

HOME AND AWAY: Hunterston B and, far right, Canada's Bruce Power plant run by Duncan Hawthorne, inset

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29.8% APR TYPICAL

By Tristan Stewart-Robertson

A SCOT who dropped out of high school is now presiding over the world's biggest nuclear power plant – and he wants government ministers and industry bosses in his native land to learn from his success.

Duncan Hawthorne, 52, dropped out of school in Greenock and has ended up in Ontario, Canada, saving jobs in the communities of Kincardine, Port Elgin, Paisley, and Tobermory. His devoted 3,600 workforce, many of them Scots, have nicknamed him "William Wallace" and describe him as a hero for sustaining one of the most successful energy stories in the world. Mr Hawthorne is CEO of Bruce Power, based in Bruce County, about 155 miles north of Toronto. The area is a Scottish ex-pat haven, with Scottish summer festivals and reminiscences from former shipyard

'It's strange to be here, there's such Scottish flavour'

workers who are now invaluable to the surging nuclear industry. Speaking from his new \$70million headquarters there Mr Hawthorne said: "It's a strange feeling to be in an area with so much Scottish flavour. "There might be some kind of fate to that – but I'm too busy to think about that. The chemistry is good here."

The rise and rise of Bruce Power has been so rapid that there aren't enough workers to satisfy a station that heats and lights 20 per cent of all homes in the province. Hundreds more skilled labourers are needed, and some union members recently recruited from Scotland to get boilermakers to help build Mr Hawthorne's ambitious plans. The engineer, cut from shipyard family stock, has a \$20billion, 40-year plan for a site that was partially shut down by Ontario government managers in 1997. In total, the contract, now lasting into 2043, could be worth \$40billion.

THE outspoken chief executive officer thinks Scotland would be wrong to go nuclear free – and advises using cash set aside for refurbishment of existing reactors at Hunterston to buy new ones. "I think it would be a massive mistake to go nuclear free, but I'm not surprised at the early banter," he said. "Nuclear power is not people's first choice. But if you had a vote on it, I think you would be surprised at the level of support. "The reliable energy from Hunterston and Torness is something Scotland needs, and they have some really intelligent and skilled people at those sites and it would be a great shame to lose that."

As Scotland debates its nuclear future, Mr Hawthorne and his unions are busy recruiting up to 1,600 more construction workers from beyond Canada to meet the demand. When he arrived in Bruce County, thousands there were unemployed. So it's little wonder he's considered a saviour. One employee, visiting Scotland recently in a search for new staff, said: "He's hailed as a hero – he's William Wallace."

Mr Hawthorne is slightly more modest about his achievements. "The fortunes of the community rise and

fall with your decision making," he said. "When we came here, it was on the back of the Bruce A reactors being closed and there was a lot of unemployment.

"We said we were prepared to make a commitment. I think we have been true to our commitment. People identify the change with me. It's quite humbling but I think we have a great workforce and great employers keen to prove people wrong."

Westminster's recent white paper backed building new power plants to meet Britain's energy needs in more environmentally friendly ways.

But the SNP government has yet to spell out what plans it has for the future of Hunterston and Torness, which generate almost 40 per cent of the country's electricity.

Mr Hawthorne has seen alternatives to nuclear come and go. His career initially took him to Inverkip Power Station, with its monumental smokestack. But the oil-fired plant never produced a watt of electricity and has lain derelict for more than 30 years. It's now expected to make way for 500 new homes.

When Mr Hawthorne moved to Hunterston it was for job security with South of Scotland Electricity Board, who eventually paid for his graduate training. SSEB gave way to Scottish Nuclear and Mr Hawthorne eventually made his way to the East Kilbride headquarters with British Energy.

IN 1996, he became director of North American operations for British Energy, acquiring new power stations.

British Energy took over the lease of the Bruce County reactors in 2001, just months before a financial crisis forced the company to sell off all their foreign holdings to secure emergency government loans.

Mr Hawthorne stayed behind and made a commitment to the new private firms and trade unions who bought Bruce Power to stick with the site and make it a success.

"I didn't make a conscious choice to go into nuclear power," he said. "The nuclear industry is perhaps the most interesting technically that you can find. You're looking at the idea of splitting atoms, working on breakthrough technology. We are doing a lot of exciting things here."

An environmental assessment is planned for the possibility of increasing Bruce's eight reactors, built in the Seventies and Eighties, up to 12.

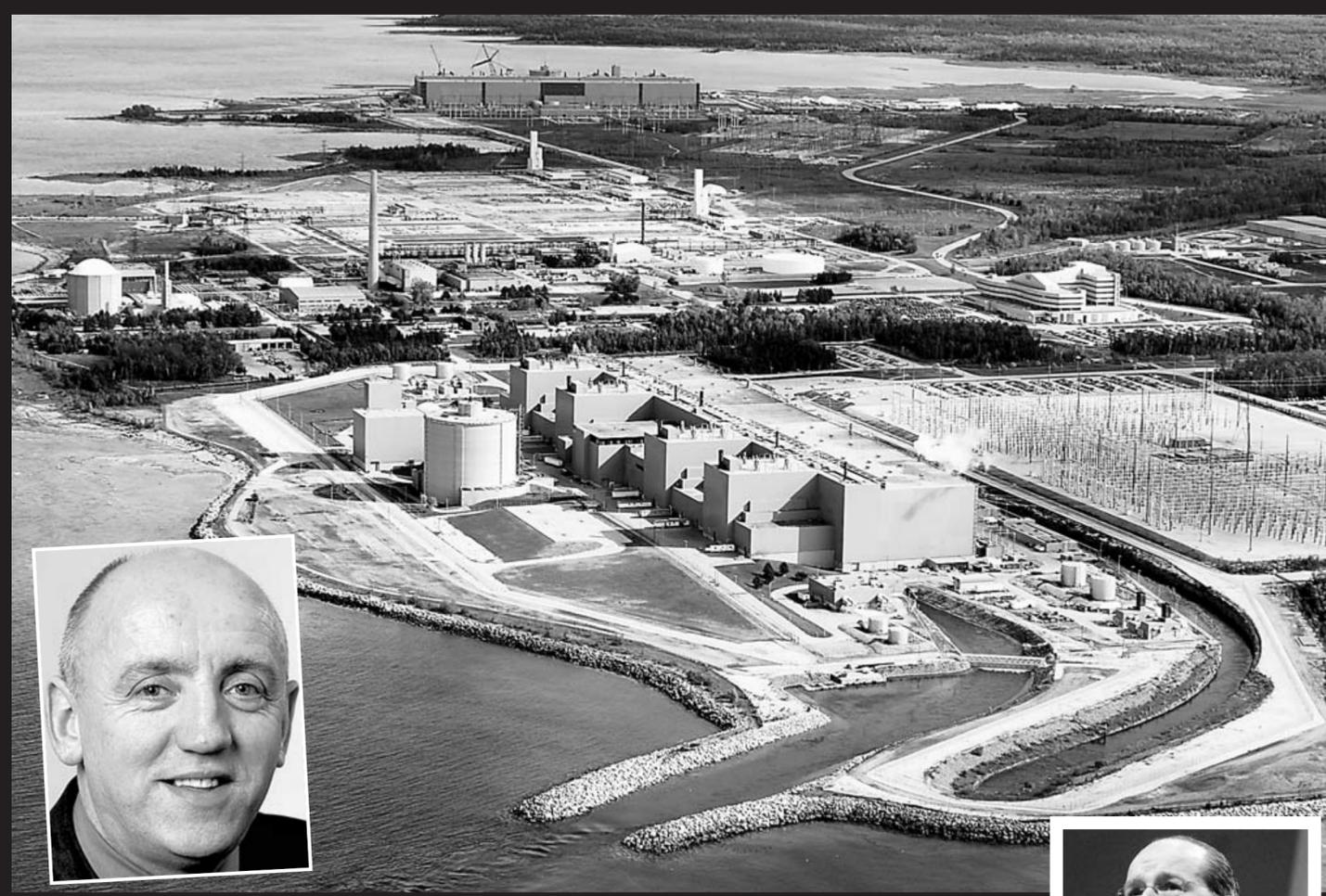
When Mr Hawthorne put his \$20billion questions to residents of

'People identify change with me. It's humbling'

Kincardine, a little girl started a jig at the front of the town hall. He has been called the "King of Kincardine" and won the title of "Energy Person of the Year" in Canada for 2005.

So although his 26-year-old daughter Nicola remains in Glasgow, his expertise won't be returning to the British energy sector any time soon.

He has no intention of giving up on the residents of the copy-cat Scottish towns. "I have a job here and made a promise, and I have no intention of breaking that promise," said Mr Hawthorne, who will marry his partner Lesley later this year in Canada. "I will see this project through. I think there's a much better chance of building new nuclear plants in Canada than in the UK. I would like to think there is a possibility of partnership, of people learning from us, and I would happily welcome anyone from Scotland to come and see the success we've made of Bruce Power."



THE SCOT WHO MADE CANADA A NUCLEAR SUPERPOWER

As Scotland faces a nuclear-free future, the man dubbed William Wallace in the Ontario town his power plant saved warns against writing off atomic energy



UNCERTAINTIES: John Swinney SNP: RENEWABLE FUEL IS FUTURE OF OUR NATION

SCOTLAND'S last remaining nuclear power stations – Hunterston B in Ayrshire and Torness in East Lothian – will not be replaced when they come to the end of their operational lives. Nor will money be spent on refitting them to extend their working lives, according to the Scottish Government.

The oldest of the two, Hunterston B, in West Kilbride, can supply power for a million homes. It took nine years to build and was commissioned in 1976. It employs 525 staff and contributes £55million to the local economy. Last month it was announced the station's operational life was being extended by five years to 2016.

The more modern Torness, near Dunbar, opened in 1988 and took eight years to construct. It will come to the end of its operational life in 2023. It employs 475 people and pumps £25million a year into the local economy.

Affirming the Scottish Government's opposition to new nuclear plants, finance secretary John Swinney said this week: "Scotland in 2006 met 92.5 per cent of its energy needs from fossil fuels, renewables and pumped hydro storage. The risks of new nuclear power, in terms of waste disposal, decommissioning, security and health concerns, or cost, are far too great."