

Bank role for CBI assistant director

THE Journal's former head of business is to become The Bank of England's "eyes and ears" as a new deputy agent for the North East.

Andrew Hebden, who spent five years on The Journal's senior editorial team and is currently CBI assistant director, will take up his new role in August, holding monthly discussions with businesses and reporting back to the Monetary Policy Committee before interest rates are set.

The agency is one of 12 around the UK whose primary role is to assess economic conditions affecting businesses.

Hebden, 34, said: "I have thoroughly enjoyed my time at the CBI and it has been a privilege to represent the interests of some of the most successful businesses in the region.

"Although I am moving to an exciting new role in a very different institution, I see the remit as much the same - to do what I can to help the North East economy."

Hebden joined the CBI in 2012 after spending 11 years in regional journalism, working in reporting and editing roles at newspapers in Yorkshire, Scotland and the North East.

The Bank's agent for the North East, Rosie Smith, said: "I'm really pleased that Andrew will be joining the Bank's team in the North East. His understanding of the region and its businesses will be very valuable to us. I'm sure he'll play an active part in our work to provide useful insights to help the Bank's policymakers do their job well."



PRIVILEGE Andrew Hebden

Manufacturing firm lands £10m subsea orders

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ENGINEERING firm FES International has secured around £10m of orders for its latest patented product which is attracting high demand among the subsea industry.

The business, which specialises in manufacturing fluid transfer systems for subsea oil and gas extraction, has patented its new Automatic Diverless Bend Stiffener Connector (DBSC), technology the company said reduces installation costs by up to £400,000 for customers.

Since patenting the design, the forward order book has been filling up with contract requests from blue chip firms, including Shell, Total and Inpex.

The contract wins come months after the Blyth-based business announced plans to move from its Riverside Business Park base to a 35,000 sq ft workshop in North Seaton Industrial Estate.

The new premises are seven times larger than its existing space but the firm is still concerned the new building won't be big enough as it continues to grow.

The new technology was developed in collaboration with Shell as part of a \$1.6m (£1.04m) contract for six Automatic DBSCs for Shell's Prelude FLNG operations off the Western Australian Coast.

The project, from order to delivery, including the prototype and testing of the new units, was delivered in just nine months.

The move follows the firm's aim to continue development of its bend stiffener connector product line, a design which it said provides quick, efficient, safe and cost-effective installation in congested and confined areas. It has



PROGRESS Rob Anderson, managing director of FES International

over 150 DBSC units in operation across the globe including West Africa, Australia, Gulf of Mexico, Brazil and the North Sea and is attracting interest in its automatic system from all these markets.

Rob Anderson, managing director of FES International said: "DBSCs represented real progress for the subsea industry, improving safety by removing much of the need for divers during installation. Our automatic DBSC takes this a step further by removing the need for ROVs, reducing costs and giving firms much greater flexibility during installation.

"Shell has been a fantastic client

and its proactive approach played a key role in the development of our design. They also contributed significantly to the prototype testing. In return we're delighted that we've been able to deliver a project that represents a significant leap forward in subsea technology to a timetable that has helped keep Prelude on schedule and that few firms in the world could match.

"The number of enquiries we're receiving for our Automatic DBSC shows it fills a gap in the market place and we have received contracts from Shell, Inpex, Total and BG Norge while others are racing to specify it at the design stage."

SARAH PITTENDRIGH



Building your brand identity

THERE are so many brands I admire from the iconic market leaders like Land Rover, Aston Martin, Cartier and Chanel that have managed to retain their credibility for decades, to more recent success stories like Jo Malone and Ultimo.

One thing they all have in common is a unified approach and a clearly defined set of values that their target consumer is going to identify with and aspire to.

When starting a business, branding is the first thing you need to nail in your business plan before you tackle the nitty gritty of numbers, projections and cash-flow. A small local business can hardly expect to match the brand power of these heavyweights, but you can certainly strive to be the most powerful within your target market.

When I started my business, defining where I wanted my brand to sit in the market was absolutely crucial. The events linen and chair cover sector is a crowded marketplace with lots of products of a similar quality, all competing on price so I had to differentiate my business. If you're competing on price eventually you have nowhere to go, so I was always clear that I wanted to compete on quality.

From the start I knew the key words I wanted customers to associate with my business - quality, innovation, aspiration and creativity.

Choosing a name that encapsulated the business's core values was also key. I chose Simply Bows & Chair Covers because we purely do linen and chair covers rather than being a jack of all trades. We don't dabble in floristry or event management, instead preferring to focus on one specialism and do it well.

I tend to agree with brand expert John Parham who says "It's better to be clear than to be clever".

Building a brand that has longevity is all about consistency. So my logo, website, marketing material, uniforms and vans all reflect that. You have to be prepared to stand by your initial marketing strategy too. I've turned down business when it's all been about price, because I didn't want to compromise my brand values.

Maintaining brand power is all about customer experience. Marketing guru Simon Bradley has managed to do this brilliantly with Virgin Atlantic. This relatively small airline is competing with the big boys but has carved out a niche identity by defining its customers as "adventurous mavericks" who want something a bit different. So their planes are more like ultra-cool but fun boutique hotels. Passengers can have a drink in the onboard bars, enjoy a massage or get their nails buffed. The resultant word of mouth is like "little earthquakes going on all over the place" according to Bradley.

Satisfied customers will always spread the word. It's something I always bear in mind as I know I'm only ever as good as my last event.

Sarah Pittendrigh is managing director of www.simplybowsandchaircovers.co.uk. Ask a question via Twitter: @simplybows

New chief executive for Traidcraft

TRAIDCRAFT has appointed its first female chief executive.

Mags Vaughan, who has been acting up into the role since April, will take up the top job permanently at the Gateshead-based fair trade retailer on Monday, July 1.

Vaughan has spent nine years with the organisation, first as operations director and then business director with strategic responsibility for developing and implementing organisational strategy.

She will also head up the development charity Traidcraft Exchange, which last year supported almost one million people to transform their lives through trade.

Vaughan said: "Traidcraft is an amazing organisation, not only doing inspirational work in an increasingly competitive fair trade marketplace, but transforming lives across the world through its development work, and a leader in the battle for trade justice - I can't help but feel motivated.

"Of course we are not immune from the commercial realities of the UK retail climate, the financial realities of raising funds from sources whose priorities are changing and a fair trade landscape that is evolving and changing at some pace.

"So I feel very privileged to be chosen to establish and take forward a refreshed strategic vision that will help us take advantage of a new enthusiasm from consumers for ethical, traceable supply chains

and for engaging with companies with real integrity - companies like Traidcraft."

Traidcraft chairman Ram Gidoomal said: "Mags Vaughan brings a wealth of experience of fair trade and business improvement to the role.

"I am confident that she is the right person with the right experience to develop the organisation's significant potential, building on our work over more than 30 years."