



Membership  
magazine of the IoD  
in Northern Ireland

# IoD

# DirectorNI

October / November 2022

**Dame Floella  
Benjamin to  
headline IoD  
Conference**

Page 08

**Meet our  
new members**

Page 12

**IoD NI launches  
Annual search  
for Directors  
of the Year**

Page 03



- 03 IoD NI launches annual search for Directors of the Year
- 05 The reality of apprenticeships is far better than public perception
- 06 IoD NI joins call for industry to help 100,000 young people develop work skills
- 08 Dame Floella Benjamin to headline IoD Women's Leadership Conference
- 10 Northern Ireland Tourism Strategy key to our 10X economic success
- 12 Meet the new IoD NI members
- 17 Corporate social responsibility, reimagined
- 18 How diversity is making its mark on the war for talent in Northern Ireland
- 20 IoD NI member news
- 24 The changing face of the health and safety profession
- 26 Spotlight on IoD NI events
- 29 Start your journey to becoming an IoD Chartered Director
- 30 Why NI's SMEs could benefit from investing in research and development



## Our committee



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Chair, IoD Northern  
Ireland



Bonnie Anley CDir,  
Londonderry Port and  
Harbour



Barry Byrne,  
Mount Charles Group



Catriona Gibson,  
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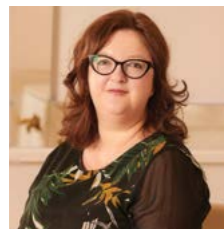
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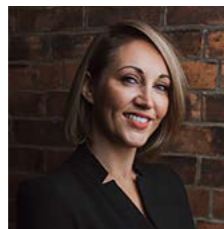
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Henry Brothers



Aodhán Connolly, Director  
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& Head of Office, NI  
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Grainne Walsh,  
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Sarah Orange,  
Artemis Human  
Capital



Natasha Sayee,  
Northern Ireland  
Civil Service



Anne Donaghy OBE  
CDir, Mid and East  
Antrim Borough Council



Claudine Heron,  
W&R Barnett

# IoD NI launches annual search for Directors of the Year

**The Institute of Directors NI has launched its annual Director of the Year Awards which celebrate the achievements and leadership of directors across Northern Ireland.**

The awards which are held in partnership with AIB, recognise exceptional leaders from across twelve categories and are open to directors from all sectors and industries.

Awards will be given for Family Business Director of the Year, Early Stage Business Director of the Year, and Public/Third Sector Director of the Year as well as honouring achievements in Corporate Social Responsibility, Innovation and Inclusivity. A special award for Philanthropy will also be given to an individual who has gone above and beyond to support charitable causes throughout their career.

Previous winners include leaders from many of NI's most reputable and recognisable companies including Moy Park, Spirt AeroSystems, and PwC.

Launching the awards, IoD Northern Ireland Chair, Gordon Milligan, said

it was important to recognise the exceptional talent of directors here.

"The IoD Director of the Year awards in association with AIB are all about profiling the high calibre and talent of our local business leaders and sharing their achievements with a wider audience.

"This has been a challenging period for many businesses and we feel it is important to acknowledge the leadership skills of those who are driving our local economy forward and working hard to maintain the highest standard of corporate governance businesses here are renowned for.

"I'd strongly encourage directors to put themselves forward for the awards and look forward to celebrating with all of our winners at the event."

"Thanks must be paid to all of our sponsors, particularly those at AIB, for supporting us with the awards this year and helping us deliver what promises to be a great event in the local business calendar."

Seamus McGuckin, Head of Business Banking at headline sponsors AIB added: "Given the current challenges businesses are

all facing, it is more important than ever to recognise outstanding leaders across Northern Ireland."

The full list of categories and details on how to submit your entry can be found at <https://directoroftheyear.com>.

**“ Previous winners include leaders from many of NI's most reputable and recognisable companies including Moy Park, Spirt AeroSystems, and PwC. ”**

[awardsplatform.com/](https://awardsplatform.com/) All entries must be received before midnight on 21st October 2022.

The winners will be announced at a lunchtime ceremony in Belfast's Merchant Hotel on 9th December.



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## Disclaimer:

Articles are published in Director NI as a contribution to discussions about business issues. They represent the personal views of their authors and do not necessarily reflect the Institute of Directors' policy.

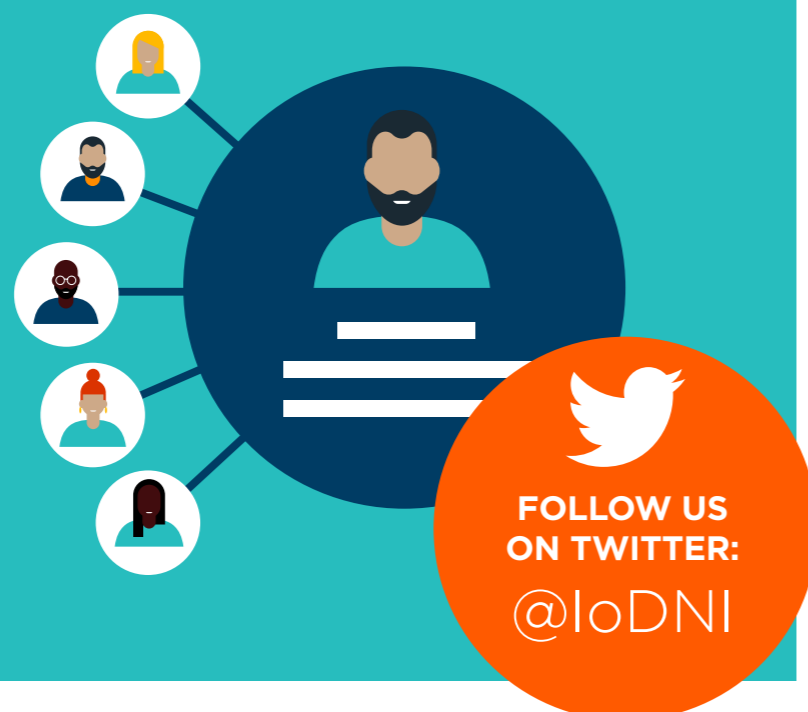


## Marketing your brand and products to IoD members

Director NI magazine reaches many of Northern Ireland's most influential business leaders.

A bi-monthly magazine, it is circulated to 1,000 local members of the Institute of Directors (IoD), and offers regular insights into current business and governance.

To advertise in Director NI magazine and to find out more about advertorials, sponsored features and other commercial opportunities, please email [Chelsea.Brennan@iod.com](mailto:Chelsea.Brennan@iod.com)



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## The reality of apprenticeships is **far better than public perception**



Richard Kirk, CEO,  
Workplus

**P**erception is powerful. So powerful, in fact, that it can sometimes overshadow reality.

A few years ago, Professor Bobby Duffy wrote a widely lauded book entitled *The Perils of Perception: Why We're Wrong About Nearly Everything*. It's a book that tries to close the gap between perception and reality. I've always liked the title.

Recent research and subsequent news have pointed to the marked gap between perception and reality when it comes to apprenticeships.

Research into perceptions of Level 4 and 5 qualifications in Northern Ireland, commissioned by the Department for the Economy (DfE), revealed that there is still a "societal stigma" stopping some young people taking vocational qualifications - including apprenticeships - instead of a full-time university degree.

### Lived experience challenging the stigma

Apprentices are living proof that there is an excellent alternative to full-time education. We are speaking to apprentices on a regular basis who are thriving and being enriched by the blend of working and continued learning. In fact, one of our current IT degree apprentices said: "I get to go out and live that university life without having to live the bad aspects of it... It's a better alternative to a full-time university degree." On the employer side, the story is

also positive. For them, these positive experiences are being translated into strong retention rates, eager-to-learn employees and companies being enriched through having apprentices to mould and mentor.

**“ Apprentices are living proof that there is an excellent alternative to full-time education. ”**

### 'Gathered together, that all may thrive'

I was heading to a meeting in Bristol and this slogan caught my eye: *Gathered Together that all may thrive*. It's the slogan for Bristol Cathedral Choir School and it very much resonated with me. It captures the culture of Workplus - the knowledge sharing, mentor training, addressing the challenges and realising of opportunities associated with apprenticeships. It's a deeply collaborative approach and the best way to grow the apprenticeship culture and narrow the gap between perception and reality.

### Eroding the stigma

Changing perception can only happen through challenging it with the reality. It's also achieved by growing the apprenticeship culture through deep and sustained

collaboration - 'gathering together'. At Workplus, collaboration is in our DNA with over 60 employers in our network. We exist to make it easier for employers to find apprentices through a dedicated platform and coordinated approach.

We are working hard to grow and change the culture of apprenticeships. We know there remains a stigma but that is gradually being eroded as more apprentices share their success stories and an increasing number of employers catch the vision for growing talent through alternative pathways.

For us, this research spurs us on to continue to address the challenges and promote the benefits of apprenticeships to young people, parents, schools and employers.

### Upcoming campaign

Workplus is currently working with over 60 employers across the sectors in Northern Ireland, from large multi-nationals to fast-growing SMEs. The next Workplus campaign launches in January 2023. Employers interested in joining the Workplus network can get in touch with Richard via [workplus.app](http://workplus.app) or through LinkedIn.



# IoD NI joins call for industry to help 100,000 young people develop work skills

**It's back to school time and after two years of disruption, Young Enterprise is planning a full return to the classroom, with the business community aiming to engage 100,000 young people.**

Business leaders from Institute of Directors, Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce, CBI, Women in Business, Social Enterprise NI and Enterprise Northern Ireland, have joined forces with the charity to call on companies across Northern Ireland to support young people in developing employability skills for work.

Chief Executive of Young Enterprise, Carol Fitzsimons MBE explains:

"Over the last two years we have developed innovative online learning solutions, but we have been restricted in getting business volunteers into the classroom.

"This generation has had its education disrupted, particularly in terms of skills development, and we are hearing from employers that many young people have anxieties about entering the workforce as a result.

"We need business supporters and volunteers to help us address this emerging issue by bringing the reality of the skills

needed for work in the modern economy into the classroom.

"We know the experience of hearing directly from people in the world of work is highly valued, so we're excited to welcome business volunteers back as part of our programmes. Our aim is to engage with 100,000 young people this year, and that is only possible with support from business community."

The charity is echoing the Department for the Economy's 10X skills strategy and skills barometer in emphasising the need for the entrepreneurial skills, such as innovation and creative thinking.

Representatives from business organisations have come together to support the call for businesses to get into back into school in the new term.

Gordon Milligan, Chairman of Institute of Directors in Northern Ireland said:

"I am delighted to support Young Enterprise as they re-invigorate the business community in getting back to supporting our young people in employability and business skills. It is never too early to encourage and stimulate bright young minds into the world of work.

"We cannot underestimate the value of face-to-face interactions and conversations. I will be encouraging our IoD members to be generous with their time, skills and experience to ensure we build strong foundations for young people who are the next generation of business leaders."

**"Companies should be honest about where they are on their diversity and inclusion journey"**

Angela McGowan, CBI Northern Ireland Director said:

"Connecting with business makes a real and significant difference to young people's life chances, and it's something every firm can do. On all counts, it's time to step up."

Colin Jess, Director of Social Enterprise NI commented:

"Now more than ever it is so important that young people have the opportunity to learn new skills and to develop these across as many disciplines as possible to enable them to be successful in the workplace."

Lorraine Acheson, Managing Director of Women in Business NI added:

"I'm delighted that the business community will be returning to face-to-face interactions with schools and recognise the positive impact of this method of delivery."

Michael McQuillan, Chief Executive of Enterprise NI commented:

"It is essential if we are to achieve our 10x ambition that we have an increased pipeline of young people ready and encouraged to embrace an entrepreneurial future."

Christopher Morrow, Head of Communications and Engagement at Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and Industry concluded:

"Developing entrepreneurial and business skills early is really important. In Northern Ireland, there is a particular need to promote STEM skills among school-age children, which will encourage them to consider future study and careers in these high-growth areas."

*To get involved, contact Jan Donaldson on 028 9026 7103 email [jan.donaldson@yeni.co.uk](mailto:jan.donaldson@yeni.co.uk) or visit [yeni.co.uk/business-backer](http://yeni.co.uk/business-backer)*

Carol Fitzsimons, Young Enterprise and Gordon Milligan, IoDNI with pupils from, St Joseph's Primary School, Carryduff, Down High School, Downpatrick, Bangor Integrated Primary School and Laurelhill Community College, Lisburn.



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## WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

🕒 10 MARCH 2023  
📍 CROWNE PLAZA, BELFAST



# Dame Floella Benjamin

to headline IoD Conference

**T**he Institute of Directors (IoD) has announced that former children's TV presenter and social activist, Baroness Floella Benjamin DBE, is to headline the 2023 Women's Leadership Conference.

Taking place in the Crowne Plaza Hotel on Friday 10th March 2023, this will be the first return to a physical conference since 2020.

Around 500 delegates are expected to attend the full-day conference, which is delivered in partnership with international law firm, Herbert Smith Freehills.

Host, Susan Hayes Culleton, will oversee proceedings once again,

bringing her unique style of presenting and sense of fun to the event, which has been a firm fixture in the calendar of local business leaders for 14 years.

Baroness Floella Benjamin shot to fame many years ago as the host of popular children's television programme, Playschool. Since then, she has had many successful roles both as an actor and a singer, but it is through her activism and work on social justice issues that has gained her the most recognition.

Her long list of accolades include becoming the first female Chancellor of colour at a UK university and one of the first female actors to be admitted to the House of Lords. Earlier this year she chaired the



Windrush Committee, unveiling a statue in London to honour those who had been wrongly deported from the UK in the 1960s. Throughout each of her roles, Dame Floella has demonstrated exceptional leadership skills, something IoD National Director in Northern Ireland, Kirsty McManus thinks will inspire those attending the conference next year.

"Each year we invite inspirational women to speak at our leadership conference so it's a huge honour

to be able to bring Dame Floella to Belfast. Her story is a truly remarkable one and I'm especially looking forward to hearing her thoughts about maintaining good leadership, particularly in the face of adversity.

"It's wonderful that we are able to return to a face-to-face event for the first time since 2020 and I'm grateful to all of our sponsors, particularly the team at Herbert Smith Freehills and our media partner, The Irish News, for supporting us to deliver the event once again.

"With more high-profile speakers being announced in due course, I would encourage anyone interested to secure their conference tickets as early as possible and join us for what promises to be an unmissable event for local business leaders."

Lisa McLaughlin, Partner at Herbert Smith Freehills Belfast, said that her organisation was pleased to team up with the IoD once again to support the conference.

"As an organisation, we are passionate about growing and developing our female leaders

and so partnering with the IoD to deliver this event very much reflects our company ethos.

"It is so important to recognise the contribution female leaders have made to society. We are proud to work with the IoD to continue to provide a platform to elevate these changemakers and innovators and inspire the next generation of leaders to make their own mark on public life."

As well as Dame Floella Benjamin, Gráinne McNamara, Managing Director at Accenture has also been confirmed as a speaker. Based in New York, the Donegal native has over 25 years of experience in the financial services industry and using technology to drive positive change for large corporations.

Other sponsors of the event include NIE Networks, KPMG, Danske Bank, The Open University, Civica, SONI, The Irish News and Translink.

To secure a spot at the conference and to keep up to date with the full list of speakers as they are announced, visit [www.io.com/ni](http://www.io.com/ni) or follow the IoD's social media channels.



**"It is so important to recognise the contribution female leaders have made to society. We are proud to work with the IoD to continue to provide a platform to elevate these changemakers and innovators and inspire the next generation of leaders to make their own mark on public life."**

Gráinne McNamara, Managing Director  
- Technology Stream, Accenture



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# Northern Ireland Tourism Strategy key to our 10X economic success

**E**conomy Minister, Gordon Lyons MLA has announced that work will recommence to develop a strategy that will lead the tourism industry through the next decade, ensuring the Northern Ireland brand stands out in local markets.

In 2019, the £1 billion tourism industry employed approximately 71,000 people throughout Northern Ireland. The development of a tourism strategy, which had been paused as a result of the pandemic, will help bring a return to pre-pandemic heights and also ensure the local tourism industry can meet the challenges of being more sustainable, inclusive and innovative.

Minister Lyons said:

"Tourism is a key element of our desire to develop Northern Ireland as one of the small elite economies of the world. The creation of a specific and unique tourism environment will be central to promoting Northern Ireland's reputation and attractiveness globally. The strategy is important to the 10X Economic Vision, enabling tourism to fulfil its

important role in the innovation and transformation agenda for our local economy.

"Over the past decade, substantial investment in authentic visitor experiences, and world-class attractions and events, has enabled Northern Ireland to present itself to global audiences as a stunning destination, with a unique landscape and a uniquely warm welcome for both its business and leisure visitors.

**"The creation of a specific and unique tourism environment will be central to promoting Northern Ireland's reputation and attractiveness globally.."**

"My officials, working closely with Tourism NI, will be engaging over the coming months with key stakeholders on developing

a regenerative Northern Ireland Tourism Strategy to promote and develop tourism after what has been, and continues to be, a challenging time for the sector. The new strategy will have a global focus and cover the period up to 2030, setting out the principles, vision and key aims necessary to drive growth in this important sector."

Welcoming Minister Lyons' statement, Chair of Tourism NI, Ellvena Graham said:

"I very much welcome this announcement by Minister Lyons. The tourism industry has come through a very difficult period as a result of the pandemic and although we currently face a very different set of challenges, I remain confident that we can return to the growth we experienced over the past decade.

"This announcement paves the way for a new regenerative strategy that will set out a clear pathway for sustainable growth until 2030 for all of us involved in the tourism industry. Tourism NI is looking forward to working with our colleagues in DfE in the development and delivery of this new strategy."

Department for the  
**Economy**



# Mobility boost for NI Children's Hospice

**T**he NI Children's Hospice has been given a boost for specialist mobility equipment, with the recent granting of funds from the Energy for Children Charitable Trust.

The Northern Ireland Children's Hospice, based at Horizon House, provides specialist care for children with life-threatening and life-limiting conditions, supporting over 300 children and their wider families each year. The Hospice takes a holistic approach to the care it provides, going beyond meeting clinical and medical needs to include wider social, psychological and spiritual care for children and their families.

With the support of the Energy for Children Charitable Trust, the NI Children's Hospice has been able to purchase a new specialist trike and walker that can be used to help children at the Hospice with their physiotherapy needs, while also giving them greater independence and freedom to explore the Hospice with their family.

Detailing the benefits of the new equipment for children coming to the Hospice, Suzanne Gordon, Physiotherapist at Children's Hospice, explains: "Learning to ride a bike is one of the most memorable milestones of childhood, giving

children an amazing sense of independence and achievement. With the specialist trike we can help give the children here that same sense of independence and achievement, providing new experiences while providing physical benefits such as improved hand and eye co-ordination, spatial awareness and lower limb mobility.

"The specialist walker is also of significant benefit as it assists children who struggle to walk, helping them build their strength and confidence in a safe way and ensures that children who have access to this type of therapy at home don't miss out when they need to stay with us at the Hospice.

"We are so grateful to the Energy for Children Charitable Trust for their support to fund these two important pieces of specialist equipment, which will bring so much joy to many children that come to Horizon House each year."

Charity Liaison Officer, Gillian Orr said: "NI Children's Hospice provides such important care and support to families in the most difficult of circumstances and we are delighted to help play a small part

in ensuring it can provide the best possible experiences for the children and families that it supports.

"Making a positive difference and helping local children in need is exactly why the Energy for Children Charitable Trust exists. We are pleased to help provide facilities and equipment to make things better for the families and organisations that are working to improve young lives," added Gillian.

Energy for Children is an initiative of Phoenix Natural Gas and the wider natural gas industry. The charity was established in 2005 to provide financial support to groups and individuals that may slip through the net of the wider charity network.

Founded on the principle that 'all monies raised go directly to local children and young people', the Trust aims to reach deeper into the heart of local communities throughout Greater Belfast and beyond in order to really make a difference to disadvantaged children's lives.

Since its formation, the trust has helped over 8,000 local children and continues to help those who need it most.

For more information on the Energy for Children Charitable Trust, visit [www.phoenixnaturalgas.com/about-us/phoenix-group/corporate-responsibility](http://www.phoenixnaturalgas.com/about-us/phoenix-group/corporate-responsibility)





# Our members

**A**s a member of the UK's leading business network, our members have access to a wide range of support and services.

In every edition we introduce you to some of our members through these profiles and encourage you to network and join in with our IoD Northern Ireland Community.

To have your profile featured contact: [chelsea.brennan@iod.com](mailto:chelsea.brennan@iod.com)

## MEMBER PROFILE

### Celine McAnenly Profit Partners

Celine is a pragmatic and influential business leader, turnaround expert and finance director, with a successful background in achieving sustainable growth and cost reductions.

She is experienced in transforming and enhancing operations across global manufacturers and indigenous companies within various industries, including construction, food and engineering.

Through the implementation of process improvements, Celine has achieved remarkable successes in driving efficiency and has turned around struggling organisations to become profitable entities.



With a proven track record in building brands and advancing customer service delivery, Celine combines exceptional managerial strengths with a commitment to impacting and achieving business objectives.

## MEMBER PROFILE

### George Higginson Bank of Ireland

George joined Bank of Ireland UK in October 2019 as Interim UK Mortgages Director then went on to be Managing Director for Home Buying & Ownership.

George has 30 years' broad financial services experience, with particular expertise in the UK Mortgage and Wealth markets - where he has held roles at both Board and CEO level and latterly within the banking sector.

Recognised as being at the forefront of change in financial services from both a commercial and regulation perspective, George was also CEO of Alpha Beta Partners.

Prior to that George held a senior management role as CEO of Sesame Bankhall Group and was a founding director of Intrinsic Financial Services.

George's early career was spent with Zurich Financial Services where he was Chief Operating Officer of the Zurich Advice Network.



## MEMBER PROFILE

### Kyle Best Best Property Services

Kyle is one of three executive directors at Best Property Services, a fifth-generation family run estate agency based in Newry, Northern Ireland with additional offices in Dungannon and Warrenpoint. Best Property Services has a long history as the market leader in residential, land and commercial sales in the surrounding areas.

Kyle was educated at the Royal School Armagh and holds a degree

from Heriot Watt University, Edinburgh in Business Management and Law and has previously been working within both the London and Dublin property markets since 2012 covering a range of property sectors such as New Homes, Residential Sales within the prime London market and Property Investment working with both institutional property investors and individuals.

Kyle moved back home in 2021 and into the family business taking up a director role. Day to day, Kyle is heavily involved in the residential side of the business along with playing a part in the overall operation of the company.



Kyle lives in neighbouring Warrenpoint with his wife Jo. Outside of work, Kyle is a big sports fan, mainly rugby and can often be found playing for the local club Newry RFC or supporting Ulster and Ireland.

## MEMBER PROFILE

### Ruth Kimbley Strategic Power Projects

Ruth is a qualified Communications practitioner with almost 20 years' experience in industries including, travel and aviation, automotive, pharmaceutical and FMCG. Her initial years were spent in London with global consumer goods organisation Unilever where she worked in Corporate Relations.

Formerly Head of Communications for a Northern Ireland airport, she oversaw external and internal communications strategies, often relating to large planning applications that required a significant amount of stakeholder engagement and

community consultation. She initiated the airport's digital content strategy and informed the strategic direction of the communications crisis plan. Here she implemented many creative marketing strategies that led to her Young Marketer of the Year Award, awarded by the Chartered Institute of Marketing.

In more recent years, Ruth was an Account Director at a leading Northern Ireland Public Relations agency, where she successfully advised public and private sector clients on communications projects of all sizes throughout Northern Ireland.

Currently, as Communications Director for Strategic Power Projects, Ruth has the opportunity to exercise both her passion for communications and climate change. Here she



has been the brand development lead behind the renewable energy company and has led marketing and communications campaigns that would raise awareness of energy security, net zero and ESG targets in an increasingly volatile energy market.



MEMBER PROFILE

## Sinead Shackley

Liberty IT

Sinead is the Director of Evolve in Liberty IT, where she is responsible for the identification and scaling of strategic capabilities across the organisation. In her role, she is a strategic partner to the Liberty IT Senior Executive team, working to maximise capabilities and help the company differentiate.

Sinead joined Liberty IT 15 years ago and has held a variety of positions across all the Strategic Business Units.

Sinead is the co-Executive Sponsor of the Liberty IT STEM Committee and is committed to a future where the young people in NI are educated in technology and recognise the local and impactful opportunities and benefits of working in this sector.

Outside of Liberty IT, Sinead likes being active outdoors with her husband and young son. She also plays softball for a team in Belfast.



MEMBER PROFILE

## Stephen Potter

Praxis Care

Stephen is a qualified social worker and social work practice teacher and has worked in the in the Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland charitable/voluntary sector for 20 years. Having completed post-graduate studies in Applied Social Studies for Strategy and Leadership, he gained an MA in Philosophy and is working on achieving CIPD accreditation.

Stephen has worked in Ireland Regional Management for The Salvation Army and more recently, he was Head of Operations for Praxis Care. With experience of managing homelessness services as well as adult, family and children's services, Stephen currently has responsibility for dementia services, learning disability services and residential and community mental health services.

An advocate of authentic and servant leadership models, he's committed to cultivating compassionate and psychologically safe workplaces.



MEMBER PROFILE

## William Deane

Action Renewables

As Head of Projects, William supports the delivery of renewable energy projects in the private and public sectors across electricity, transport and heat.

He also delivers the company's flagship charitable project, the Action Renewables Solar PV Support Programme. William has been an Executive Director and company Secretary for Action Renewables Energy Trading limited since 2019.

He has worked with Action Renewables for eight years and prior to that, spent five years working within the energy sector with a prominent electricity supplier.

William represents Action Renewables at various stakeholder events and currently sits on the Energy Institute Committee, Northern Ireland branch and the SONI Grid Code Review Panel.

MEMBER PROFILE

## Anthony Kieran

Aurient Ltd

After graduating with an honours degree in Computer Science from Liverpool JM University in 1993, Anthony emigrated to the USA where he worked for seven years, five of which were spent as a senior programmer in NASA HQ (Washington DC).

In 1999, he took two years out to travel the world with a backpack, visiting twenty countries before returning to NI in 2001.

Since returning home, he has co-founded a number of Internet based businesses in Ireland/Scotland, along with his business partner Cecil Hetherington.

These businesses include Used Cars NI Ltd, Car Finder Scotland Ltd, Media Lightbox Ltd and Aurient Investments Ltd.

The past four years have seen him heavily involved in the investment company, Aurient Ltd. The investments include pitchbooking.com, ripley.chat and a huge restoration project of two Georgian buildings in the Queen's Quarter of Belfast. The Regency has been transformed into five luxury



apartments with a 5 star grading, and he is currently expanding that offering with the renovation of three further buildings on Upper Crescent.

# IoD NI member benefits



### Events programme:

We continue to run a hybrid programme of virtual and face to face events.

More info on our programme can be found at [www.iod.com/events/](http://www.iod.com/events/)

### Ongoing consultation with Government:

We work closely with Government to share the views of our members and encourage necessary support for the economy.

Guided by evidence submitted by the IoD community, measures including tax breaks, grants, wage support and insolvency protection have been introduced.

### Non-executive roles:

Did you know that IoD membership gives you access to the latest non-executive director-level jobs from publicly listed, investor-backed, private and family companies, start-ups and charities?

In association with Nurole we're helping IoD members to find their next board-level role or their next board-level hire.

### DirectorNI magazine:

Interested in sharing member news or providing a thought leadership article for our local directorNI magazine? Please email [chelsea.brennan@iod.com](mailto:chelsea.brennan@iod.com)

### LinkedIn group:

Please join the members only LinkedIn group. Contact [aoife.mccreesh@iod.com](mailto:aoife.mccreesh@iod.com) for more details.

### Pall Mall and IoD premises:

Our iconic building at 116 Pall Mall is open to members and has a wide range of options for client meetings, entertaining and co-working.

We also have local member hubs for use by members including Ulster Museum and Mallusk Enterprise Park.

### Professional Development:

We have a varied suite of training programmes, designed and delivered by directors to support our members in becoming highly skilled and informed directors.

There is a recognised pathway to help you achieve Chartered Director status. Alternatively you can attend individual modules that are most relevant to your director development requirements.

Get in touch with [heather.white@iod.com](mailto:heather.white@iod.com) for more information.



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# Lockview Business Solutions reaches gold tier as a Hubspot Solutions Partner



Adrian McCourt,  
Managing Director,  
Lockview Business  
Solutions

**L**ockview Business Solutions has announced that it has reached the gold tier of HubSpot's Solutions Partner Program.

HubSpot, a leading CRM platform for scaling companies, works hand-in-hand with partner experts to grow their businesses through inbound software, services, and support.

The Solutions Partner Program is an ecosystem of experts that offer marketing, sales, customer service, web design, CRM, and IT services. It's a global community that believes putting customers first is the key to growth and enables its members to offer a wide breadth of more sophisticated solutions across the entire customer experience.

Over the past year, Lockview Business Solutions has assisted their clients grow by reviewing their current sales and marketing processes and implementing HubSpot to attract more visitors, convert more leads and close more sales.

Lockview Business Solutions has grown its business by incorporating strategies to attract, engage and delight customers.

Adrian McCourt, Managing Director of Lockview Business Solutions, said:

"This relationship gives us additional support from a global business that allows our clients to grow better. I am proud of achieving gold tier status with HubSpot and being a certified partner assists with our mission to deliver value in our clients' businesses.

"Over the past 12 months, we've helped business in Ireland to attract visitors, convert more leads and close and retain more customers. HubSpot equips companies to better manage marketing, sales, service and operations efforts. We have assisted with the product adoption in these businesses locally."



## About Lockview Business Solutions:

Lockview Business Solutions works closely with business owners and leaders to challenge and define their goals for the coming years and help deliver a strategy to achieve their vision.

It acts as a business bounce board to sound out, challenge and share ideas that deliver success through three main pillars of sales improvement, cost reduction and contract negotiation.

By reviewing the businesses current processes, analysing data and working with the existing teams, the business and management consultants are the conduit to deliver on business growth, profitability and potentially work towards a succession plan or an exit strategy.

Are you planning to grow your business, sell your business or buy another business? Or maybe you can't see the wood for the trees and need someone independent and impartial to help you navigate problems with fresh eyes.

If so, it's time to talk.  
[www.lockview.co.uk](http://www.lockview.co.uk)

# Corporate social responsibility, reimagined



Lynne Rainey,  
Forensics Partner,  
Place & Purpose  
leader for Northern  
Ireland, PwC UK

**F**or many years, PwC approached Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) on a well-trodden path. First we'd create a shortlist of charities, then give everyone the chance to vote for the charity partner and then fund-raise.

But in 2018, after an amazing year where the firm raised £100,000 for a local charity, they paused and started to reflect on whether they could be more impactful than simply donating money. Could they shift their efforts to support an issue that was really impacting society, aligned to its purpose: "to build trust in society and solve important problems"?

Northern Ireland has had a very long and difficult history of suicide: it's often reported that more people here have died as a result of suicide than as a result of the Troubles. There are dozens of individual suicide-prevention charities trying to support communities throughout the region. PwC, through its experience of convening groups and finding new approaches, felt that it could make a difference through collaboration. It launched a competition asking suicide charities to submit long term, multi-year project concepts that addressed gaps in the provision of mental health and suicide prevention/awareness.

With a focus on hands-on support and intervention, the winning organisation would receive funding via PwC's CSR fundraising activity and payroll giving scheme. And so the Into Tomorrow programme

with Leigh Carey and The Hummingbird Project began.

## What is Into Tomorrow?

The programme provides intense 1-2-1 support to a small number of marginalised young people that have multiple risk factors including homeless, addiction,

**"Real change takes time and patience, and is never a straight line."**

abuse and poverty, who have lost hope in the system, and consider suicide regularly.

From the start, the focus has been on creating an entirely flexible programme, not constrained by how Hummingbird or PwC felt it should work, but one that worked for the individual.

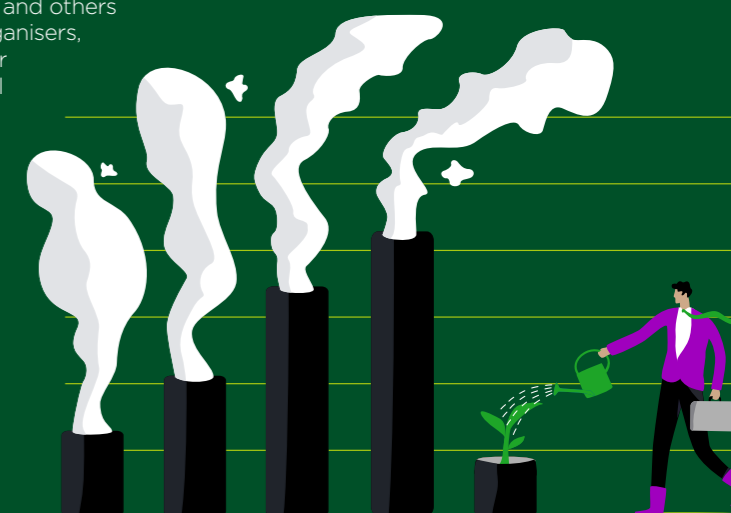
In trying a new approach, we knew we'd need to be adaptive - some things would work and others wouldn't. So as organisers, we empowered our team to have a "fail fast and change direction" mindset.

Running 1-2-1 sessions was a critical evolution early in the project. Hummingbird needed to build trust

and hope with each individual participant, meet their needs and allow them to re-engage with support, socialisation and safety. Building trust took time, in some cases many months, but by showing them we were here for however long it took, they could figure out what worked for them without the fear that the people around them would give up. In many cases this involved the staff at Hummingbird to provide crisis support out of hours, so that they always had someone to support them when things spiralled.

Over four years, there have been many ups and downs as we continue to support these young people through to the next stage in their lives. But the power of seeing change and hope in real time, inspires our staff to engage in innovative ways to support the lives of these young people, and opens up new conversations to break down the stigma of mental health in the workplace.

Real change takes time and patience, and is never a straight line. We continue, because we know there may be two steps forward and one step back, but overall, that's a step in the right direction.



# How diversity is making its mark

## on the war for talent in Northern Ireland



Nuala Murphy,  
Director, Diversity  
Mark NI

**In a candidate's market, can diversity and inclusion be the key to recruiting and retaining the best employees? Independent accreditation charity Diversity Mark believes it is. Here's why.**

In the past, when people in Northern Ireland spoke of diversity and inclusion, they were generally speaking in terms of sectarian division in the work place related to religious belief – and at that, only two religions, Protestant and Catholic. However, society has changed and with it, the business world.

Diversity and inclusion (D&I) extends well beyond religious tolerance to include gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and social inclusion. And with the majority of employees wanting to work for a company or organisation that values diversity, equity and inclusion, businesses need to live those values in order to attract and

retain the best talent. In short, D&I has become a business imperative.

### Why diversity is a business matter

"Diversity and inclusion is no longer just the right thing to do in an equitable workplace, it is a business priority few can afford to ignore," says Nuala Murphy, Director, Diversity Mark, a registered charity that has been offering independent D&I accreditation for businesses since 2017.

Launched by the social enterprise Women in Business after years of grassroots development and backed by a panel of expert individuals across the UK and Ireland, Diversity Mark helps businesses of all sizes on their journey to bronze, silver and gold accreditation.

"Our aim is to get companies to commit to progress, to take a proactive approach to D&I by working their way towards formal accreditation that clearly demonstrates to employees and the market how they are improving," says Murphy.

As it celebrates its 5th birthday this month, Diversity Mark represents

150,000 employees in companies including NI Water, Praxis Care, Northern Ireland's largest registered social care provider and Queen's University to smaller organisation such as Part Three Digital, Kairos Sport and Davidson McDonnell. It has become the leading authority in diversity in the UK and Ireland with its accreditation now a sought after and trusted badge of honour.

The fact that Diversity Mark's signatories doubled last year and looks set to do the same this year, bears testimony to the rising number of businesses that now recognise the value of investing in diversity.

"Above and beyond attracting and retaining talent, it is well documented that having a diverse workforce can unlock greater innovation within a company, driving its performance and success," continued Murphy.

Recent research by McKinsey supports her view, finding that companies in the top quantile for gender diversity on executive teams were 25% more likely to experience above average profitability than their peers.

### Accountability, process and support

So what is the secret of Diversity Mark's success? In a nutshell: accountability, process and support.

"Accreditation is not a tick box exercise just for numbers; it aims to effect real change. It's a journey that needs to be embraced from top to bottom and that must be measured," Murphy explains. "People need to be held accountable, whether that's in performance, decision-making or hires and promotions."

Most importantly, Murphy says, companies need to make a start. She acknowledges that for many businesses finding ways of taking diversity and inclusion from theory to practice can be daunting, especially for those without the time, resources or budget to hire a dedicated D&I manager. But, she says, this is where Diversity Mark can really make a difference meeting each company and organisation where they are and providing resources, advice, information and insights as well as helping establish SMART goals using a tried and tested framework.

"These goals are designed to help businesses make real progress quickly, using small steps that make a big difference," she explains.

**“The frameworks and resources provided by the Diversity Mark team have been invaluable in helping us to set goals, track performance and benchmark against other organisations.”**

### The IT case for success

The IT sector in Northern Ireland offers a remarkable example of the impact commitment to diversity can make. Four of the industry's

principal players, Allstate, Learning Pool, Liberty IT and Outsource have, in the two years since they received Diversity Mark accreditation, jointly increased their female workforce by 27%, and 30% specifically in senior management positions.

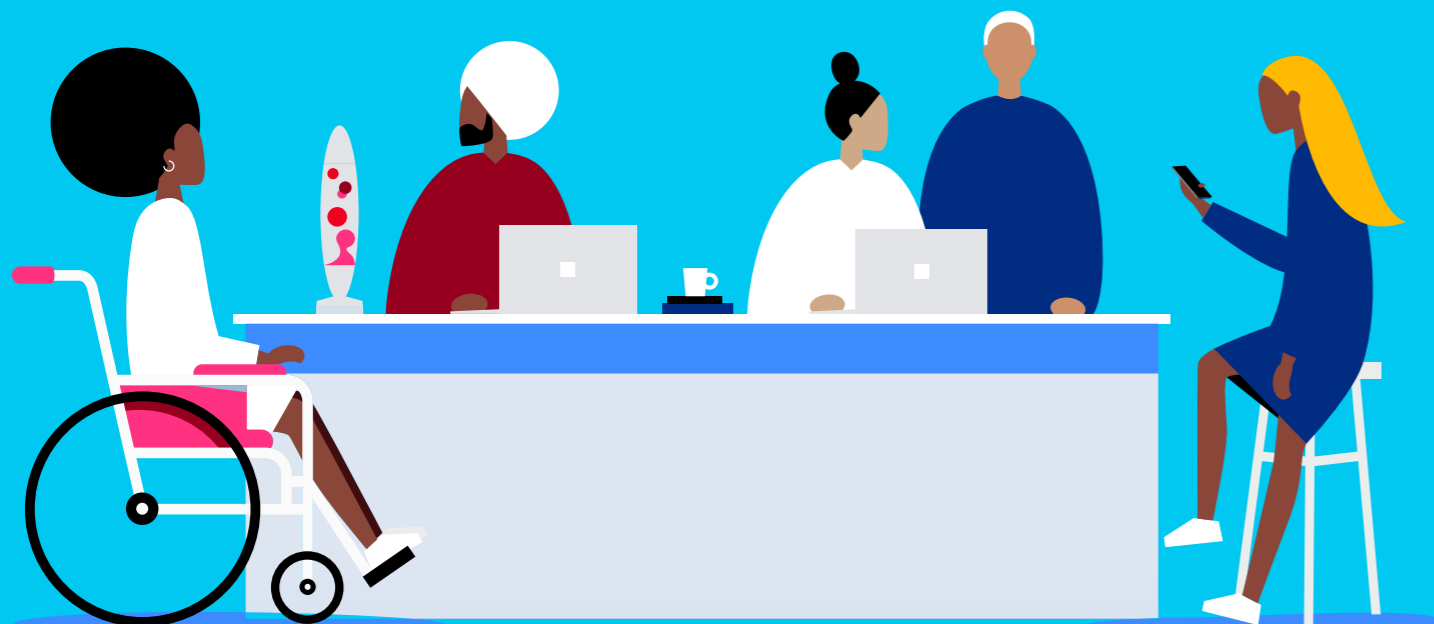
"For any company that genuinely wants to grow or attract the best candidates the Diversity Mark is a fantastic way to show you are a genuinely inclusive and welcoming place to work, where skills and talents from all sections of the workforce are actively encouraged and welcome," says Terry Moore, Founder and CEO of Outsource.

John Healy OBE, Vice President and Managing Director at Allstate NI, agrees, stressing that having processes and accountability systems in place is what has kept the momentum in the business' D&I journey. "The frameworks and resources provided by the Diversity Mark team have been invaluable in helping us to set goals, track performance and benchmark against other organisations," he says.

### “But we are certainly not stopping there”

So far so good, but Murphy is keen to stress that this is just the beginning for her organisation. "Rapid growth has also been seen across professional services, manufacturing and engineering and advertising," she explains. "But we are certainly not stopping there!"

*Diversity Mark will be celebrating their 5th Anniversary on the 5th November and extend an invite to all IoD members - if you would like to join them please email [info@diversity-mark-ni.co.uk](mailto:info@diversity-mark-ni.co.uk)*



# Member news

## easyJet launches first flight to Bristol from Belfast City for the winter

easyJet has launched the first flight on a new winter route from Belfast City to Bristol, providing customers in Northern Ireland with even more convenient domestic connections this winter.

The inaugural flight on the new winter route from Belfast to Bristol is took off on 7th September, with flights operating up to three times a week on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays throughout the winter season until 24 March 2023.

Bristol offers something for every type of traveller, with its year-round festivals, award-winning cycle tracks, Michelin-starred restaurants, inspiring street art, and lively nightlife. The city also offers convenient direct links to the nearby historic city of Bath as well as to Wales and the South West coast.

Flights are available to book on easyJet.com and via the app, with fares starting from just £17.99\*.

Ali Gayward, easyJet's UK Country Manager, said:

"We are delighted to be launching our first flights from Belfast City to Bristol for the winter, providing more choice for business and leisure travellers wishing to connect to one of England's most popular city destinations. We continue to further strengthen our network in Belfast, having recently added services to London Gatwick, Liverpool, and Glasgow from Belfast City which are already proving very popular with our customers.



"As Belfast's largest airline, we remain committed to offering customers a wider range of flight options and great value fares."

Ellie McGimpsey, Aviation Development Manager, said:

"It is great to see flights to Bristol taking off with easyJet, adding another route to our comprehensive network of domestic destinations.

"We are confident that Bristol will prove a popular with business and leisure passengers alike, with the convenient flight times and three-times weekly service giving travellers a hassle-free link to the southwest of England.

"This new route adds to easyJet's portfolio at Belfast City, with services to London Gatwick and Liverpool already operational and flights to Glasgow set to commence in October."

easyJet is the largest airline in Northern Ireland, serving Belfast International and Belfast City airports, offering over 30 routes across the UK and Europe.

*For more information about the new flights or easyJet's network from Belfast visit [www.easyJet.com](http://www.easyJet.com)*

## Strategic Power Connect launched to reduce energy costs and improve ESG reporting

Leading renewable energy developer, Strategic Power Projects, has launched Strategic Power Connect, an extension of their renewable energy provision that will support large C&I energy users within a volatile market.

Strategic Power Connect will design and install onsite renewable energy systems to enable major companies make long term commitments in reaching their sustainability goals while securing energy supplies at a set price through a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA).

PPA contracts make it possible to develop renewable energy installations, giving certainty on energy prices over the medium to long term. There is no capital outlay, Strategic Power Connect will fully finance the design, build, maintenance, and operations of the systems while the customer will benefit from reduced energy costs.

Strategic Power Projects Managing Director, Paul Carson said,

"The launch of Strategic Power Connect comes in response to a huge demand from large energy users to reduce their energy costs while more consciously making their transition to decarbonise their energy outputs. The recent publication



of the REPowerEU document, which sees the Commission proposing to increase the 2030 target for renewables from the current 40% to 45% highlights just how important the requirement is to enhance the range of sources from which power can be generated and used on a local level.

"Strategic Power Projects has been hugely successful over the past few years. Our experienced team has taken a range of renewable energy projects from inception through to fruition. Now we plan to build on that success with the launch of Strategic Power Connect, but more importantly, we want to help our customers become more resilient in an ever-changing market. Our market research and constructive discussions with potential clients has highlighted just how much we can help with that."

Ruth Kimbley, Communications Director for Strategic Power Connect said that reducing cost is only one of the benefits of the launch as ESG reporting becomes more and more important for businesses,

"Energy provenance has never been more important.

The future of any business will demand more empathy to the environment in which it operates and to the people and stakeholders with which it works.

"Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) matters are increasingly becoming part of the business narrative. With a raft of ESG-related disclosure requirements coming into force over the coming years, companies need to assess their readiness in terms of the transition to a low carbon economy and in meeting their sustainability disclosure requirements."

Paul Carson concluded,

Strategic Power Connect solves a lot of problems for businesses – we can help with the reduction of energy costs whilst enabling the sustainable transition. It's refreshing to see that companies welcome the solution, and very much in a vocational sense rather than simply meeting regulatory requirements.

We want to help companies on this journey. Demonstrating an environmental commitment should be seen as an opportunity and not a burden. The prize for the future is too big.



# Visit Belfast vies to ‘change the menu’ to help tackle food poverty in the city

Visit Belfast, the city’s official destination management and marketing organisation, has launched a new tourism initiative aimed at tackling food poverty in Belfast.

The ‘Changing the Menu. For Good’ project, which will run as a pilot into next year, enlists venues, caterers and event organisers to directly raise funds for local food banks. It sets out four headline options – donating the value of a fourth course, giving a proportion of catering costs, rounding up delegate fees or donating directly.

Like elsewhere in the UK and Ireland, demand for food banks is growing in Belfast. The Trussell Trust, which manages 14 food banks across the city, states an increase in their networks of 128% in the last five years. Organisations like this and the independently-run charity, The People’s Kitchen, need more support than ever.

‘Changing the Menu. For Good’ is already supported by founding partners Hastings Hotels, Titanic Belfast, Hospitality Belfast/ Yellow Door, Food NI, Conference Partners International, Crowne Plaza Belfast, Event-ful and Queen’s University Belfast.

Visit Belfast Chief Executive, Gerry Lennon, said:

“Tourism has played a pivotal role in Belfast’s growth, vibrancy and economic wellbeing in recent years. By working collaboratively and creatively, Visit Belfast and our partners and stakeholders have identified targeted ways where the sector can continue to contribute positively to the city’s social wellbeing and help tackle food poverty amid the cost-of-living crisis.

“This important initiative is part of our long-term commitment to deliver more sustainable events and drive regenerative tourism growth that leaves a lasting legacy and has our people and their needs at its heart.”

The People’s Kitchen, Paul McCusker said:

“The vital work of The People’s Kitchen is more important than ever. We’re currently dealing with unprecedented demand, providing over 1,000 meals and 500 food parcels each week. However, there is still so much work to do to reach the most vulnerable in our city.

“As an independent charity, we rely heavily on supporter funding. Initiatives like this are invaluable to ensure we can deliver the immediate support required.

“I’d encourage all businesses and stakeholders holding events in the city to look at how they can get involved. Any level of support will make a difference.”

Chief Executive of Belfast City Council, John Walsh added:

“Our city is facing complex challenges as we recover from Covid, with the cost-of-living crisis impacting upon the most vulnerable in our city. The reliance on food banks for many of our citizens has increased significantly in recent weeks, which is why this initiative from Visit Belfast with support from city partners including Belfast City Council is both timely and a positive step in the right direction.”

Upcoming business events already on board include PHUSE EU Connect (The Global Healthcare Data Science Community), Business Travel Association and The Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance.

It is hoped that as the scheme grows, and more conference and event organisers get involved, local food banks will get the support they require to help those in immediate need.

For more information about Visit Belfast, go to [www.visitbelfastpartners.com](http://www.visitbelfastpartners.com)

# Herbert Smith Freehills expands successful ALT Belfast Trainee Solicitor Programme

Leading global law firm Herbert Smith Freehills is delighted to announce that it is expanding its Alternative Legal Services (ALT) Trainee Solicitor Programme in Belfast by offering positions to external

With a dynamic and growing team in Belfast, ALT is committed to offering opportunities for career progression and development, including a pathway to qualification for those who aspire to become solicitors.

The Belfast office launched training contract opportunities to internal candidates in 2012 and, to date, has supported 33 Belfast-based candidates to qualify as solicitors – enabling them to build on the considerable experience they had already gained within the firm as Legal Analysts.

This year, 10 years on from its inception, ALT is expanding the programme by increasing the overall number of Trainee Solicitor positions available

and welcoming direct applications from external candidates for the first time.

Lisa McLaughlin, Managing Partner for the Belfast office, comments: “We are extremely proud to launch our refreshed ALT Belfast Trainee Solicitor Programme. We welcome candidates who have a desire to be part of a firm that is at the forefront of the future of law – combining cutting-edge technology with expert legal talent. We want to ensure that we continue to recruit candidates with diverse interests and experience, and that we continue to attract top talent to drive the ongoing success of both ALT and the wider firm.”

The ALT Belfast Trainee Solicitor Programme will comprise a rotation of four seats within the Belfast office – enabling trainees to hone their skills across a range of practice areas and develop into well-rounded solicitors. Practice areas offered include Disputes, Corporate, Funds, Finance and Banking, Real Estate and Construction, and Employment. Trainees will also have the opportunity to complete a seat in the firm’s London office if they wish to.

Trainees will complete the Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE) learning programme on a part-time basis during their second, third and fourth seats, and on completion of the programme, will become England and Wales-qualified solicitors.



The programme is open for applications from final year Law students, or those who have already completed their Law degree. Applications to commence the training programme in September 2023 should be submitted between 20 September and 18 October 2022.

Herbert Smith Freehills’ ALT practice originated in Belfast in 2011. It offers expert, technology-led solutions for tackling document and data-intensive legal work as a fully-integrated part of HSF. ALT’s pioneering launch was the first of its kind in Belfast – a “near-shore” offering from a major international law firm.

In the intervening decade, and encouraged by early success in Belfast, ALT has grown to become a global business – spanning 10 hubs across the US, UK, South Africa, China and Australia – and is a leader in the global NewLaw market. The practice is proud to be unrivalled in its ranking in all four categories of the Chambers and Partners Alternative Legal Service Providers Guide 2022.

To find out more about the ALT Belfast Trainee Solicitor Programme, please follow this link: <https://careers.herbertsmithfreehills.com/uk/belfast/grads>



# The changing face of the health and safety profession



Ashley Haslett,  
Director, Health  
and Safety  
Consulting

**H**ave you taken the opportunity to 'pause' and reflect on what you as a director and your organisation have learnt from the experience of the pandemic?

Have the lessons been clearly identified and consolidated to ensure that the maximum value is extracted?

Perhaps it related to building resilience and enhancing your organisations business continuity capability. It may be that having developed the ability of working from home, more flexible working can deliver a reduction in cost base while enhancing employee retention. Whatever has been learnt, having competent personnel was central to getting through it.

**“ Whatever has been learnt, having competent personnel was central to getting through it. ”**

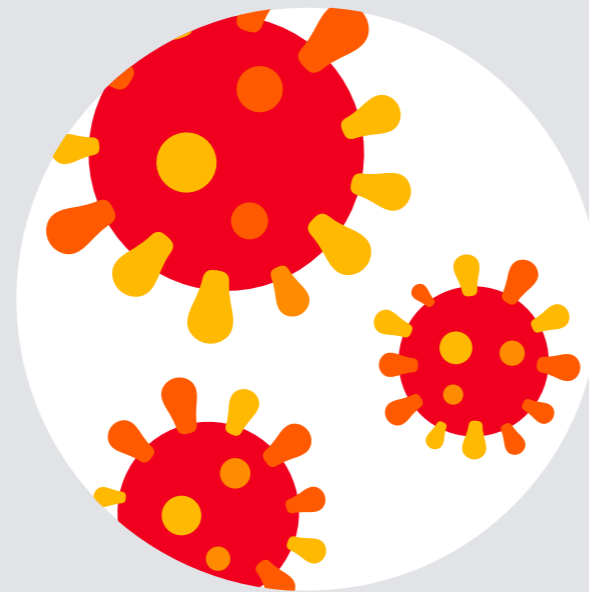
Common to all organisations, it challenged each's health and safety resources to provide pragmatic solutions quickly and effectively to enable them to adapt and continue to function. At the same time, they were required to provide an assurance that the risk was being managed. It required research and planning followed by ongoing communication, then demonstrating that adequate control measures were being implemented and maintained to manage the risk. For many, the

ability of those health and safety personnel will have been previously progressively developed in a structured and systematic manner to ensure that they were competent to perform at the appropriate level at which they are employed. While most will not have experienced a pandemic previously, they will have used their existing competencies in the manner in which they were intended to identify the solutions.

Similar to the Institute of Directors (which provides the Certificate and Diploma in Company Direction with the opportunity to progress to Chartered Director having demonstrated suitable experience), the Institution of Safety and Health has a number of qualification routes and a Competence Framework matched to grade membership.

A new Competence Framework is soon to be launched that will drive greater emphasis and capability in the wider organisational environment such as Strategy, Leadership & Management and Stakeholder Management. Employing health and safety professionals that are trained, assessed and have achieved verification of competence, or who are actively progressing towards those, will deliver real value to the organisations employing them. Matching the appropriate level of competence to the expectation and challenges of the role is therefore essential during recruitment and selection of health and safety personnel.

William Lemon (Chairperson of N. Ireland Branch of IOSH) re-affirmed this stating, "With the drive from professional institutions towards



ongoing competence development, selecting and retaining the appropriate grade of membership adds value to organisations capability."

## Take-aways:

- 1) Competence can be considered as a combination of knowledge (attained through training), skills, experience, attitudes and behaviours to consistently undertake tasks to a specified standard.
- 2) Employing personnel that have been independently assessed in the subject matter will assist with the legal requirement to appoint 'Competent Persons' [Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (N. Ireland) 2000]
- 3) Recruiting and employing health and safety personnel that have been assessed against competence standards such as Chartered Members of IOSH will deliver real value.

# The reluctant leader



Alan Branagh,  
Founder & Chair,  
The Alchemists  
Forum

**It's a goal for many people to be "The Boss" but not everyone who finds themselves in a leadership position has chosen to be there or is ready for the challenges. It can feel isolated and uncomfortable, even scary on occasions, especially when you feel like you've been parachuted into a scenario where you're not as confident or as adequately prepared as you would like to be.**

## How did this happen?

Perhaps you've set up a small enterprise that has grown so rapidly you no longer feel in control and have lost sight of why you started it in the first place, or unexpectedly found yourself at the helm of the family business. Whatever the circumstances, the realities of leading an organisation will be coming at you thick and fast. The important thing to remember is that you are not alone in this - help is out there.

## What can you do?

Look for a peer group network where you'll get emotional support, honest advice from experts who have been in your shoes, accountability without blame or judgement and practical, incisive advice when you need it. You'll still make your own decisions, but with more perspective and the backing of a group of contemporaries rooting for you every step of the way.

Remember - just because you got the "top job" before you were ready, doesn't mean you're not capable of being a great leader, especially if you can harness your passion for the business and remember the "why". As Steve Jobs once said: "If you are working on something exciting that you really care about, you don't have to be pushed. The vision pulls you."

## How does it work?

Effective peer groups and one-to-one coaches and mentors are helping many "reluctant leaders" find their

**“ The important thing to remember is that you are not alone in this - help is out there. ”**

identity and mojo, personally and professionally by learning how to balance and grow themselves and their organisations.

Knowledge and confidence are built through ongoing open and frank discussions on:

- What are the priority issues you need to address personally and in your business?
- How does your team's expectations of you as a leader align with what you can deliver?
- If there are gaps, how can these be bridged?
- What competencies do you lack personally and in your business?
- Can you secure these externally and how?
- What steps can you take to protect your current business and prepare for managed growth?
- Who raises your awareness and holds you accountable?
- Who are you as a leader and owner of your business?
- How will you transform yourself and your business to be a greater enduring company?

Many business owners and leaders, no matter how seasoned they may be, experience challenges and uncertainty when it comes to the big decisions, so there is no shame in seeking "outside trusted" help

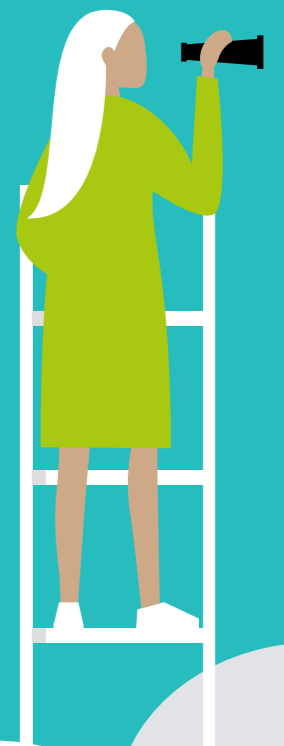
from a "personal board." Success is what drives us at all stages of our journey. Sometimes we just need to be reminded of what that means and how that might look, especially when vision gets clouded with everyday processes.

If you need to define or re-define your vision, your goals, your performance and build on your confidence to take your business to the next level, let the Alchemists Forum help you on your journey of transformation, change and discovery from now and into the future.

As an Alchemists forum member our forever promise to you is :-

You'll never have to face challenges alone as you move forward in a safe and comfortable environment where you will build strong relationships through dialogue, learning and enjoyment that will enable you to thrive and achieve your full potential.

Contact Alan Branagh [alan@alchemistsforum.com](mailto:alan@alchemistsforum.com) for more information.





# Spotlight on events

**IoD NI & Titanic Hotel**  
**Chartered Director (CDir)**  
**Lunch** ^ v >



**IoD NI & Translink**  
**"Behind the Scenes"**  
**Weavers Cross &**  
**Regeneration Projects**  
**Site Visit** ^

**IoD NI & Investec:**  
**Market Update**  
**Breakfast** > v





# Start your journey to becoming an IoD Chartered Director

**Option 1**  
**Modular Approach to IoD Certificate in Company Direction**

12-13 Sept  
The Merchant Hotel, Belfast  
**Award in Role of the Director and the Board**  
2 days

17-19 Oct  
The Merchant Hotel, Belfast  
**Award in Finance for non-financial directors**  
3 days

7-9 Nov  
The Merchant Hotel, Belfast  
**Award in Strategy for Directors**  
3 days

29-30 Nov  
The Merchant Hotel, Belfast  
**Award in Leadership for Director**  
2 days

**Option 2**  
**Accelerated IoD Certificate in Company Direction**

Noon on Sunday 14 May – Friday 19 May 2023  
**5 day intensive course covering the following awards at the Culloden Hotel Belfast**

- Award in Role of the Director and the Board
- Award in Finance for Non-Finance Directors
- Award in Strategy for Directors
- Award in Leadership for Directors

If you are interested in starting your journey to becoming an IoD Chartered Director, please get in touch with [heather.white@iod.com](mailto:heather.white@iod.com)

## IoD NI & Artemis Human Capital HR Leaders Private Dinner with Dr Declan Quinn: Wellness in the Workplace <^



# Why NI's SMEs could benefit from investing in Research & Development



Dr Scott King, Co-founder, Pinnacle Growth Group

**N**orthern Ireland's small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are negotiating a difficult and fluid economic landscape.

With a 9.9 per cent inflation rate, increased material and supply chain costs, and increased energy costs, our local businesses are facing real challenges, but all is not lost, the solution could lie in investing more!

For nearly two decades, I have been nurturing business growth for organisations of all sizes, from start-ups to SMEs, to global brands. During this time, I have also founded numerous businesses and know personally how impactful business challenges can be. However, I also know that they can be successfully navigated with the right guidance.

Whilst it's imperative that businesses recognise challenges and tackle them headfirst, I would strongly advise that they also focus on the many positive opportunities that are out there and consider how these might be secured.

Though it may seem counterintuitive right now, with businesses facing various cost increases and supply

delays, I believe that they should consider investing in Research and Development (R&D.)

Why? R&D is the process by which a business works to generate fresh knowledge that can be used to create new technology, products, services, or systems. For many businesses, it isn't a priority but if you aren't innovating, then you're simply stagnating.

Investing in R&D can help your business to grow and maintain a competitive edge by catering to emerging demands in the market. It can also help you attract the best

**“ Since 2018, we have helped clients of all sizes to secure a collective £15m in funding, and we have seen them go on to generate real business wins. ”**

talent and keep your employees engaged and motivated.

Furthermore, it can help you to formulate new products and services, improve processes, reduce costs, and help develop your unique

selling proposition. It is also a powerful marketing tool, which can help to attract new clients.

There is a common perception that R&D is expensive, and that projects take years or are only performed by high tech businesses, but this is inaccurate. R&D can be a great way for businesses to forge the new collaborations and partnerships that can help to stimulate and sustain growth.

Yet, I would always urge businesses to remain cautious and engage in a period of reflection before embarking on an R&D project. Investing is a significant decision. Therefore, they must establish where the link is between R&D and the successful achievement of their vision and goals. If you conclude that the project won't support these, then you must ask yourself, "Why would we do it?"

There are various local and national R&D funds for which NI businesses can apply. These are highly competitive and, as they are publicly funded, they require the business to provide a clear narrative that outlines how the project will generate a return on investment for the economy as well. There are also R&D Tax Credits available for businesses to utilise.

R&D funding can help facilitate the research and development of technologically innovative products, processes, or services. Specifically, it could help you to plan, develop and test your idea, build, and test a prototype, create,



and refine your concept and design and secure intellectual property.

Lack of funding is one of the key reasons why businesses can fail to scale and reach their full potential. Since 2018, we have helped clients of all sizes to secure a collective £15m in funding, and we have seen them go on to generate real business wins.

Many business owners are unsure of how to apply for R&D funding, and I would always suggest seeking expert advice, to identify and access relevant funding opportunities, and to ensure guidance through every step of the process.

Expert support can help you to prepare a compelling submission that effectively presents your business and its needs, whilst ensuring that the application criteria are met, and maximising the chance of a positive outcome.

Through our work with Northern Ireland's businesses, we know that, despite the difficulties presented by the current economic climate, local businesses can survive and remain at the top of their game, with the right guidance.

For more expert business advice, email: [info@pinnaclegrowthgroup.com](mailto:info@pinnaclegrowthgroup.com)



## Marketing your brand and products to IoD members

Director NI magazine reaches many of Northern Ireland's most influential business leaders.

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