



Membership
magazine of the IoD
in Northern Ireland



DirectorNI

April / May 2024

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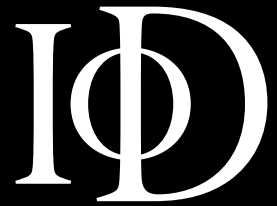
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Our committee



John Hansen, Chair, IoD Northern Ireland



Bonnie Anley CDir, Londonderry Port and Harbour



Barry Byrne, Mount Charles Group



Colin Coffey CDir, AgriFood & BioSciences, Invest NI and Natural World Products



Professor Gillian Armstrong MBE, Ulster University Business School



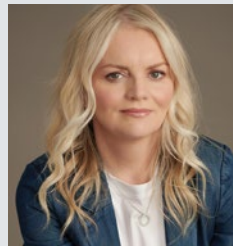
Kathryn Thomson, National Museums NI



Patrick Gallen, GallenTCF Limited



Richard Johnston CDir, Northern Ireland Civil Service



Nuala Murphy



Tanya Anderson, AIB NI



Professor Marie McHugh OBE, Ulster University Business School



David Henry, Henry Brothers



Aodhán Connolly, Director of European Division and Head of Office, NI Executive in Brussels



Gráinne Walsh, Stratagem NI



David Smith, Kilvaughter Minerals Ltd



Natasha Sayee, Northern Ireland Civil Service



Claudine Heron, W&R Barnett



Philip Smyth, Danske Bank UK



Emer Hincep, Think People



Jonathan Williamson CDir, EY Northern Ireland

IoD appoints new Northern Ireland Chair

The Institute of Directors (IoD) has appointed John Hansen to lead the organisation in Northern Ireland.

A chartered accountant, John is non-executive chairman of Titanic Quarter Limited. He also sits on the business funding committee of Invest NI and holds directorships in other companies.

John's experience spans a raft of senior roles across the accountancy sector. He was previously partner in charge at KPMG in Northern Ireland and was KPMG's international representative to KPMG Greece for two years. Prior to that he was a partner at RSM Chartered Accountants.

The IoD supports its members to become better directors. John will work alongside a team of branch ambassadors to provide connections, professional

development opportunities and an influential lobbying voice for business in Northern Ireland.

John said:

"IoD Northern Ireland plays a key role in supporting not only homegrown businesses, but also international companies based in the region. I have sat on the committee for a number of years and recognise that these are challenging times for directors across all sectors. I look forward to working with colleagues to support our membership in improving their networks and professional development to help them successfully grow their businesses.

I would like to thank outgoing Chair, Gordon Milligan OBE for his huge achievements and commitment to IoD over the past six years."

IoD Nations Director for Northern Ireland, Kirsty McManus said:

"I am delighted to welcome John to his new role as Chair of Northern Ireland. He brings a wealth of

“ I am delighted to welcome John to his new role as Chair of Northern Ireland. He brings a wealth of financial and leadership skills and experience which will be invaluable to our members as we support them in their journey with the IoD. ”

financial and leadership skills and experience which will be invaluable to our members as we support them in their journey with the IoD."



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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.



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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

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#inspireinclusion



Frances Hill, Bank of England's Agent for Northern Ireland, co-chair of the Bank's DisAbility Network and D&I Ambassador for the IoD in NI.

As a female business leader coming from a state school background and starting out life in a very junior admin role, I've had to break many glass ceilings and class ceilings, only to find another glass or class ceiling waiting to be broken.

I've spent most of my career in a very male dominated environment, including working as an Investment Manager in the City of London surrounded by public school educated white men. I was frequently the only woman in a meeting, a couple of times the only woman in a restaurant and while attending a two-day meeting, the only woman in the whole hotel! When I came to NI to be the Bank's Agent, I was the only female Agent in the UK and the youngest Agent they'd ever had. Having divorced a few months earlier, I was also the single parent of a four-year-old with a brain injury and visual impairment.

I had plenty of challenges to overcome, not least that my daughter didn't transition to NI as well as expected. Like many mothers, I consciously paused my career progression but I took this time to learn new skills, including chairing the board of a Northern Ireland charity supporting parents with visually impaired children as well as chairing a D&I working group at the bank.

My work and passion for DE&I has shown me that I hadn't been bringing my whole self to work. I'd kept hidden how hard it was to juggle the

“...a mass of evidence shows that harnessing diversity and inclusion makes businesses perform better and reduce business risk so it's a win win situation!”

demands of a job, which definitely wasn't 9-5, with single-handedly parenting a child with a disability. I just got on and made it work, but did it have to be so hard? I've resolved to help make it easier for others by using my lived experience to make the bank

and other organisations inclusive of diversity in all its aspects.

In my working life gender diversity has improved. 25 years ago, as an investment manager, women had to prove you were “as good as” a man. For me, this meant, working ridiculously long hours and showing that I could drink all of my stockbrokers under the table! Thankfully women can now bring all their strengths to the table and be their authentic selves.

But, we still have a long way to go. We still need more female role models - people who will share their stories, and support and mentor other women (something I now do). This can be difficult, especially at senior levels which are still dominated by men.

But it isn't just about gender. Most workplaces need to be more inclusive generally. Having a child with a disability and working with children and adults with disabilities, opened my eyes to what people can achieve with the right support (my daughter is now in university doing a maths degree and having a ball!). In addition to inclusivity being the right thing for employees, a mass of evidence shows that harnessing diversity and inclusion makes businesses perform better and reduce business risk so it's a win win situation! Surely, this is a priority for us all as directors?

#inspireinclusion



IoD NI to award over £40k in bursary funds

The Institute of Directors in Northern Ireland (IoD NI) has announced a new bursary scheme to support five female leaders complete professional qualifications.

Worth over £40,000, the scholarship fund will enable five women to complete either the IoD Role of the Non-Executive Director course or the Bachelors level IoD Certificate in Company Direction qualification.

The new fund was announced at the annual IoD NI's Women's Leadership Conference, held to mark International Women's Day in Belfast's Crowne Plaza Hotel. The sold-out event was attended by more than 500 delegates from across Northern Ireland and hosted by 'The Positive Economist', Susan Hayes Culleton.

The IoD's National Director for Northern Ireland, Kirsty McManus, who made the announcement, said it was part of the IoD's remit to push for a greater gender balance at board and executive level.

"Increasing the representation of women on boards and leadership teams isn't just important in terms

of providing greater opportunities for female leaders but it also makes better business sense. Firms that are the most gender-balanced also tend to perform better overall so we are prepared to play our part to help local businesses here capitalise on this diversity dividend.

"We are offering five scholarships to female directors in Northern Ireland with at least two years' experience of director service in the private, public, voluntary or community sector to complete one of two IoD qualifications aimed at preparing professionals to take on a board or leadership position.

"It was particularly important to make this announcement at our annual Women's Leadership Conference in front of a packed audience of exceptional female business leaders who are exactly who we want to see taking up these positions and hope this scheme will create a smoother pathway to make this happen."

This year's Women's Leadership Conference was headlined by presenter, author and activist, Mariella Frostrup who gave the room insight on the need to carve a "woman-shaped space" to move

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beyond an economic model which was still largely predicated on 52% of the available workforce staying at home. Mariella urged





the audience to just “keep going” and in her usual humorous style, Mariella also urged delegates to show less gratitude and more rage.

Other speakers on the day included internationally renowned chef Danni Barry, Booker prize winning author, Anna Burns, and Irish navy captain Marie Gleeson who all spoke about their own experiences of leadership in male-dominated environments.

Lisa McLaughlin (Partner, Herbert Smith Freehills) said: “Once again

it has been a pleasure to support the IoD NI and the IoD Women’s Leadership Conference. I’m proud of how our organisations have worked together over the years to grow this event and broaden its reach. This partnership has also delivered a great many benefits to our own colleagues who have learned so much from attending over the years. It has become a standout event and one our Belfast team always looks forward to participating in.”

One of the standout elements of this year’s conference was the female-founder pitching contest which saw five entrepreneurs take to the stage and pitch for their chance to win £4,000 to take their business to the next level. This year’s contest was won by Co. Antrim dairy farmer, Louise Adams, founder and CEO of Cultshe Clothing.

The 2025 Women’s Leadership Conference will take place on Friday 7th March 2025.



Executive Head Chef,
Ballynahinch Castle

Carol McTaggart
Chief Executive,
Clanmill Housing
Association

Jennifer Neff
Managing Director &
Co-Founder, Access
Elemental

Stacey Murtagh
Health Coach and
Yoga Teacher



HAPPY INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY!

FRIDAY
7TH MARCH
2025





Introducing Yfor:

Move beyond skills shortages



Geraldine Gordon
CEO, Yfor

Yfor combines workforce planning and development to address skills and workforce shortages within the construction sectors, further pressured by rapid changes due to technological, sustainable, and regulatory changes.

Yfor's technology empowers Employers to address shortages by removing confusion and complexity by aligning educational standards with business skills needs. Marking a new dynamic era in the world of work, bridging the gap between employee, employer, and education provider to deliver skill-based career opportunities.

Built for construction

Inspired by over 30 years working in construction and as Chair of the IoD Education and Skills Committee, founder Geraldine Gordon built YFOR to transform workforce

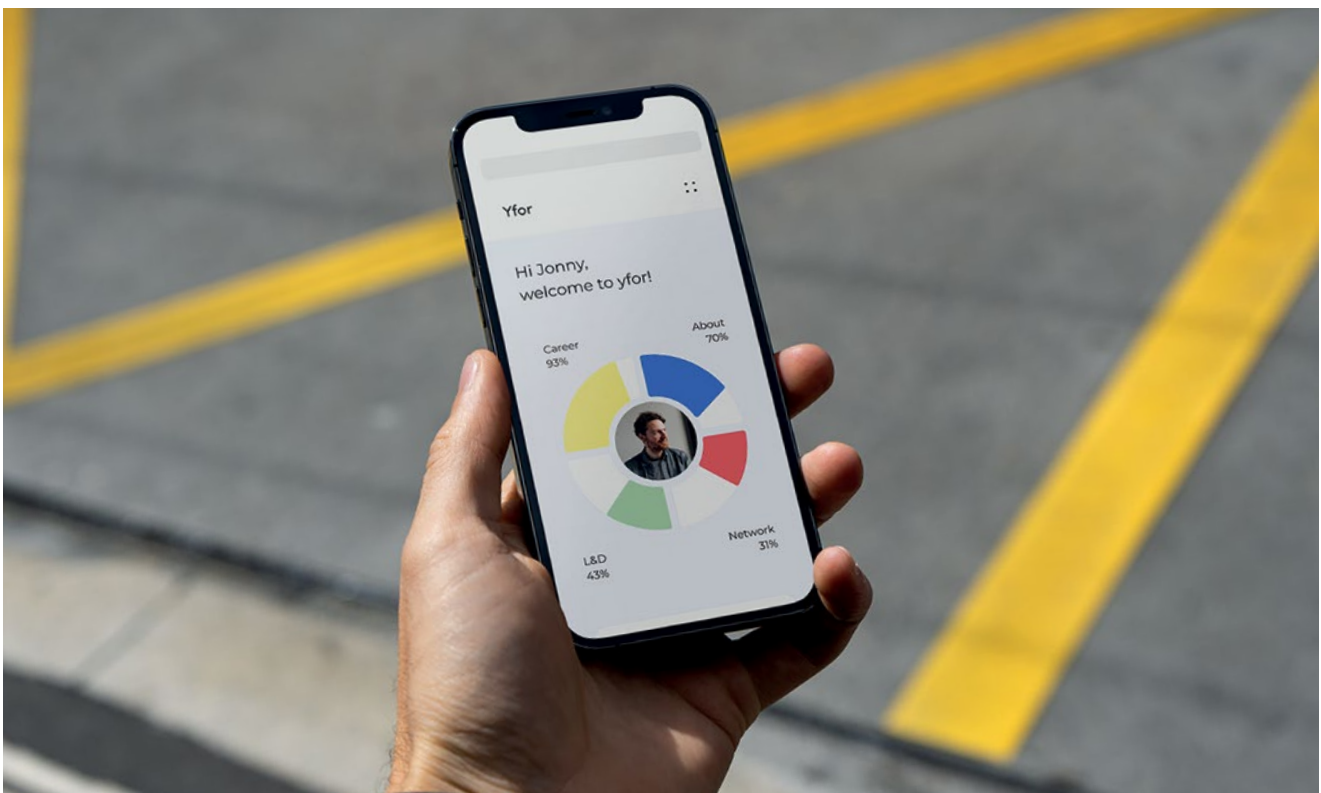
“Yfor’s skills datasets cover every essential area, technical, digital, green, safety, and human skills, providing workers with the full spectrum of business-critical skills.”

engagement, learning and career development in construction. Through our collaborative user-focused approach, Yfor continues to innovate, developing new features to digitise work-based learning, leveraging skills-based credentials to enable flexible career paths.

Yfor's skills datasets cover every essential area - technical, digital, green, safety, and human skills - providing workers with the full spectrum of business-critical skills. Our principal aim is to align work-based learning with accredited educational frameworks, addressing both current and future sector skills requirements with a universal skills language that ensures educational standards and industry needs.

Validating work-based learning

“Learn as you earn” pathways are made more appealing, increasing the value of vocational training



and its responsiveness to industry demands. Yfor proudly facilitates accessible employment pathways, especially for those facing entry barriers, by providing skill-based routes from training programmes to in-demand jobs. This is an approach that supports industry demands for a diverse and skilled workforce and addresses challenges of economic inactivity and low participation rates.

For employers navigating the complex skills landscape, Yfor offers skill mapping to industry needs, facilitating internal career mobility, automated personalised training plans and strategic workforce planning. This ensures teams are skilled and prepared for the industry's future direction. Today, employers can easily define the skills required through practical technology that provides data-driven insights and actions.

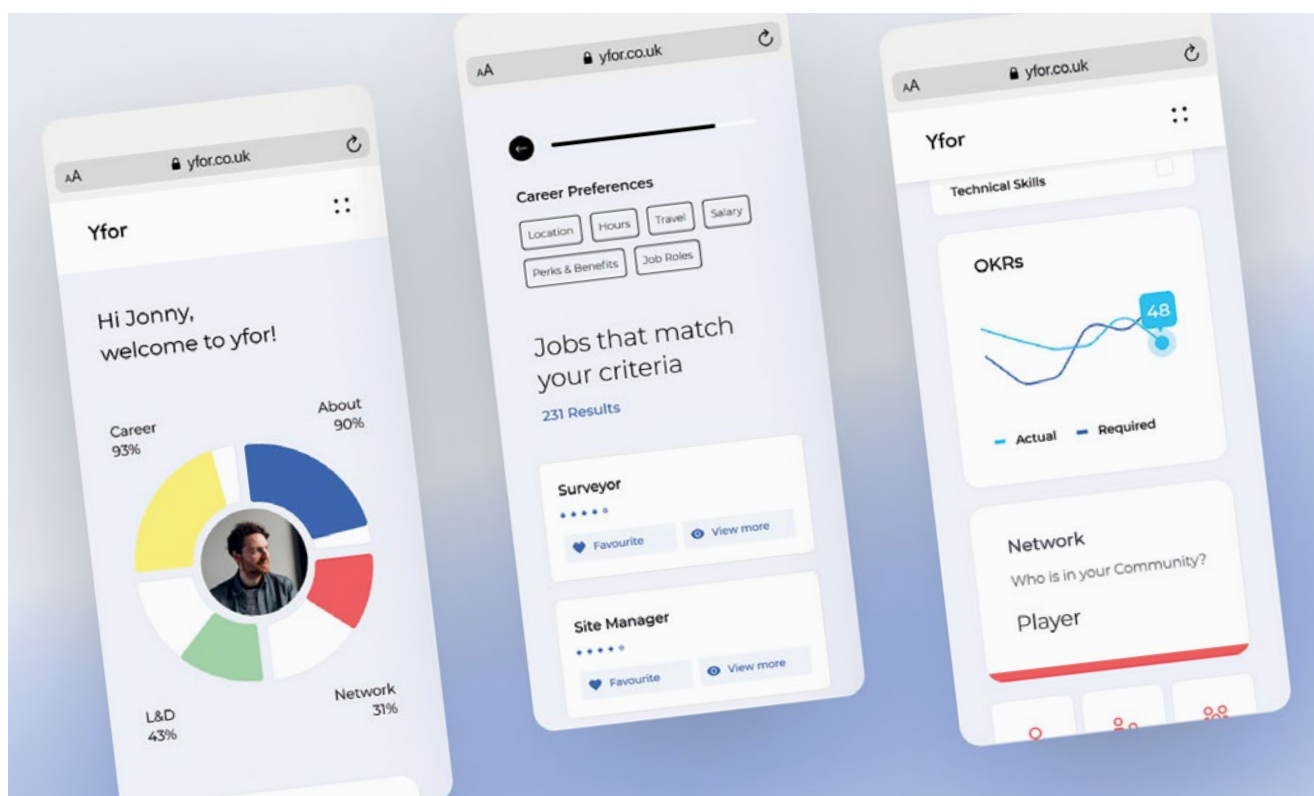
From words to action – we're more than just a platform, it's a force for change.

Central to Yfor's approach is a commitment to "learning by doing", accelerating the realisation of skills-focused, meaningful apprenticeships and vocational training programmes tailored to dynamic and transferable skills opportunities. Yfor remains committed to shaping a skilled and adaptable workforce, capable of addressing the challenges of a rapidly changing industry. We welcome construction companies to join us in refining and expanding our platform's capabilities, modernising work-based learning and aligning business needs with educational frameworks through our upcoming collaborative workshops.

It's a vision for the construction industry's future, integrating seamless, accessible skill development with sector demands. Join us in building a workforce ready for today's challenges and tomorrow's opportunities.

To be part of the Skills First Revolution, visit:

www.yfor.co.uk



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The lost dark art?

Directors, negotiation and pay disputes



Mark McAllister,
Director of
Employment
Relations Services,
Labour Relations
Agency

As this article goes to print, the NI Executive has agreed to allocate £688m to allow public sector pay deals to be progressed. So now this sets stage for the real work to begin and the skills of the respective sides' negotiators comes into sharp focus as the slices of the pie begin to get divvied up.

As a skills set this begs the question, do directors have the necessary skills and experience to get in the room and negotiate and resolve matters of pay, pre or post dispute?

In 2022 and 2023, pay disputes in Northern Ireland grew exponentially and although many were effectively political and public sector facing, many more were private sector, involving pay and conditions with industrial action being a real and present threat. What became readily

apparent when these disputes came to a head, was how directors felt in the face of such industrial unrest and their role in resolving it.

Two examples sprang into my mind from 2023 whereupon one director in a company saw the negotiations as just below their "field of vision" and another director stating that this was "the first pay dispute" they had ever been involved in. Both were on the backfoot from the outset as one saw their role as helicoptering and the other was out of their depth as a trade union official seemed to have the upper hand.

What soon became readily apparent was, through no fault of their own, the capacity and capability gap that had developed regarding negotiating skills in the collective bargaining and dispute arena because for years the directors were busy doing the things directors do.

Another key facet of these particular disputes was the lack of governance architecture around the collective bargaining and dispute resolution processes. This would have framed the process procedure to allow the parties to narrow the issues and follow a pathway regarding a collective process that would

make provision for informing, consulting and negotiating.

“ ..do directors have the necessary skills and experience to get in the room and negotiate and resolve matters of pay, pre or post dispute? ”

From here, the sequencing and choreography around how to address impasses, failure to agree, pre-ballot protocols etc would have provided directors with a procedural comfort blanket. This would allow them to focus on the skills of collective bargaining and negotiation without having to worry about process sequencing.

The Labour Relations Agency, as a result of our findings during the biggest increase in industrial unrest in decades, is now developing guidance and training on collective bargaining to help parties (especially directors) get a handle on both process and skills sets associated with negotiation. It's not an HR or finance issue, it's a leadership issue that requires the requisite knowledge, skills and understanding to get to resolution.

The general day of collective trade union industrial action on 18/1/24 demonstrated the collective will of the trade union movement in a muscle flex never seen before. As such, some commentators have seen this as an inflexion point in industrial relations in NI. If this is the case, directors need to look at up-skilling accordingly in an age old art that seems to have been neglected over recent years, but where the need for it has come back with a considerable bang.





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Stage 1 Certificate in Company Direction

Option 1



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The Merchant Hotel, Belfast



Finance for Non-Finance Directors

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Strategy for Directors

26-28 November
The Merchant Hotel, Belfast



Stage 2 Diploma in Company Direction

22-24 October
The Merchant Hotel, Belfast

Individual courses available in Northern Ireland



Role of the Non-Executive Director

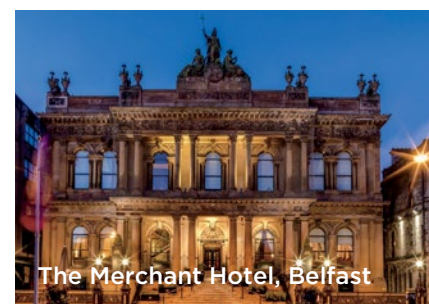
25 October
The Merchant Hotel, Belfast

Option 2

Accelerated Certificate in Company Direction

14-19 May
Culloden Estate

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



Please contact
heather.white@iod.com

My Seven Steps for Business Success

Stairway to Seven



T Balendran,
Director, Davy
Group

T Balendran is an Associate Director at Davy UK, a Wealth Management firm in Northern Ireland. Over the past 15 years, T has combined his degree in Mathematics with Actuarial Studies, a keen interest in the Economy and his desire to enable and educate clients, to forge a career where he now assists over 100 clients with their finances. Comprising individuals, corporates, charities and trusts, the total client assets under his management totals over £100m.

Put yourself in your clients' shoes

When you put yourself in the shoes of your clients and begin your dialogue from there, an immediate connection develops that stems beyond business and encourages loyalty. Take the time to listen to your clients, process what they say, put yourself in their shoes and act on their behalf. People want and need to know that you care.

Push yourself out of your comfort zone

Life can often become repetitive, and this is never more apparent than in the workplace. Being comfortable at work is important, but it is a fine line between comfort and complacency. Set a target every year (or more frequently)

to expand your skillset – public speaking, professional qualifications, whatever it may be. If the thought of it makes you nervous, that's okay. Give it a go – you don't know what you are capable of until you try.

“ If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together. ”

Always strive to improve

Continuous improvement is based on the idea that even when things are good, they could be better. On completion of a task, it is good practice to reflect and ask yourself, and your colleagues – could that task have been achieved quicker, or to a higher standard? Continuous incremental improvements help us to ensure that we are functioning as efficiently, effectively, and accurately as possible.

Always seek feedback

Never be afraid to ask for feedback – from clients, from colleagues, from everyone. Asking for feedback is important because it demonstrates to others that you are committed to improving your skills. Taking the initiative to get better at essential aspects of your work shows that you have the dedication and drive to succeed.

Have a plan, and stick to it

In the absence of a plan, days can drift into weeks which can drift into months. When you reach a target, celebrate it, but then set the next one – and break it down into a realistic timeframe with sub-targets, and make sure to regularly review against the schedule. If you are behind, carve out time to catch up. If you are ahead, don't let it slip.

Attention to detail

Don't underestimate the importance of the little things. Turn up on time, be professional, be organised, be prepared, be accurate, stick to your promises. Make these hygiene factors and productivity will increase.

Team mentality

Collaborative problem solving leads to better outcomes. People are more likely to take calculated risks that lead to innovation if they have the support of a team behind them. Working in a team encourages personal growth, increases job satisfaction, and reduces stress. If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.

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Our members

As 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

MEMBER PROFILE

Ursula Mulvaney

Ursula is senior data protection and privacy specialist consultant and regulatory and commercial solicitor with a specialist focus on privacy and data protection. She provides strategic and practical advice and support to clients on data protection and privacy management programmes and she is passionate about operationalising compliance.

Prior to working as a consultant solicitor for regulated law firms, Ursula spent over seven years at a global law firm before moving in to an inhouse role as Legal Counsel for a multi-national FMCG company supporting the business across the island of Ireland.

In addition to being a qualified solicitor (9 years + PQE) in England and Wales, Republic of Ireland and



Northern Ireland with 14+ years of experience as a legal professional, Ursula is also a Certified Information Privacy Professional (CIPP/E) and holds a certificate of Privacy Program Management Training with the International association of Privacy Professionals, the largest and most comprehensive global information privacy community and resource.

She also holds a Diploma certificate in Data Protection and Commercial Contracts from the Law Society of Ireland and certificates in Technology Law & Employment Law in the Digital Era and Technology in Litigation.

MEMBER PROFILE**Luke Fuller****Hays**

Luke was born in Canterbury in Kent and attended University of West of England where he secured his Business Studies degree, after which he joined Hays. Luke has worked for Hays since September 2000 and has seen the landscape of recruitment change significantly over these years. He moved with Hays to Northern Ireland in 2005, recruiting in the

accountancy and finance specialism throughout the majority of his career. Recently Luke has taken on a new position of Client Engagement Director alongside the Accounting Recruitment Director role. His remit is to work with businesses across Northern Ireland supporting clients to find the best talent in all areas of their business and helping them promote their employee value proposition and advise on overall recruitment strategies.

**MEMBER PROFILE****Andrew Ayres****Hewlett-Packard Enterprise**

Andrew currently works as a Master Strategist for UK & Ireland at Hewlett-Packard Enterprise – one of the world's most innovative technology companies – where he advises clients, across a range of industries, on how they should leverage people, processes and technologies to spur

their transformation and change agenda. In his work, Andrew is able to draw from his extensive knowledge and experience spanning a broad range of related areas – such as Transformation, Edge to Multi-Cloud Technologies, Big Data and Artificial Intelligence – to advise boards and their teams on their optimal paths to success. In recognition of his expertise, he currently holds the position of Discussion Leader at HPE's Customer Innovation Centre in London.



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/

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

LinkedIn group:

Please join the members only LinkedIn group. Contact aofe.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 for more information.



Young Directors Forum

In the dynamic landscape of business, the journey of a young director is both exhilarating and challenging. These individuals, armed with ambition and a hunger for knowledge, are the future architects of our economy.

The Institute of Directors (IoD) successful Young Directors Forum works to help aspiring entrepreneurs and business leaders across Northern Ireland realise their potential.

The forum is part of the Institute of Director's commitment to embrace tomorrow's leaders today. It represents the interests of emerging business leaders, students or apprentices.

Kirsty McManus is the Institute of Director's Nations Director for Northern Ireland said: "There are many emerging entrepreneurs in our region who are making great strides in establishing their companies, creating employment and making a contribution to the region's economy.

"It is important that the IoD provides targeted and incisive support and guidance to help them realise their full potential to become the business grandees and role models of tomorrow."

The NI Young Directors Forum helps plan and deliver events that enable new Directors or prospective IoD members to access advice and develop their professional skills.

In this article, we meet our 2024 Young Directors Forum (YDF), a group driven by passion and

“ It is important that the IoD provides targeted and incisive support and guidance to help them realise their full potential to become the business grandees and role models of tomorrow. ”

determination to shape the narrative of Northern Ireland's business community across its many sectors.

Brendan Digney: Championing Young Leadership

Brendan is the IoD Young Directors Ambassador, an Electrical and Electronic Engineer, Technologist and founder of Machine Eye Technology, a multi-award-winning technology business based in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

His involvement with IoD stems from a commitment to supporting and representing emerging talents in the business sphere and empowering young leaders.

For Brendan, IoD's greatest asset lies in its ability to foster connections and open doors to unparalleled opportunities. In a time of unprecedented challenges

for Northern Ireland business, Brendan sees IoD as a catalyst for change, advocating for leadership, funding and support to navigate uncertain waters.

Gavin Annon: Embracing Growth and Learning

Gavin Annon is the Chief Strategy Officer for Mount Charles. For him, the decision to join the IoD and serve on the Young Directors Forum was motivated by an ambition to grow and develop his own leadership skills and knowledge. His journey as a young director has been a testament to the transformative power of continuous learning. Through IoD, Gavin has not only expanded his knowledge base but has also forged invaluable connections and honed a mindset of ambition.

Reflecting on his experience, Gavin emphasises the importance of investing in you and your career early on, citing IoD's proven track record in accelerating directors' development.

His message is clear: making a difference is never too early.

Michelle McKinley: Navigating the Business Landscape

As a Tax Director at KPMG Belfast, Michelle McKinley's expertise spans various sectors. Her motivation to join IoD and contribute to the Young Directors Forum stems from a desire to broaden her horizons and leverage best business practices.



Michelle highlights the unparalleled benefit of networking with senior leaders, a privilege IoD membership offers.

Northern Ireland faces significant challenges, particularly while we rebuild our political systems. Michelle sees IoD as a beacon of advocacy and support, promoting strategies to bolster the economy.

Cara Macklin: Pioneering Innovation and Next-Gen Development

Cara's entrepreneurial journey is a testament to innovation and resilience. As the founder and CEO of Future of Family Enterprise, she disrupts traditional paradigms in the healthcare industry, advocating for scalability and next-generation development.

Cara's motivation to join IoD and engage with the Young Directors Forum stems from a desire to connect with visionary leaders and drive impactful change.

With Northern Ireland businesses facing pressing challenges such as labour shortages and Brexit uncertainties, Cara finds solace in IoD's supportive network and advocacy efforts.

Valerie Ludlow: Mentoring for Positive Change

Valerie is the CEO of ASG, an independent PR, Advertising and Events agency. In this role, she is on the frontline, informing award-winning campaign strategies for other local businesses to achieve cut-through and success in their given sector.

Valerie joined IoD to improve her knowledge of governance and gain access to key business information and analysis. Her decision to join Young Directors Forum was inspired by the invaluable mentorship she gained from networking with other members and a desire to give back, especially when engaging with minority audiences who might not consider IoD membership 'for them'.

In conclusion

The stories of our Young Directors Forum epitomise the spirit of resilience and innovation that defines Northern Ireland's up-and-coming leaders and the work of the IoD. As ambassadors of change, they exemplify the power of collaboration, advocacy and continuous learning in navigating the complex business landscape. To young professionals aspiring to make a mark in the business world, their message is clear: seize the opportunity to join IoD, embrace challenges as catalysts for growth, and together let's shape a brighter future for Northern Ireland's business community.

IoD

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.

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End-to-end service drives radius vehicle solutions into success



Ciarán O'Neill
Director, Radius
Vehicle Solutions

New figures from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT), show that in 2024 fleet and business company car registrations account for almost two in every three new car registrations. It now equates to 65% of the market, up from 55% in 2023, with the one millionth electric vehicle also registered in the UK in January 2024.

At Radius Vehicle Solutions (RVS), we are noticing the same trends across our business and having recently reached the milestone of having 3,500 vehicles on Irish roads, we are busier than ever when it comes to company cars, vans and HGV commercial vehicles, including electric vehicles (EV) and hybrid models.

Since joining the global Radius Group in 2022, Radius Vehicle Solutions has been on an upward trajectory, making strategic business moves and realising us as the only all-island leasing provider in Ireland. We acquired an additional Gus Commercials site in 2023, representing a £1 million investment, adding a third premises to our Northern Ireland estate and growing our employee numbers to 74 in Ireland. This expansion allowed us to extend our passenger car and van service centre, meaning RVS can service and repair a larger proportion of vehicles in house and offer a more rounded end-to-end service for customers - something that has been crucial to our success.

Looking at our business, in Northern Ireland especially, SMEs are our core target and understanding what they want from us and what we can do to

make their day-to-day work life easier is where we have found huge success. The headache for a fleet manager is to deal with multiple different suppliers across all areas of leasing. This is where we've been able to make moves with RVS and grow our end-to-end service offering.

“..more and more customers opt in to our tracking, telematics, fuel cards and electric charger installations, all of which we can offer through Radius Group.”

Now that we are part of the global Radius Group, we can offer our customers the full service across mobility and connectivity under one roof, saving our customers time and money spent on additional admin. Through our mobility division, we have seen huge growth across our vehicle leasing and rental, having recently recorded 1,000 vehicles delivered within a calendar year and even higher figures projected for next year. We are seeing more and more customers opt in to our tracking, telematics, fuel cards and electric charger installations, all of which we can offer through Radius Group.

Speaking on the latest SMMT statistics, Mike Hawes Chief Executive of SMMT pointed out that it has taken over 20 years to reach the million EV milestone, but with the right policies we can double down on that success in just another two. This is something we agree with at RVS. We have seen a huge shift in Northern Ireland with companies moving towards an

electric company car scheme because of tax implications and the benefits an employee gets, and only see this continuing.

When looking at the roll-out of EV for companies, there is an added layer of operations which needs to take place such as the installation of chargers. Radius manufactures and installs EV chargers at a home or business and manages the charging point through its own software, reducing the fleet manager's extra admin duties. The charger will identify the employee using the charge point at a business through their charge card.

Radius is the only business where you can use your fuel card to charge your vehicle as well. You can top up with fuel and you can top up with electric with the same charge card that has a unique identifier or a tag. By using this service, businesses will start to gain really valuable information such as what time people arrive at the company charge point and how efficiently they are operating. Our chargers are for private business and private use but our charge card can be used across the network.

With the shift towards more company vehicles rather than personal and the ever rising tide of EV, how we service those vehicles beyond the initial supply is what sets us apart at RVS, along with the additional offering we are able to supply through Radius Group.

Having a successful business in Northern Ireland (more so than elsewhere) is largely weighted on your relationship with people and the support you can offer them. So it's no surprise that we've seen a noticeable uptick in business when we were able to offer our customers so much under one roof and take that little bit more off their plate. End-to-end servicing has been so vital to our success and is an area we envision will continue to grow in the coming years.



Unveiling truths and navigating impartial investigation in public inquiries



Matthew Howse,
Partner, Dispute
Resolution and
Litigation, Eversheds
Sutherland

With the Covid-19 Inquiry set to sit in Northern Ireland from 30 April, the media's spotlight will squarely sit on a Belfast hotel as journalists, core participants, and the general public wait to hear more about the pivotal political and administrative choices that shaped the pandemic response here.

Highly centralised decision making, the perception of failure in Whitehall institutions, and inadequate checks and balances on the Prime Minister has been the theme of Covid-19 Inquiry hearings so far.

As hearings continue, there are already lessons to be learned and actioned for the future, especially with the publication of the Omagh Bombing Inquiry Terms of Reference.

We know that the Omagh Bombing Inquiry will cover serious and sensitive issues including the handling of shared intelligence, whether there was advance knowledge of the bomb, and whether disruption operations could or should have been mounted to prevent the attack.

With this in mind, it is important to remember that any public inquiry, though a legal process,

is also inherently emotive. An inquiry addresses the most serious matters of public concern and for many individuals, it is the only avenue for their pain and suffering to be acknowledged, or the sole opportunity for their voice to be heard.

It evokes a great deal of emotion: memories of losing loved ones, destroyed livelihoods, gross misconduct, corruption, and injustice. Under the brightest of media spotlights, individuals relive something they would rather forget, or wished never happened in the first place.

This begs the question: How can an inquiry best display empathy towards those affected by the events under scrutiny, while also ensuring an objective and impartial investigation is conducted? How much emphasis should be placed on ensuring the inquiry venue looks the part and is transparent and accessible versus protecting the public purse?

Or does the public consider finding out what happened more important than making recommendations on what needs to change? From observing the outworkings of recent inquiries, intuition suggests that the former holds true. After all, understanding what happened is a vital step towards healing and indeed, preventing it from happening again.

Also, with hearings streamed and often televised live, scrutiny is rigorous and relentless. Journalists and the ordinary lay person provide a running commentary of proceedings as they unfold online which means

no stone is left unturned; many will express diverse opinions on the terms of reference, who is or isn't a core participant, or the panel line-up. What can we learn from this? It is easier for people to overlook delays, than forgive mistakes. In other words, a public inquiry is a marathon, not a sprint.

“ How can an inquiry best display empathy towards those affected by the events under scrutiny, while also ensuring an objective and impartial investigation is conducted? ”

Overall, looking ahead to another major public inquiry getting underway, any successful public inquiry must earn the trust of the public from the outset. It needs to demonstrate a commitment to thorough investigation, fair representation of all stakeholders, and clear communication of its findings and recommendations.

Member news

Let's Talk Menopause in the Workplace

A new event, 'Let's Talk Menopause in the Workplace' aimed at empowering leaders to foster inclusive and supportive workplaces for individuals navigating the menopause, will take place on Tuesday 7th May 2024.

Hosted by BBC Northern Ireland's Health Correspondent, Marie-Louise Connolly, the event will feature legendary businesswoman and health and wellbeing authority, Liz Earle MBE as headline speaker. Liz



Earle will be joined by journalist and menopause campaigner Kate Muir and founder of Menopause NI Siobhan Kearney.

A local medical expert will also offer invaluable insights on medical aspects of the perimenopause and menopause, along with practical advice aimed at both supporting women with menopausal symptoms and guiding colleagues and managers to address the workplace impacts effectively.

Business leaders and HR professionals will also receive essential knowledge regarding the legalities, resources and strategies required to foster open dialogues with colleagues and help them support women navigating the menopausal journey from Aisling Byrne from A&L Goodbody.

For more information about Let's Talk Menopause in the Workplace and to book tickets visit letstalkmenopauseni.com

Progressive partners with Co-Ownership to offer no deposit mortgage in NI

Progressive Building Society has partnered with not-for-profit organisation Co-Ownership to broaden its range of mortgage products to include a no deposit option.

With this new product, customers will be able to borrow 100% of the mortgaged share of the property they aim to buy, with the remaining share being rented from Co-Ownership.

The partnership has been formed in light of the steady growth in house prices in Northern Ireland over the last few years, a move which has made it increasingly

difficult for first time buyers to get on the property ladder.

This new offering will help an increasing number of prospective owners to buy their own home, even if they don't have a deposit. In essence, buyers will purchase the share of the property they can afford with the help of the mortgage from Progressive while Co-Ownership will buy the remainder.

Jane Millar, Head of Lending & Savings at Progressive Building Society, said: "Progressive Building Society are proud to partner with Co-Ownership, helping local people buy their own home. We have worked alongside Co-Ownership for many years and as a locally owned Building Society we are delighted to announce the launch of our no deposit mortgage products.

"These products will provide more opportunities to help local people onto the property ladder, without the need for a deposit."

Co-Ownership is Northern Ireland's regional body for shared ownership and has been helping people to become homeowners for over 45 years. It is a registered housing association and industrial & provident society, regulated and part-funded by the Department for Communities.

The new products are available directly from Progressive, where online mortgage appointments with a dedicated advisor are available on their website, or through a mortgage broker.



A&L Goodbody announces senior appointments in Northern Ireland

Corporate law firm A&L Goodbody (ALG) has announced three senior appointments in Northern Ireland.

James Flanagan has been appointed Partner in the Construction & Infrastructure team and John Palmer joins ALG as a second Energy Partner within its Corporate team. Caroline McNally, meanwhile, has been appointed to the senior advisory role of 'Of Counsel' in the firm's Commercial & Technology team.

The three appointments take ALG's senior leadership team in Northern Ireland to 24, charged with leading a team of over 130 lawyers and business support professionals in its Belfast office.

Congratulating Caroline, James and John on their appointments, Michael Neill, Head of ALG's Belfast office, said:

"Caroline, James and John both demonstrate the unwavering energy, commercial acumen and industry-leading technical expertise that are the very core of exceptional client service for which ALG is so widely renowned.

"Their appointments reflect a healthy demand in the Commercial & Technology, Construction & Infrastructure, and Energy sectors, and our commitment to bringing our clients the most relevant and timely legal expertise.

"As part of our senior leadership team in Belfast, they will set an excellent example to the wealth of up-and-coming talent within our firm and will continue to play a key role in their development going forward."

Caroline McNally

Caroline McNally has extensive experience in advising both private and public sector clients on a wide range of commercial arrangements, including procurement, outsourcing, logistics, agency and distribution, international trade, franchising and sponsorship.

Caroline helps her clients achieve pragmatic and commercially focused solutions in relation to both day-to-day contractual matters as well as large and strategically important projects. She also has extensive in-house experience, so has a deep understanding of the commercial and legal risks faced by in-house counsel.

James Flanagan

James Flanagan's areas of expertise include all forms of construction and engineering contracts, such as NEC, JCT and FIDIC. He regularly advises employers, contractors, sub-contractors and funders in respect of contractual issues and frequently provides training

in respect of same, including the negotiation and drafting of contracts. James is also highly regarded and experienced in procurement matters, having acted on some of the biggest procurement challenges within Northern Ireland, in addition to assisting contracting authorities with tender competitions, including the drafting and preparation of tender and contract documentation.

James has acted on a number of significant non-contentious matters across the housing, retail, transport and energy sectors within Northern Ireland. He is also regularly involved in high value contentious construction matters and is known for providing strategic and detailed advice in respect of litigation, adjudication, arbitration and alternative forms of dispute resolution.

John Palmer

John Palmer is a projects lawyer with over 10 years' experience in the Irish Energy sector advising on a range of renewable technologies including onshore wind, solar, hydro and bioenergy. His clients include a range of international developers as well as equity and debt funders.

John is a regular speaker at industry events and provides specialised in-house training to a number of financial institutions in the funding of renewable energy projects. John is qualified to practice in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Pictured (left-right): John Palmer, Michael Neill, Caroline McNally and James Flanagan.





Spotlight on **events**

**IoD NI & Investec Breakfast:
Delivering sustainable
growth in disruptive times**

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IoD NI & PwC: Harnessing the power of GenAI Breakfast

^ v >





**IoD NI & Tughans:
Building an
Inclusive & Diverse
Workplace
Breakfast**

^ v >





**IoD NI & Investec:
Private Dinner with
Carl Frampton
MBE, Former
Professional Boxer
& Noel Mooney,
CEO, Football
Association of
Wales**

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