My name is Matthew and I’m a service engineer for HIAL (Highlands and Islands Airports Limited). I started with HIAL in 2008, ten years ago. I completed a 5 year modern apprenticeship which lead me to the position I’m in now as a fully qualified engineer. The daily tasks of an engineer can be quite varied because we’re responsible for a wide range of fleet here. It can be anything from strimmers, mowers, fire appliances, company vehicles and snow clearing equipment. I’d say it’s a lot more interesting because you’re not working on the same types of vehicles every day. You’ve got a wide range of vehicles: light vehicles, heavy vehicles, plant. We also do fabrication and welding so we’ve got to think outside the box sometimes and parts that might be obsolete or that you can't buy yourself. So you’re making a lot of things yourself, you know. So you’re working on old stuff, new stuff, it’s just a lot more interesting.

Typical day might involve servicing one of the fire appliances but things don’t always go to plan, you might come in the morning and find that, during the night, something has broken and you have to get on the case and fix it straight away.

As well as being responsible for the maintenance and repair of vehicles, we also do other airfield tasks such as the runway friction surveys. This involves using specialist equipment to test the friction levels of the runway. This is really important to ensure good breaking action for the aircraft.

Yeah, so we work a varied shift pattern here; we can do an early shift which is 6 till 1:30, or a late shift which is 1 till 9. We also do on call cover at the weekend and during the winter it might work extra hours depending on the weather conditions as well.

For me, part of the job that I enjoy is people that I work with, but apart from the that it’s the fact that we’re working on such a wide range of equipment that keeps it interesting and varied and it’s different from what you might work on in a normal garage.

I suppose if you come in and something is broken and you’re not sure quite what’s wrong, you’ll be finding that fault, problem solving and then being able to repair that yourself, you know. You’re not just coming in and changing an oil filter but if it’s, you know, a fault, you’ve got to fault find and problem find it and then you managed to work out yourself, you’ll be proud that you’ve, sort of, done that, you know.

One of the challenges, for me, the unsociable hours that you work. So we work a varied shift pattern and also during the winter, when the weather affects operations, you might be required to work extra hours or during the night as well. From time to time you might be required to work outside in cold or snowy conditions.

There are 2 engineers based in Inverness, also 2 head office engineers, which means we’re responsible for travelling around all the 11 HIAL airports. We travel round to the other airports to do the runway fiction surveys or we could be assisting engineers there with big jobs or covering annual leave or sickness, for example.

I think 3 core skills that you need to have for a job like this, is to be able to: be resourceful, think outside the box and work on your own initiative.