other key supply chain services.

LINKS

- A comprehensive supply chain for Moray can be found at www.hi-energy.org.uk
- Energy North Fabrication Directory 2013: www.energynorth.co.uk/Documents/Fabrication-Doc-2013-Final-Version.aspx
- Horizon Scotland and Enterprise Park Forres www.enterpriseparkforres.co.uk

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