

[skip to main content](#)

# Site navigation



- [Home](#)
- [News](#)
- [Events](#)
- 

Search in site

Search in site  

Menu 

- Share
- 
  - 
  - 

Michael Behr

04 February 2021, 09.06am



**While SMEs are among the hardest hit economically by the pandemic, small businesses can also lead the creation of a more flexible Scottish economy.**

Held on 3rd February, the [CAN DO Innovation Summit](#) brought together figures from across the triple helix of government, business and academia. Discussions took place in the shadow of the coronavirus pandemic, both as a crisis to overcome and as a driver of change.

The event explored innovative ways to create a more resilient and sustainable economy that works for everyone involved. The key drivers of this are companies, governments, and education institutions – but more importantly, it is how they can work together to foster innovation.

During the opening remarks, we heard from Scottish Minister for Trade, Investment & Innovation Ivan McKee. He [noted](#) that Scotland's legacy of innovation and manufacturing can help it 'build back better' in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

A **FREE** tool for organisations of all sizes, which helps find out **how resilient they are to cyber attacks** and practise their response in a safe environment.

[Click here](#)

To find out more and join an upcoming session.



SMEs lay at the heart of CAN DO's focus – not only have they borne the brunt of the economic effect of the coronavirus, but their flexibility and agility mean that they are key drivers of the innovation needed to find new ways to recover from the pandemic.

As such, smaller companies will help drive growth and provide the Scottish economy with a sustainable competitive edge from 2021 onwards.

Dr Laura Bell of the CAN DO Innovation Summit said: “We know SMEs are being disproportionately affected by recent events. It will be critical for businesses to adapt to the economic and societal challenges we are facing. This year's CAN DO Innovation Summit was carefully designed with SMEs in mind, allowing them to explore opportunities, develop new and better business models and drive a sustainable competitive advantage.

“We hope the information and resources provided, by world-leading experts and local talent in the field of innovation, will help equip SMEs with the tools they need to survive and thrive through these testing times.

“The events networking opportunities were utilised by attendees who made valuable connections through live Q&As, speed networking and 1:1s in the Delegate Hub. Entrepreneurs, investors and academics were among the 1300 registered delegates who joined the event from Scotland, the UK and beyond. We are grateful for the support of our funders, partners, sponsors and the Virtual Support Village, all of which played an integral part to ensuring the success of the day.

“We'd like to share a special thanks with our keynote speakers and panellists who shared compelling and useful insights that we hope businesses can take forward to help secure their future wellbeing. For those who missed any of the sessions, they will all be available to view on the CAN DO Innovation Summit website as of Thursday morning.”

### All Together

Sustainability has two sides – one is environmental, which includes moving towards a net zero economy, increasing recycling and remanufacturing, and reducing emissions. The other is social sustainability – ensuring opportunities are available to all members of society, workers are paid fairly and ensuring exploitation is absent from the supply chain.

The first talk, from Lolita Jackson from the New York City Mayor's Office, touched on these issues. From an urban perspective, few cities can match the scale of New York – both in terms of the resources it can muster but also in the challenges it faces.

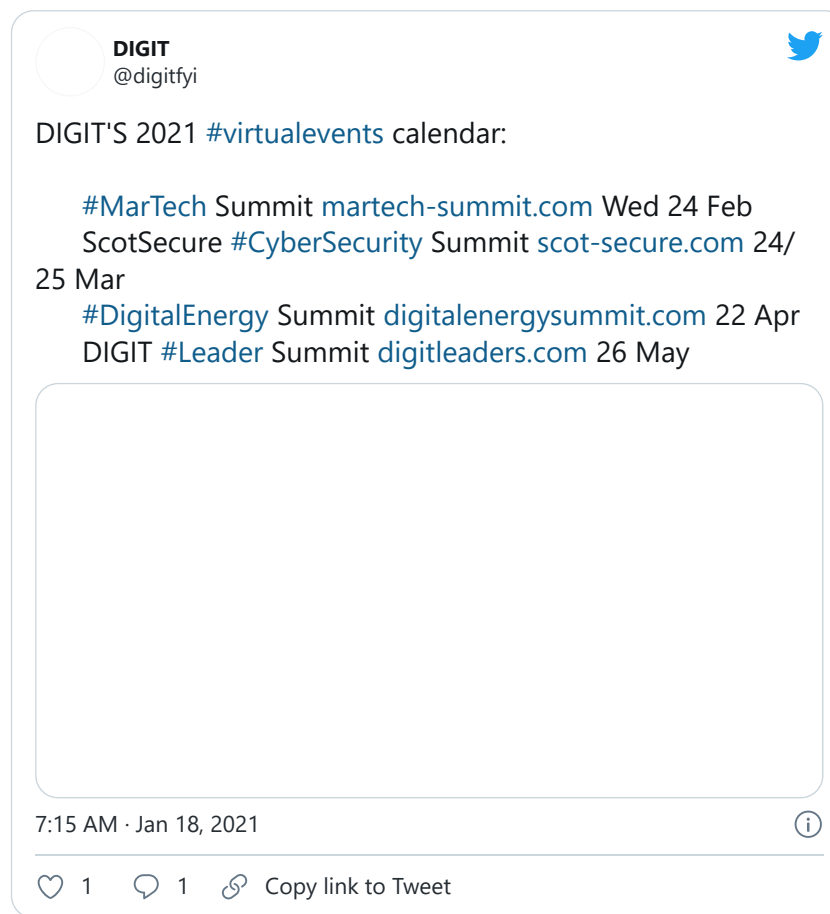
During the early months of the pandemic, it had to work fast to combat the disease, which had a disproportionate effect on the city's immigrant and minority residents. Jackson shared insights into how the city reacted to protect its most vulnerable and shared how other cities can use its experience to build a more resilient, sustainable, and inclusive city.

### Know-how

With technology providing the key to adapting to the pandemic, ensuring that the triple helix members work together to upskill employees is vital. In the wake of the coronavirus, remote working has become the norm. Ensuring that flexible working models are sustained post-pandemic will help bring more people into the workforce, who might not have been able to accommodate a traditional work schedule.

The pipeline, from academia to business is also important. While research is key to innovation, without businesses involved to create new products, services and business models, new ideas simply stay as ideas.

During the NHS Solver Session Discussion, the speakers noted that Scottish research into AI is some of the highest standard in the world. However, its standing drops as it transforms that research into patents, and even further as those patents are used to create businesses.



As such, Scotland needs to do more to turn its world-leading education and research into practical and innovative businesses. The pipeline needs to develop to support collaboration between academia and business, with government support.

Perhaps one of the great success stories of the pandemic, and an illustration of the power of cooperation between different sections of the Scottish ecosystem, was the production of PPE. John Reid from the National Manufacturing Institute of Scotland explained how when the coronavirus first hit, Scotland produced virtually none of the PPE it needed.

With coordination and cooperation between the Scottish Government, organisations like the NMIS and businesses, Scotland was able to produce half of its PPE needs in a matter of month, a figure which has since increased.

## Coming Back Stronger

As the world hopes to see the back of this crisis, it is vital that businesses use this as an opportunity to get stronger. As John Reid noted, if you do not use this as a chance to become more agile, efficient, and flexible, someone else will.

In her presentation, Chloe Demrovsky from Disaster Recovery Institute warned that one of the greatest lessons of the pandemic was how unprepared the world was, despite all the warning signs and near misses over the past few decades. As such, all players in the global economy need to be prepared for the potential shocks and catastrophes the world is facing.

## Recommended

- [Colin Hewitt: Scotland's tech sector should embrace the 'roaring twenties'](#)
- [Apple's app tracking transparency – what does it mean?](#)
- [2020 was a record year for scams, Barclays reveals](#)

While different shocks have different causes, many of the effects are similar, and that allows us to learn lessons from one crisis and apply them to the next. Demrovsky advised that creating a generic effects-based resilience plan can help protect against a crisis, no matter the cause.

As the Advanced Manufacturing panel heard, technology saved the day – whether it was remote working, online shopping or the millions of hours that went into expediting a vaccine. As such, creating a more sustainable and resilient business means making innovative use of new technology.

---

Tell the world!



---

Like this:

Loading...



Michael Behr

Senior Staff Writer

## Editor's Picks

1

[CAN DO Innovation Summit | Evolving Your Business for Future Threats](#)

2

[Scotland's Space Ambitions Grow as Glasgow Satellite Firm Signs Skypark Deal](#)

3

['Plain Speaking' SBRC Course to Bolster Executive Cyber Awareness](#)

4

[ABI Defends Against Claims Ransomware Pay-outs Fund Crime](#)

5

[Leader Insights | Mastering Marketing with Gideon Wellins, Lemon Pulse](#)

Subscribe to

News

[Subscribe](#)

## Trending Articles

1

[LinkedIn Research Reveals that CMOs Expecting Role Changes in 2021](#)

2

['Plain Speaking' SBRC Course to Bolster Executive Cyber Awareness](#)

3

[Check Point Partners with SBRC to Support New Cyber Incident Response Helpline](#)

4

[Poll Suggests Digital Skills Drop Will be Biggest Concern for Firms in 2021](#)

[LiberEat Data to Help Health Agencies Understand Dietary Trends](#)

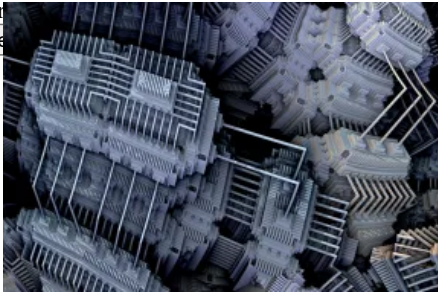
Latest News



Events

[CAN DO Innovation Summit Receives 1400 Virtual Visitors](#)

3 hours ago  
Share



Technology

[Aberdeen Uni Scientists to Boost Quantum Tech with Horizon Grant](#)

3 hours ago  
Share





Business Recruitment

[Amazon Apprenticeship Drive to Recruit 1,000 Across the UK](#)

4 hours

Share



Business Editor's Picks

[CAN DO Innovation Summit | Evolving Your Business for Future Threats](#)

5 hours ago

Share

- [!\[\]\(79516a995cff76a1aff85c3662aea2c5\_img.jpg\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(eccb9a483ab0e7e56efdd579e29a52b0\_img.jpg\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(2ccbb51543148aca2718e727021d6f32\_img.jpg\)](#)

- 
- [About Us](#)
- 
- [Terms & Conditions](#)
- 
- [Privacy & Cookies](#)
- © 2021 DIGIT | All Rights Reserved
- [in](#)
- [t](#)
- [f](#)

2