

# Time to make an impact

## Global Scotland

**O**PPPOSITION parties have ridiculed Gordon Brown's latest attempt at boosting businesses in Scotland. Industry leaders, although at first despondent about the setting up of another committee, say they welcome anything that raises the importance of our economy to our parliamentarians.

It's the first time since devolution that Downing Street has been so actively involved in Scotland's enterprise policy, and Scottish and UK ministers are gearing up for the summit in Edinburgh under the chairmanship of the Chancellor. The joint ministerial committee will discuss moves to assist economic growth in Scotland.

Some Scots firms, burnt from the economic downturn, decline to make predictions about their business or give assurances about Scotland. But CEO of Graham Technology, Iain Graham, has high hopes for the future.

The Scottish Software Firm of the Year has employed around 40 recruits world-wide, with more expected to join over the next few months.

"The graduate intake this year is probably the biggest and best yet in our 17-year history.

"Glasgow, Edinburgh and

Strathclyde Universities never let us down in the quality graduates they produce," said Graham.

"Some of our guys who've been with us for years have told me they're glad not to be competing against such talent. The people who've joined us this year are quite exceptional."

Head of Computing Science at Glasgow University, Professor Muffy Calder, puts Graham Technology and British Telecom as two of their major high-quality employers in Scotland.

He said: "Companies like Graham Technology are so important. It's tremendous that in this economic climate, they're taking on 15 graduates, all of which have at least a 2:1 honours degree and four holding first class honours."

He added: "I don't feel enough's being done to attract businesses to Scotland, however, or even that they're being fostered enough when they are here. We need to take steps to prevent the brain drain."

Glasgow University's student recruitment officer, Alison Mitchell admits there is a lack of high quality jobs in Scotland.

She said: "I think it's a tragedy that Scots graduates are being forced out of the country to look for jobs, while the majority of those I talk to

want to stay. We really need more companies of Graham Technology's calibre.

"We have got top students who should be powering the Scottish economy. A degree in Computer Science at Glasgow University is not just vocational – it's academic.

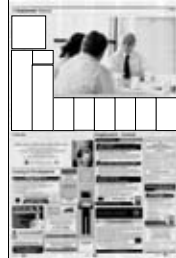
"We're not just teaching our students about technology today – we're teaching them to design the technology of tomorrow."

Privately-owned Graham Technology has just posted record operating profits of £1.4m, with a target to reach £2.4m by the beginning of 2004.

Graham knows Scotland has a huge amount to offer, but concedes we have to think big to be big.

"The issue that Scotland faces today is that we are still a village in the global economy. The fact of the matter is, in Scotland, we have a huge pool of very talented people, therefore, we've got to be focused on going global."

Graham Technology, with its core strategic software solution, GT-X, employs 170 people worldwide, and is recruiting in the UK, Ireland, America and Australia. The organisation is close to finalising significant deals in Europe, North Ameri-





ca and Asia Pacific and has plans to expand into South Africa and Holland.

"The company would not be able to grow or perhaps even survive if our market was limited to Scotland and the UK. It's got to be looking at the global marketplace," said Graham.

The Scottish Executive's economic strategy "Smart Successful Scotland" sets out a need for individuals to be willing to learn and re-learn, for businesses to be smart and government to listen and learn. But it has come under much criticism, with analysts branding it nothing more than verbal tinsel.

The overall objective of "A Smart, Successful Scotland" is to increase the standard of liv-

ing with Gross Domestic Product per head being used as a measure of this.

But with GDP falling by 0.3% in the first quarter of 2003, organisations say it is high time the document was rewritten and the credibility gap between fine words and flagging policy resolved.

Scottish Enterprise has recently set out a three-year plan to allow individuals, businesses and local areas to realise their full growth potential.

Former chief executive, Robert Crawford who helped set-up the plan, said: "Scotland has the potential to become an economy centred on the skills and knowledge of its people and industries.

"We should have the ambi-

tion and vision to see ourselves as a country recognised across the world as a beacon of economic transformation."

He continued: "To achieve real sustainable economic change, we have to focus on the long term. We have to ask ourselves what we would like the Scottish economy to look like in a decade and beyond and what do we need to do to get there; where do we have competitive advantage and how do we get the most from it."

Iain Graham added: "It's difficult to know what the Executive can do.

"What's been my biggest criticism is the attitude within Scotland. I've had the privilege to visit manufacturing companies in Scotland, which lead

the world in better factory gate prices than the Chinese.

"Yet all we seem to hear in the media is doom and gloom, instead of taking these companies on as role-models and letting the rest of the Scottish economy see what can be done.

"The people who promote the Scottish economy should encourage a much more confident, can-do attitude.

"Sometimes I get the feeling people think it just can't be done from Scotland, and that a lot of what we do is second best.

"There's certainly no brand disadvantage in being Scottish. We've got a heritage in invention and innovation that we can capitalise on."