



**Commercial Diver Training    ROV Pilot Technician Training    Diver Medic Training    Sea Trials**

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## Investment Drive at The Underwater Centre, Tasmania



Allan Brown takes up his post at The Underwater Centre, Tasmania

150,000 skilled workers needed in Western Australia by 2017.

Allan joins The Underwater Centre, Tasmania from its sister base in Fort William, Scotland, where he was general manager for two years and is credited with helping to increase revenues amid additional investment to enhance every aspect of the Centre's operations.

Allan is looking forward to the challenge of positioning the Tasmanian Centre as a world-leading subsea training facility in Australasia and Asia Pacific.

'The investment being made is integral to the development of the Centre in this part of the world. We are expecting a huge increase in the need for offshore diving personnel throughout Australasia and we want to be equipped to meet this demand.'

The Underwater Centre, Tasmania, has appointed Allan Brown as general manager to oversee a period of significant investment in the subsea training facility.

An anticipated increase in demand for diving personnel in Australasia has been the catalyst for an initial six-figure

investment in staff training, infrastructure and support activities.

The Underwater Centre is aiming to increase business in Tasmania by more than 40% as a result of a programme of investment to meet the emerging subsea needs in this region, with an estimated

**Read more about what's happening at both Centres by visiting:**  
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## Commercial Diver Training Centres in UK & USA form Alliance

Leading commercial diver training centres in the UK and USA have formed an alliance to provide American students with the opportunity to advance their careers in the global market.

The Underwater Centre in Fort William, Scotland, will now offer graduates of the Divers Institute of Technology (DIT) in Seattle the opportunity to complete their saturation diver training or ROV pilot technician training with them.

There is currently nowhere in the USA that offers the Closed Bell training required to complete internationally recognised saturation diving certification, however The Underwater Centre does. The

alliance means that the DIT can provide American subsea workers access to certification and training that will increase their employability.

As well as graduates from the DIT, the school will also assist any other divers in the USA to access the courses at The Underwater Centre.

Both schools have recognised the need to maintain a high standard of training, industry focused competence and reliable certification on a worldwide basis, which the alliance between the two centres will provide.

Finlay Finlayson, Managing Director of The Underwater Centre, said: 'For some time



The Underwater Centre's closed bell being lowered into Loch Linnhe now, the DIT and The Underwater Centre have enjoyed a developing relationship based on shared ethos of providing students with the best possible platform on which to build a global subsea career in diving and ROV. We are delighted this relationship has now developed into a formal alliance.'

## A Career in the Sea

**Ullapool man, Chris Steventon, has spent most of his 30 year career at sea; from a fisherman in his early 20s to starting a new business venture in mussel farming on the west coast of Scotland.**

The lure of the sea brought him back to the underwater world when he decided to forge a career as an ROV pilot.

Chris embarked on a seven week training course at The Underwater Centre to learn the complex skills needed to navigate ROVs in the depths of the ocean. Chris signed up for the Centre's Premium ROV Course with the additional SQA Award in ROV Subsea Support Skills.

He said: 'I wanted to go offshore and I decided that working as an ROV pilot was the best way to do that, so I signed up to the course at The Underwater

Centre, which I'd heard was the place to go to gain any sort of diving or ROV accreditation.'

The Premium ROV Course combines hands on 'flying' of ROVs, carrying out tasks such as closed bell diver observation, pipeline and rig structure inspections and sectorised searches, with extensive training in electronic circuit design, test and measurement, fault diagnosis and repair.

Chris also signed up for the SQA Customised Award in ROV Subsea Support Skills. This was specially created by The Underwater Centre in conjunction with West Highland College to equip students with the key competencies and skills that will allow them to embark on a career as an ROV pilot technician.

Chris believes the course has equipped him with the skills



Chris with one of the Centre's Seavey Falcon ROVs

needed to succeed in his new career and has given him the added bonus of a formal certificate which has been audited and approved by an internationally respected, external organisation.

Chris has used the skills he learned to secure his first post in the industry as an ROV pilot with an Aberdeen-based

company, working both offshore in the North Sea, and at their onshore base.

'It's great to have found my first job in the industry and I'm really enjoying it so far. The skills I learned at The Underwater Centre are vital to my job, but there's so much more to learn, a lot of which can only be done while actually working.'

## Spotlight on... Tasmanian Diving Instructor



**Herb from Tasmania 'loves being able to teach something he is so passionate about'**

**Andrew 'Herb' Mitton is one of the air diving instructors at The Underwater Centre, Tasmania, where he has worked for the past 3 years. Here he shares his experiences as an instructor and commercial diver.**

Herb has always had a strong passion for the underwater world – Jacques Cousteau is largely to blame for that. In his teens, he gained his SCUBA diving qualifications and then surface supplied, before realising his dream by finally qualifying and getting a job in the aquaculture industry as a commercial diver.

Now, he loves being able to teach something he is so passionate about, and he loves interacting with the students when they come on course,

while helping them build their knowledge and skills.

As an experienced commercial diver himself, the best advice Herb can offer is:

'Once qualified, I advise students to get as much dive work as they can for a couple of years, then come back and complete the Closed Bell training and supervisor's qualifications to open even more doors.'

As for the ideal career background best suited to becoming a commercial diver:

'It helps if you have a natural passion for working on or in the water. That said, some of our best students have non-water backgrounds and have done really well. A trade background, such as welder, rigger or carpenter, seems to make the practical work easier to grasp. These backgrounds can also assist when looking for work because many employers look beyond the diving qualifications.'

With regards to earning potential, Herb says this depends on what level of diving work students go on to do:

'At the top end are saturation divers working in the oil industry who can earn over \$1650 AUS per day in the Bass Strait. Then there are aquaculture divers who can expect to earn up to \$80k AUS a year. Civil divers

tend to fall between the two, earning up to \$800 AUS per day.

At the moment there is a great deal of work for aquaculture divers in 'Tassie' and mainland Australia. Herb explains:

'This is good news as it's often a great starting point for our graduating students. In Australia, at present, there also appears to be plenty of civil construction dive work available, with many of our students securing employment in this sector prior to completing their training with us. I'm delighted to say that the last few commercial air diving courses we've run have resulted in 100% of our graduates getting work – this is certainly an excellent result and one we strive to maintain.'



Master of Ceremonies, Nicky Marr, presents Steve Ham with the award

## Underwater Centre Wins Top Award

**The Underwater Centre picked up a top award recently at the inaugural Energy North Awards Ceremony held in Inverness.**

The Centre triumphed in the Best Oil and Gas Industry Service Supplier category, which recognises those companies that are involved in supporting the oil and gas industry in the Highlands region. The Underwater Centre's primary focus is on providing industry specific skills and competency training for commercial divers and ROV pilots; helping graduates into their new careers and providing the energy sector with the workforce that it needs.

The Underwater Centre's General Manager, Steve Ham, said: 'It is an honour to have won this award and it is testament to the hard work of all the staff at the Centre who have helped to deliver our service in the UK and across the globe.'

To keep up-to-date with the latest news at  
The Underwater Centre:  
[www.theunderwatercentre.co.uk/news.asp](http://www.theunderwatercentre.co.uk/news.asp)

## Increase in Demand for Divers

**Due to an increase in offshore windfarm projects, The Underwater Centre is reporting an increase in demand for training required to break into a career in the Marine Energy Renewable Industry.**

The Centre in Fort William has seen an increase in people keen to pursue a career in commercial diving due to the increase in employment potential highlighted in reports documenting the rapidly expanding offshore wind sector in Europe\*.

Divers currently working inshore are also keen to move into the sector due to the potential of higher earnings.

Norwich man, Lee Walker decided to pursue a career in commercial diving after working for a dive company as a yard person.

Lee says: 'Working for a dive company I saw how much divers enjoyed what they did, so I was keen to explore a career for myself in the industry.'

'The Underwater Centre was recommended to me by divers who I worked with, who had

trained there, so I decided to book on their HSE Surface Supplied Top Up Course, which I would need to be able to get work on the windfarms.

'It was fantastic and will help me now secure employment on a windfarm.'

\*Source: The European Wind & Energy Association Report 'European Offshore Wind Industry: Key Trends & Statistics.'



Lee Walker during his HSE Surface Supplied Top Up Course

## Keeping it in the Family

**Lowestoft man, Craig Shiers always had an interest in the water and diving, having come from a long line of commercial divers.**

After completing his civil engineering degree at Loughborough University, he set about looking for ways to combine his love of the deep blue sea with his new qualification.

This search took him to Fort William-based The Underwater Centre and, on the advice of his father and grandfather, both of whom were commercial divers, he enrolled on the Centre's Premium Industry Career Package.

He said: 'My family's passion for diving has been passed down through the generations. My grandfather, father and uncles have all worked as commercial divers so I was lucky enough to be introduced to leisure diving at a really young age.'

'I'd heard about The Underwater Centre through my

family. My grandfather – who ran his own diving company and is now a diving consultant, has had divers from the Centre working for him. My father – who has worked as a commercial diver/ supervisor and has also forged a career in the ROV industry but is currently working as a diving rep on windfarm developments – has worked with divers and ROV pilots from the Centre and advised me that this was the best place to achieve my certificate.'

Craig has worked freelance for companies such as Red7 Marine as an inshore diver. His work takes him to various locations across the country, and he hopes to use what he learned at The Underwater Centre to progress in his new career, and hopefully travel the world.

Craig believes there are lots of opportunities out there for people wishing to follow in a similar type of career, but you have to be enthusiastic,

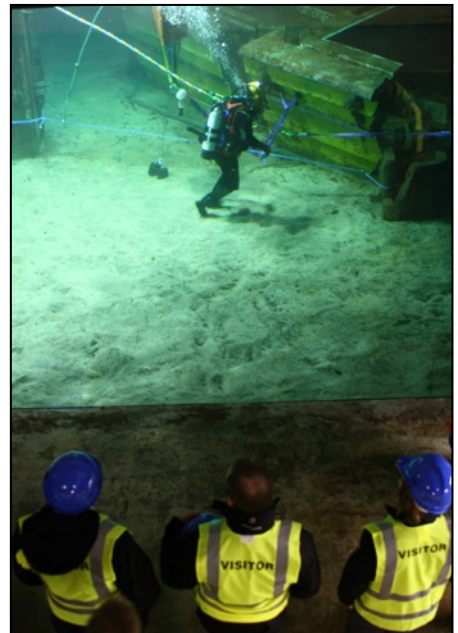
## Results of Investment Revealed

**The Underwater Centre opened its doors recently to some of the industry's key executives to demonstrate the results of significant investment in its facilities.**

The Fort William-based Centre has invested £2 million over the last six years in improvement and expansion of its facilities, including upgrades to the pier infrastructure and additions to the onshore complex.

As a leading provider of commercial diver and ROV training as well as trials facilities to the energy sector, many of the industries' key players have visited the Centre previously and the open day was an opportunity for them to see the extent of the changes resulting from the investment.

On the day, representatives from the various companies, including Shell, Fugro and DOF



Guests enjoying a view into the Centre's onshore dive tank

Subsea, enjoyed a cruise to the Centre's deep dive site, a tour of the saturation diving barge and pier, including ROV cabins and dive stations, as well as the indoor dive complex, ROV and NDT classrooms.



Craig Shiers 'would definitely encourage others to pursue a career underwater'

hardworking and ideally, have a real passion for diving.

'I would definitely encourage others to pursue a career underwater, but make sure you do a lot of research first! If you can, look at commercial diving kit, try it on and observe any diving work that you can. You need to know what you're getting into so I would definitely recommend doing the Centre's Introduction Day.'

Unlike some schools, every dive at The Underwater Centre is a

working dive, where students complete the same kind of tasks that they'll be doing once working as commercial divers. The surface and subsea tools that are used for training are also industry specific so give each student a good grounding and experience of what to expect once employed as commercial divers.

For information on the Centre's courses visit:  
[www.theunderwatercentre.co.uk/courses.asp](http://www.theunderwatercentre.co.uk/courses.asp)

## Energy Sector Looks for Diving Courses for Non-diving Personnel

Following an increase in offshore projects, The Underwater Centre has seen an increase in requests from the oil and gas and renewables sectors to understand more about the diving and ROV professions.

The Centre has delivered training to companies who will now be hiring diving contractors as part of their offshore and onshore projects and need to understand and appreciate the intricacies of the process.

Companies embarking on diving or ROV projects recognise that a greater understanding is fundamental to ensure company representatives know what questions to ask contractors. They need to have detailed knowledge of requirements for minimum team sizes, diving qualifications and a good understanding of the challenges faced by a dive team.

This increase in offshore and onshore representatives' competency aims to produce

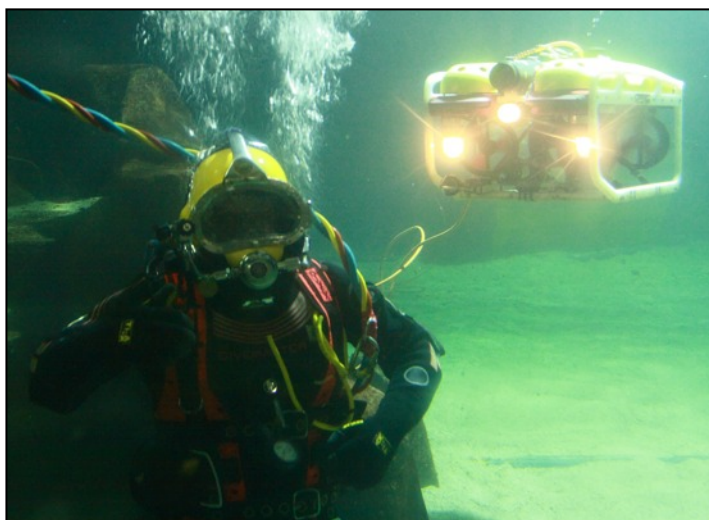
more efficient working, which reduces company expenditure.

Former commercial divers and current ROV pilots make up the team of instructors at The Underwater Centre who, due to their extensive experience, have a unique perspective on training requirements in the industry.

DONG Energy E&P recently spent two weeks at the Centre attending the Company Representatives Course (Diving for Non-diving Personnel).

Jake Law, Subsea Engineer at DONG said: 'We were very specific in what we wanted to get out of the course. We provided some of the high-level documents from our current projects and then spent time with key people at The Underwater Centre going through the details of what we wanted to achieve from the course. The Centre could then tailor the course programme to fit our needs.'

'Our Company reps already have a base knowledge and many years experience in diving operations, but this course further expands on that, giving



**Jake Law from DONG in surface supplied equipment with an ROV keeping a close eye on him**

them greater understanding of diving methods, legislation and physiology. It's been a great learning tool for our people.

Alf Leadbitter, Diver Training Manager said: 'Many non-diving companies are recognising the importance of their own teams having a good understanding of diving and ROV disciplines. They find that gaining this understanding is hugely

beneficial to them in terms of productivity, cost effectiveness and of course, employee safety.'

'At The Underwater Centre we have the facilities, trainer expertise and experience to put together a bespoke training package for what the client requires and will deliver results for their business.'

## Subsea Trials and Testing Boom

The Underwater Centre has seen a 100% increase in companies using its trials and testing facilities this year.

The upturn in research indicates a growing confidence in the industry with an increase in contracts being awarded, as well as the rapid expansion of the renewables industry.

Companies including SALT, Verd Erg, Subsea 7 and Nautronix have all completed trials at The Underwater Centre in recent months.

The Centre is a purpose built subsea trials and training facility and is unique as it leases the seabed of Loch Linnhe surrounding the extensive pier complex, with waters plunging to depths of 150m.

Verd Erg, specialist supplier of subsea diverless connectors and structures to the offshore energy industry, tested a gas pipeline thermal insulation system at the Centre.

The trial involved heating a subsea pipe flange that had been insulated with a prototype Verd Erg insulation system to a predetermined temperature. This was then allowed to cool for 24 hours whilst data logging tracked the temperature at a number of locations within the pipe.

Wainford Deeks from Verd Erg said: 'Following the successful completion of the trial the insulation is now to be used on a major new gas field in the North Sea.'

Wainford continues: 'We chose The Underwater Centre as it was the only open water facility that had all the facilities we required,

either already in place or with the ability to adapt existing facilities to suit our requirements.'

'During the test we were most impressed with the flexible attitude of The Underwater Centre staff and the ability to sort problems quickly without hindering progress of the test, which was on a very tight timescale.'

Douglas Ormiston, Trials Manager at The Underwater Centre, said: 'The facilities and support we offer are ideal for trials and are currently very much in demand.'

'Another advantage we can offer is the unrivalled experience of our instructional and support staff who have important knowledge of the loch, the local environment in general and of course, offshore conditions.'



**Wainford Deeks with the test piece, in the background, being lowered into Loch Linnhe**

**To find out more about the Centre's trials facilities:**  
[www.theunderwatercentre.co.uk/trials\\_training.asp](http://www.theunderwatercentre.co.uk/trials_training.asp)