# CivTech marches to the front line

**Scotland's software development community is helping deal with Covid-19 with a new community platform to link technically skilled volunteers with critical coronavirus projects.**

The Scottish Tech Army will gather the talents of tech sector experts. These are people who are at home, but who can't do their own jobs because they've been furloughed under the UK Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, or may have already lost their jobs.
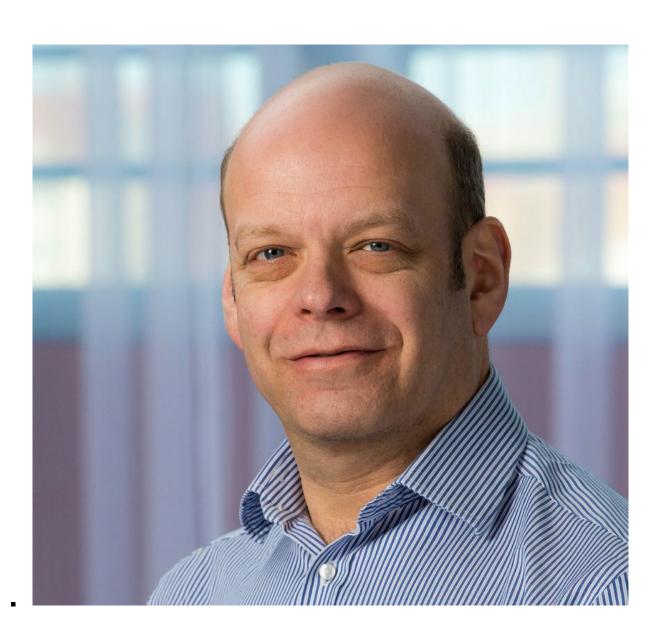
Instead, their skills and experience will now be harnessed to support public sector organisations which are developing digital projects. These aim to help tackle the outbreak of the virus and also the management of the recovery process.

CivTech is The Scottish Government programme that uses digital technology to allow smoother access to public services. It will play a central role in finding Covid-19 related projects which require help.

The Scottish Tech Army will then work with recruitment firms and senior figures from within the digital technology community, to find volunteers with the right skills to solve those problems.

Many hundreds of companies and organisations have already offered their support to The Scottish Government in the form of products and services they are willing to provide on a pro bono basis.

Kate Forbes, Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for Finance said: "Our tech community can really support the national response to the Covid-19 pandemic. I know how much talent and skill exists within the tech community and this welcome initiative gives volunteers the chance to play a valuable role while continuing to stay at home to protect the NHS and save lives."

L-R Alistair Forbes and Peter Jaco
The Scottish Tech Army project was co-founded by Edinburgh-based entrepreneurs Alistair Forbes and Peter Jaco just over two weeks ago with the aim to build a Covid-19 rapid reaction force.

Alistair Forbes, formerly Head of Software and Internet at investment firm Mercia Technologies, said: "Scotland's tech community is ready to join this fight.

"Public and private sector workers — from health and social

care staff through to food supply chain and logistics workers – are out there risking their lives to battle this pandemic and the Scottish Tech Army gives our digital community the chance to demonstrate that we've got their backs.

"Data and digital technologies are key weapons in the fight against the coronavirus and we'll be able to rapidly deploy the resources and skills needed to tackle the outbreak and support the people who are being affected. We see the opportunity to deliver three-way benefits – providing support to the people and organisations on the front line, delivering meaningful impact in the communities around Scotland and giving the volunteers a sense of purpose and achievement in what are very challenging times for them.

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime challenge and I'm confident the Scottish tech community will rise to it. We have had an immediate and enthusiastic response from all the organisations we have approached for help in setting up the Scottish Tech Army, including leading professionals from the legal, recruitment and communications sectors, as well as the Scottish Government."

Paul Atkinson, Founder of recruitment firm Head Resourcing, which is supporting the Scottish Tech Army, added: "Staying at home to save lives is exactly what we need to do during this outbreak – but there are better ways to spend our time than just playing Call of Duty or binging on Netflix boxsets.

"The Scottish Tech Army will not only help the public sector to complete vital projects but will also give participants the chance to keep their skills sharp for when it's time to return to work.

"When you're in a fight, you don't want your top people sitting in their bedrooms playing computer games or vegetating on the sofa in front of the television – you want them putting their digital skills to good use and that's exactly what the

Scottish Tech Army will do."

Volunteers can sign up to join the Scottish Tech Army on the website at [https://www.scottishtecharmy.org](https://www.scottishtecharmy.org).

The web site also provides a mechanism for individuals and organisations to suggest project ideas for the Scottish Tech Army to tackle.