

# COVERED!

Fife Society for the Blind newsletter

*Autumn 2011*

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Alan Suttie celebrates 25 years at Fife Society for the Blind. He is pictured with (left to right) Cindy Godfrey-McKay (NVT Product Executive for FSB Enterprises), Richard Godfrey-McKay (Chairman, FSB) and Alan's wife Janet.

## **SEE MAIN STORY**

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**Tribute to Alan's work page 4**

## **INSIDE**

**Volunteers corner, Recreation rambles  
and much more**

## **From the Editor's desk...**

Autumn's here and it's time to sit down for a new 20-page edition of Covered! If you want to get out, kick leaves and enjoy all sorts of fun activities read on to find out more about a great range of events such as audio-described theatre performances in Edinburgh with Artlink (page 5).

We have our regular features, but also thanks to other contributors to the newsletter, including David Ross for his articles on the cabaret concert and the celebrations of the 50-year anniversary of the Dunfermline Folk Club. Thanks also to Bill Campbell who contributed his article on the Domino Championship to Recreation Rambles.

Special thanks to April Hunter who shares her love of the Isle of Arran in her poem on page 19. If you would like to contribute to a future issue with your own thoughts, please do get in contact with me by e-mail: **[geoff.barker@fsbinsight.co.uk](mailto:geoff.barker@fsbinsight.co.uk)**

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# News from our CEO

*by Alan Suttie*

**Having just celebrated 25 years at Fife Society for the Blind I have used the opportunity to reflect on the many changes that have occurred since 1986. Operating since 1865, the Society has a long and credible history, and as we look towards our 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2015, I hope that we can share more of our heritage, perhaps in a published format.**

When I arrived on July 1<sup>st</sup> 1986, Fife Society for the Blind worked with 929 people on a budget of just over £100,000, while employing just nine staff. We worked from small offices in Townsend Place, Kirkcaldy where visitors were welcomed with a display of craft work prepared by blind and partially-sighted people. At the time I wondered if 'welcome' was an apt description as a small glass window was slid back to allow communication with visitors! Today we work with over 2,000 people, have a budget of over £600,000 and employ 25 staff. We operate from a modern and welcoming building in Wilson Avenue and will soon be opening a newer facility at Elmwood College for the benefit of those who live in the North East Fife area.

Times may have changed but the issues for blind and partially-sighted people remain the same. We are particularly grateful to those who joined us recently at the three consultation events over the summer and provided such excellent feedback and input to our thinking about the services we deliver. We continue to collate your responses and will feed back to you later in the year. What we have learnt already is that we must continue to rise to address the increasing needs of blind and partially-sighted people in a difficult financial climate.

# Tribute to Alan's work

**Alan Suttie, CEO of Fife Society for the Blind, was recognised for his 25 years of service at the FSB User Event in Kirkcaldy on August 3<sup>rd</sup>. Staff and clients gathered in Reception and Richard Godfrey-McKay, Chairman of FSB, presented Alan with a Nikon Coolpix digital camera along with some flowers for his wife Janet.**

After training as a teacher, Alan worked for the Voluntary Services Overseas and was responsible for setting up a technical training centre in India called the Poona Blind Men's Association. He then went on to join the Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind as Works Manager. Alan came back from India to Torquay and started a teaching job at the RNIB Rehabilitation Centre before progressing to Rehabilitation Programme Manager there. He was then successful in becoming the Superintendent with Fife Society for the Blind on July 1 1986, taking over from Miss Mackie. He was made a Director of the Society on the November 1<sup>st</sup> 1989 and appointed as Chief Executive on April 13 1999 when the post of Superintendent was renamed.

Richard Godfrey-McKay reflected on Alan's many years of hard work for the Society: 'Alan may not be the most vocal of people but he is well respected and thought of in the world of the blind and partially-sighted arena and always does his best for the Society – and you can't ask for more than that!'

Alan commented that: 'The reason I get up in the morning and still enjoy coming to work is that I enjoy what we all do. And there is nothing better than being with the blind and partially-sighted people we aim to support.'

Currently Alan is also involved in work with the European Blind Union and chairs a World Blind Union for the Elderly Working Group as well as being a trustee of RNIB. He has also set up projects in Tanzania which help blind and partially-sighted children – and he even conquered Mount Kilimanjaro in 2002 as a sponsored climb for the Society.

To say that Alan is a bit of a workaholic is an understatement – just ask his wife Janet! He is always looking for ways to improve the way we do things for the blind and partially sighted.

Brenda Francis, Alan's executive secretary said: 'He is a very organised person and must have been a boy scout when he was younger as he is "always prepared" – he might not always remember the date but he is prepared!'

On one occasion when Alan came to the rescue he may well have regretted his great skill in always being prepared. He was away abroad on the Society annual holiday and one of the visually impaired clients – who was also hard of hearing – had taken her hearing aid out. Her husband was unable to get back into their hotel room as she could not hear him knocking on the door. In a daring attempt to attract her attention, Alan thought he would climb over from the next door's balcony. This all went to plan until she thought he was an intruder and started to attack him with her stick!

Congratulations Alan, from all the staff and clients at FSB. We look forward to the next 25 years!

## **Artlink special events**

**Audio-described theatre performances, events and Touch Tours are available for a great programme of events this autumn and winter in Edinburgh. Shows include James Cordon in the comedy One Man, Two Guvnors, popular musical The King and I, Rossini's opera The Barber of Seville, Simon Callow in two one-man plays by Dickens and the pantomime Cinderella.**

Contact Susan at Artlink for more information on these special facilities and to find out more about what's on and where. Artlink also organises descriptive tours in galleries and museums.

tel: **0131 229 3555 – option 1**

email: **[susan@artlinkedinburgh.co.uk](mailto:susan@artlinkedinburgh.co.uk)**

# **Volunteers corner**

*by Liz Reid*

**The mornings have become a little colder, the ‘nights are fair drawing in’ and even the leaves are beginning to change colour and put on their magnificent autumn display. Here at ‘Volunteers corner’ it’s time to round up the autumn news and events.**

## **Volunteer response**

There was a superb response to my plea for Befriending Volunteers and thanks to you, the lady who wanted to go for short walks is now able to and is enjoying walks along the beach and around the park with Moira.

The elderly lady in St Andrews feeling isolated is getting out and about a little more and enjoying the social chat with Gillian every week, as well as trips out for the occasional coffee.

A totally blind lady from Dunfermline with additional health difficulties is now getting out to her local shopping mall and enjoying the company of Rosie. Absolute knockout... I am so privileged to work alongside great volunteers and meet lovely clients.

It’s a good time to mention a special thank you to Colin who visits a very frail, deaf and blind gentleman in the North East of Fife and is doing an amazing job into the bargain.

There is still a waiting list of people who require some additional support in the form of a weekly or fortnightly visitor to brighten up their day. If you can help or know a friend in your own social circle; a friend at the golf club, the country dancing, tai chi class, the philatelist club – well you never know the interests, talents and skills many of our volunteers have or... even someone from the local pub, then put us in touch with them. >

The needs of our blind and partially sighted people in Fife are ongoing and many of them are dependent on YOU! We're a great team.

## **Drop-in sessions**

A number of clients have expressed interest in the Society having some kind of 'Drop In' sessions. They can meet up to discuss issues that affect them personally or receive updates on the latest equipment but equally important, it may be a place where you can talk over a cuppa and receive support. We want to hear what you want! We are running three pilot 'Drop In' sessions, to be held initially at FSIC to gauge interest. Depending on numbers the 'Drop In' could be rolled out to West and North East Fife, so if you wish to try out this new concept here are the dates:

**Wed 2 November: 10.00am – 12.00 noon**

**Wed 7 December: 10.00am – 12.00 noon**

**Wed 11 January: 10.00am – 12.00 noon**

There will be no charge for tea and coffee during the pilot sessions. Just come along and share your ideas and thoughts with others. You may not even wish to stay the full two hours – the idea is that you can just 'drop in' and go when you wish. A member of staff and sighted volunteers will be on hand to assist.

## **Sighted volunteers**

This brings us nicely to a further request for sighted volunteers to support the 'Drop In' which initially, will be held on the first Wednesday of the month, apart from January due to the Christmas period. If you think you could support this new idea by helping with teas and coffees or just being a friendly face and offering a warm welcome, do get in touch. We can't do this without the valuable support of our volunteers. >

## **Fundraising dates**

**Sat 15 October – Kingdom Centre, Glenrothes**

**Sat 26 November – Sainsbury's Store, Kirkcaldy**

We hope to hold the Kirkcaldy High Street collection during the first weekend in December but please phone the office to confirm dates.

We appreciate all your support both from sighted and visually impaired people for these events and other fundraisers – please do all that you can to help.

## **Mr Motivator**

To round off Volunteers Corner I'd like to quote FSB Volunteer Fundraiser, car driver and amateur operatic singer in his spare time – the extraordinary Geoff Strong. When replying in an email which asked him to confirm that he was OK for driving at the start of the new Baldridgeburn Club Winter session, Geoff said, 'No problem, I enjoy working with FSB and I will keep going until I'm 104 – that's my target!' Don't know what his wife has to say about that either! It doesn't get much better than that. Thanks for listening.

## **Unused magnifiers**

Have you got any magnifiers on loan that you no longer use? Or is your magnifier no longer suitable? If so, we would greatly appreciate if these could be returned to us for recycling. We can provide freepost labels for these or you can simply hand them in to Reception at Wilson Avenue. Please phone on **01592 644979** for more information. We would also like to thank all the clients who have returned their unused magnifiers to us over the past few months.

# Recreation rambles

*by Amanda Graham*

As I am out and about in Fife I notice that the gardens are full of colour and the farmers are harvesting their produce. It's plum time in Newburgh – apparently the reason for such an abundance of fruit is because the monks planted lots of plum trees around here many years ago. The locals pick the fruit then sell it in the town. I stopped to buy some from outside someone's door – you just helped yourself and left a donation. How trusting is that?

We've been pretty busy with our summer outdoor activities. Starting with bowling, it was the InterFife Championships on September 5 – what a beautiful sunny day it was too! A big thank you to Kingseat Bowling club for hosting it and to Jack O'Hare for being the main organiser. A raffle was held to cover the catering costs and over £100 was raised.

Congratulations to all the winners and the participants – you are all stars. Winners were Maria Spencer, John Barbour, Eddie Hodgkinson, Joe Tottenham and Dorothy Sharp.

## **Rambling**

The rambling season has been a good one thanks to our great dedicated band of volunteers who turn up to every walk. There are still a couple of walks to go so it's not too late to get your boots on! The final walk is on October 22 followed by a high tea – the route is still to be decided. Welcome to Marjory and her guide dog who travel from Forfar to join us. Her local society does not have a rambling group so Marjory has joined our group – she tells me how welcome she has been made to feel and loves going on the rambles.

## **Under-60s**

The under-60s group meets monthly. New members are needed so let us know if you want to come along. Brian Craig will contact you. >

## **Social groups**

After a well-deserved break the social groups are ready to go with some exciting programmes on offer including Bothy Ballads to East Neuk First Responders.

We have groups in Dunfermline, Lochgelly, Glenrothes, Kirkcaldy, St.Andrews, Leven, Cupar and Anstruther.

If you stay in any of these localities and think you would like to try coming along you will be made most welcome! Just call Reception and I will get back to you. There are some places available. We have some new members starting at Dunfermline and Kirkcaldy.

I was recently visiting the Lochgelly group and a Mr Graham (not my husband) was entertaining the group with songs from the shows and a quiz – eggheads beware!

Exciting things are happening at Elmwood with the sensory garden. It's initially been a bit slow to take off due to staff cuts but a site has been selected with mature trees which offer the rustling of the wind, as well as a lavender path and some old fashioned scented roses – with some magical names like Breath of Life, Madame Butterfly, Warm Welcome, Mr Bluebird and Peter Pan. It will be a marvellous place to visit when it's finally completed.

## **Swimming**

Newcomers are always welcome. There is a group at Bowhill pool and Cowdenbeath. New volunteers are always needed so if you know of anyone who can spare an hour or two then please let me know!

## **Curling**

After a summer break, the curling season has just started at Kinross, but new members are still welcome. The season continues every week until December 19. >

## Dominoes

The 2011 Domino Championship was keenly contested at the Lomond Centre, Glenrothes on Tuesday 23 August. The tournament dates all the way back to the mid-1950s. This year's participants were Glenrothes, Leven, Kirkcaldy and St Andrews.



Our photograph above shows the trophy with the successful Kirkcaldy team of Aileen Fraser, Brian Craig and Edith Mason. This year's hosts, Glenrothes, finished as runners-up, with Leven in a close third place. St Andrews, disappointed in their fourth spot, will host the 2012 event and are planning to make amends next time.

All four clubs extend a warm invitation to anyone wishing to join them in the new season starting around October time. Further information is available from Amanda at FSB. >

## **Tara's trip to Glasgow**

On a beautiful day in July which she described as: 'So hot you could guzzle a gallon!' Tara King travelled to Glasgow to try out a side-by-side bike. This is a local charity in Glasgow Green called Freewheelnorth which has lots of specially adapted bikes to suit a variety of disabilities. They allow anyone to try them out for just £1 – which is great value!

Tara sat alongside her cycling companion and she felt completely safe. She was also able to cycle the pedals herself. She found the ride peaceful and uplifting, and the cool breeze was a welcome relief from the heat that day. They cycled along the Clyde and under the subway so she could hear the trains above them. They then cycled along the streets of Glasgow. It was the school holidays – a young boy was singing an Amy McDonald song and there were street dancers. What a brilliant way to spend a day and a fond memory of this summer.

## **Tele-care project**

FSB offers a telephone support/counselling service from one VIP to another. If you would like to be a caller or would like to be called then let me know. The following are currently available:

**Your Call** is a new telephone counselling service open to disabled people from all over Scotland. It is run by trained volunteer counsellors who are disabled themselves.

**[www.lothiancil.org.uk/whatwedo/yourcall/index.php](http://www.lothiancil.org.uk/whatwedo/yourcall/index.php)**

**The Listening Eye** is a UK-wide telephone support for anyone with a sight problem. This useful service is run by blind people with long-established experience of living with sight loss.

The Listening Eye is available between 6pm and 10pm on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings.

**Freephone: 0800 783 1979**

Thank you for listening and do get in touch. If any of this information is of interest to you please contact me – Amanda Graham – at the office, and I will be delighted to speak to you.

# What's on your Christmas wish list?

As I sit on my favourite chair in my cosy living room with a cup of tea near at hand I'm thinking about my Christmas list. I find myself reflecting back on a journey of inequalities that has turned into a journey of understanding.

I am the founding member of Talking Tandems, a tandem cycling project based in Fife that involves individuals who are blind or partially sighted in mainstream cycling activities. I am registered blind and when I decided to set up Talking Tandems all I could see were barriers.

Last year's Christmas list included: volunteer pilots (front cyclists); storage for tandem cycles; and a method of transporting tandems and stokers (back cyclists) who are blind or partially sighted to and from cycling venues. And let's not forget money!

It never occurred to me that I was thinking about me and what I wanted, and only now when I reflect back do I see this passion for cycling has opened a door to informing others of the barriers facing individuals who are blind or partially sighted. By talking about my reservations and apprehensions I have helped sighted people understand my frustrations and how we can overcome them together by discussing solutions rather than just seeing problems.

As I consider my future cycling adventures, this year my list is full of confidence, laughter and smiles. I'm looking forward to meeting new friends, planning new routes and enjoying this beautiful country – by tandem cycling!

If you are interested in changing your Christmas list into a journey of opportunities please telephone Janet Brereton:

tel: **01592 201328** or

email: **info@talkingtandems.org**

or visit Talking Tandems' website **www.talkingtandems.org**

# Come to the cabaret!

Tickets are now on sale for the fundraising cabaret concert which will be held at the Halfway House Hotel Kingseat on Sunday 6 November from 2 until 5 pm. The concert will feature local comedian Bert Allan, FSB's own David Ross accompanied by Gifford Lind on guitar, who will be singing a selection of contemporary and traditional folk songs. There will be a raffle as well as a chance to do some early Christmas shopping with stalls selling Christmas cards and Braille jewellery.

This event promises to be a really enjoyable and entertaining afternoon. Tickets are £6 for adults and £4 for children and can be bought from the office or on the day itself.

## Fashion show

Is the end of summer making you blue? Why not come along to our Picante Fashion Show! Add some pizzazz to your winter wardrobe with unique designer-style handbags, shoes and accessories at affordable prices. Guilt-free shopping when you know it's for a good cause as 10% of all sales on the night go to FSB.

Even better is the Picante promise of year-round donations. FSB will shortly get a charity code that we can give to people so that when you purchase anything from Picante, using our code, FSB will receive 10% of your total bill.

Feeling tempted? Then come along to the Fashion Show and see what Picante has to offer.

- **When?** Thu 10 November 2011
- **Time?** 7pm to 9pm
- **Cost?** Tickets are £5 (includes free champagne and canapés)
- **Where?** Glenrothes at Picante Direct, Unit H4, Newark Rd South

Picante will also donate some prizes for our raffle such as gift vouchers, which make a fantastic present for friends and family or even as a special treat for yourself!

Picante sells handbags, shoes, purses, gloves, scarves, tops and jewellery for her, as well as ties, wallets, belts and gloves for him.

All of the handbags and shoes are imported from Spain. Picante is the only UK customer to many of the suppliers, so it provides something a bit different from what you find on the local high street. Many items are based on the styles of designer labels such as Louis Vuitton, D & G, Prada – they are just a bit more affordable!

**[www.picantedirect.com](http://www.picantedirect.com)**

Contact FSB to book your Fashion Show ticket:

tel: **01592 644979**

or by email

Places are limited to 55 guests so contact FSB to buy your ticket and make sure you don't miss out.

## **BASE events**

**Thu 13 October**      Local walk Springfield or coastal path  
(bad weather alternatives: Fisheries Museum,  
Anstruther or Scotland's Secret Bunker)

**Thu 17 November**      Verdant Works, Dundee

**December**              Christmas lunch

Bad weather alternatives will be organised for the outdoor events where possible. Details of each event will be available nearer the time but please contact Joe or Morag for further information on:

Dr Joe Lamb **01334 475 909** or Ms Morag Stewart **01334 840 490**

Or email us via our website: **[www.fifebase.org](http://www.fifebase.org)**

# Dunfermline folk club

It's 50 years since the first folk club was held in Dunfermline. The club which started in September 1961 met at the Howff, a cellar in Chalmers Street. To mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary Dunfermline Folk Club are holding a wide range of events during the last weekend in October, including:

- **Fri 28 October:** Family ceilidh featuring Dollarfield Ceilidh band plus surprise guests
- **Sat 29 October:** Gala Concert featuring Barbara Dickson and Archie Fisher amongst others
- **Sun 30 October:** Final concert featuring Alistair MacDonald and folk club regulars.

The events on the Friday and Saturday will be held in the Glen Pavilion whilst the final concert will be held in the Thistle Tavern.

Tickets are on sale now and can be bought in the following ways:

From Carnegie Hall box office:

tel: **01383 602302**

From Jeannie Gardiner, Folk club secretary:

tel: **01383 725872**

or from the folk club every Wednesday night at the Thistle Tavern.

If you would like more information on what is happening during the folk weekend please visit the Dunfermline folk club website at:

**[www.dunfermlinefolkclub.co.uk](http://www.dunfermlinefolkclub.co.uk)**

# Eyeway code

The results of the International Glaucoma Association (IGA) awareness campaign CAN U C 2 DRIVE survey are in.

30% of 1,000 drivers aged 40 plus are failing to take an eye test every two years!

The survey was conducted in July 2011 by ICM Research on behalf of the International Glaucoma Association and results are based on the sample of 1,000 drivers aged 40 plus.

Glaucoma is the leading cause of preventable blindness and the 40–54 age group is most at risk. Experts, including the IGA, recommend for people aged over 40 to take an eye test, including all three glaucoma tests, at least every two years to ensure early diagnosis, when treatment is most effective.

The survey also showed that many people are not aware of the facts about glaucoma such as:

- Glaucoma mainly affects peripheral vision.
- It is not easy to self diagnose as the condition develops slowly.
- Glaucoma can be diagnosed through a complete 'eye health check' by a qualified optometrist, as this should include the three simple and painless glaucoma tests.

The IGA has published the 'EyeWay Code: Keep your eyes and life on the road after 40 years old'. The EyeWay Code addresses the risks of glaucoma and aims at 'getting the nation into gear with glaucoma'.

The Code is available to download free of charge on the IGA website:

**[www.glaucoma-association.com/media.html](http://www.glaucoma-association.com/media.html)**

# Lottery results

And now to the 200 Club lottery results from June, July and August:

## June 2011

1 <sup>st</sup> Prize	No. 182 Margaret Walker	£197.50
2 <sup>nd</sup> Prize	No. 104 Charlotte Lockhart	£39.50
2 <sup>nd</sup> Prize	No. 120 G S Seaton	£39.50
3 <sup>rd</sup> Prize	No. 080 Patrick Clark	£23.70
3 <sup>rd</sup> Prize	No. 122 Margaret Bryce	£23.70
3 <sup>rd</sup> Prize	No. 008 May Aird	£23.70

## July 2011

1 <sup>st</sup> Prize	No. 055 Teresa Gallagher	£196.25
2 <sup>nd</sup> Prize	No. 002 Pam Peplinska	£39.25
2 <sup>nd</sup> Prize	No. 044 Helen Fairgrieve	£39.25
3 <sup>rd</sup> Prize	No. 032 Aileen Fraser	£23.55
3 <sup>rd</sup> Prize	No. 089 Catherine Carswell	£23.55
3 <sup>rd</sup> Prize	No. 165 Joseph McAllister	£23.55

## August 2011

1 <sup>st</sup> Prize	No. 164 Lin Jones	£197.50
2 <sup>nd</sup> Prize	No. 080 Patrick Clark	£39.50
2 <sup>nd</sup> Prize	No.151 D R Grant	£39.50
3 <sup>rd</sup> Prize	No. 145 Alexander Reid	£23.70
3 <sup>rd</sup> Prize	No. 049 Marianne Baird	£23.70
3 <sup>rd</sup> Prize	No. 045 Jinty Wilson	£23.70

# Isle of Arran *by April Hunter*

There is an island in the sea  
Calling, calling me  
My beloved isle of Arran  
Is where I long to be.

When life is troubled and the spirit sore  
Oh to walk that familiar shore  
And hear the sweet voices in the air  
Telling of times gone past, when we were there.

And retrace my steps of long ago  
Seeing pictures as I go  
Of tender youth and children dear  
To bring a smile and perhaps a tear.

I raise my eyes to that grandest peak  
The Warrior sleeping near  
Where eagles and the buzzards soar  
O'er shadowed glen and sunlit moor

And gaze out over the glistening bay  
Where gannets dive and porpoise leap  
And great white horses risen from the deep  
Come charging, wild manes flying  
And the seagulls crying.

Now all is still as I stand on that shore  
Where peace steals round to comfort me  
And above me spread the myriad colours of the setting sun  
That touch the soul when day is done.

And oh, that island in the sea  
Is calling, calling me.

Dear friends – someone once said, ‘We are born able to see, but are required to look’. Although registered blind now for several years, in my ‘mind’s eye’ I am still looking! My warmest good wishes, April Hunter.

# Stop press!

## Forthcoming events:

### **Mon 17 October**

A special curry night is to be held on Monday 17 October at Reya Indian Restaurant, Leslie. Ticket price is £12, of which the FSB gets 50%.

### **Fri 4 November: 10 am–12 noon**

We will be holding our Christmas Coffee Morning on Friday 4 November 2011. We will have a tombola, raffle and bake sale (any contributions welcome). There will also be Christmas cards for sale and a chance to buy some early Christmas presents with jewellery for sale.

Tickets will cost £2 and will include tea/coffee, a biscuit and a pamper taster session, as we are fortunate to have a few students joining us from Adam Smith College.

### **A message from Hazel White** (Access Technology Trainer)

Many of you are aware I have been off work for some time due to back problems. However, since having surgery in August I am pleased to say I have returned to work. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who sent cards, visited and phoned. Your kind wishes were very much appreciated. I am sure you will understand that I have a backlog of queries to deal with and thank you for your patience while I process these before restarting classes.



FIFE SOCIETY FOR THE  
**BLIND**

Fife Society for the Blind  
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Wilson Avenue  
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**e-mail: [info@fsbinsight.co.uk](mailto:info@fsbinsight.co.uk)**

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