

## BUSINESS NEWS

# New owners have sights set high for Braidwood

'Natural decision' to move in to Scottish Borders says managing director

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The owners of Bisley at Braidwood have said the 'passionate following' for outdoor pursuits locally was a factor in their decision to buy Braidwood Sporting Clays.

The Bisley Shooting Group owns Europe's largest sporting clay ground, just 30 miles from central London, but added the Midlem facility to its portfolio when Jim and Joyce Black retired earlier this year.

Alex Roupell, managing director of Bisley Shooting



'We are delighted to build on our leading reputation and years of experience'

**Alex Roupell**  
Managing director

Group, told The Southern: "The Scottish countryside is an area of outstanding natural beauty, perfect for clay and rifle shooting, so it was a natural decision for the Bisley Shooting Group to expand into the Scottish Borders given the wide range of outdoor pursuits that complement us, and have such a passionate following."

"Bisley at Braidwood is the largest and most versatile clay shooting ground in Scotland, with new facilities including the first 100m full-bore pipe range in the country, offering the perfect environment for the rifle shot sheltered from the elements."

Mr Roupell added: "Our aim is to ensure that the ground is the place to shoot in Scotland, for everyone from the seasoned professional to the keen beginner looking for instruction."

He said that the group have "exciting plans in the pipeline".

"With the acquisition of Bisley at Braidwood we are delighted to build on our leading reputation and years of experience."

"Set in stunning scenery and offering the top facilities and tuition that Bisley Shooting Group has become synonymous with, we are looking

forward to enhancing a very special shooting ground in the Borders," he said.

"Those looking for a challenge will appreciate the hugely versatile set-up, including simulated game experiences

and the highest clay pheasants, rising teal, bolting rabbits and driven grouse."

Braidwood provides a huge range of targets for everyone from the complete novice to the seasoned professional, in both game and clay disciplines.

With clubhouse, cafe and shop, guests have lots to enjoy outwith the shooting too.

**Alex Roupell**  
**'It was a natural decision to expand into the Borders'**



Alex and Anthony Roupell of Bisley Shooting

## It's time to celebrate...

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NEWS IN BRIEF

## Long-service celebrations

A KESLO woman was among 17 Simpsons Malt employees honoured for their long service at the Berwick company recently. Kathleen Park was recognised for 30 years service at the company. Among others honoured were two generations of the Simpson family – chairman Simon Simpson and newly appointed vice-chairman Richard Simpson have been at the company for 60 years

and 15 years respectively. Commenting on the milestone markers for each of the employees, chairman Simon Simpson said: "It gives us great pride to be able to pass on deserved acknowledgment to each dedicated member of the Simpsons Malt team. It is testament to the company that offering a workplace with a vision for learning and development returns long-serving employees."

## House sales up in Borders

According to Rettie's, house sales are up by nearly one-third in the Borders over the last year. The increase was reflected throughout Scotland, with significant increases in transactions and the values of property sold. House sales in Scotland are up 13 per cent on the year to

date. Average prices have remained relatively stable. This recovery is now being seen in rural areas as well as urban areas, with prices expected to pick up over the next five years due to economic recovery, improved lending and improved consumer sentiment.



Group at an open day at Braidwood last week



Bisley boast some of the country's top instructors



The group acquired Braidwood Sporting Clays earlier this year

## Local businesses to benefit from council procurement changes

CONTINUING efforts are being made by Scottish Borders Council to make it easier for local firms to bid for work.

At last Thursday's full council meeting members agreed to change the thresholds for goods and services procurement and that for works contracts.

The council believes that this will help increase the potential for contracting opportunities for local suppliers.

This in turn may also have a positive knock-on benefit to the wider local economy.

Councillor Michael Cook, executive member for human resources and corporate involvement, said: "We are trying to strengthen the hand of local businesses."

He added that work was on-going with Borders businesses to ensure they are 'tooled-up' to bid for work.

Councillor Michelle Ballantyne added: "It is extremely important that we do make it simpler for small and medium sized enterprises to involve themselves in the procurement

process." The previous threshold for goods and services contracts was between £5,000 and £20,000 for invitation to quote and above £20,000 for invitation to tender.

The £20,000 figure has now been extended to £35,000.

For works contracts the upper threshold for quotes and lower point for tenders has been moved to £500,000 from £50,000.

A report will be brought back to the council in March in relation to council officers' on-going work relating to developing a corporate community benefit policy.

The report before councillors last week stated: "The council recognises the importance of supporting local suppliers and the many advantages of purchasing works, goods and services in ways that minimise environmental impact, make best use of local produce and labour, support and maximise local employment and training initiatives and encourage economic development."

A community benefit policy could see 'added value social and environmental benefits' built into public contracts in the region.

## Firms looking to increase staff and investment in 2014

SCOTTISH small businesses are planning to increase their staff numbers and boost capital investment in 2014, new figures from the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) have revealed.

The FSB's Voice of Small Business Index, published on Monday, showed that despite business confidence taking a seasonal dip it remains much higher than it was in the same quarter of the previous three years.

In addition, the study revealed that more small firms plan to hire staff over the next three months than plan to reduce employee numbers. At the same time, 28 per cent expect to increase capital investment over the next year.

The research by the FSB also found increasing profit margins for small businesses for the first time in two years.

Andy Willox, the FSB's Scottish policy convener said: "2014 will be a big year for many Scottish small business owners, not because of political landmarks or sporting events, but because they plan to take their enterprise to the next level.

"Our index shows firms are looking to grow in 2014

and that, year-on-year, Scottish small business confidence is much higher than it has been since we started collecting comparable data in 2010."

Mr Willox added: "If Scotland is going to make the most of the recovery, we need to ensure that businesses determined to grow are backed by our banks and enterprise agencies.

"Further, too many firms highlight a difficulty hiring people with the right skills for the modern workplace.

"If we're going to get more people back to work while growing our businesses, the country's educational decision-makers need to do more to boost work readiness."

The FSB's research found that the main barriers to growth for small businesses are the domestic economy and consumer demand, but one in four businesses reported a difficulty in obtaining skilled staff.

The FSB in Scotland argues that this underlines the need for "educational decision-makers to redouble their efforts to get people ready for the modern workplace".

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