Global Underwater Hub

HEADLINE SPONSOR

SMD

Underwater Robotics 2026

Tuesday, 30 June 2026

Scottish Gas Murrayfield Stadium, Edinburgh

Rapid Evolution



Credit: SMD

Global Underwater Hub is the leading trade and industry development body for the UK's underwater sectors.

Owned and governed by industry, Global Underwater Hub represents, promotes and supports all sectors of the underwater industry. As the UK's underwater industry organisation, we support our member companies by enabling access to market opportunities, expertise, contacts and specialist support to accelerate market growth and build value.

Global Underwater Hub

Underwater Robotics 2026

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Conference overview

Global Underwater Hub is holding its annual **Underwater Robotics Conference** on Tuesday, 30 June 2026 in Edinburgh, an event that is a central strand in the organisation's programme of activity.

Underwater robotics technology has become an essential tool within the oil and gas sector, enabling safe, efficient and cost-effective operations. The technologies and their applications are now being utilised in many marine operations, including offshore renewables, defence, ocean science and aquaculture. Alongside remotely operated vehicles (ROVs), autonomous underwater vehicles (AUVs), seabed crawlers, gliders and autonomous surface vessels (ASVs) or uncrewed surface vessels (USVs) are driving forward underwater robotic technology and its applications.

Sponsored by **SMD**, this one-day conference at Scottish Gas Murrayfield Stadium Conference Centre, Edinburgh will bring together individuals with a vested interest in the development and application of underwater robotic technology. It offers an opportunity to learn from and network with colleagues working at the forefront of subsea robotic technologies.

This year's conference programme will focus on three key themes, with sessions centred around the following areas:

- Insight from Operators, Developers and Regulators
- The new wave of developments in robotics and autonomy
- Data acquisition, AI and interpretation

Previous editions of the conference have welcomed representatives of oil and gas operators, subsea contractors, equipment manufacturers, service providers and many more, keen to share knowledge and experience that helps to keep driving forward this innovative industry.

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Headline Sponsor

The power behind subsea pioneers

We're the power behind subsea pioneers. For over 50 years, SMD has partnered with industry pioneers to overcome the hardest challenges in subsea engineering.

Engineering excellence underwater, we lead in the design, manufacture and deployment of remotely operated and autonomous power and control solutions that help our partners around the globe harness the potential of the most challenging subsea environments with maximum safety, efficiency, and sensitivity.

Find out more about SMD at www.smd.co.uk

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Supporting Partners

Global Underwater Hub extends its thanks to our sponsors for their valued support of the **Underwater Robotics Conference**. Their commitment and collaboration help enable meaningful discussion, innovation and progress across the underwater robotics sector.

Supporting Sponsors

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Conference Programme

08:30 – 09:00	**Registration, breakfast and networking** **Networking breakfast sponsor -** ETZ, National Robotarium and Robertson
09:00 – 09:10	**Opening remarks** – Steve Fernie, Global Underwater Hub
09:10 – 09:20	**Headline sponsor -** Mark Collins, SMD
09:20 – 09:30	**Market overview -** Lewis Scorgie, Global Underwater Hub
09:30 – 10:30	**Session 1 – Insights from Operators, Developers & Regulators** Albert Williams, Adura Andy Gower, Neo Next+
10:30 – 10:40	**Sponsor spotlight** Steve Arnott, Saab UK
10:40 – 11:10	**Coffee & networking**
11:10 – 12:10	**Session 2 – The new wave of developments in robotics and autonomy** James Cowles, Acua Ocean James Fleming, Reach Subsea Francesco Cavallini, Saipem
12:10 – 12:20	**Sponsor spotlight** Marc Drew, Nautexe Global
12:20 – 12:30	**Sponsor spotlight** National Robotarium
12:30 – 13:30	**Lunch & networking**
13:30 – 14:30	**Session 3 – Data acquisition, AI and interpretation** Joshua Erratt, Deepocean John Bethea, Oceaneering International Kushal Chetty, TSC Subsea
14:30 – 15:00	**Coffee & networking**
15:00 – 16:20	**One-to-one meetings**
16:20 – 16:30	**Closing comments**

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Confirmed speakers

Delegates to the **Underwater Robotics: Rapid Evolution** on **Tuesday, 30 June** will hear from representatives of the following organisations.

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Exhibiting companies

Delegates to the **Underwater Robotics: Rapid Evolution** on **Tuesday, 30 June** will have the opportunity to meet our exhibiting companies and network throughout the day.

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Session 1 Chair



Global Underwater Hub

Steve Fernie

Strategy & Policy Director

Global Underwater Hub

Steve Fernie is the Strategy & Policy Director at Global Underwater Hub, a role that sees him identify core areas of focus where products, services and experience can be transferred across numerous underwater markets. In addition, he ensures that the intelligence offering of GUH is value-adding and aligned to the requirements and strategy of members, stakeholders and the organisation itself in realising the opportunities offered by the blue economy.

Steve has over 12 years' experience in market analysis and strategy support across the subsea sector, including eight years managing business intelligence, market analysis, forecasting and strategy for a range of global business units within Subsea7. In addition to UK conventional subsea operations, his remit covered global ROV and bespoke tooling, subsea decommissioning, early-stage energy transition, automation and digitisation, and the associated market-expansion opportunities of these. Steve has previously held intelligence and analysis roles within other key product and service provides within the underwater space.

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Albert Williams

ROV & Remote Technology SME

Adura

Albert Williams is a highly experienced ROV and Remote Technology Subject Matter Expert with Adura Energy, bringing over 30 years of expertise in advancing subsea diverless and remote technology solutions within the oil and gas industry. Based in Aberdeen, he has built a career at the forefront of subsea technology, supporting the development and delivery of advanced remote solutions for offshore operations.

Albert began his career in ROV and AUV design, as well as subsea tooling, gaining a strong technical foundation in the development of innovative diverless and robotic systems. Over time, he progressed into managing ROV and diverless intervention contracts for Shell UK and led the delivery of complex remote technology solutions. Since 2004, he has worked with Shell UK, successfully delivering robotic and remote operations capabilities, and continues to do so today through Adura Energy. He has collaborated extensively with multidisciplinary teams to deliver safe and efficient outcomes in demanding offshore environments.

A strong advocate for innovation, Albert has consistently driven the adoption of remote and robotic technologies to improve safety, efficiency, and performance. He is particularly passionate about advancing diverless intervention solutions as a safer and more effective alternative to traditional diving operations.

At the GUH Robotics Conference, Albert brings deep technical expertise and practical insight, offering an operator's perspectives on subsea robotics, operator challenges, and the future direction of the industry.

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Speaker biographies



Andy Gower

Subsea Robotics & Digital Lead

Neo Next+

Andy Gower brings over 25 years of expertise in subsea engineering, specialising in Production Control Systems and advanced robotics. Recently as Project Lead for TotalEnergies' Subsea Robotics R&D project in Stavanger, Andy was successful in the deployment of pioneering platforms in both demonstration and commercial settings.

Returning to the UK the focus is now on ensure commercialisation of emerging robotic technologies for subsea Inspection & Maintenance.

Sponsor spotlight



Steve Arnott

Sales Manager (Europe & Africa)

Saab UK

Steve has been with Saab UK for 13 years, working within the sales team for the Seaeye portfolio of underwater robotics. He brings a strong commercial background to the role, having previously worked in the UK Civil Service and later in product management and European sales roles within the leisure-marine electronic cartography sector.

As Sales Manager for Europe & Africa, Steve is responsible for supporting both commercial and defence customers across the full breadth of the subsea market.

Outside of work, he is an accomplished guitarist and performs occasional live gigs in his spare time.

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Session 2 Chair



Mark Collins

Innovation Director

SMD

Mark has spent his whole career working in the subsea sector. He started in the late 1990s as an Electronics Engineer working with ROVS and sonar/acoustic systems. And later held positions in sales and business development becoming Managing Director of SMD's ROV business in 2015.

For the past eight years Mark has been SMD's Innovation/Business Development Director, responsible or new technologies and new products.

Speaker biographies



James Cowles

Business Development Director

ACUA Ocean

James has been working in Marine robotics for over 12 years. Starting in the industry developing science and survey focused USVs, moving on to developing and operating USVs across the commercial and defence markets. Working on over 10 classes of USV including delivering and supporting operations across 6 continents.

Now as part of the ACUA Ocean team bringing the next generation of USVs to market enabling nested robotics through the highly stable long endurance Pioneer class USVs.

Speaker biographies



James Fleming (Speaker)

Project Engineer

Reach Subsea

James Fleming is a Project Engineer at Reach Subsea, based in the Aberdeen office, where he supports the delivery of subsea projects across the oil & gas and renewable energy sectors. He has experience taking projects from early concept and planning through full engineering and offshore execution, with a particular focus on IRM and light construction scopes.

Since joining Reach Subsea, James has worked on a range of commissioning, decommissioning, and IRM campaigns, contributing to both the onshore engineering phase and offshore delivery. He works closely with project teams to support safe, efficient operations and has experience coordinating with offshore personnel, subcontractors, and clients. His role spans the full project lifecycle, providing him with a practical understanding of how robust engineering translates into successful offshore execution.

James holds a Master's degree in Mechanical Engineering with Distinction from Robert Gordon University. He also brings a background as a design engineer, having worked on the development of novel subsea and mechanical solutions for the oil and gas sector.

By combining design experience with practical project delivery, James brings a well-rounded perspective to engineering challenges – linking innovation, constructability, and real-world offshore operations.

Speaker biographies



Chris Van der Merwe (Panellist)

Technical Authority – Lifting

Reach Subsea

Chris van der Merwe began his career as a Project Engineer and is now the Lifting Technical Authority at Reach Subsea, where he provides specialist support to offshore projects across the oil & gas sector. With over five years of industry experience, Chris brings a strong foundation in project execution combined with deep technical expertise in lifting operations and safety-critical activities. He has also been instrumental in achieving Reach Remote's MCA certification, enabling the organisation to operate commercially within UK waters.

During his time as a Project Engineer, Chris was involved in delivering a wide range of offshore and onshore scopes, from planned maintenance and engineered solutions to complex crane-related projects. His responsibilities spanned planning, coordination, and offshore execution, working closely with clients, offshore teams, and subcontractors to ensure projects were delivered safely, on time, and within budget. In parallel, he contributed to compliance and certification efforts aligned with MCA requirements, supporting the organisation's expansion into regulated UK operations. This hands-on project experience underpins his practical approach to lifting assurance and operational risk management.

Chris holds a Bachelor of Technology in Mechanical Engineering and has built his career across multiple service and engineering organisations within the offshore energy sector. Now operating as Lifting Technical Authority, he plays a key role in providing technical guidance, governance, and assurance for lifting operations, drawing on real-world project delivery experience to support safe and effective execution offshore, including work conducted under UK regulatory frameworks.

Speaker biographies



Francesco Cavallini

Head of Commercial & Tendering, Sonsub

Saipem

Francesco holds a master's degree in aerospace engineering from Politecnico di Milano and he has been working with Saipem in the offshore energy industry for almost 20 years, making experiences in different countries and several roles within the company, spanning from technical to management positions. At present, Francesco holds the position of global Head of Commercial and Tendering for Sonsub, the Saipem's Business Line specialised in subsea technologies and associated services.

Francesco and the Sonsub team are currently engaged in the promotion and implementation of disruptive technologies such as underwater drones, pipeline repair and monitoring solutions as well as subsea processing technologies in the offshore energy market, with increasing focus also on the defence segment.

Sponsor spotlight



Marc Drew

Chief Executive Officer

Nautexe Global

Marc Drew is Chief Executive Officer of NauteXe Global, where he leads the organisation's strategy and growth across high-risk environment capability development, testing, evaluation and operational readiness.

Marc brings extensive experience delivering complex engineering, manufacturing and operational infrastructure programmes across the aerospace and advanced technology sectors. Prior to joining NauteXe Global, he was Chief Operating Officer of Blue Abyss, leading the operations of large-scale extreme environment research and training infrastructure. He also served as Chairman of Unimech Aerospace, a Bangalore-based precision aerospace manufacturing business he helped establish in 2017.

Before this, Marc spent more than two decades with Rolls-Royce plc in senior leadership roles across the UK, Canada and India. His experience includes overseeing major aerospace supply chain and operational footprint development programmes, establishing new manufacturing capability in India, leading factory setup and industrialisation activity, and delivering operational service infrastructure for global aerospace programmes.

Marc holds a Mechanical Engineering degree from Swansea University and is a Chartered Engineer.

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Session 3 Chair



Global Underwater Hub

Lewis Scorgie

Market Intelligence Analyst
Global Underwater Hub

Lewis joined Global Underwater Hub after graduating with an MSc in Management from Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen. Since then, he has engaged in key research and analysis projects, including insightful industry-wide business surveys, supply chain mapping and producing targeted intelligence reports highlighting the market opportunities across all underwater sectors.

Lewis is skilled at obtaining, interpreting and analysing data across all facets of the underwater sectors to allow members and GUH to realise the value offered by industry.

A key part of Lewis's role involves the daily management of Global Underwater Hub's Market Intelligence Platform. This comprehensive, interactive online system offers GUH members exclusive access to sought-after strategic industry information on projects across the underwater industry, both in the UK and overseas.

Speaker biographies



DEEPOCEAN

Joshua Erratt

Technical Manager - Spatial Engineering

Deepocean

Josh Erratt is a Technical Manager at DeepOcean, specialising in subsea spatial engineering, digital workflows, and the integration of advanced perception technologies across offshore operations. He leads the company's global Subsea 3D scanning capabilities, combining optical, acoustic, SLAM and cloud-based systems to deliver high quality data and enable more efficient, remote-enabled subsea workflows.

With over a decade of experience in hydrography and subsea survey, Josh has worked across more than 200 projects spanning inspection, maintenance and repair (IMR), construction, and survey environments. His work focuses on reducing offshore exposure while improving engineering outcomes through photogrammetry and integrated data workflows.

Josh has completed over 50 offshore rotations on board subsea vessels, gaining extensive first-hand experience of offshore operations. He brings together multi-disciplinary systems including ROV operations, advanced positioning, and point cloud generation, and has played a key role in trialling and deploying emerging technologies such as SLAM, subsea laser scanning, and AI-assisted data interpretation in live operational environments.

Currently working towards Chartership status as a Marine Technologist with IMarEST, Josh focuses on advancing autonomy, AI-driven decision-making, and fully integrated digital workflows to support the next generation of subsea robotics and inspection strategies.

Speaker biographies



John Bethea

Geosciences Project Manager

Oceaneering International

John Bethea is the Geosciences Project Manager for the Eastern Hemisphere at Oceaneering International Inc., based in Aberdeen, Scotland. He holds a BSc in Geosciences from Mississippi State University and an MSc in Applied Physical Oceanography from Bangor University. John has extensive experience in marine construction and survey projects, with a career focus on autonomous underwater vehicle (AUV) data acquisition.

Currently, John is focused on exploring applications and opportunities for Oceaneering's Freedom AUV, advancing subsea survey and inspection capabilities through the use of edge technology and machine learning.

Speaker biographies



Kushal Chetty

Subsea Technology Advisor

TSC Subsea

Kushal Chetty is a Regional Sales Manager at TSC Subsea, responsible for Europe and Africa. He has over 10 years' experience in the NDT and subsea robotics sector, supporting offshore inspection and asset integrity operations.

Kushal has worked in major global energy hubs across North America, Europe and the Asia Pacific regions, gaining broad international experience in subsea technologies and operations. His background spans commercial and technical roles, with a focus on delivering practical inspection and robotics solutions to operators and service providers.

Future events from Global Underwater Hub

Global Underwater Hub organises a series of events throughout the year, bringing together businesses to discuss key industry topics. Full event information, including booking details and calls for abstracts can be found on our website at www.globalunderwaterhub.com, where you can also sign up to receive our weekly e-newsletter.

Moorings Seminar – Anchors & Survey

Thursday, 8 July 2026 | **GUH, Westhill**

This seminar will focus on anchors and survey as critical components of moorings systems for offshore and subsea developments. Attendees will gain practical insight into anchor technologies, site investigation and survey considerations, alongside real-world experience from across the supply chain, supporting robust design, installation and long-term station-keeping performance.

Cables 2026

Wednesday, 9 September 2026 | **Energy Central Campus, Blyth**

The Cables conference brings together key stakeholders from across the cable and energy industries to explore the critical role of cables in offshore renewables and global energy security. Attendees will gain insight into the latest developments in manufacturing and protection, alongside key challenges in installation, inspection and maintenance, and the scale of future project opportunities.

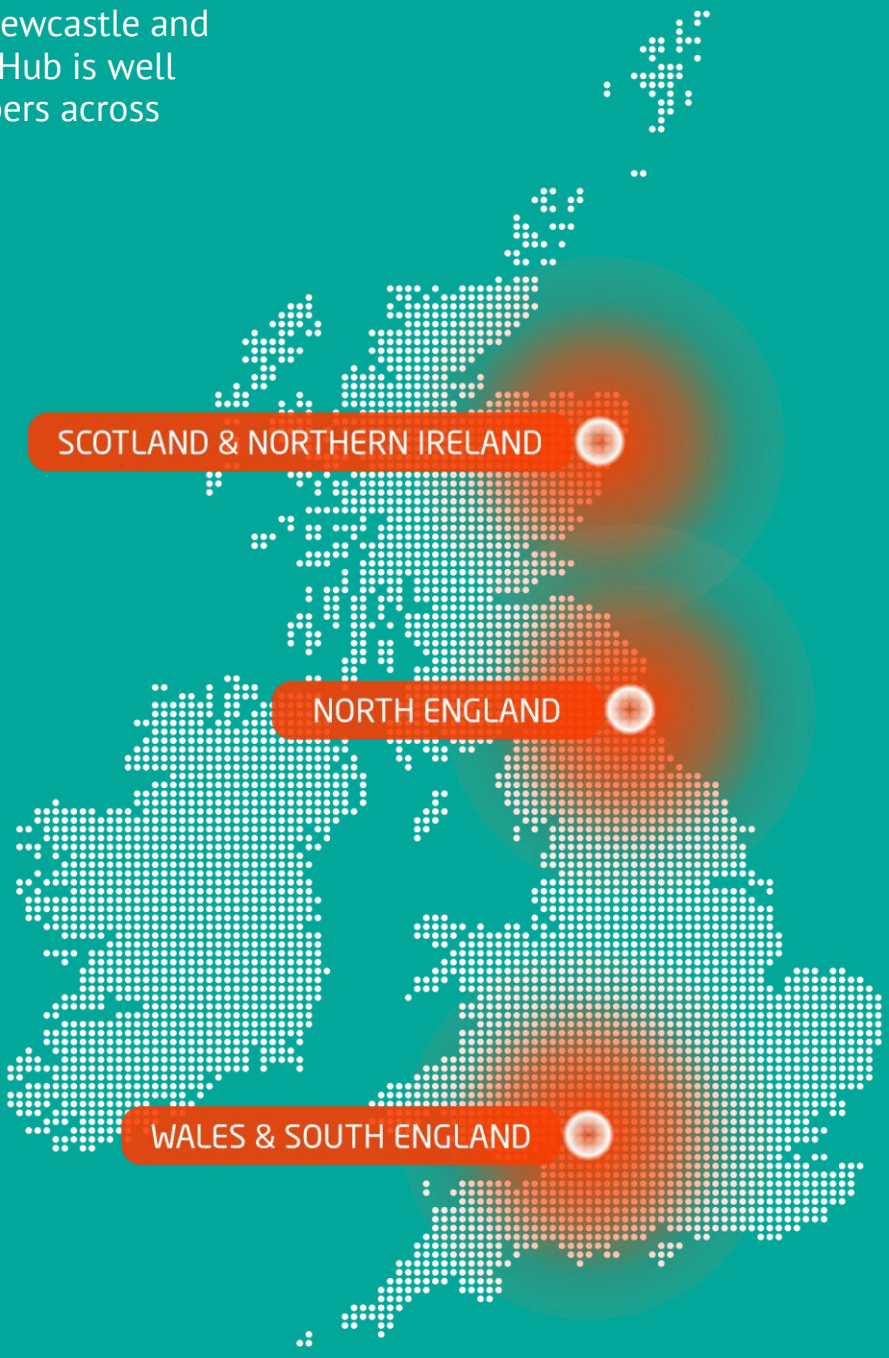
Unexploded Ordnance 2026

Thursday, 1 October 2026 | **The Catalyst, Newcastle**

This second edition of the popular annual UXO Conference will examine the management of unexploded ordnance (UXO) risk across offshore and subsea developments. Attendees will gain insight into regulatory expectations, risk assessment, survey and mitigation strategies, alongside real-world experience from developers, contractors and specialists, supporting safe, efficient and compliant project delivery.

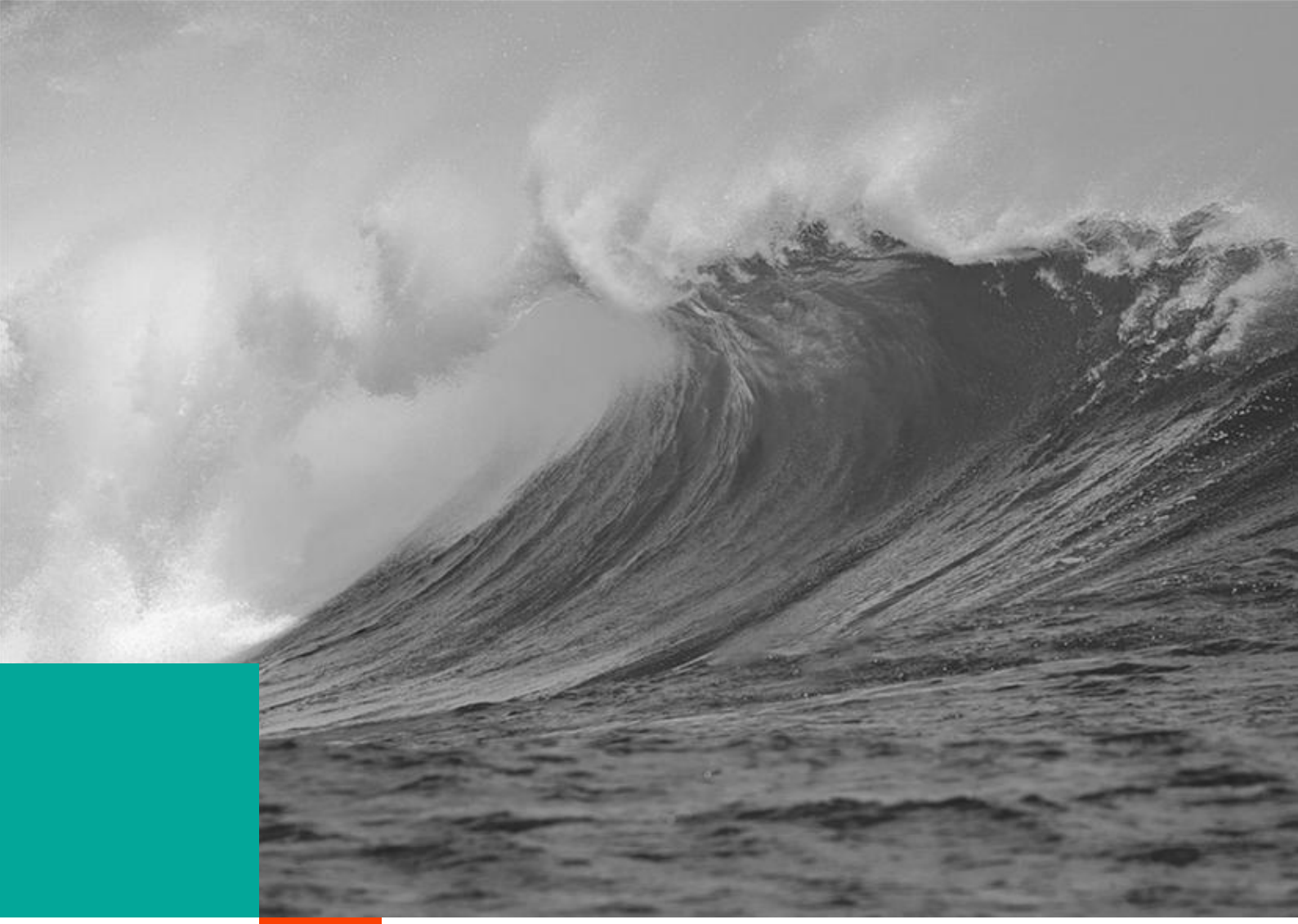
Led and governed by industry, Global Underwater Hub is helping to transform the UK's underwater industry into one of the largest and fastest-growing industries in the country, accelerating the drive to net-zero and creating high value jobs and exports.

With offices in Aberdeen, Newcastle and Bristol, Global Underwater Hub is well placed to support its members across the United Kingdom.



Access. Connect. Grow.

Global Underwater Hub



Global Underwater Hub

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