



Despite picking up the order pledges from subsequent trade shows, and staying regularly in touch with the buyers since, Cameron has found himself stuck in a catch 22: retailers and distributors will not place final orders until they know the stock is available, but many investors will not invest until they can see final orders.

He is hoping to secure backing from an angel investment syndicate in Gibraltar next month, which would

pay for a run of up to 100,000 units and marketing materials.

The vision for the Pongo sprays is that customers will use them daily, replacing their bottles every couple of weeks. The total cost per unit would be about £1.50, wholesaling for £3 and then retailing for £5.99 in the UK.

He said: "It will be the first in a line of step-change pet industry products. I envisage a whole grooming system, tailored to dog health and wellbeing."

at Pacific Quay

development at the moment. We see it as being medium term."

But he insisted that the new developments would still move the idea of a digital media quarter forward. "The De Vere and the new retail will mean that the services are available that will make the area more attractive for businesses coming in," he said.

He said that the homes were likely to be family homes with gardens, but added it would depend on developers' proposals as to how upmarket they would be.

No-one appears to be expecting to build any of the "live-work" units at present, with one source saying that this could turn out to be the sort of thing where an architect's vision ends up clashing with commercial reality.

The masterplan, drawn up by Edinburgh firm 7N, also envisages a housing expo with a renewable energy unit at its centre.

“**We see [the plan for a digital quarter] as being medium term**”

Since the work was completed, SE has since selected rival firm BDP to ensure that the masterplan is followed.

McQuade added that there will not be incentives offered to any of the developers, though there would be tax breaks due to the fact that it was declared an enterprise area by Finance Secretary John Swinney last year. There would also be the potential for regional selective assistance for foreign investors. A source estimated that the development work could cost anything between £25m and £40m.

Bruce Patrick, a director of Savills, said he expected that if this first phase went well, he would start marketing the other plots in due course.

"To go and convince a developer right at this moment to build a speculative commercial building almost of any sort without a tenant lined up is very difficult," he said.

Agenda Pensions problems

RESPECT to Finance Secretary John Swinney for his readiness to enter the lion's den of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland (ICAS) conference, to face an audience of fastidious pensions experts. This group has just issued an exhaustive list of detailed questions on the hugely complex subject of how an independent Scotland would meet its liabilities.

While not everyone was convinced by Swinney's uncensored assertion that Scotland's system would, in fact, be stronger than the rest of the UK's after independence, he seems to have been given the benefit of the doubt, at least until the publication "shortly" of the Scottish Government's detailed response to the ICAS document.

Not for the first time, Agenda wonders why the SNP didn't anticipate – rather than have to react to – questions about the mechanics of independence, particularly with a killer issue such as this. After all, pensioners, unlike 16-year-olds, are all but guaranteed to vote.

Facing our energy future

JELTE Harmmeijer, organiser of next week's Global Energy Systems Conference (June 26-28 at Our Dynamic Earth, Edinburgh), has a pertinent question: does the sheer complexity of the energy market breed complacency?

As even the experts can't fully fathom the "vast and complex" infrastructures delivering energy, why should the public bother thinking beyond the socket on the wall or the forecourt pump except when there's a shortage?

The problem, as Harmmeijer sees it, is that the post-privatisation state of the energy market makes it hugely difficult to effect the necessary transformation from fossil fuels, while a cacophony of interest groups on the environmental and fossil-fuel sides, plus situations like Fukushima and Deepwater Horizon, make things even worse.

"It's an exciting, but far from easy, time to be an energy policymaker or investor," he says.

So much for the problem. Harmmeijer proposes next week's conference as part of the solution, a "holistic" event covering "the entire spectrum of our energy supply system", from fossil fuels through to nuclear power and the renewable generation.

"It will aim to engage industry, policymakers and academia in transparent discussions on the controversial issues of how best to design the infrastructure, markets and policies required for our energy future."

Extension for Hargreaves as it runs the rule over Scottish Coal's assets

By Steven Vass

HARGREAVES Services, the company aiming to mop up parts of Scottish Coal, has been granted an extension by the liquidator after missing its due diligence deadline, the Sunday Herald has learned.

KPMG has agreed the Durham-based company can have a week-to-week extension as it decides which of the remaining parts of Scotland's biggest coal-mining producer it wants to buy. Hargreaves was selected as preferred bidder for the assets in May, ahead of two other candidates, after Scottish Coal collapsed in April.

It is understood Hargreaves has confirmed it wants to buy the open-cast mines at House of Water in East Ayrshire and Broken Cross in South Lanarkshire – by far the two most productive of Scottish Coal's six working mines. It is also said to have selected the site at St Ninians in Fife, which has permission for a new mine.

Hargreaves's final decision on the assets has important implications for the 660 miners and support staff who lost their jobs with the liquidation, together with about 70 workers who are still helping with the wind-down, since it will determine how many will be re-employed.

It is also being watched closely by environmentalists, who are anxious to know what will happen to the 11 former mines that were left derelict with the collapse. Mining companies are supposed to set aside cash and keep insurance policies to pay for the restoration of mine sites, but Scottish Coal is short by an amount that looks likely to exceed £100 million. KPMG has petitioned the Court of Session for permission to abandon the sites, but is being challenged by several councils and Scottish agencies. The case is due to be heard next month.

Elaine Murray, Labour MSP for Dumfriesshire, said that the delay to the process was "disappointing". She said: "This should not be allowed to go on for too long. Hargreaves are a major UK company and should be able to put in a reliable bid.

"There were other bidders who appeared to have the backing of fairly major foreign investors, so it is not as if Hargreaves is the only option."

Hargreaves already bought Aardvark (TMC), another company with several mines in Scotland that had gone into administration last year, saving 237 out of around 300 jobs and paying £10.4m.

The company confirmed that KPMG had granted it an extension, but declined to comment on speculation about its preferred sites.