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Events

Annual Lunch
10 November

The Annual Lunch will be held in the new and unique Titanic Hotel, located in the former Harland & Wolff headquarters and drawing offices.

Guest speakers are Bill Molloy, Vice President of Bombardier Business Aircraft in Canada and Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive of Belfast City Council. Bill and Suzanne will talk about their experiences of leadership in very different sectors.

A Northern Ireland native, Bill Molloy is responsible for Aftermarket Sales and Commercial Strategy based in Canada. With 27 years of aerospace experience, he is renowned for developing a culture of innovation that ignites sales, reduces costs and improves customer satisfaction.

Bill began his career in Belfast and since moving to Canada in 2001, he has distinguished himself in a number of leadership positions within the Parts Services organisation. He has gained a vast international experience, through business travel to all continents of the world, having worked in Ireland, UK, United States and Canada.

Suzanne Wylie has worked for Belfast City Council for 28 years and previously held the position of Director of Health and Environmental Services from 2010, and she is focused on positioning the City Council as a key driver in the continued growth of Belfast.

Since taking up the post in 2014 Suzanne has been leading the Council’s new City Plan, the Belfast Agenda 2035, which is focused on economic growth and connecting neighbourhoods and people to the opportunities it creates.

For your professional development

The Professional Directorate Series

For your professional development

The Professional Directorate Series developed by IoD Northern Ireland helps business leaders at all stages of their leadership career to develop their core competencies as directors.

Thanks to the support of Arthur Cox and KPMG, several events in The Professional Directorate Series will be delivered free of charge to IoD members.

Keep up your CPD

The IoD’s programme of training courses, workshops and briefings provides many opportunities to enhance your competencies as a director and leader. Our professional development activity is available both in Northern Ireland and through our portfolio of courses in London and other centres.

IoD professional development may be eligible for your CPD requirements for other professional bodies. CPD hours for Northern Ireland activity are indicated (in brackets) in the list of Diary Dates on these pages.

IoD events also provide valuable opportunities to network with and learn from other business leaders.

The Effective Board

The Effective Board sessions are designed to help you and your board to operate more effectively in the boardroom. Presented by Partners from our sponsors, Arthur Cox, the sessions will cover issues that help your board keep abreast of changes in good governance and good boardroom practice.

Managing risk

23 November

Employers must take all ‘reasonably practicable’ steps to ensure the health and safety at work of employees and third parties, and breach of the legislation is a criminal offence so all directors must maintain the highest standards. Learn about your responsibilities.

Understanding bank facility and security documents

24 January

This session will help improve your understanding of the documentation around agreeing and renewing bank facilities so you are better informed when discussing facilities with your bank.

Leadership for Board Chairs

This ILM accredited programme of 6 modules plus an assessment session leading to a Level 5 qualification. The first programme has been successfully completed and we plan to run it again. If you or your Chair are interested in participating in the next programme, please email iod.northernireland@iod.com.

The Effective Board – managing risk (2)

09 Women’s Leadership Conference (6)

10 Annual Lunch

23 **The Effective Board – understanding bank facility and security documents (2)

08 The Annual Dinner

February

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17 New member lunch

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Designed to introduce new members to the Institute of Directors, the lunches are free of charge and allow members to view the facilities at Riddel Hall, hear about IoD member benefits and network with other members. See Diary Dates on page 2 to find out when the lunches will take place.

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For other marketing or sponsorship via the IoD website, emails, events or other activity, contact Julie-Anne at julie-anne.clarke@iod.com

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JComms claims Gold

JComms, whose team includes IoD members Jane Wells and Chris Harrison, won six awards at the recent Chartered Institute of PR PRide Awards.

The PR and content agency collected Gold awards in both the Business & Corporate Communications Campaign category and the Consumer PR Campaign category.

The company also picked up accolades in several other categories including Outstanding PR Consultancy, Integrated Campaign, Not for Profit Campaign, and Education Communications Campaign.

The CIPR PRide Awards are the major awards for the PR industry in Northern Ireland.

NEW MEMBER PROFILE

Ian Megahey

Ian is Head of Sales at WorkPal, with over 6 years’ sales experience in both WorkPal and their sister company, Barclay Communications.

WorkPal is a mobile and desktop app which streamlines workflow, with job management, time tracking, job reports and invoicing all from the palm of your hand. Mobile workers have access to customised job sheets from the mobile app, can be guided through their task and have the ability to report back, instantaneously on the progress. Once a job is completed, WorkPal allows for speedy invoicing, even from out in the field. The end-to-end process management ensures that the accounts department is completely integrated with field workers and everyone in between.

With GPS, time tracking and management, WorkPal increases productivity and gives clients an accurate method of capturing costs, putting an end to under-billing or under-estimating job times by improving quotes. Logged job times and breakdowns of reports create both added value for the client’s customers and a more transparent experience.

The IoD Northern Ireland Committee

Chairman:  Ian Sheppard, Bank of Ireland
Immediate past Chairman:  Paul Terrington, PwC
Honorary Treasurer: Geoffrey Henderson CDir, Total Mobile

Committee chairs
Business Environment:  Bill Beers CDir, Beers Engineering Consultancy

Connection:  Colin Coffey CDir, RDA Group
Developing:  Gordon Milligan, NITHCo Translink
Economic Strategy:  Dr Joanne Stuart, Catalyst Inc
Education & Skills:  Geraldine Gordon CDir, Gordon Business Consultancy
Young Directors’ Forum:  Adrian Allen, The Tomorrow Lab Create Limited

Members
Norah Anne Barron, Pi Communications
Noel Brady, Consult NB 1 Ltd
Ashleen Feeney, KPMG
Catriona Gibson, Arthur Cox Belfast
Declan Gormley, Brookvent Limited
Caroline Keenan, ASM
Louise Kelly, Grant Thornton NL LLP
Alan McKeown, Dunbia
Sarah Orange, HHU Human Capital
Rose Mary Stalker, Catagen

Our newest members

Welcome to the latest Northern Ireland business leaders to join the Institute of Directors.

All new members are invited to attend a New Member Lunch at Riddals Hall to meet other members and find out more about the benefits of membership. Check the Diary Dates on page 2 to find out when the next Lunch will be held.

New and existing members are also invited to send a Member or Company Profile for publication in IoD Northern Ireland News. Contact alleryabrown@gmail.com for further details.

Asking Bremner, Bright Young Things Drama
Alan Leacock, Metal Forming Innovation Ltd
Brian McCaul, Queen’s University Belfast
Bronagh Bourke, Grant Thornton NL LLP
Ciera Kelly, Every Day Harmony
Clare Hughes, Sorley Society NL
Clare McKallister, Electric Ireland
Claudine Heron, W & R Barnett Trading Ltd
Colin Johnston, Galgorm Resort & Spa Hotel
Colin Mullan, Find Insurance
Colin Potts, Dunbia
Conor Margery, Parker Residential Limited
Conor Murphy, Grade-All International Ltd
David Saddaf, McCalls Ireland Ltd
David Fry, Construction Employers Federation
David Watson, Ryds Aluminium Casting (UK) Ltd
Eoghan McFanna, McKenna Sweeney McKewen Solicitors Ltd
Gareth Moore, Construction Employers Federation
Iain Niblock, Orca Money Ltd
Ian Thom, Vidian Group Ltd
Ivy McFarlane, Aquae Ltd
John Gallagher, Lismore Events Ltd
John Turking, Turkington Chartered Accountants
Jonathan McCormick, Rossau Ltd
Jonathan Walsh, Data Analytics Labs Ltd
Leigh Haggerty, Galgorm Resort & Spa Hotel
Lia Blyson, Everheds Sutherland
Maeve Hunt, Grant Thornton NL LLP
Natalie Sayee, SONI Ltd
Neil Mutch, Citibank
Nicholas Hudson, Seven Technologies Group Ltd
Richard Bufton, PGR Advisory Ltd
Robert McConachie, Park Electrical Services
"Our newest member inclusion continues to prove that the Institute of Directors remains the number one choice for business leaders to join and add value to the organisation. I would like to welcome all of our new members, and I wish them every success in their new role within the Institute of Directors."

Chairman’s message

by Ian Sheppard, IoD Northern Ireland Chairman

I was delighted to see that Northern Ireland business leaders were yet again recognised for their achievements at the National UK Directors of the Year Awards.

Janet McCollum of Moyo Park and Gareth Loyal of M&SB Contractors won the Large Company Director of the Year and Family Business Director of the Year categories respectively. In addition Janet was also highly commended in the overall Director of the Year category while Suzanne Wylie of Belfast City Council was highly commended in the Public and Third Sector category and Noel-Anne Barron of Pi Communications was highly commended in the SME category. Owen Judge from Queen’s University Belfast was highly commended in the Student of the Year Category.

These achievements reflect the strength of the leadership talent we have in Northern Ireland, which will be critical as Northern Ireland businesses seek to navigate the challenges of political and economic uncertainty.

Both category winners paid tribute to the staff in their respective organisations and the contribution they have made to the success of their businesses. A skilled and motivated workforce and management team is vital for success, however, without strong leadership that success is unlikely to be maximised.

The role for the IoD here in NI is to help our local leaders achieve their full potential through professional development, networking and support which benefits the leader, their organisation and ultimately the whole of Northern Ireland.

Absent leadership

While our business leaders are stepping up to the well documented challenges our local economy and international reputation.

Unfortunately some 9 months later those Statesmen and Stateswomen are still missing. Our members are clearly concerned that any agreement that may be reached to re-establish the Executive will ‘paper over’ the current issues only for them to re-emerge in the near future with the potential to cause further damage to our local economy and international reputation.

If a deal is done it must be a proper foundation for the future of Northern Ireland which allows our Statesmen and Stateswomen to step forward.

Christmas giving

As we approach the Christmas season, I would encourage you to support our charity of the year, Mencap, as part of your celebrations.

In lieu of sending cards or giving gifts, why not make a donation directly to Mencap and help to give people with a learning disability the best possible start in life.

Here’s how your Christmas (or other celebration) gifts could help:

£25 could buy a jigsaw with different faces to help children without speech to express how they are feeling
£50 could purchase a talking floor mat which will stimulate children with complex learning disabilities

To find out more, contact Mensap Fundraising Team on 028 90 691 351 or email fundraising.ni@mencap.org.uk

£100 could buy some soft edged mirrors which allow children to see their own reflection and facial expressions

Richard Harron as Joseph in Mencap’s 2016 Nativity play

IoD NORTHERN IRELAND NEWS
November/December 2017 — 5

Director Chris Harrison (2nd from right), Managing Director Jane Wells (4th from right) and the JComms team are pictured with their trophies.
Top of the hill

By Stuart Carson, Rainbow Communications

Executive or no Executive, the Civil Service and its various departments and bodies have to function effectively, both internally and externally. As we continue to watch the ongoing stalemate at Stormont with interest, the day to day operations of the Assembly rely on a modern, efficient and user-friendly system with which to communicate.

Following a very competitive tender process, Rainbow is delighted to announce a major multi-year deal with the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) to upgrade and maintain crucial telephony communications networks across 185 locations.

We have been tasked with modernising a key component of central government’s telecommunications infrastructure. This will involve transferring approximately 55,000 direct dial-in points to fully-equipped centralised data centres which will unify, underpin and strengthen the communications network.

Millions of calls

The Northern Ireland Civil Service and associated government bodies handle and make millions of calls every year and our work will be extended across the full network as we deliver a focussed, solutions-based implementation plan.

This will ultimately provide a strong telecommunications network fit for the 21st century and the needs of its thousands of users.

During the procurement process, key weighted criteria were expertise and value. The fact that we count around 45 percent of NICS Top 200 companies as clients as part of our 10,000 business customer portfolio clearly stood us in good stead.

As we approach our 20th anniversary in business, we are delighted to now play our part in helping government to radically enhance its communications infrastructure while assisting it to achieve sustained cost savings and improved operational efficiencies for many years to come.

Ahead of us, in 2025, all landline users will be migrated to a single IP core network, meaning all voice traffic, data transfer, video and conference calling, will be transmitted via an Internet connection. This contract reflects the government’s aim to improve its telephony and communications infrastructure in advance of this change.

Our focus - as a provider of strategic telecoms solutions - is on helping organisations to become more efficient, resilient and technologically equipped for future growth and we have a specialist team of almost 100 employees who share this drive.

As a result, we deliver fully-integrated, industry-leading and cost-efficient solutions – is on helping organisations to become more efficient, resilient and technologically equipped for future growth and we have a specialist team of almost 100 employees who share this drive.

Gareth Loye, Director of M&M Contractors and Mascott Construction won the Family Business Director of the Year category while Janet McCollum, Chief Executive of Moy Park was named Large Company Director of the Year.

Janet has been with Moy Park for more than 20 years and has held the Chief Executive position since 2014.

Gareth took over as Chief Executive of the family firm M&M Contractors in 2011 and has led it through a period of growth which included the acquisition of Mascott Construction last year.

Highly commended in their categories were Belfast City Council CEO, Suzanne Wylie in the Public and Third Sector category and Norah Anne Baron of Pi Communications and Ashleen Feeney from KFMG.

Local members’ success at IoD Awards

Two IoD Northern Ireland business leaders were among the winners at the IoD UK Director of the Year Awards in London.

Gareth Loye, Director of M&M Contractors and Mascott Construction won the Family Business Director of the Year category while Janet McCollum, Chief Executive of Moy Park was named Large Company Director of the Year.

Janet has been with Moy Park for more than 20 years and has held the Chief Executive position since 2014.

Gareth took over as Chief Executive of the family firm M&M Contractors in 2011 and has led it through a period of growth which included the acquisition of Mascott Construction last year.

Highly commended in their categories were Belfast City Council CEO, Suzanne Wylie in the Public and Third Sector category and Norah Anne Baron of Pi Communications, who was nominated in the SME category.

IoD NI student member, Owen Judge from Queen’s University Belfast was highly commended in the Student of the Year category.

Finalists at the event, which recognises excellence across all sectors in the economy, are drawn from the best winners of regional IoD awards, including the IoD NI First Trust Bank Director of the Year Awards.

Suzanne Wylie of Belfast City Council

Janet McCollum of Moy Park

Norah Anne Baron of Pi Communications collects her Highly Commended certificate

Owen Judge from Queen’s University Belfast receives his Highly Commended certificate in the Student of the Year category

At the event were (from left) IoD NI National Director Kirsty McManus, Laura Howell of First Trust Bank, Tina McKenzie from Staffline Group, Norah Anne Baron of Pi Communications and Ashleen Feeney from KFMG.

Attending the event were (from left) IoD NI National Director Kirsty McManus, Laura Howell of First Trust Bank, Tina McKenzie from Staffline Group, Norah Anne Baron of Pi Communications and Ashleen Feeney from KFMG.
There is no doubt that the IoD’s Committees tackle a varied agenda of activity and the past couple of months have been no exception with issues addressed ranging from social housing and Dignity at Work to Brexit and Generation Innovation.

Any IoD member interested in learning more about the Committees should contact the IoD NI National Director, Kirsty McManus.

Economic Strategy

The Economic Strategy Committee, chaired by Dr Joanne Stuart, received a presentation from Aidan Gough of InterTradeIreland on Brexit. Aidan highlighted the current support that is available via their Brexit advisory service. Members can access a support voucher of £2,000 to begin contingency planning for Brexit.

Frances Hill, the Northern Ireland Agent for Bank of England, gave members a confidential update on the current business for Bank of England, giving members a opportunity to engage in one particular initiative with students from Methodist College.

The Committee has agreed that it is important to inform the wider IoD membership about the current suite of programmes and initiatives that are available for businesses to engage in providing work experiences to students in the new year. In issues of this magazine, they will showcase best practice that will allow for a better connected education and business sector.

Business Environment

The Business Environment Committee, which is chaired by Bill Beers, was joined by the leading economist John Simpson to discuss Social Housing, which is an issue of concern to members, particularly those in the construction and housing sector.

The Committee also organised a Connect & Influence event with the Department of Infrastructure on the Living With Water & Influence event with the Department of Infrastructure. The Committee also oversaw the content of IoD Northern Ireland News so any suggestions for articles and contributions of material can be communicated to the Committee via National Director, Kirsty McManus at kirsty.mcmanus@iod.com.

Professional Development

With the current government strategy for Management and Leadership Development being several years out of date, the Professional Development Committee under Gordon Milligan are leading on plans to conduct major piece of research on Leadership & Management.

In partnership with the Trade Unions and other business organisations, the Committee has contributed to a revised Joint Declaration for Dignity at Work launched in October.

The Committee are also leading on exciting new plans for IoD professional development in Northern Ireland to be revealed in late 2017.

Connecting

The Connecting Committee led by Colin Coffey is re-examining how IoD Northern Ireland engages with its members in order to provide the benefits that members expect from their professional body. Any ideas from members can be communicated to the Committee via National Director, Kirsty McManus at kirsty.mcmanus@iod.com.

The Committee also oversees the content of IoD Northern Ireland News so any suggestions for articles and contributions of news or thought pieces are very welcome either through the IoD office or directly to the editor at elleraybrown@gmail.com.

Risk Group

This special interest group of business leaders responsible for risk and governance recently met at NIE Networks to discuss best practice in the area of Cyber Security.

Access a support voucher of £2,000 from InterTradeIreland to begin your contingency planning for Brexit at www.intertradeireland.com/brexit.

When planning which areas of the world to target for exporting, the continent of Africa may not always come top of the list. Part of the reason could be down to preconceived ideas about the continent. The truth is the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa represent real opportunities for Northern Ireland companies, with South Africa being one of the main focal points for Invest Northern Ireland in this region.

South Africa is the gateway to the rest of Africa and in terms of market size, is home to over 50 million people. Latest figures from HMRC value Northern Ireland exports to South Africa at £38.5 million, our single largest market in Africa with machinery and transport equipment accounting for the biggest proportion of exports. Terex Finlay and CDE Global are just two examples of Northern Ireland businesses already successfully exporting to South Africa and the wider sub-Saharan region. Many of our companies have also appointed dealers to service the mining and mineral processing industries and the fast-emerging opportunities in the recycling industry.

Supporting our companies to export

In September I led an Invest NI trade mission of eleven companies to the Sub-Saharan region, visiting Johannesburg and Lagos. Some of Northern Ireland’s leading materials handling companies and companies from our flourishing food sector took part. For many, it was their first time in this market and they used it as an opportunity to meet with potential buyers and forge relationships to help increase their exports.

There are a number of key synergies between South Africa and Northern Ireland which makes it an attractive option for exporters. English is the business language, it is in a similar time zone, and the financial system is very similar to our own. Business links between the UK and South Africa are strong, making the country a good market for large and small companies prepared to commit the time and other resources required to develop contacts there.

Increasing our international presence

While I was in South Africa we announced the appointment of a new Regional Manager who will be based in Johannesburg. They will provide vital in-market support to companies, helping identify potential new business partners and offering advice and mentoring.

Steve Harper, Invest Northern Ireland

Developing local partnerships is important and really helps with market access. As well as supporting Northern Ireland companies at meetings with potential suppliers, I met with a range of industry bodies including the new UK Trade Commissioner for Africa at the Department for International Trade, Emma Wade-Smith OBE. These trade bodies can also help our companies develop important relationships and support the development of export opportunities.

Finally, I have been hugely impressed by the opportunities that exist for Northern Ireland companies in South Africa across a wide range of sectors including Food & Drink, Life Sciences, Energy and Agri-Tech.

Companies that participated on Invest NI’s trade mission included Mallaghan Engineering, Maximus Crushing & Screening, OBE Waste & Agri Engineering, Linwoods, Evoquip, M&M Refractories, Powerscreen, The Savile Row Company, Spill Assist Ltd and Tesab Engineering Ltd.

Steve is Invest NI’s Executive Director of International Business.

Growing exports in Sub-Saharan Africa

by Steve Harper, Invest Northern Ireland
**Goodbye Lisa**

Lisa Keys, who has been the Head of Business Development at IoD Northern Ireland for the past three years, has moved on to a more senior role in a local charity.

Not only has Lisa played an invaluable role in building the Institute’s membership in Northern Ireland, she was also responsible for helping to revitalise the Young Directors Forum and establishing the very successful Young Directors Conference.

Lisa is now pursuing a new challenge taking on the position of Chief Operating Officer with Crown Jesus Ministries. She said “I’ve really enjoyed working for IoD over the last few years. Our membership is steadily growing and it has been a real delight to meet lots of members, learn more about their fabulous businesses and support the IoD team in the delivery of some great events and programmes. My Christian faith is very important to me and so this new role is a great fit for me.”

Crown Jesus Ministries is a charity that works with schools, youth groups, churches and partner organisations throughout Ireland, seeking to communicate the good news of Jesus and see people crown Jesus Lord of their lives.

For more information on the work of Crown Jesus Ministries visit www.crownjesus.org

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**Chartered pool widens**

There are now more than 65 Chartered Directors in Northern Ireland after several more local business leaders achieved Chartered status, including the youngest ever to receive this award locally.

Robert McConnell, Engineering Director at CCP Gransden, at 31 years-old, was among the most recent cohort to gain chartered status through the programme run by Director Development Ireland on behalf of the IoD Northern Ireland.

Stephen Reid, Chief Executive of Ards and North Down Borough Council and Brian Murray, CEO of The Workspace Group also received their Chartered status and all three were congratulated by IoD Northern Ireland Chairman, Ian Sheppard.

The Chartered Director Programme is designed to raise standards of governance and business leadership across the private and public sectors. The widening pool of Chartered Directors across Northern Ireland illustrates the commitment of the local business community to continually develop in order to improve economic standards overall. This commitment demonstrates to would-be investors from outside Northern Ireland the strong desire of the corporate community here to be the best-in-class and that makes this an attractive place to do business.

Lisa Keys is pictured (2nd from left) with the IoD team at the Young Directors Conference – National Director Kirsty McManus, intern Chelsea Brennan and Administrator Julie-Anne Clarke

**Private lunch**

A private IoD lunch was held in James Street South restaurant where members met John Simmons, Minister Counsellor, Commercial Affairs at the US Embassy in London.

Pictured are (from left) Barry Smyth of MCS Group, John Simmons from the US Embassy and Ian Sheppard, IoD NI Chairman.

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**Sign up for 2018 Programme**

Peter is now preparing for retirement and recruitment is now well under way for what will be his final cohort of the Chartered Director Programme - starting on 29/30 January 2018 and running until November 2018 including a summer break. The opening residential will again take place at The Old Inn, Crawfordsburn.

The Chartered Director Programme attracts participants from all sectors across Northern Ireland. It is tailored to suit the requirements of those with a busy workload and while the qualification may be the main reason for getting involved, it also provides a platform for business leaders to network and share ideas and best-practice methods with one another.

Contact Peter about participating in the 2018 Programme on 028 9064 1131, 07778 835 026 or directordevireland@yahoo.com

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**New Chartered programme start**

A full cohort of candidates has commenced the 2017-2018 Chartered Director Programme, which started at the end of September.

The first module was the “Role of the Director and the Board”, a residential session held at The Old Inn, Crawfordsburn.

Every place on the programme was taken, with 11 of the 18 delegates coming from organisations which had previously supported the programme. Two of the other 7 delegates came from organisations that have past participants now sitting on their boards.

Presenter George Bartlett spoke highly of the contributions from delegates and their enthusiasm, and also of this hospitality extended to our group by The Old Inn, managed by IoD member Garvan Rice, who was awarded “Northern Ireland Hotel of the Year” at the AA awards ceremony in London while the residential was in progress.

Seán Hogan, who runs his own consultancy business providing strategic development advice, has also been awarded Chartered qualification, along with Bonnie Anley, Chair of Londonderry Port & Harbour Commissioners.

**Contact**

Pictured are (from left) Robert McConnell CDir, Ian Sheppard, Brian Murray CDir and Stephen Reid CDir at Riddel Hall, the home of IoD in Northern Ireland.

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**For more information on the work of Crown Jesus Ministries visit www.crownjesus.org**

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**More CDirs**

- Seán Hogan

**Bonnie Anley**

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Pictured are (from left) Barry Smyth of MCS Group, John Simmons from the US Embassy and Ian Sheppard, IoD NI Chairman.
New Chair for Arts & Business NI

Former IoD Northern Ireland Chairman, Dr Joanne Stuart OBE is standing down as Chairman of Arts & Business NI after six years in the role.

Her successor is Martin Bradley MBE. Martin has been a Director on the board since 2015 and has extensive connections with the arts community and public and private sector.

Arts & Business NI is a creative charity that brokers innovative partnerships between the Arts and the private sector, and Joanne has led it through a period of change as the organisation demerged from the UK to set up as an independent NI company in 2011.

Martin Bradley is a former Mayor of Derry City Council and was Chair of Culture Company 2013, the body responsible for the delivery of the first UK City of Culture in Derry/Londonderry. He has extensive connections with the arts community in the city and wider region. Currently he chairs the Millennium Forum Theatre and Craft Northern Ireland as well as being a former Chair of the Ormeau Baths Gallery Belfast and former vice-chair of the Arts Council for NI. Martin was awarded an MBE in 2008 for services to the arts in Northern Ireland. He is currently Head of HSC Pension Service in Northern Ireland.

New lab links academia and industry

Ulster University has opened a new £7.3m biomedical engineering laboratory in a major industry partnership. The university has joined with Invest Northern Ireland, medical testing firm Randox and devices company, HeartSine Technologies, to open the lab.

The laboratory will offer expertise and state of the art equipment to assist companies to develop prototypes for the biomedical, engineering, electronic device and aerospace sectors.

Tracey Meharg, Invest NI’s Executive Director of Business Solutions, welcomed the new BioDevices Lab, which will open up opportunities for stronger innovation by hosting a suite of equipment that will allow companies to quickly develop prototypes and medical devices for testing.

Ulster University’s Professor Jim McLaughlin, overall project lead, explained that “Developing technology platforms to help translate our world class science and discovery to a device format as promptly as possible is essential for the very best design and performance. “In healthcare technology, Ulster University leads the way in the development of new patient monitoring systems, stimulation devices, wearable solutions and diagnostic sensing. The lab will enable our researchers to develop the strong leadership and innovation skills so critical to future industry growth, working in collaboration with our industry partners.”

With medical device technology often requiring up to 20 iterations to reach a competitive solution, this major investment enables research to be carried out in one lab, reducing both costs and time, and enabling life changing interventions to reach the market more quickly.

The total investment is £7.3m. Invest NI has offered assistance of £3.7m through a Grant for R&D, with Ulster University contributing £2.9m and £716,000 invested through industry collaborations with Randox Laboratories and HeartSine Technologies.

Invest NI’s R&D support is part funded by ERDF under the EU Investment for Growth and Jobs Programme 2014-2020.

The Director’s View

by Kirsty McManus, National Director IoD Northern Ireland

Recently, United States President Donald Trump vowed to press ahead with his proposals to lower Corporation Tax to 15% in order to compete with countries such as the Republic of Ireland.

It was a reminder to those of us in Northern Ireland that hard-won plans to do similar here have stalled, and will not regain momentum until the Executive is back up and running.

There is a clear message from our members that they want to see local policies back at Stormont, around the Executive table, delivering on key infrastructure projects, and reducing the mounting budgetary pressures being experienced across all departments.

We already know that the proposed start date of April 2018 for a new lower Corporate Tax rate of 12.5% is in all likelihood unachievable. Any further delay could greatly reduce Northern Ireland’s competitiveness as it seeks to attract new international investors.

In the in-tray, however, the lack of movement on reducing the levy is just one issue that will be in our politicians’ in-tray should there be a successful outcome to the Brexit negotiations for the local economy.

It was a reminder to those of us in Northern Ireland that hard-won plans to do similar here have stalled, and will not regain momentum until the Executive is back up and running.

It was crucial also that we get further clarity on the issue of the Irish border to give some reassurance to the 30,000 people that cross it every day and for the many businesses that carry goods from one jurisdiction to another.

Key infrastructure

Our members want to see progress also on key energy infrastructure projects. We have the Single Electricity Market and the East-West Interconnector, but we also need to see a positive outcome from the recent Appellate Commission on the second North-South Interconnector.

Having a Minister for Infrastructure in place would help drive the agenda as we are already playing catch-up with authorities south of the border having given the project the go-ahead.

As we enter the new academic year, for more than 15,000 students born in Northern Ireland, it means a return to studies at colleges and universities across England, Scotland and Wales.

Government statistics consistently show that around a third of those who graduate, subsequently settle in Great Britain or elsewhere outside Northern Ireland.

As the decision to leave the EU moves from referendum result to reality, there is an opportunity for Northern Ireland to be sold across the world as a gateway to Europe for investors who also want to establish a foothold in the UK, post-Brexit.

Seizing that chance, and building on the already strong network of foreign direct investors that have lifted sectors across the economy and helped to foster new ones, such as our thriving TV and film industry and financial services sector, will also make Northern Ireland a better place for our young people to work in and set down long-lasting roots.
Caffè Nero founder meets Young Directors

The Young Directors Forum welcomed Paul Ettinger, co-founder of Caffè Nero, to their latest event held in the Barclays Eagle Labs at Ormeau Baths.

This was Paul’s first visit to Northern Ireland and he certainly did not disappoint, giving delegates a fabulous insight into his story and the success of the coffee shop chain.

Riki Neil, Founder & Director of RNN Communications, was one of the many attendees who enjoyed the event. She said: “Like most businesspeople, I’m time poor, and have to be selective when choosing which events to attend but the IoD’s Young Directors’ Forum events have proved to deliver every time – well organised, short, high calibre and in great venues. The recent event with Paul Ettinger of Caffe Nero didn’t disappoint.

“Paul’s high energy address and incredible life-story was pretty inspirational and his nuggets of information on how Caffe Nero first marketed the brand and continued to innovate was an important reminder for all business founders. Other notable key takeaways were engaging company culture helped Caffe Nero to grow – something that I’m a big believer in at RNN Comms.”

The survey results reflected our understanding that:

• 75% of FOBs believe having a clear procedure to resolve family conflicts is important
• 80% of FOBs believe preparing and training a successor before succession takes place is critical
• However the results also show that only 26% of FOBs actually have a clear succession plan in place and only 40% have a procedure to resolve family conflicts

So what is stopping FOBs from implementing the rules/planning they know is vital to the future success of their business? The answer to this question seems to be a combination of:

• The financial capacity to retire
• Willingness to let go
• And the ability to generate adequate financial returns.

Our full Future of Family Business in Northern Ireland report can be found on our website at www.bdoiri.com

Maybeth Shaw, Partner, and Angela Keery, Director, are specialists within the family business centre at BDO Northern Ireland. If you would like a hard copy of the report or to discuss any of the issues raised in more detail please contact Maybeth or Angela on 028 9043 9009.

Future of Family Business in Northern Ireland

By Maybeth Shaw and Angela Keery, BDO

BDO Northern Ireland have recently completed our Future of Family Business in Northern Ireland survey and collated the results.

The results are encouraging for Northern Ireland Business across a number of areas, some of which are mentioned below.

They also highlight areas that threaten to become a major concern for businesses and clearly show that whilst businesses recognise the need for strategic and succession planning, they show that most businesses are still reluctant to take the final step and implement the planning required.

POSITIVE RESULTS

Innovation

Almost 90% of Family Owned Businesses (FOBs) in Northern Ireland believe innovation is important for the future success of business with the majority of those businesses saying that they have the technological capabilities required to innovate.

• 77% of FOBs report that they are adaptable to a changing market
• 77% of FOBs report that the board/ management have the skills to grow the business

This shows remarkable confidence in the business / board and management even in uncertain times

Brexit

There was no clear consensus on what Brexit means for Business in Northern Ireland, with only around:

• 1/3 advising that they understand the impact of Brexit
• 1/3 advising that they do not understand the impact of Brexit

And the remaining 1/3 reporting that they are somewhere in between

The more revealing response was that the majority of businesses do not believe that Brexit will be significantly detrimental to their business. Whilst this view may in part relate the lack of understanding around Brexit, the view from FOBs is that business will continue regardless of Brexit – business will find a new way to work if required and indeed Brexit may bring as many opportunities as threats. This was particularly encouraging since, of the businesses that responded, 93% export to ROI and 43% export to the rest of the EU.

Unfortunately - presumably as a result of the apparent uncertainty around Brexit - very few businesses are starting to prepare, and in most Brexit scenarios this lack of preparation could become a problem in a relatively short period of time. The longer businesses leave their Brexit preparations the more they may ultimately be challenged on how responsive and innovative they are.

CHALLENGES FACING FOBs IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Employee retention and recruitment

Over 60% of businesses that responded advised that employee recruitment and retention has become more challenging, with many of the businesses we spoke to advising that employee recruitment is now one of the biggest challenges they face.

The ability to recruit sufficient staff with the right skills, at an affordable cost is a major barrier for growth for businesses across Northern Ireland. This issue seems to have become more prevalent within the last year, and business are urging local government to address the issue as soon as possible.

Succession

The majority of businesses that completed the survey recognise that strategic planning that addresses succession within Family Businesses is important to the future success of their business, yet the majority of businesses haven’t yet put suitable planning in place.

• Only 59% of FOBs advised that they have a strategic plan that addresses succession – and the number of FOBs that have a written plan and communicated that plan to the relevant individuals is even lower.
• More than 70% of FOBs agree that employee recruitment is now one of the biggest challenges they face.

The more revealing response was that the majority of businesses do not believe that Brexit will be significantly detrimental to their business. Whilst this view may
Infrastructure – vital for business

It goes without saying that any economy that hopes to flourish and grow needs more and better infrastructure to support the efforts of businesses in that country.

Northern Ireland may be small but in order to guarantee that economic wealth is created and shared across the province, we need to ensure that investment is made in developing new infrastructure and replacing ageing assets.

On this and the following pages, several contributors give us their views on what investment is already being made and what more needs to be done.

Economist John Simpson comments on the Arcl21 energy from waste project, while the Construction Employers Federation’s David Fry addresses the vital roads infrastructure. Robin McCormick from SION explores why an investment in the energy intensive industry, MacHugh from the Department for Infrastructure describes how the Living With Water Project aims to continue to provide clean water and efficient sewage treatment while tackling flood risk.

Reward and risk of the roads budget

By David Fry, Construction Employers Federation

Over the next five years, Northern Ireland’s strategic road network will undergo greater sustained change than it ever previously has.

The change, while in some cases long overdue, has at its core the fundamental need to enhance Northern Ireland’s competitiveness and attractiveness as a region to do business and invest in.

Connectivity

Taking each of the major developments in turn, the A6 Randalstown – Castledawson scheme, being delivered by a GRAHAM/Farrans JV will, over the next three years, provide a major lift to the connectivity between Northern Ireland’s two main cities and economic drivers. With legal issues now resolved in, correctly, the Department for Infrastructure’s favour, nothing further should hold back the scheme given its direct and indirect benefits that will equate to hundreds of sustainable jobs over the course of the project as well as many opportunities for the GRAHAM/Farrans JV extensive supply chain.

As dualling

With the completion of the remaining statutory procedures, and with a JV in place for several years, early 2018 should see the first major element of the A5 dualling, from Newbuildings to north of Strabane, break ground. The A5 itself is a three schemes with a budget now in excess of £1 billion. It’s hard to estimate when it will fully complete, but it is realistic to now assume that substantial progress will be shortly forthcoming.

Jigsaw

The final piece of the jigsaw is the much speculated about York Street interchange. With a build programme of north of three years, and in a relatively confined space in an already gridlocked city, the scheme will come with considerable challenges. However, its economic rationale is clear for all to see.

A legal challenge on the appointment of a contractor is thought pending and, with detailed design work still required before any movement towards actual construction, we are approximately 18 months from it hitting commencement. That the £145 million scheme has been identified as a key focus for part of the year is understandable.

The scheme must seek to reduce the congestion and, in doing so, bring to the area the economic benefits that are currently lacking.

Cost considerations

Irrespective of ongoing political challenges, the capital budget is there over the coming four years to 2021 to significantly advance, and in some cases complete, all of the strategic road projects outlined.

The focus on the strategic network does though have its cost.

In the current year, the Executive’s flagship schemes (A5, A6, Belfast Rapid Transit, Belfast Transport Hub. Mother and Children’s Hospital, the revised plan for Desertcreat and the staia programme) have a combined capital outlay of just under £200 million. This outlay will grow to £300 million for each of the next three financial years. With a total capital budget of £1.2 billion, this means that other public sector clients such as education and water will have to deal with lower annual increases, if not decreases, in their capital spend.

Looking specifically at the Department for Infrastructure, and assuming their capital allocation remains at approximately £400 million, their flagship schemes will, by 2019/20, total £200 million and that’s before even a penny is allocated to Northern Ireland Water who have a critical role in underpinning new development within our economy such as housebuilding. It must also be remembered that not all the capital budget is construction – by industry’s estimates you would be lucky if we were two-thirds.

Considering the budget then from a road maintenance perspective, and on the back of recent media coverage in respect of the huge shortfall anticipated there, it is important to see how, with the strategic road schemes advancing by and large as planned, with limited capital, the remaining capital is available over the coming 4-5 years.

That of course then extends into the public interest or community, what is the public good? As a community, what is needed, sometimes there is a clash between the wider public interest (the greater good of the number in the population) and particular interest groups in a locality where the argument tries to shield an area from a development that adversely affects a small number (otherwise described as the NIMBY syndrome) sometimes linked to a policy objective of a conservation nature (e.g. if an animal species is threatened). Consensual outcomes are sometimes possible but, in the real world, mechanisms to make decisions in the absence of consensus are needed.

Contested decisions

Recently Northern Ireland has had a series of contested policy decisions including the referendum on Brexit, the building of overhead electricity networks north-south for the Irish electricity grid, and investment in new roads.

Not all contested decisions are amenable to a referendum, as for Brexit. Road developments, electricity grids, water storage and waste treatment plants are part of the improving infrastructure and, of necessity, must have a mechanism to allow progress.

The decision-making process should be clear and subject to informed assessment mechanisms: what, on the basis of expert professional advice, are the developments that are either in the public interest or show a positive cost benefit for the wider community? As a community, what is needed is a reputable assessment made through the agreed process which can reach a decision that carries the equivalent of a determination in a legal setting. Judicial and judicious decisions are critically important.

The endorsement by Peter May, Permanent Secretary of the Department for Infrastructure, of the approval of Arcl21’s energy from waste investment near Mallusk, north of Belfast, got important headlines: some for the wrong reasons. The debate focused largely on whether Mr May should have taken any action in the absence of a Minister; equally the challenge to the action by the Permanent Secretary seem to have obscured key issues.

When a difficult public policy decision is needed, sometimes there is a clash between the wider public interest (the greater good of the number in the population) and particular interest groups in a locality where the argument tries to shield an area from a development that adversely affects a small number (otherwise described as the NIMBY syndrome) sometimes linked to a policy objective of a conservation nature (e.g. if an animal species is threatened). Consensual outcomes are sometimes possible but, in the real world, mechanisms to make decisions in the absence of consensus are needed.

Energy from waste approved - in absence of a Minister

by John Simpson, Economist

The Arcl21 proposal for an expensive energy from waste investment only reached the desk of the Permanent Secretary after it had (often laboriously) gone through all the earlier processes and, after earlier Ministerial involvement, had been referred to the PAC which, had, after due process, agreed that the proposal could be accepted.

The Minister, unless there was a procedural flaw, would have been advised to try to stop the investment. Any allegation of a serious procedural flaw could have attracted a judicial review.

The Permanent Secretary could have been judged at fault if, by action or inaction, he had stalled its implementation. In the unusual circumstances of the absence of a Minister, on this occasion, the go-ahead was the right decision.

The public good

Critical to key decisions on investment in infrastructure services, there is a well-established method of assessing the ‘public good’ of proposals. Proposals must seek ‘planning approval’ that approval comes in a tiered format. At a local level and usually for less contentious suggestions, local authorities rely in the first instance on the recommendation of professionally trained (and country) planning specialists. Recommendations, after professional assessment and amendment, get the approval of the elected local authority.

For major decisions and for local decisions that prove contentious, there is the second tier of consideration: the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC). The PAC brings to bear expert evidence on issues that are in dispute and brings an independent, well-informed assessment from a group of people who have experience of the diverse pleas on economic, social and environmental implications.

The Arcl21 proposal for an expensive energy from waste investment only reached the desk of the Permanent Secretary after it had (often laboriously) gone through all the earlier processes and, after earlier Ministerial involvement, had been referred to the PAC which, had, after due process, agreed that the proposal could be accepted.
Powering the economy

by Robin McCormick, SONI

It’s no secret that strong economies are underpinned by modern and reliable infrastructure. Businesses and employers need good transport links, access to broadband and fundamentally a secure and efficient supply of electricity.

At SONI (System Operator for Northern Ireland), a key aspect of our role is making sure ‘the lights stay on’. We work to ensure electricity gets from where it is generated at wind farms and power plants to the homes, farms and businesses that need it. We also decide if we need to strengthen and develop the grid to ensure that Northern Ireland has the electricity it needs to power economic growth.

Responsibility for developing the grid, including delivering planning permission, was transferred to SONI from NIE Networks in 2014. We are working to identify and plan any future grid requirements.

At the moment our grid development team is focused on achieving planning consent for new infrastructure west of Garvagh; responsibility for developing the grid, including delivering planning permission, was transferred to SONI from NIE Networks in 2014. We are working to identify and plan any future grid requirements.

Considering the factors

When we are thinking about new infrastructure we have to consider a number of factors: Is it needed? We don’t plan new infrastructure unless it is absolutely necessary. It is equally important to us that we clearly communicate the need and the benefits to the public, and we have established new grid development processes which put community consultation at the heart of what we do. This is fundamental, but particularly so, since the transfer of planning powers to local councils in 2015. We’ve worked with several councils, including on multiple-boundary applications and have found all to be fair, efficient and professional.

Our new grid development process involves extensive engagement with local representatives and communities from an early stage. We also have a dedicated landowner engagement team and full-time Agriculture Liaison Officer; they work closely with landowners, listening to their feedback and guiding them through the process. This ensures we gather as much information as possible from the outset, allowing us to submit high quality planning applications having taken on board the views of local people. It is about a two-way flow of information – no one knows the land better than like the people who live on it and work on it, and it is also about building trust with everyone we deal with.

While we work with developers to deliver connections for new generation projects, SONI also has to analyse future electricity demand and plan grid upgrades; and our priority project remains the proposed North South Interconnector. The Interconnector will provide a 400kV overhead link between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. This will ensure we have enough electricity to meet demand in Northern Ireland in the coming years; and it will create savings for consumers north and south, by realising the full benefits of the all-island electricity market.

The planning application for the North South Interconnector is with the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC), which completed its Public Inquiry into the proposal in February of this year. The PAC is now preparing its report and a recommended decision is to be issued to the Department for Infrastructure in the coming months. We are hopeful that a planning decision will then be announced by the Minister for Infrastructure without delay.

We are grateful for the support the Interconnector project has received from the business community throughout Northern Ireland, including IoD NI National Director Kirsty McManus and her team who have been vocal in their support; recognising the benefits the Interconnector will deliver for its members.

Single Electricity Market

A major advantage of having the North South Interconnector in place is that it will allow us to realise the full benefits of the Single Electricity Market. Since the introduction of the all-island electricity wholesale market in 2007, electricity is delivered at the least possible cost to consumers. With the Interconnector in place, a major bottleneck on the grid will be removed, meaning greater efficiencies and lower prices, good news for all consumers.

Delivery of the North South Interconnector will also support the implementation of the new Integrated Single Electricity Market (I-SEM), which is due to go live in May 2018. Building on the success of the single electricity market, the I-SEM will result in increased access to cheaper sources of electricity; and the market will be more open and efficient, with strong links to neighbouring electricity markets; all of which will deliver further benefits to consumers. The crucial point is that modern infrastructure, in the form of the proposed North South Interconnector, is required to deliver this range of benefits.

Looking ahead, SONI will continue to deliver a safe, secure economic and reliable electricity supply and we will work closely with IoD NI and its members to ensure that the power grid supports and encourages economic growth across Northern Ireland.

Robin is Director of Operations, Planning & Innovation and General Manager of SONI, the System Operator for Northern Ireland.

We’re here to help.

Answering your questions

SC

The current

with you for a future and reliable electricity supply.

Senior members of the SONI team (l-r) Nick Fullerton, Manager: Connections and Charging; Leigh McCarthy, Solicitor; Robin McCormick, General Manager; Natasha Sayee, Senior Lead Public Affairs Specialist; Sarah Friedel, Regulatory Affairs Lead

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Living with water - now and for years to come

By Linda MacHugh, Department for Infrastructure

With much of it underground – a huge system of 26,800 kilometres of watermains and 15,800 kilometres of sewers all under our towns, villages and cities, much of our water infrastructure is unseen. Yet we live with it every day.

Coupled with pumping stations, water and wastewater treatment works, this infrastructure supplies approximately 570 million litres of good quality drinking water on a daily basis. It also collects around 340 million litres of wastewater from around 680,000 households and organisations connected to the sewers system and transfers it to works where it is treated and disposed of safely.

However, it is during times of flooding that this “invisible” infrastructure comes in to the spotlight – and this is happening more frequently. As our economy, population and tourist numbers continue to grow, and climate change produces more intense rainfall, the drainage infrastructure of Belfast and many other towns and cities across NI is coming under ever greater pressure. This has led to increased instances of serious flooding over the past number of years. There are also environmental concerns that need to be tackled if NI is to meet the standards required under environmental legislation. If this is not addressed, there may come a point when the future development of Belfast could be threatened.

The solution?

The Living With Water Programme (LWWP) was established to consider the best solution to these inter-related problems and to develop a Strategic Drainage Infrastructure Plan for Belfast which protects against flood risk, enhances the environment and at the same time supports economic growth.

The LWWP is taking a long-term, strategic approach to managing the flow of water through Belfast. It needs to resolve the issues of under-capacity in the sewerage and watercourse network in order to enable economic growth. The LWWP also considers how to maximise water assets to improve green/blue spaces for the benefit of local communities.

One of the key aims is to take as much clean rain water out of the sewerage system as possible and deal with it in a more natural and environmentally sustainable way. This will involve innovative catchment management and a range of sustainable drainage solutions.

An integrated approach

Due to the complex nature of the problems, no one organisation can tackle this alone. Whilst the Department for Infrastructure (DFI) is leading the LWWP, there are many key stakeholders involved. The Board which oversees the programme is a cross-sectoral mix from across central and local government, with support from the private sector. All are working together in an integrated way to develop economic solutions that move away from the conventional end-of-pipe models towards a more holistic catchment-based methodology whilst minimising disruption.

The Challenges

Initial estimates indicate that implementation of the plan will cost around £460 million in nominal terms, with most of this expenditure required between 2020 and 2027. This is likely to include improvements to wastewater treatment works, sewerage systems, rivers, culverts, road drainage and better land management within the catchment areas.

There is also a challenge to those involved in planning and regeneration to consider how water fits within area planning and promoting a more sustainable approach to drainage for new developments, public realm schemes and environmental improvement schemes.

A vital driver to our economy and protector of our environment

Whilst there is no doubt that it will be a challenge to deliver the Programme in the current financial climate we all live with water so we all have a stake in delivering a long term, integrated solution for our water infrastructure. This is essential to supporting our economy, protecting our environment and reducing the risk of flooding.

Linda is Director of Water & Drainage Policy in the Department for Infrastructure.

City Deals are an innovative UK Government initiative which directs bespoke packages of funding to City Regions, to deliver a programme of investment that is prioritised on delivering economic growth.

In the financial annex to the Confidence and Supply Agreement between the Conservative Party and Democratic Unionist Party signed in June 2017, the UK Government committed to working with the Executive and other stakeholders towards a comprehensive and ambitious set of City Deals across Northern Ireland.

The City Regions across the devolved administrations that have secured City Deals to date have used the deals to increase investment levels significantly above what would otherwise have been possible, as the UK Government funding contribution is additional to Barnett funding. The early involvement of the business community in City Deals is essential, if every £1 of public sector investment is to lead to £4 of private sector investment from the businesses who will benefit from improved infrastructure and an up-skilled workforce.

Belfast Region City Deal

The ambitious and emerging proposition for the Belfast Region City Deal is seeking to provide more and better jobs, inclusive growth and improved skills for the residents across the Belfast Region that currently represent more than half of the total population of Northern Ireland.

The Belfast Region City Deal Partner Councils believe that a Belfast Region City Deal with a cohesive programme of investment across ‘Infrastructure’, ‘Innovation’ and ‘Skills’ can be an economic game-changer for Northern Ireland and would form a key part in ensuring the region develops economic resilience to face the current and future local and global challenges and opportunities, including Brexit. It will do this by helping to address barriers to future economic growth including critical levels of required investment in infrastructure, over-reliance on the public sector compared to elsewhere, high levels of economic inactivity, insufficient investment in future high growth sectors and skills inequality gaps.

The Belfast Region is the economic driver and enabler for the rest of Northern Ireland, so if the Belfast Region succeeds, Northern Ireland succeeds. The Belfast Region City Deal is an opportunity to develop longer term spending and delivery plans which share local, regional and government resources in an innovative way to maximise economic and social impact.

Brain drain

With significant devaluation and high levels of economic inactivity across the Belfast Region; inclusive growth and a parallel skills programme will be a core component of the proposition ensuring a spread of benefits on both a geographic and socio-economic basis. In addition, 37% of local graduates leave with only a third of this talent pool returning to live and work in Northern Ireland. The Belfast Region needs to reduce the impact of this ‘brain drain’ and ensure an abundance of sufficiently attractive opportunities with higher earning potential are created, to attract experienced talent with local roots, to come back and contribute to super-charging the region’s future economic growth.

As in the City Deals that have secured a government funding package in the region of £1bn, it is envisaged that there will be a sharing of risks as well as rewards, and that there is an understanding that this is likely to involve self-help funding from the coalition of City Deal Partner Councils to partially fund an up-front programme of investment. Innovation, commonly centred on University sites, has also been a key element of many of the larger City Deals signed to date.

In light of the above, a Belfast Region City Deal presents the opportunity to re-think the way the City Region works including realisation of the growth potential of the eastern economic corridor linking Belfast and Dublin as well as allowing Local Councils to work more closely together. Coupled with the emerging support from the business community, a Belfast Region City Deal could be the game-changer Northern Ireland needs and contribute to the Region’s Brexit readiness.

Ashleen Feeney, KPMG
Director – Head of Business Development, KPMG in Northern Ireland and a member of the IoD Northern Ireland Committee

NI City Deals economic game-changer

By Ashleen Feeney, KPMG

Ashleen Feeney, KPMG, Director – Head of Business Development, KPMG in Northern Ireland and a member of the IoD Northern Ireland Committee.
New premises for Concentrix

Global business services company Concentrix has officially opened its new purpose-built, state-of-the-art facility in Belfast. The 130,000 sq foot centre of excellence represents an investment of £14 million and reflects the company’s continued commitment to outstanding facilities and exceptional customer engagement solutions for the world’s best brands. This centre of excellence also marks the latest investment from Concentrix in the growth of its European business.

Concentrix President, Chris Caldwell said, “Opening this new building signifies the realisation of exciting aspirations for Concentrix Belfast, as well as the organisation globally. We are truly pioneering and redefining what a customer engagement centre should be across the globe. As a company we are growing and proud to be leading the market. Our position is much owed to our incredibly talented staff and the successful relationships we hold with our clients.”

InoD member and Concentrix Senior Vice President Concentrix Philip Cassidy added, “The history associated with Maysfield is so plentiful that we believed it was right to put our investment into regeneration because this space and a café, along with state-of-the-art technology. Maysfield is an important part of the significant growth we have planned over the coming years and we are delighted to celebrate the opening of this facility with our staff, clients and the wider community.”

Concentrix’s Mayfield Belfast facility will serve as a hub for its staff in Northern Ireland with international career prospects throughout the Concentrix global network.

MEMBER COMPANY NEWS

Kainos new posts for Londonderry

Belfast technology giant Kainos has announced the creation of 15 new high-tech jobs at its digital hub in Londonderry. The company currently employs 27 people in the city and the new consultants will work for its WorkSmart division, advising major companies in how to meet demand for new contracts as it ramps up fresh wind farm projects over the next few years. Jobs include tower crane operators, pipe fitters and fabricators, planners, structural engineers, accountant and surveyors and welders.

Warrenpoint Harbour Signs 10-year extension to deal with Irish freight company

Following major investment in Warrenpoint’s port facilities, including a recent £1.3 million dredging project, the Co Down Harbour has signed a new freight contract aiming to position it as the province’s second busiest port for freight. The harbour authority has announced a 10-year extension to its arrangement with Dublin-based freight firm Seatruck Ferries.

Record results for Foyle

Foyle Port has revealed pre-tax profits of more than £2 million during a record year in the harbour’s 162-year history. The port saw profits rising by around 50%, with turnover sitting at £8.6 million. It’s now in its fifth year of consecutive growth. The business, which has grown its workforce to 92, has invested around £8.6 million in the last year, including a new tugboat to safeguard the future shipping operations in Lough Foyle.

Wind farms mean jobs

Harland and Wolff is taking on more staff to meet demand for new contracts as it ramps up fresh wind farm projects over the next few years. Jobs include tower crane operators, pipe fitters and fabricators, planners, structural engineers, accountant and surveyors and welders.

Tasty deal for Genesis Crafty

With a multi-million pound uplift to its existing contract with Marks & Spencer, family bakery company, Genesis Crafty has created almost 50 new jobs and grown turnover to more than £16 million. The deal has doubled the Magherafelt based company’s cake business. Its tealtime range, which includes 11 new product lines, will be sold at 850 Marks & Spencer stores across the UK.

Growth for tech firm

Fast-growing web solutions agency Flint Studios is expanding into the north west following the acquisition of Creative Metrics in Derry. Flint has just reported a 40 per cent growth in turnover for the first nine months of this year.

French connection

Portlaoise Fit Out has completed work on a new flagship branch for an American fashion giant’s first luxury store in Paris. It is the second fit-out the company has done for clothing brand Kate Spade New York. It follows on from the company’s arrival in London last year. Located at Rue Saint-Honore, the store is a 185 sq metre, two-floor unit.

Top of the class

Dunganon based McAvoy Group has been awarded a lucrative £8.2 million contract for the design and construction of an English primary school. The company has secured the deal for the new 630-pupil primary school for Concordia Academy in Romford, Essex.

Sunny Jim joins SHS

SHS Group, owner of consumer brands including Shloer and WUD, has bought a fire products company that will bring even more household names into its portfolio. The Group has bought Standard Brands, which produces Sunny Jim firelighters and the Zip range of fire products.

Got any news?

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KPMG moves to Soloist Building

Multi-national accountancy firm KPMG’s plans to further grow its presence in Northern Ireland have been evidenced by their move to a new Belfast office. The 250-strong team has taken up residence in a 39,000 sq foot space across two floors in the distinctive Soloist Building, situated adjacent to Belfast’s Waterfront Hall at Lanyon Place.

Digital DNA plan for growth

The Belfast firm behind the successful business and technology event Digital DNA has announced ambitious growth plans for 2018, which include new jobs. The company, whose most recent event at St George’s Market in June is estimated to have brought in more than £52 million to the local economy and attracted more than 800 international delegates, has appointed a new management team eager to build on existing success.

KPMG’s Ashleen Feeney, John Hansen, Sara Hamill and Jordan McCune at the new offices

MEMBER COMPANY NEWS

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Record results for Foyle

Foyle Port has revealed pre-tax profits of more than £2 million during a record year in the harbour’s 162-year history. The port saw profits rising by around 50%, with turnover sitting at £8.6 million. It’s now in its fifth year of consecutive growth. The business, which has grown its workforce to 92, has invested around £8.6 million in the last year, including a new tugboat to safeguard the future shipping operations in Lough Foyle.

Warrenpoint Harbour Signs 10-year extension to deal with Irish freight company

Following major investment in Warrenpoint’s port facilities, including a recent £1.3 million dredging project, the Co Down Harbour has signed a new freight contract aiming to position it as the province’s second busiest port for freight. The harbour authority has announced a 10-year extension to its arrangement with Dublin-based freight firm Seatruck Ferries.

Tasty deal for Genesis Crafty

With a multi-million pound uplift to its existing contract with Marks & Spencer, family bakery company, Genesis Crafty has created almost 50 new jobs and grown turnover to more than £16 million. The deal has doubled the Magherafelt based company’s cake business. Its tealtime range, which includes 11 new product lines, will be sold at 850 Marks & Spencer stores across the UK.

Growth for tech firm

Fast-growing web solutions agency Flint Studios is expanding into the north west following the acquisition of Creative Metrics in Derry. Flint has just reported a 40 per cent growth in turnover for the first nine months of this year.

French connection

Portlaoise Fit Out has completed work on a new flagship branch for an American fashion giant’s first luxury store in Paris. It is the second fit-out the company has done for clothing brand Kate Spade New York. It follows on from the company’s arrival in London last year. Located at Rue Saint-Honore, the store is a 185 sq metre, two-floor unit.

Top of the class

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Christmas joy of Mencap mum

Christmas is fast approaching and the mother of one of the children who attended the Mencap Children’s Centre talks about the difference Mencap has made to her four-year-old son Finn and her Christmas joy at seeing him play Joseph in the Children’s Centre Nativity last year.

When mum Amy Harron was pregnant with Finn, doctors discovered a rare heart condition which is often found in babies with Down syndrome. Once he was born, doctors told Amy and her husband, Harry Harron, that Finn indeed had Down syndrome as well as Hirschsprung’s disease, a bowel condition.

“I already knew that Finn would have Down syndrome,” Amy said. “I said to my husband when Finn was born ‘Just tell the paediatrician we know that and it’s absolutely fine’. I didn’t want them to sit next to me and have a doom and gloom conversation. Finn’s arrival was a gift.”

When Finn was still a toddler, Amy and Harry were told about the Mencap Children’s Centre. In partnership with the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, the Mencap Children’s Centre is a purpose-built hub for 2 to 3-year-olds with a learning disability, autism or developmental delay. Finn received a referral to start at the Mencap Children’s Centre and has shown ‘massive’ development ever since.

“We were extremely lucky that Finn was able to attend the Mencap Centre,” Amy said. “He’s thrived in all areas - developmentally, personally and socially - and it has been wonderful to watch this happen. His communication skills in particular have sky-rocketed. When I look back to this time last year he’s come on so much. He’s only four but is speaking in full sentences and can hold a great little conversation. We are certain his time at Mencap has been integral to this.”

Every year in December the children at the Mencap Centre perform a Nativity play for families and much to his Mother’s surprise Finn starred as Joseph. Amy said: “Finn was Joseph in the nativity. We didn’t know what part he had been given, so when he came out it was a real surprise. It was a moment we’ll never forget. He was so happy and proud of himself as well. Of course, we would have been just as proud of Finn whatever character he had played; he’s also made a wonderful sheep in the past, but there was definitely something special about seeing how far he has come from his early, medical days to starring in the nativity.”

Margaret Kelly, Director of Mencap in Northern Ireland, added: “Finn was a popular little boy when he was at the Mencap Children’s Centre and we would like to thank Amy and Harry for sharing how Mencap helped change their lives. The Mencap Children’s Centre is dedicated to giving children like Finn the best start in life by working directly with each and every child to support their early development.

“We also know that parents make the most difference in a child’s life. Our new Family Support Programme offers bespoke guidance and support for parents to enable them to have the best possible outcomes for their child.”

Support Mencap

Mencap is the IoD’s charity of the year. To find out more about their work in ensuring that people with a learning disability are valued equally, listened to and included, contact Mencap’s Fiona Mc Cann on 028 9069 1351 or fiona.mc Cann@mencap.org.uk

The IoD’s target of fundraising for Mencap is £15,000 so help us to reach this by supporting their fundraising efforts.

New board for Neueda

Belfast-based digital transformation company, Neueda, has appointed a Board of Directors to support its growth strategy and help develop its business on an international scale. Four individuals from outside the organisation have joined the Board, bringing with them a broad spectrum of experience and industry knowledge from across Neueda’s core customer markets.

Joining the Board is IoD member Helen Kirkpatrick-MBE, who will act as Chairman, bringing considerable financial and business acumen to the role. Helen is also a non-executive director at Kingspan Group plc and Dale Farm Co-operative.

Sir Malcolm McGuigan also joins as a non-executive Director. He is currently head of the group, a position he has held since joining the Board in 2017, bringing with him a broad spectrum of experience and industry knowledge from across Neueda’s core customer markets.

Fellow Director David Clements spent his career at PwC before retiring in 2016 as Chief Operating Officer, responsible for driving the firm’s growth agenda. Previously, David was a Partner leading PwC’s Corporate Finance and Strategy Services.

Tony McManus joins the Neueda board with two decades of international experience in capital markets and the fintech sector. Tony is the Global Head for all Real-time Market Data Products & Services at Bloomberg and has previously held senior positions at UBS, Wombat, NYSE Technologies.

Public transport ‘champions’

More than 60 companies in Northern Ireland took part in Translink’s #GetOnBoardNI Corporate Challenge during Bus + Train Week 2017 and IoD members’ companies are amongst the winners.

Edwards & Co Solicitors – where Dorcas Crawford and Jenny Ebbage are IoD members - came out on top as the grand champion of the Corporate Challenge. Edwards & Co was asked organisations to broadly champion public transport, including the tracking of journeys by public transport instead of car, Barryards Bank Plc (Corporate Team) were the Best Large Organisation and Northern Ireland Co- operative Wholesale Association were the Public Sector Champion.

Translink pioneered the competition to engage the corporate community in supporting public transport and to encourage commuters to try the bus or train for their daily journey to work.

The competition was part of the second annual Bus + Train Week, an initiative which highlights the importance of public transport and the vital role it plays in the success of Northern Ireland supporting economic growth and social inclusion while delivering energy efficiency and ‘low carbon’ mobility.

For more information about Bus + Train Week, visit translink.co.uk

According to Neueda’s CEO Brendan Monaghan, this high calibre Board will contribute to realising the company’s ambitious business growth strategy of seeing revenue to £100million by 2022. Neueda has experienced more than 35% annual growth for the last five years and has achieved sufficient scale for this to accelerate in the coming years.

Established in 2006, Neueda delivers large-scale, mission-critical software projects to international market leaders across government, utilities and financial markets and is headquartered in Belfast. The company also has a presence in London and New York.

Earlier this year, Neueda announced plans to invest £15 million into creating 150 new roles and developing its already 250 strong team of software engineers, IT consultants and data engineers. The company receives over 15% of its annual profits to develop its people through leadership, technical and personal skills improvement, graduate and apprenticeship programmes and has previously opened a conference in Spain to help it retain talent following Brexit.

Catherine Keanan (left), Company Solicitor and Manager at Cragh Concrete Products Limited and Karen Mc Quaid, Assembly Technician at CDE gender diversity as an essential part of the Northern Ireland construction materials industry’s success.

“The next step is to identify champions who will represent the industry across different platforms such as Women’s TEC, the largest quality provider of training for women in non-traditional skills in Northern Ireland.”

Claire Colvin concluded “All we have to do is work towards having more women take on senior positions, both in terms of leadership as well as in our day to day roles. Women are building their presence in the construction and cde we are determined to continue engaging with women and help them reach their professional ambitions on an even keel to men.”

Lynda Shannon of Translink presents Gemma Lawlor and David Sturgess from Edwards & Co Solicitors with the award for Grand Champion of the #GetOnBoardNI Corporate Challenge
GDPR and your organisation

In May 2018, the new General Data Protection Regulation will be introduced in the UK, making significant changes to the way that employers handle their employees’ data.

Claire Hughes

Current Data Protection Law

You need to know about the changes to the way that employers handle their employees’ data in the UK, making significant changes to their “entire ethos” on data protection with the main focus on increased accountability and transparency to how organisations hold data.

Main Changes

- Employee consent to their employer processing their data will need to be informed, freely given and specific.
- Employee handbooks need to be reviewed in this regard.
- Data protection risk assessments are likely to be required when carrying out a new project or implementing a new system.
- When responding to a Subject Access Request, employers will no longer be able to charge the employee a fee for gathering the information unless the request is manifestly unfounded or excessive, in which case a “reasonable fee” can be applied. The information will have to be provided without delay and within one month at the latest (currently a 40-day limit applies).
- Individuals will have new rights to have data corrected; restrict how it is used and to be ‘forgotten’.
- Data processors will no longer need to inform the Information Commissioner’s Office annually of data processing activities. Instead there will be increased record keeping requirements.
- Maximum fines for very serious instances of non-compliance will increase from £500,000 to £20 million or 4% of an organisation’s worldwide annual turnover, whichever is the highest.

Tips

- The Government will be given some leeway to make its own law on data protection so employers should continue to keep an eye on developments in this area.
- With maximum fines increasing so significantly, employers must be sure they are comfortable with the changes. The starting point is likely to be a review of all data protection documentation in place to ensure it remains valid.

For more information, IoD members can log in to iod.com and search for the relevant Factsheet.

NEW MEMBER PROFILE

Claire Hughes

Former bank manager Claire Hughes CMgr FCMI took early retirement in 2012 after 35 years in banking and started her own consultancy business helping business start-ups.

She is a Fellow member of the Chartered Management Institute, and was the first banker in Northern Ireland to be awarded Chartered Manager status. She served on the board of Dunganon Enterprise Centre from 2005-2012 and was Chairperson of the ‘Up for Business’ network Dunganon 2012-2013. Currently she is an Independent Board Member for Department for the Economy.

In 2015, she founded Northern Ireland’s only award-winning and fully accredited Matchmaking Agency, Soirée Society.

Although happily married herself, Claire is at the top of the local dating scene as she won the prestigious ‘Best Upcoming Matchmaking Agency of the Year’ award at the UK Dating Awards in London in November 2016 and was a finalist in the Rising Stars NI 2017.

Claire says that statistics prove that being in a stable relationship is linked to both physical and mental health benefits. “Many professionals find it difficult to meet a partner. Reasons range from lack of time or work commitments, dislike of the lack of confidentiality or distrust or disillusionment with online dating, or lack of confidence after the break-up of a relationship or bereavement. Employing a Matchmaker is just like a company using a professional recruitment company to fill a vacancy, as it significantly improves the chances of getting the right person for the job. The only difference is that we work to fill the vacancy in people’s lives.”

As a new IoD member, Claire is looking forward to the support and services and networking it offers.

Innovation is key.

Networks (or communities) require different solutions, but it is important that the leaders of those communities reflect on the importance of the individual.

Natasha Sayee: Modern infrastructure is crucial for economic growth in Northern Ireland. Public awareness, political stability and speedy decisions are vital.

IoDNI: What do you consider to be the greatest challenges facing the infrastructure sector presently?

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Natasha Sayee: While we’re monitoring Brexit and providing input re: energy, it’s business as usual for SONI and we are progressing projects as planned.

IoDNI: What lessons can be learned locally from infrastructure planning across the world?

Natasha Sayee: Different areas (and networks) require different solutions, but we are always trying to learn and improve. Innovation is key.

IoDNI: How important are organisations such as the IoD in supporting local companies and cultivating better business leaders?

Natasha Sayee: SONI operates the transmission grid and plans new projects. All consumers get the electricity they need as efficiently as possible.

IoDNI: What skills and qualities do you think are required to be a strong business leader?

Natasha Sayee: In my view, work ethic, attention to detail and leadership by example are fundamental. As a self-believer while promoting a team ethos. And we’ve such a great team here at SONI!

IoDNI: How important are qualifications and skills to a successful career?

Natasha Sayee: SONI operates the transmission grid and plans new projects. All consumers get the electricity they need as efficiently as possible.

IoDNI: What is the best business lesson you’ve ever learnt?

Natasha Sayee: I loved journalism but the transition to public affairs felt very natural and I still use many of the same skills in my work with SONI.

IoDNI: How much value do you place on networking to further business success?

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Reasonable adjustments and mental health at work

by Jacqui McKee, Director, Advice & Compliance, Equality Commission

A recent Industrial Tribunal decision brings into focus an issue which is an increasing area of concern in the workplace – that of managing staff with mental health issues.

We helped a woman with mental ill health, bouts of depression and panic attacks bring a case against her former employer under the Disability Discrimination Act. She worked a 47.5 hour week and applied to have her working week reduced to 40 hours, making specific reference to her disability and the severe impact it was having on her and her work colleagues.

The Tribunal said: “Her request for reduced hours was not considered in an appropriate manner. It was consistently dealt with as an application for flexible working with an emphasis on the needs of the business. There was little or no focus on the needs of the claimant.”

The timeframe for dealing with the employee’s request was much too long. The Tribunal stated: “Had the employer focussed correctly on the concept of reasonable adjustments under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and taken a proactive approach to the matter, all members of the tribunal are satisfied that the claimant would have had the benefit of the reduced hours she sought at an earlier stage.”

The Tribunal held that there was no doubt that the treatment the employee received at work affected her mental health and well-being. “The treatment which the claimant received at work (or the failure to grant her a reasonable adjustment in terms of allowing her to work reduced hours) inevitably compounded and exacerbated to a serious degree any pre-existing condition, and was a major cause of her mental health issues at the relevant time.”

She was awarded £11,840 by the Tribunal, which found that her employer had failed in its duty to make reasonable adjustments for her.

Proper and timely

It’s clear that to stay on the right side of the law, employers need to be more pro-active in addressing issues around mental health. Proper and timely management of mental health at work is crucial. Failure to do this, as happened here, actually made the employee’s condition – and the situation - worse.

The Tribunal noted that when the adjustments were put in place the employee had found it much easier to cope with her employment. She had little or no absence from work and she found it much easier to get the job done. Employers have a legal duty to consider and make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees, but there’s also a benefit to the business through outcomes such as improved attendance and increased productivity.

We encourage all employers to sign up to our Mental Health Charter and make a commitment to work towards a better understanding of mental health issues and the impact they can have on individuals and the workplace. Jacqui is Director Advice & Compliance at the Equality Commission.

Employee benefits merger

Two of Northern Ireland’s largest employee benefits providers – both led by IoD members – have joined forces to create Incorporate Benefits LLP. Kerr Henderson Group and Independent Healthcare Solutions have combined their extensive expertise and experience to create the province’s first specialist employee benefits consultancy.

The new organisation was launched at The Gallery on the Dublin Road, Belfast where clients enjoyed drinks and canapés while Terry Denny, clients enjoyed drinks and canapés while the new organisation was launched at The employee benefits consultancy.

Healthcare Solutions have combined Henderson Group and Independent by IoD members - have joined forces to merger.

Modern business culture has changed in recent times. Alongside technological advancements there has been a shift in focus when it comes to identifying new talent. Rather than looking for those with the highest IQ and qualifications, employers are looking for high potential indicators such as a consistent drive for excellent results, a catalytic learning ability and excellent relationship building skills.

The art of developing talent

Within our “hypercompetitive world” many businesses now place greater emphasis on attracting new talent demonstrating these factors and using tools such as the nine-box grid to calibrate their talent pipeline. However, all too often inadequate support is put in place to ensure retention and sustain engagement. Directors and line managers within organisations often focus so much on satisfying customers and investors that they’ve lost the art of developing talent, leading to an “exodus”.

Terry Denny from Opes continues her series on Talent and discusses the importance of line managers investing time and effort in career conversations with their people in order to ensure a successful future for both the individual and the company.

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Managing our productivity crisis
by Kirsty McManus, IoD Northern Ireland

When we consider current challenges facing businesses, discussion tends to focus on Brexit, and understandably so.

However, while the impending exit from the European Union presents, for many, the most pressing contemporary issue for industry, there is another which has been anpersistent problem for more than a decade – productivity.

It is a major issue because without increased productivity, economic growth will remain sluggish, government will find it harder to reduce the deficit meaning less manoeuvrability on taxes and spending, therefore leaving little chance of an improvement of living standards.

The factors contributing to low productivity growth vary and have been the subject of much debate.

Research
According to research carried out by McKinsey & Co, its Global Management Matters survey, a direct correlation can be made between management practice and productivity and return on capital employed.

Further research presented by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills highlighted the connection between strong management and leadership skills and increased productivity and vice-versa.

A lack of growth in productivity is experienced in all sectors across the UK with the most recent government figures, produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), showing levels over the first three months of this year fell to their lowest point since 2007.

The drop of 0.5% in hourly output followed a full year of quarterly growth in productivity but since the financial crisis, levels have generally plateaued.

And although growth has slowed in almost every major economy across the globe, rates in the UK lag behind many of its main trade partners such as Germany and the United States.

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And although growth has slowed in almost every major economy across the globe, rates in the UK lag behind many of its main trade partners such as Germany and the United States.

Managing our productivity crisis
by Kirsty McManus, IoD Northern Ireland

When we consider current challenges facing businesses, discussion tends to focus on Brexit, and understandably so.

However, while the impending exit from the European Union presents, for many, the most pressing contemporary issue for industry, there is another which has been an persistent problem for more than a decade – productivity.

It is a major issue because without increased productivity, economic growth will remain sluggish, government will find it harder to reduce the deficit meaning less manoeuvrability on taxes and spending, therefore leaving little chance of an improvement of living standards.

The factors contributing to low productivity growth vary and have been the subject of much debate.

Research
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Laughter, liveliness and learning

Laughter, liveliness and learning was the order of the day for the Young Directors Conference on 6th October.

130 young directors and business leaders attended the ‘Grow How’ themed conference at Riddel Hall for an afternoon filled with great speakers and masterclasses, a panel discussion with industry experts and the opportunity to meet fellow young directors from a variety of industries.

We are very grateful to our sponsors Barclays Bank and MCS Group for supporting the conference.

We were delighted to welcome award winning BBC reporter Mark Simpson as our host for the day. Mark quickly set the scene for a fun, informal afternoon of learning and had all the audience involved in a game of ‘Heads and Tails’.

There was more audience participation in store as our legendary keynote, David Meade got everyone’s attention in his own impeccable style. The main focus of David’s session was the art of persuasion – how to get that elusive yes and the session was filled with useful tips and learning which we can easily apply in our working lives.

In keeping with the theme ‘Grow How’ a selection of industry leaders gave an insight of their experience in growing your business and growing yourself.

We heard from Alan Metcalfe from Red Bull who shared his experiences in growing a business brand and also shared his own personal business journey. Our youngest Chartered director, Robert McConnell from CCP Gransden spoke about the importance of developing yourself, setting goals and having a plan to work towards those goals. Barry Smyth, MD of MCS Group recounted the challenges of starting a business as the recession hit and gave some useful tips on how to grow your personal brand in a challenging environment.

There were also 3 masterclasses on offer:
- Sell Well by David Meade
- Scaling your business by Garath Hagan, OCO Global
- Keep Growing by Heather Dalzell and Alan Davison Brand Etiquette

The evening finished off with entertainment from the fabulous Belfast Ukulele Jam.

Action for Children Byte Night

The day hadn’t quite ended for IoD staff Kirsty and Julie-Anne who headed to the Stormont Pavilion to join 150 others participating in Action for Children’s Byte Night. Earlier in the day, conference delegates supported a prize draw, raising almost £700 for the charity which was a great boost to Kirsty and Julie-Anne as they started their sleepout.

Byte Night is Action for Children’s biggest annual fundraiser, a national ‘sleep-out’ event. Each year, hundreds of people from the technology and business worlds give up their beds for one night to help change the lives of vulnerable young people. It all began in 1998 and has since raised over £9.6 million.
Phion is Invent winner

The overall winner of Invent 2017, organised by Catalyst Inc and sponsored by Bank of Ireland UK, is Phion Therapeutics developed by Dr Helen McCarthy. Helen was awarded a prize package of £13,000 and one of the sought-after spaces on the NI Tech Mission to California in January 2018.

Phion Therapeutics is the result of 11 years of extensive research involving protein fragments called peptides that could have a significant impact on the pharmaceutical industry and revolutionise how drugs are delivered to parts of the human body.

Helen, from the School of Pharmacy at Queen’s University Belfast, says that “Phion has been able to concentrate various anionic drugs into tumours while preventing delivery to normal or healthy tissue and cells. This is potentially revolutionary for the treatment of cancer.”

Together with David Tabaczynski (an entrepreneur from Boston) and QB85, Helen spun out her drug delivery technology earlier this year.

The Invent competition offers an opportunity for the innovators of Northern Ireland to come forward and be recognised as the next ‘big thing’ to - and this year attracted a record breaking 144 entries across six categories.

Morrow Foods from Newtownards also benefited from the SDA with annual sales increasing by 31%, mostly driven by the introduction of a new line of ready-meals.

The programme also offered participating companies the opportunity to explore export potential for their branded ranges with the longer-term goal of being stocked in Asda’s GB stores.

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James Leckey named Innovation Founder

At the Invent awards, James Leckey was announced as the 8th Innovation Founder to be recognised by Connect at Catalyst Inc.

James is the Founder and CEO of globally recognised Leckey Design. As an Innovation Founder, he joins an esteemed list of previous recipients - Martin Naughton KBE, Brian Conlon, Dr William Wright CBE, Dr Peter FitzGerald CBE, Tom Eakin, Dr Hugh Cormican and Prof John Anderson.

Established in 1983, the pioneering Lisburn based company positively changes the lives of thousands of adults and children living with disabilities through its research, design and development of posture-supportive products.

£8m legacy of Food & Drink

Eleven local food and drink companies have benefited from a combined £8 million sales boost after participating in a bespoke training and development programme led by Asda.

The Supplier Development Academy (SDA), which is backed by Invest Northern Ireland, was the cornerstone of Asda’s commitment to NI Year of Food & Drink (2016).

Capacity building and business growth potential were the main goals of the SDA with each supplier offered the chance to enhance trading skills and maximise sales opportunities. Delivered over a 12 month period, the initiative involved innovation workshops, supply chain sessions, mentoring and head-office visits.

All participating companies achieved significant growth with sales across the smaller suppliers increasing by over 10% year-on-year. Much of the success was attributed to the introduction of new innovative product lines.

Cavanagh Free Range Eggs from Fermangh was a particular success story, with sales up by over 750% over the last year.

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IoD member Alastair Hamilton CDir, Invest NI Chief Executive, said: “Northern Ireland’s IoD members have access to a wide range of support and services. Make sure you take advantage of them all.

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To benefit fully from the services available to IoD members, you should create your own log in on iod.com if you have not already done so.

By logging in, you will be able to book events (both in NI and across the UK), access member-only fact sheets and policy information, and make requests directly to the Business Information and Advisory Service. You’ll also be able to see a history of your engagement with the Institute, update your contact details and renew your membership.

If you haven’t already logged in, or are having trouble with your log in link, please contact membership@iod.com who will be happy to help. For ease of recognition, please quote your membership number when asking for assistance.

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