

RBS risks new pay controversy

BANK IS TO OFFER INCENTIVE-BASED REWARD WORTH £2.4m ON PAPER TO HEAD OF ITS AMERICAN BUSINESS

BY HOLLY WILLIAMS

The Royal Bank of Scotland risked courting fresh controversy over excessive pay at bailed-out banks yesterday after it emerged four senior staff were set for share windfalls worth nearly £5million.

The bank - which is more than 70% owned by taxpayers - is to offer incentive-based awards of nearly 12million shares to staff under a bonus scheme, including a reward

worth £2.4million on paper for Ellen Alemany, the head of the bank's US business.

She is in line for 5.9million shares, although the bonus is based on performance tar-

gets being met over the next three years, and is subject to clawback. Three other senior executives are also due to pick up hefty rewards, according to the details contained in a stock exchange announcement made on Friday.

Corporate banking bosses Alan Dickinson and Chris Sullivan have been promised 1.9million and 1.8million shares respectively, with 1.9million shares earmarked for RBS chief administration

officer Ron Teerlink. The news follows hefty criticism levelled at RBS over pay given to bosses after its near-collapse saw it turn to the UK Government for billions of pounds in rescue cash.

RBS was blasted by Business Secretary Lord Mandelson earlier this year for preparing to offer "exorbitant" bonuses to its traders and senior bankers just weeks after being bailed out. The group has also caused

fury for paying out a pension worth £700,000 a year to former chief executive Sir Fred Goodwin.

But RBS stressed the share bonuses were subject to stringent targets, which have been so strict in recent years that the medium-term performance plan has not paid out since 2004. It added that those directors offered the shares were not responsible for the bank's record £28billion of losses seen last year.

A spokesman said: "There will be no reward for failure. Nothing will be paid until and unless performance criteria are achieved and awards are subject to clawback."

The bank plans to reveal the performance criteria for business targets after a strategic review this summer.

RBS announced in February it would cut this year's staff cash bonus by more than 90% to £175million. The bank also confirmed there would

be no discretionary cash bonuses made for last year.

It has frozen pay this year for senior and US staff, as well as those in its investment banking arm, the division largely responsible for mammoth losses at the group. RBS has also introduced an option to "claw back" any of the non-cash awards made to staff for 2008 if losses arise from their activities.

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· IN BRIEF ·

Four men killed in two-car crash on motorway

Four men were killed yesterday in a motorway crash, emergency services said.

The people were travelling in two cars which collided on the southbound carriageway of the M6, between junctions eight and seven, at about 6am. A fifth man was described as "walking wounded".

A spokesman for the Highways Agency said one of the cars involved had been travelling the wrong way.

Religious orders 'must pay more to victims'

A senior aide to Ireland's top Catholic churchman yesterday insisted that religious orders must pay more compensation to the victims of abuse in their institutions.

A public inquiry detailing decades of abuse of children by 800 priests and nuns has sparked calls for a review of a 2002 indemnity deal agreed with the Irish Government.

Father Timothy Bartlett, Cardinal Sean Brady's assistant, said: "I believe personally there is no question but that the agreement must be looked at again."

TOURISM OPERATOR 'SHOCKED' AT VISITSCOTLAND COSTS

'Horror' at £800,000 bill for surveys

BY IAIN RAMAGE

A leading Highland tourism operator has spoken of his "horror" at the revelation that the Scottish Government agency VisitScotland spent almost £800,000 last year on surveys.

The P&J gleaned the information through a question under freedom of information legislation. But the agency refused to reveal the cost of hiring a private company to carry out a recent "stakeholder management corporate reputation" telephone survey to gauge people's perceptions of the agency's effectiveness.

It cited confidentiality - but did confirm spending £786,282 on surveys during 2008-09.

A spokesman said: "Tourism worldwide is fast moving and ever-evolving, and for Scottish tourism to remain successful in an increasingly competitive environment it is important to understand our visitors, their characteristics and what influences their behaviour. This work helps us identify where we can have competitive advantage."

Clive Freshwater, who created the 40-year-old Loch Insh water sports centre at Kincaig, considers the £786,282 figure "shocking". He said: "I would think 60% of these surveys go straight in the bin. I haven't the time.

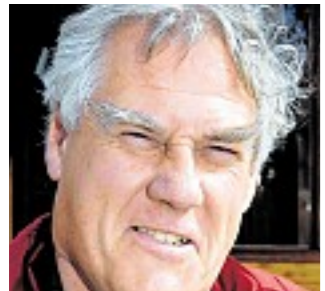
"These people seem to be sat back in their offices dreaming up questions to ask and the only time we see them is to collect money for advertising with them. We still spend at least £3,000 a year with them to promote our five businesses.

"But much more of our business now comes from the internet. We get very few bookings from VisitScotland or VisitScotland.com"

Highland Council tourism spokesman Ian Ross, said: "I wasn't aware that they were spending that sort of sum.

"There are some surveys which have merit. It would depend on the purpose of the survey and the benefits that would come from it to clearly demonstrate good value."

MSPs criticised VisitScotland earlier this month for being slow to get to grips with its loss-making website. Holyrood's public audit committee report demanded a "robust" business plan for the future. The site reported cumulative losses of £12.4million at the end of 2007.



Clive Freshwater: "most surveys go in the bin"



STEP IN LINE: The Duke of Atholl handed out Juniper sprigs to new recruits and long-service awards to the Highlanders

Atholl Highlanders on parade at Blair Castle

PRIVATE ARMY TAKES CENTRE STAGE AT OPENING CEREMONY OF GAMES

BY MARK DOWIE

EUROPE'S last remaining private army gathered in Highland Perthshire at the weekend.

The Atholl Highlanders' annual parade, with inspection by John Murray, the 11th Duke of Atholl, took place at Blair Castle on Saturday. The Highlanders also took

centre stage at the opening ceremony of the annual Atholl Gathering and Highland Games.

A crowd of several thousand watched them march on to the games field at Target Park, near the castle, before the duke officially opened the event.

The gathering has been held there since the 1820s,

with the traditional Highland games and the Atholl Highlanders parade combined in the mid-19th century.

The tradition was stopped during World War I - and it was not resurrected until the games were revived in 1984.

The Highlanders were granted the right to bear arms by Queen Victoria in the

1840s and the regiment gathers at Blair Castle annually on the last bank holiday weekend in May.

This year's games included world-class heavyweight athletes, caber tossing, hammer throwing and other feats of strength.

The day also included a variety of family entertainment which included highland

dancing, solo piping and tug o' war.

To mark the 2009 Scottish Year of Homecoming, there was also a special clans tent detailing the history of the clans associated with the Atholl family - the Murrays and the Stewarts.

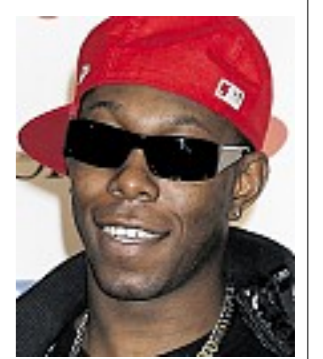
It also included displays about castle and estate life in past centuries.

Cruise holidays taken by Britons up 11%

The number of cruise holidays taken by Britons rose 11% to just under 1.5million last year, according to figures from the Passenger Shipping Association (PSA). This was the third year of double-digit growth.

Help for heroes' bike riders set off

A group of 240 riders set off yesterday on a 350-mile cycle ride across France, visiting some of the major World War II battle sites in a fundraising bid for injured service personnel. The Help for Heroes (H4H) fundraisers include seven members of the armed forces injured in recent conflicts.



Rapper Dizzee Rascal, above, has shot to number one spot in the singles chart with Bonkers only four days after its release, making it the fastest selling single of the year so far.

Call to tighten security after chauffeur allows undercover reporters into palace

FORMER HEAD OF ROYAL PROTECTION SQUAD SAYS INCIDENT 'BEGGARS BELIEF'

ROYAL security needs to be shaken up in the light of allegations that a chauffeur allowed undercover reporters into Buckingham Palace in exchange for money, a former head of the royal protection squad said yesterday.

Former chief superintendent Dai Davies said: "We need to look at the whole way we do this."

"This has exposed yet again weaknesses in security and the fact they have failed to learn from history."

A palace spokeswoman confirmed chauffeur Brian Sirjusingh has been suspended pending an investigation into the allegations in a Sunday newspaper.

It reported the pair posed as wealthy Middle Eastern businessmen and were allowed into the building without security checks.

Mr Davies said: "This happened in an area that is the workshop of the palace where a lot of staff live.

"It beggars belief they can take people in there without having to show photographic ID and vouch for them.

"That should be a secure, controlled zone.

"Many of the royal staff are not paid very much and some may well be tempted by something like this.

"I'm incredulous about the whole thing. It needs to be shaken up."

The newspaper reported Mr Sirjusingh was paid £1,000 by its reporters in exchange for access to the building.

Once inside, he showed them several vehicles used by members of the royal family and allowed one reporter to sit in a Bentley used by the Queen on state occasions.

It was also reported Mr Sirjusingh revealed code names used by royal protection officers for two of the cars used by the Queen, and told them about her travel plans.

Strict security measures are meant to be in force at the palace and even members of the royal family, including the Duke of Edinburgh and the

Prince of Wales, are required to show photographic ID each time they enter a royal residence.

A Scotland Yard spokesman said: "We are naturally concerned about the issues raised by this story and are liaising with palace officials about their staff security arrangements."

This is not the first time security has been breached at the palace.

A journalist managed to get a job as a footman in 2003.

The most serious breach came in March 1982 when Michael Fagan broke into the Queen's bedroom at the palace. She woke to find him sitting on her bed.

Helicopter move by coastguards rescues two

SHETLAND Coastguard were forced to call in their colleagues from Stornoway over the weekend after two medical emergencies struck at the same time.

At 7pm on Saturday the coastguard helicopter Rescue 102 was scrambled from Sumburgh to fly 95 miles to airlift a crewman off the Peterhead-registered fishing boat Nordfjordur, who had suffered an acute allergic reaction after eating a megrim (a common flatfish).

At 7.30pm, as the helicopter was on its way to collect the man and take him to Lerwick's Gilbert Bain Hospital, the coastguard received another emergency call from the BP-operated Petrojarl Foinaven floating production, storage and offloading vessel west of Shetland, where an oil worker had been taken seriously ill.

The coastguard initially called on BP's Sumburgh-based search and rescue helicopter operated by Bond Helicopters, but it was out of action for maintenance.

Coastguards in Lerwick called Stornoway Coastguard, whose helicopter was at Raigmore Hospital, Inverness, after transferring a 15-month-old child from Lochinver. The Stornoway crew flew to the oil field 120 miles west of Shetland and took the sick man to their base so he could be taken to Western Isles Hospital.

Fisheries experts lead fight against 'alien' species

BY LEANNA MACLARTY

FISHERIES experts are spearheading the fight against "alien" plant species in Scotland.

Invasive non-native species (INNS), which colonise a wide range of habitats to the exclusion of native flora and fauna, cost the economy up to £500million every year, says conservation charity Rivers and Fisheries Trusts of Scotland. It is co-ordinating a nationwide strategy to curtail the environmental and economic damage.

Japanese knotweed is thought to affect an area in the UK larger than London. It

would cost about £2billion to remove using current techniques. Invasive rhododendron bushes at Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park could cost £25million to clear.

Biosecurity planning project officer Chris Horrill said: "INNS are a massive and growing threat to our native plants, animals and habitats.

"To control their populations or mitigate their impacts costs our economy, and therefore us, millions each year. Prevention of the introduction and spread of these species is the most cost-effective means to address this threat."

Over the next two years, 20 fisheries trusts will produce local biosecurity plans which, together, will cover virtually the whole of Scotland.

Some have been completed already, and they will be avail-

"We cannot afford to allow Scotland's wild environment - perhaps the country's greatest asset - to be further damaged"

able soon for public consultation.

Mr Horrill appealed for people to report "alien" species as soon as they are spotted. "We cannot afford to allow Scotland's wild environment - perhaps the country's greatest asset - to be further damaged by INNS," he said.

Rafts chairman Roger Brook said: "Our challenge now is to avoid further damage and work towards restoring habitats to their natural state. Within such an environment the native fish and other aquatic species in our rivers and lochs can take care of themselves."



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