



Membership
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in Northern Ireland



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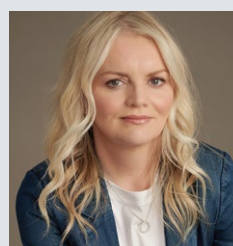
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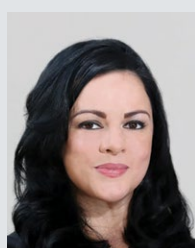
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Social value is high on the agenda at EY



Jo McGinley,
EY Northern
Ireland, Director
of Social Value

As EY continues to expand its presence in Northern Ireland, with a new office at Ebrington Plaza in Derry-Londonderry due to open this summer, social value remains high on the priority list.

In a significant move last year, EY Northern Ireland appointed Jo McGinley as its first Director of Social Value. This pioneering role highlights the organisation's dedication to social value and reflects the firm's ongoing efforts to contribute positively to the NI region. With a workforce of over 1,000, EY NI is poised for substantial growth, planning to double its headcount over the next five years underpinned by support from the Department for the Economy. Jo emphasises that while social value has long been integral to EY's operations, her focus is on continuing to build strategic partnerships with community organisations, including collaborations with Business in the Community NI, Social Enterprise NI and Young Enterprise NI to tackle the skills challenge in Northern Ireland.

"Working for an organisation which is committed to giving back to the community, alongside EY's focus on regionality really stood out to me. I am truly passionate about making an impact here in Northern Ireland and with the growth ambitions that EY has, and the commitment I see from leadership, I know I have an opportunity to really make a difference."

EY NI, in collaboration with Business in the Community NI (BITCNI), has launched initiatives like the Time to Code programme to empower young people in the community

by enhancing their IT skills. Acknowledging the disparities in access to technology among children in Northern Ireland, Time to Code offers hands-on learning experiences to bridge this gap. Alongside the Time to Read programme, these efforts reflect EY's commitment to equipping youth with essential skills for success in a digital age while promoting community involvement and support. Since the initiative started just over two years ago, 59 EY people have delivered the programmes in 33 schools across NI – engaging 457 pupils.

“I am truly passionate about making an impact here in Northern Ireland and with the growth ambitions that EY has, and the commitment I see from leadership, I know I have an opportunity to really make a difference.”

The professional services firm has also introduced the free EY STEM App in Northern Ireland to inspire girls aged 13 to 18 to pursue careers in STEM fields. Currently being piloted in three girls' schools, the app includes immersive modules created in collaboration with renowned institutions like NASA and Stanford University, focusing on subjects such as climate change and artificial intelligence. With a user base exceeding 100,000 globally, the app fosters self-directed learning and practical applications,

aiming to close the gender gap in STEM and promote education and gender equality in the workforce. Jo and the team plan to introduce the EY STEM App into more post-primary schools across the region in the next academic year.

"We see the value in getting more girls interested in STEM at an early age and supporting them in considering a career in STEM. This is not only good in terms of gender equality, it is essential in supporting sustainable economic growth here in NI. We hope that the STEM app can play an important role in this and are excited to see the impact that it has for local girls."

The EY Foundation is another highly impactful programme that brings together young people and employers across the UK to deliver high-quality employability skills training, career guidance, and paid work experience. It is celebrating more than a decade of impact in transforming the lives of 24,000 young people from low-income backgrounds since 2014.

Nicola Henry, an Executive in the Strategy and Transactions team in EY NI is embarking on an ambitious "Mums Run The World Challenge", completing 12 races in 12 months across 12 countries, all in support of The EY Foundation. Having kicked off this January, Nicola is lacing up her running shoes every month for this epic challenge. With the successful completion of the Marrakesh Half Marathon, the Gap of Dunloe 10k and the Harmonie Mutuelle Semi de Paris already under her belt, she is determined to make a lasting impact while inspiring others along the way. She is actively seeking support for the rest of the upcoming races and donations to The EY Foundation charity.

To find out more about The EY Foundation visit the website at https://www.eyfoundation.com/en_uk

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

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Intertrade UK kickstarts drive to boost trade

IoD Director Kirsty McManus has joined the recently-established group Intertrade UK, chaired by Baroness Arlene Foster. The group was formed in a move to strengthen and protect the UK internal market for businesses across the country.

The new body will advise on opportunities to promote and boost trade across the UK, utilising the wide-ranging expertise of its members drawn from industry and academia who are recognised leaders in their fields.

Intertrade UK will do this through promoting trade in goods and services across the UK and advising on overcoming identified barriers. It will consider how best businesses can take advantage of the full opportunities of the UK internal market, and conduct research and publish insights aimed at advancing domestic trade.

The first meeting of Intertrade UK was held in Enniskillen on 28th February, where members formally adopted the Terms of Reference. They also discussed and agreed a programme of work with key priorities to take forward over the next 18 months.

Speaking about the group's appointments, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Hilary Benn, said:

"The UK internal market is vital for businesses right across the country, and the Government is committed to taking all steps to protect and strengthen it.

"East West trade is essential for UK growth, and part of the success of Intertrade UK will be to ensure that people can enjoy the full benefits of the UK internal market for both goods and services.

"This was an important commitment in the Safeguarding the Union command paper, and with this experienced panel of members in place, I look forward to seeing Intertrade UK play an important role in promoting UK-wide trade and economic growth."

Chair of Intertrade UK, Baroness Arlene Foster, said:

"The Safeguarding the Union Command paper had strengthened the UK internal market at its core. I am very pleased that Intertrade UK was set up because of that Command paper so we can take this important work forward.

"The panel members which have been appointed by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland have a wealth of experience on trade in and out of Northern Ireland and we will immediately get to work looking at challenges which have been identified and if and how these can be practically resolved.

"The establishment of Intertrade UK represents another significant step in delivering on the commitments set out in the Safeguarding the Union Command Paper and a key asset in delivery of this Government's Growth Mission."

“The establishment of Intertrade UK represents another significant step in delivering on the commitments set out in the Safeguarding the Union Command Paper and a key asset in delivery of this Government's Growth Mission.”

Intertrade UK full panel members are:

- The Rt Hon. the Baroness Foster of Aghadrumsee DBE - Chair of Intertrade UK
- Dr Esmond Birnie - Senior Economist, Ulster University,
- Kirsty McManus - Northern Ireland Director, Institute of Directors
- Suzanne Wylie - Chief Executive Officer, Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce
- Roger Pollen - Head of Federation of Small Businesses Northern Ireland
- Angela McGowan - Director for Northern Ireland, Confederation of British Industry



Belfast Harbour launches five-year **Advance Regional Prosperity strategy**



Dr Theresa Donaldson, Chair of Belfast Harbour Commissioners

Launching a new strategy is a watershed moment for any organisation, and this was very much the case when Belfast Harbour unveiled its bold and ambitious plan for 2025-29 at the start of this year.

Entitled Advance Regional Prosperity, the new strategy outlines our plan to invest £313m in a range of future-focused projects, with £208m to be invested in significant port improvements, and £105m in the ongoing regeneration and development of the Harbour Estate and waterfront.

At its heart, this exciting new strategy has four key objectives, with the overarching objective of Accelerating to Net Zero:

- to Enable Economic Growth;
- to Develop and Improve Your Port;
- to Create Vibrant Places to Live and Work; and
- to Innovate for a Better Tomorrow.

This landmark strategy includes the largest single capital project we have

ever undertaken, a proposed £90m investment in a new deepwater quay which will both accommodate some of the world's largest cruise vessels and expand the port's capabilities for offshore wind turbine assembly and installation.

Stage one of the deepwater quay build, which will initially support cruise tourism, is expected by 2027-28, while stage two, due by 2030, will further strengthen the infrastructure, so the port can play a leading role in enabling the next generation of floating offshore wind turbines – one of the fastest growing segments of the energy sector across these islands.

Among the other significant port projects outlined are:

- the delivery of new, sustainably-powered cranes;
- the planning, design and consent for a rebuild of Stormont Wharf; and
- the construction of new sustainable warehouses.

We also expect to fully deploy our groundbreaking new 'Harlander' autonomous passenger vehicle across the estate, continue the growth of the City Quays development and secure new productions at Belfast Harbour Studios.

My colleagues and I on the Board of Belfast Harbour Commissioners are confident that these plans will directly support the NI Executive's ambitions to grow a sustainable and globally competitive economy on its way to net zero. The strategy also directly supports the goals of the Belfast Agenda and Local Development Plan – for a vibrant, inclusive and connected city.

“ The new strategy outlines our plan to invest £313m in a range of future-focused projects, with £208m to be invested in significant port improvements, and £105m in the ongoing regeneration and development of the Harbour Estate and waterfront. ”

We also believe that our goal for 3,500 homes in the Harbour Estate by 2035 could play a big role in helping reach their targets.



Importantly, our new strategy puts our people and their health, safety and well-being at the centre of what we do. It includes targets to grow a more diverse and inclusive workforce and crucially, given the dynamic nature of the port environment, builds on the highest of standards to keep our people safe.

This new strategy will also lay the groundwork for our transformative 2050 port and estate masterplan, which will be published within the next year following public consultation. Within this, we will detail our ambitious longer-term agenda – with a focus on positioning Belfast Harbour at the forefront of generating economic development and providing social value for both the city and the region.

Our previous strategy, A Port for Everyone, was launched in 2019, with an outlook to 2035. It challenged Belfast Harbour to become a world leading regional port, a green port, a smart port and to deliver an iconic waterfront for the city. We are proud to have delivered against all of these themes in tandem with a solid financial performance each year – achieved despite many well-documented challenges for the global economy.

Over the past decade, Belfast Harbour has made transformative

investments of £374m into new cranes and ferry terminals, logistics warehousing, 5G technology, the development of City Quays and the expansion of Belfast Harbour Studios – all while continuing to support our local communities.

Our investment has created jobs, strengthened supply chains, and raised sustainability standards. It has boosted the port and attracted major foreign investors to the city. We have supported sectors from net zero tech to tourism and the creative industries, leaving a lasting legacy for the people of Belfast and beyond.

The 2025-29 strategy aims to continue this transformative and positive impact – developing Belfast Harbour and in doing so, enhancing the region's prosperity. But to achieve this will require some changes.

As a Trust Port, Belfast Harbour is currently classified as a public corporation for accounting purposes. This restricts our ability to borrow, as any debt we take on impacts the balance sheet of the Department for Infrastructure. This is despite the fact that our borrowing is privately funded.

Because of this, we limit our borrowing to minimise the impact on public sector infrastructure budgets. But this prevents us

from financing larger projects that could deliver greater benefits.

To meet our ambitious goals, we need the Office of National Statistics to change how they classify Belfast Harbour and the other NI Trust Ports. Purely for their accounting models, we are asking to be classified as private corporations, and we are grateful to the Infrastructure Minister for consulting with the public on this important issue.

Changing our status would bring us in line with Trust Ports in GB and Scotland putting us on a competitive footing. Importantly, this technical change would not alter our governance or our Trust Port status. Once reclassified we will keep reinvesting all post-tax profits for the public good and Belfast Harbour Commissioners will continue to develop the port and estate for the benefit of future generations.

As we engage with our stakeholders about the strategy, we are keen to evidence that Belfast Harbour has a pioneering spirit, burgeoning ambition and brilliant people who are dedicated to making a difference for this city and region. We believe advancing regional prosperity is quite simply the right thing to do.

To download Belfast Harbour's 2025-29 Strategy, visit www.belfast-harbour.co.uk

In today's uncertain world, talent is the ultimate competitive advantage



Barry Smyth,
Founder & CEO,
MCS Group

As businesses try to navigate the most challenging, disruptive and volatile business environment in decades, Northern Ireland's leaders face multiple challenges.

Finding, nurturing and developing great talent, now more than ever, is proving the key difference between success and failure in today's business environment, according to Barry Smyth, Founder & CEO of specialist recruitment business, MCS Group.

Smyth, a recruitment industry veteran of 32 years, has seen it all. From the early 1990s barren economic landscape in NI, the post .com growth of the early 2000s before the crash of 2008, growth in the 2010s before Brexit, Covid and the current volatile economic environment, he and his firm have been helping businesses succeed through talent. However, he believes that today's landscape, including the AI revolution and societal changes seen since Covid, are driving the fastest change in decades, perhaps ever, in the world of work.

"We deal with hundreds of businesses weekly, large and small, across every industry and the challenges they are facing are more pronounced than at any that time across my entire career," says Smyth.

"Economic stagnation, global instability, political decision making and evolving workforce expectations are making economic growth hard

to come by. As a result, companies can no longer rely on a rising tide to lift all boats. Instead, they must seek every possible competitive edge to thrive and we are seeing that the smartest businesses are now seeing people as not just their greatest asset, but also their greatest competitive advantage."

It's not a new idea that the people who power our organisations are critical to success, but companies are waking up to the fact that often talent is one of the more underleveraged advantages in business and that perhaps it's time to think differently.

“We’re seeing brilliant local firms doing smart things: creating progression pathways, building partnerships with local universities, running reverse mentoring schemes, and shifting their EVP [employer value proposition] to genuinely reflect what today’s workforce cares about.”

"Treating talent strategy as a core strategic priority is now helping the most successful businesses navigate disruption and even turn it into opportunity, while others are struggling.

The best firms, those that are successfully moving forward and growing their businesses despite the landscape, are most often those that have cracked the talent conundrum. Meanwhile others remain frustrated with productivity and are struggling to create the organisations they desire. As a result, senior leadership is being challenged in a way that it rarely has been before."

In this flat economic environment, the internal strength of an organisation often determines success. NI's economy was already expected to grow by just 0.9% in 2025, according to economists, but with the Spring statement, that forecast may well be halved. With such marginal headroom, the quality, agility, and engagement of your team can be the difference between treading water and moving forward.

Unemployment is at a historic low of 2.2%, according to the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). With a limited pool of active candidates, great recruitment alongside retention and workforce development initiatives have taken centre stage.

"Great talent has always been in short supply. The gaps in our talent system are structural and global, with all the indicators being that talented people are going to continue to be in short supply," notes Smyth. "If you're not investing in and actively developing the people you already have, you're exposing your business to risk, while creative talent acquisition strategies have never been more critical".

This is where the mindset shift must happen. Today, forward-thinking organisations are moving talent strategy to the heart of business strategy. According to a recent survey, more than 70% of



companies said skills-shortages, competitive pay, staff wellbeing and flexible working are now board-level concerns. Skills shortages in tech, finance and engineering, NI's most strategically important areas, still exist and are getting worse over time.

"The clients who are succeeding are taking bold steps," says Smyth. "They are building internal academies, redesigning roles, recruiting for skills & potential - rather than experience, and investing in leadership development across the board. They are also more open to hybrid working and flexible solutions that help attract the best people."

But this isn't just about reacting to today's pressure. The best businesses are looking ahead. They are asking what their teams will need to look like in two, three or five years' time. With digitalisation accelerating and sustainability moving to the top of the agenda,

skills like data analysis, AI fluency, change management, and ESG expertise are increasingly in demand.

According to Invest NI, around 35% of all job vacancies in Northern Ireland are considered hard to fill due to skills shortages. If firms don't take proactive steps now, that gap will only widen.

This isn't just a big business issue either. While multinational firms in Belfast or those offering fully remote working can gain access to global talent pipelines, SMEs across NI face the same pressures with fewer resources. But that doesn't mean they're powerless.

"We're seeing brilliant local firms doing smart things: creating progression pathways, building partnerships with local universities, running reverse mentoring schemes, and shifting their EVP [employer value proposition] to genuinely

reflect what today's workforce cares about," Smyth explains.

The bottom line is that talent is no longer an HR issue. It's a strategic imperative. Those who treat their workforce as a dynamic, evolving engine of growth are already pulling ahead.

As Smyth concludes: "Leadership today requires a new level of courage. The businesses that commit fully, that invest in their people, figure out how to access the best talent and take some calculated risks, are the ones that will thrive. We're in a new era. The old playbook doesn't work anymore."

In a VUCA world, talent isn't just a differentiator. It's the foundation on which every other advantage is built. Northern Ireland businesses that embrace this reality and act boldly will not just survive this disruption – they will lead through it.





IoD NI leads the way on International Women's Day

Over 550 business leaders gathered at Belfast's Crowne Plaza Hotel for the Institute of Directors Northern Ireland's Women's Leadership conference and to celebrate International Women's Day.

The annual event was once again delivered to a sold-out audience and hosted by The Positive Economist, Susan HayesCulleton. Former winner of The Voice and county Tyrone native, Andrea Begley, formally kicked off proceedings with some of her greatest hits.

Keynote addresses were given by renowned financier, Baroness Helena Morrissey DBE, BBC broadcaster and disability activist, Lucy Edwards, and Jill Gallard, CMG CVO, the former British ambassador to Germany.

Each speaker gave a powerful testimony about their own experiences with leadership across the worlds of finance, politics and media, inspiring those in the audience with how they have overcome personal and professional challenges and risen to the top of their respective fields.

There was also a short video message of support from First Minister, Michelle O'Neill MLA and Deputy First Minister, Emma Little-Pengelly MLA, perhaps the most evident example of female leadership in Northern Ireland.

“Our aim at the IoD is to continue to empower female leaders. We want to see more women occupy positions of leadership in Northern Ireland and smash the glass ceiling once and for all.”

This year's conference also saw the return of the popular onstage business pitch competition, where five brave entrepreneurs vied for the opportunity to win £4,000. Audience members voted Pauline Timoney,

Co-founder of RoutineRoo as the overall winner of the Pitch Perfect competition, impressed by her slick delivery and passion for her product.

RoutineRoo creates storyboards and avatars to help children deal with their routines and make things like bedtime or leaving the house in the morning more relatable and enjoyable. Both Pauline and her co-founder Kristina, come from a tech background and intend to use this funding to develop the next phase of their product, which will target children and young people with additional needs.

Kirsty McManus, National Director of the IoD in NI paid tribute to each of the finalists, the speakers and everyone who contributed so fulsomely to make this year's event a success.

“2025 marks the 18th year of the Women's Leadership Conference and I can think of no better way to celebrate International Women's Day. To have created such an engaged and enthused network of female business leaders is not something we take for granted and it's a huge honour to deliver this event year on year.





"Thanks to the support of our sponsors, particularly the team at Herbert Smith Freehills, this conference grows from strength to strength and I, for one, felt inspired by each and every woman who courageously shared her story with us on stage.

"Our aim at the IoD is to continue to empower female leaders. We want to see more women occupy positions of leadership in Northern Ireland and smash the glass ceiling once and for all. That's why we have a full range of training and programmes available to women and are looking forward to supporting more women on their leadership journey."

Sponsors of this year's event included Danske Bank, Cathedral Eye Clinic, Henry Brothers, SONI, KPMG, NIE Networks and Translink.

Once again, Herbert Smith Freehills returned as the principal sponsor and The Irish News were on board as the official media partner to the conference.

Lisa McLaughlin, Partner at Herbert Smith Freehills, said it was a timely reminder of why it was more important than ever to promote inclusivity and diversity within the workplace.

"At Herbert Smith Freehills we have always believed that promoting diversity better equips our teams for the world in which we operate.

Attending today's conference and hearing so many trailblazing women from a range of different backgrounds detail how they've achieved their goals was a timely reminder to continue with this mission.

"Thanks to the IoD for delivering this fantastic event and to all the speakers and delegates who contributed to the day's success."

Other highlights of the day included a local leaders' panel session and a charity prize draw in aid of The Community Foundation Northern Ireland.

The 2026 Women's Leadership Conference will take place on 6th March 2026 and all details will be published on the IoD NI's website.







The future of sales

Embracing the data-driven approach



Rick MacDonald,
Co-Founder and
Director of Sales
Strategy, Macurial

According to an article from Gartner, *The Future of Sales in 2025*, it is expected that **60% of B2B sales organisations will transition from experience- and intuition-based selling to data-driven selling.**

Well it's now 2025. Have you started the journey to data-driven sales? The article focused on how AI is driving systems to assist sales in doing their jobs more productively. This is backed up by a quote in a recent Salesforce blog, "AI shines with repetitive, time-consuming or data-heavy tasks, helping you work faster and smarter." However the blog also stated, "AI isn't the answer to everything – you must know when to use it."

From my experience I believe there is great opportunity to be gained from a data-driven approach to sales through applying data to improve sales results beyond productivity. Before we get to that, let's take a look back at how sales has progressed through the years.

Sales has evolved significantly over the last 100 years. The relationship selling approach, which sought to develop a long-term relationship with the customer to understand their long-term needs, moved away from the transactional immediate sale. The better the relationship, the more loyalty was given, resulting in more sales.

Fundamental to sales in any era has been uncovering customers' needs and providing solutions for those needs. During the latter half of the 20th Century, many

methodologies were based upon these fundamentals. Solution Selling, introduced by Mike Bosworth in 1980, is a prime example.

In more recent years, the Challenger Sale methodology, developed by Matthew Dixon and Brent Adamson in 2011, became popular. They recognised that customers had far more access to information themselves, and therefore suppliers were brought into the buying cycle much latter than before. This created the need for suppliers to challenge the customer's thinking if they were to be successful. This drove an up-skilling of salespeople and insight selling became a new way to sell, telling the customer an insight that they did not already know.

“ Data-driven sales adds a layer of sophistication to one of the oldest trades in the world. ”

During my time as a Sales Leader, I have utilised all of these methodologies, each with its own successes and challenges. Some came naturally, while others required dedicated training. In the case of Insight Selling, the approach necessitates that the organisation be capable of generating insights. One source of these insights comes from data and analytics. From 2020-2024, I shifted from leading a team of salespeople to building a Sales & Marketing Analytics capability that elevated the organisation to a data-driven approach.

To improve sales results through a data-driven approach, we need to create the analytics capability that understands the business and has the

skills to generate new insights from data. Often an analytics function, if existing, is embedded in IT. I would strongly challenge this model, and advocate that it should be part of the business with an experienced business/sales leader at the helm.

Returning to the central question of how data and analytics can improve performance beyond productivity, let us examine it through the lens of the Macurial Five Pillars of Sales Strategy.

1) Sales Pipeline

If you are focused on new customers acquisition, where are you finding new customers? Is it left to the salesperson's intuition and experience, or do you look at data to develop your ideal customer profile that is then used to develop new leads?

2) Account Management

If you are focused on account management, which customers from your portfolio should you spend most time on? Is it left to the salesperson's intuition and experience, or do you look at data to understand which customers value your offering the most, and will have the potential of bringing the highest lifetime value?

3) Sales Organisation & Tools

If you are organising your sales model, which and how many customers should each salesperson be responsible for? Is it left to intuition and experience, or do you analyse the data to maximize your resources across your sales organisation, while meeting the business objectives?

4) People Management

If you are deciding on the best use of your coaching time, which salespeople do you decide to spend most time with? Is it left to intuition and experience, or do you look at data that demonstrates where each salesperson ranks across the team and coach those who make up the middle group to elevate them to a top performer?

5) Data & Metrics

When preparing for customer meetings, do your salespeople have to search for the data and manipulate the data to present to the customer? Is it an expectation on them to uncover their own insights, or do you serve the salespeople with

all the visualisations and insights that are instantaneously available?

These are just a few examples of why creating a data-driven sales function will enable you to be far more effective and open up new opportunities for growth. The data-driven approach does not replace previous methodologies. People buy from people, you still need relationships, customers always have needs, you still need solutions, customers need to be challenged, you still need insights.

Data-driven sales adds a layer of sophistication to one of the oldest trades in the world. If you have not yet started your journey to a data-driven selling organisation, you need to start now. Data-driven selling is here to stay.

While AI is developing at break-neck speed and will open up multiple opportunities for further efficiencies, there is a real opportunity to create a competitive advantage through building your data and analytics capability.

At Macurial, we understand that companies often need support to tackle their sales challenges. We apply a data-driven approach through the Macurial Five Pillars of Sales Strategy. Get in touch to learn how we can help your sales organization overcome its challenges and achieve successful business outcomes.

Visit us at: www.macurial.com, email: rick@macurial.com, tel: 07717894300





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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 engage with our IoD Northern Ireland community.

To have your profile featured contact:
aoife.mccreesh@iod.com

MEMBER PROFILE

David Cooke

Intelligent Project Management NI Ltd

David has over twenty-five years' experience within the built environment. He is a consummate senior management professional with a demonstrable record of successfully managing and delivering challenging and complex programmes and projects through their entire lifecycle. Sectors include hotels, logistics, pharma, modular offsite, healthcare, high-end residential, education, infrastructure and commercial projects in a client, client-facing, consultancy and contracting environment.

David has worked with globally recognised clients such as Amazon and Lendlease across the island of Ireland and UK.



His core skills are programme and project management. However, over the past eleven years, running his own Project Management consultancy, David has added skills such as business development, marketing, relationship management and maintaining and bringing in new business for clients and his own business.

David is a full member of the Association for Project Management (MAPM) and is presently going through a professional review to become a Chartered Construction Manager with the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB).

MEMBER PROFILE**Derek McCracken****DJ McCracken**

A seasoned executive with over 25 years of dynamic leadership experience, Derek has excelled in driving improvement across industries ranging from aerospace and medical to marine and construction. Known for his proven expertise in interim management, Derek has successfully led over 30 senior leadership

assignments, consistently delivering strategic solutions and remarkable results in complex, high-pressure environments.

Derek's unique strength lies in his ability to guide organisations through critical periods of growth and change. Whether overseeing strategic initiatives or leading teams through large-scale projects and market expansions, his leadership has been instrumental in shaping business success. Recently, Derek launched Leadership on Call, a cutting-edge coaching,



mentoring, and advisory service designed to support busy leaders in achieving lasting personal and professional growth.

MEMBER PROFILE**Fiona Emmett****Kimberly-Clark**

Fiona re-joined Kimberly-Clark in October 2024 to lead the Global Growth agenda for International Family & Professional Care. Fiona previously worked for KC for eight years from 2012 to 2019: four years as Regional Sector Leader for Baby Care in EMEA and four years as Global Sector Leader for KC's Global Adult & Feminine Care business. Prior to re-joining KC, Fiona worked

for PepsiCo, where she served as Senior Vice President/General Manager of West Europe Snacks, and latterly as Chief Marketing Officer for PepsiCo's UK & Ireland business.

Fiona has a long and successful track record in marketing and business leadership previously working in Procter & Gamble and Mars Inc. Fiona is from Belfast, Northern Ireland, and was educated at Oxford University, where she obtained a BA, MA (Oxon) in Modern History. She also serves as the volunteer Chair of the Northern Ireland Chartered Institute of Management (CMI).

**MEMBER PROFILE****Lana Moore****Action Renewables**

Lana Moore joined Action Renewables in 2018 having previously worked as a Branch Manager and Mortgage Advisor in the Banking sector. Lana has recently been appointed as the Head of Charity Delivery. This role will see her drive forward the Charity PV Support programme, which provides funding for the installation of solar panels on

non-profit organisations and local and overseas charitable projects. She'll also be responsible for the implementation of the new Action Renewables Network – a renewable energy platform for delivering and supporting the pathway to decarbonisation across Northern Ireland. Lana has over six years' experience in renewable energy with Action Renewables, previously heading up the microgeneration team and overseeing the annual data submissions to Ofgem and power suppliers for over 6,000 energy clients.

**MEMBER PROFILE****Catherine Shannon****Northern Ireland Civil Service**

Catherine is an experienced HR Leader who has worked over 20 years in senior public sector roles. In her current role she has responsibility for a wide range of HR service delivery functions including resourcing/recruitment, employee relations, learning and leadership development, strategic litigation, pensions and Occupational Health. Catherine is leading an ambitious

transformation of these functions to improve the way NICSHR delivers high quality HR services which will contribute to a more efficient and effective civil service.

Previously, Catherine worked in Belfast Health and Social Care Trust in several roles, including working with clinical and non-clinical leaders at all levels. Catherine is a Fellow Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (FCIPD) and holds Master's degrees in Public Health Administrations and HR Management.



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Upstream secures £150m funding for local businesses

Belfast-headquartered asset-based lending (ABL) specialist, Upstream, has successfully completed a management buyout (MBO) of the business, bringing it back into full local ownership.

The MBO team, led by original Upstream founder, Judith Totten MBE, has secured an agreement to buy the business back from the US securitisation fund, which acquired Upstream in June 2021.

Founded in June 2011 as a boutique SME funding provider, Upstream has evolved into a specialist leading structured ABL lender, challenging the mainstream market with a comprehensive and tailored offering for SME and mid-corporate business owners.

The business has successfully scaled tenfold post-Covid, and this new step assures that this rapid growth trajectory, and evolution, will continue with a focus on acquisition and product diversification across the UK and Ireland.

Pollen Street Capital has provided a new £150 million facility to accelerate the ambitious and sustainable expansion of the business.

Led by industry experts with deep sector experience, Upstream has

a dedicated team of receivables and structured ABL specialists, a cohort which will grow further this year and into 2025, creating new employment opportunities within its growing team.

Upstream has built a reputation for flexibility and agility in providing tailored solutions to business owners.

The company guarantees local businesses access to an autonomous, local decision-maker which understands the importance of swift and clear feedback, coupled with guidance and direction in structuring the most appropriate funding facility.

Upstream Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Judith Totten said: "This significant new partnership with Pollen Street Capital will give us the bandwidth and fire power to support more ambitious entrepreneurs, with a much broader service offering.

"This MBO brings the Upstream business back under the full control of the local team, positioning us for growth through acquisition and diversification into new markets and services across the working capital, structured ABL and receivables spectrum. We remain sector-agnostic, but now have the capital for larger structured finance deals and a full ABL suite of facilities, securing our place as the 'go to' for growth funding.

"Amid economic headwinds and with traditional lenders adopting a more cautious approach, our relationship with Pollen Street Capital could not come at a better time.

"Supported by Pollen Street, we look forward to growing our footprint – and our team – across the UK and Ireland to help our clients achieve economic excellence. Our clear strategy now is to drive for scale.

"Pollen Street Capital's partnership ethos aligns with our goal to support ambitious and visionary business owners."

Connor Marshall-Mckie, Investment Director at Pollen Street Capital said: "We are excited to work with Judith and the Upstream team on this new facility. Upstream have delivered impressive growth and strong performance in their structured ABL product, a perfect fit for our senior asset-backed credit strategy. We look forward to working with the team further scaling the business across the UK and Ireland."

Upstream Operations Director, Bill Hichens adds: "The timing of this announcement could not be better. The SME and mid-corporate funding landscape has changed dramatically, accelerated by global economic instability.

Businesses now require multi-layered funding approaches to maximise growth potential."





Time	Destination	Flight	Status
14:05	LEEDS BRADFORD	BA8872	Scheduled
14:15	LONDON GATWICK	EZY890	Scheduled
14:15	EAST MIDLANDS	EI3680	Scheduled
14:25	MANCHESTER	BA8904	Scheduled
15:05	LONDON HEATHROW	BA1417	Scheduled
15:15	EDINBURGH	EI3656	Scheduled
15:25	BIRMINGHAM	EI3644	Scheduled
17:05	LONDON CITY	EI8357	Scheduled
17:20	AMSTERDAM	KL950	Scheduled
17:20	SOUTHAMPTON	EI3606	Scheduled
17:30	LIVERPOOL	EZY534	Scheduled
17:30	LONDON HEATHROW	BA1429	Scheduled
17:30	BIRMINGHAM	BA8896	Scheduled
17:30	MANCHESTER	BA8906	Scheduled

Belfast City Airport flies high as **UK's most punctual airport 2024**

Belfast City Airport has been confirmed as the UK's Most Punctual Airport for the second year in a row, according to the latest data from the Civil Aviation Authority.

The airport continues to lead the way with an exceptional on-time arrivals and departures performance, ranking top across the 25 major UK airports surveyed.

Mark Beattie, Chief Operating Officer at Belfast City Airport, commented:

"At Belfast City Airport, we are dedicated to offering our passengers a seamless and stress-free experience from the moment they arrive.

"This means travellers can enjoy the fastest start to their journey, spending less time in queues and more time relaxing before their flight.

"Being confirmed as the UK's most punctual airport is a testament to our team, who work hard to maximise performance and efficiencies, and it's their commitment to excellence that has earned Belfast City Airport this accolade for a second year"

"We understand that time matters and are proud to provide the efficiency and convenience that our passengers expect, all

while maintaining the highest standards of safety and service.

"Being confirmed as the UK's most punctual airport is a testament to our team, who work hard to maximise performance and efficiencies, and it's their commitment to excellence that has earned Belfast City Airport this accolade for a second year."

Located just five minutes from Belfast city centre, Belfast City Airport is a quick and seamless travel option for passengers.

It currently operates routes to must-see destinations across the UK, Europe and beyond in partnership with its five airline partners, Aer Lingus, British Airways, easyJet, KLM and Loganair, and charter partners Royal Caribbean, Travel Solutions and TUI.

For more information, visit belfastcityairport.com

Spring Statement 2025

Key Takeaways



Nicola Averell,
Associate
Director, Sumer
Northern Ireland

The Chancellor delivered her Spring Statement on 26 March 2025, together with revised forecasts from the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR). Rachel Reeves focused mainly on cuts to welfare spending (approximately £14 billion) to meet the Government's fiscal targets and cover the costs of high-tech defence.

The Statement also concentrated on long-term economic growth and financial stability, writes Nicola Averell, Associate Director at Sumer Northern Ireland. As promised by the Government, there were no further tax increases, however, measures to help counteract tax evasion were addressed. The Chancellor referred to a new HMRC reward scheme for informants, which will be launched this year to target serious non-compliance by large corporates and high net worth individuals, as well as offshore and avoidance schemes. The new scheme will reward 'whistle blowers' with compensation linked to a percentage of any tax recouped due to their actions.

Unfortunately, there was no rolling back on the significant changes announced in the Autumn Budget last year which impact UK Inheritance Tax and National Insurance.

Penalties for late payment of income tax under self-assessment are set to double to 10% from 1 April 2025, with further rises in the penalty the longer the tax remains unpaid.

“With a number of the already announced changes kicking in from April 2026 and April 2027, now is the time to review your affairs and plan ahead.”

HMRC's Making Tax Digital (MTD) for Income Tax regime will now include sole traders and landlords with income above £20,000 from April 2028, an acceleration to the timeframe of what had previously been expected. MTD for Income Tax is being introduced in phases from April 2026 for relevant self-employed individuals and landlords. In addition, HMRC has now told taxpayers that they will have to use third party software to submit quarterly returns, as HMRC's free service will not be available.

In relation to 'Research and Development' (R&D) tax relief which provides tax breaks to companies that work on innovative

projects in science and technology, the Government has launched a consultation. The purpose of this is to seek views on widening the use of advance clearances for R&D tax relief to reduce error and fraud, provide certainty to businesses and improve the customer experience. The consultation, which launched on 26 March, runs until 26 May 2025.

Families are liable for the High Income Child Benefit Charge (HICBC) where at least one parent earns more than £60,000 annually. Currently, once they are earning above the threshold, if claiming child benefit, they must repay some or all of it by completing a self-assessment tax return. However, from summer 2025, parents will be able to report their child benefit through a new digital service and opt to pay the HICBC directly through PAYE, without having to register for self-assessment.

Whilst there have been no announcements in relation to increased tax rates in this Spring Statement, there is a lot of speculation that these will be unveiled in the next Autumn Budget. With a number of the already announced changes kicking in from April 2026 and April 2027, now is the time to review your affairs and plan ahead. For those seeking guidance in relation to how the most recent Budget and Spring Statement may impact you personally or your business, please reach out to the tax team at Sumer Northern Ireland.

Visit: sumerni.co.uk or email: caroline.keenan@sumerni.co.uk or nicola.verell@sumerni.co.uk.



Employee ownership at S&W created Shared success



Anthony McVeigh,
CEO,
S&W Wholesale

There comes a time in every business owner's journey when thoughts turn to legacy and succession planning.

For those who have built a company from the ground up and overseen all aspects of its growth, it's a big thing to decide when the time is right to hand over the reins.

Most business leaders in this position will consider three options – hand over to a natural successor, go for a straightforward buyout, or go down the merger and acquisitions road. All three routes are perfectly viable and while each will have their merits, there are also drawbacks to consider. What if there isn't an obvious successor in place? Will a buyout compromise the identity of a firm? Or what happens to loyal colleagues when an international firm acquires a local, indigenous business.

These are questions and scenarios myself and the senior leadership team at S&W Wholesale poured over back in 2022. No one option seemed like the right fit for our business and our 300 plus employees, until we began to consider becoming an Employee Ownership Trust (EOT).

Truthfully, little was known about the business model beyond the fact that it was the 'John Lewis' approach, but after a significant amount of research, the benefits of this structure became harder to ignore.

S&W has over one hundred years of legacy behind it and the firm has played a valued role in the local wholesale and retail community

and so any succession plans had to protect what had been created overtime. The company was widely regarded as being 'people-first' and the more we learned about employee ownership, the more we saw how closely it aligned with our existing values. It sounds like a simple idea, but this mantra has been the driving force of our journey with employee ownership, and the basis on which we decided to commit to the structural shift.

“ Prospective hires are genuinely interested in what that means, and existing colleagues see a long-term future with the firm. ”

Like the majority of businesses that adopt an employee ownership model, S&W opted to establish an Employee Ownership Trust. This allowed for day-to-day control to remain in the hands of the current leadership team and meant that customers and suppliers saw no visible change to operations. It did however, shift control of the overall business from private ownership to a trust, which now has responsibility for managing shares of the business on behalf of the firm's employees.

At the time S&W were seen as pioneers of the approach, and while it wasn't the first firm in Northern Ireland to become employee-owned, we were certainly the biggest. So, three years on from the move, what has the impact been?

Despite hearing so many assuring stories from firms in GB who were now operating as EOTs, we still underestimated how positive and wide-reaching the benefits would be.

Almost immediately the move created a genuine sense of shared purpose. There has been a real shift in mindsets when everyone knows they're not only employees but are fully invested in growing the business. It has fostered a stronger sense of accountability and pride across the board and there is a noticeable lift in engagement and initiative. Colleagues feel more empowered to speak up, suggest improvements, and take ownership of the work they do.

This new mentality has translated directly into improved performance in almost every area of the business. Productivity is up, the firm is more agile, more collaborative, more innovative and more democratic.

From a talent perspective, it has also made S&W a more attractive place to work. In an increasingly competitive market, being an employee-owned business sets us apart. Prospective hires are genuinely interested in what that means, and existing colleagues see a long-term future with the firm.

Financially, the model has supported sustainable growth. Because decisions are made through a longer lens with true value in mind and not just short-term profits, the business feels more stable, more focused, and more resilient. At a time of economic uncertainty, this has been an effective navigation tool. Profits are reinvested sensibly, and everyone shares in the rewards of success.

Of course, the transition did not come without its challenges, and we were thankful to have support from another wholesaler, AG Parfett's, who had undergone a similar

transition to an employee-owned model for their business in 2008. Outside of this, however, there was a limited amount of information available from firms in NI.

Thankfully the picture today is a much brighter one, largely thanks to the establishment of a new business body, Employee Ownership Ireland. EOI is on a mission to create 10,000 employee owners by 2030, and I am proud to take up a position on the newly formed board.

Our goal is to create a community of employee owners in Northern Ireland, to support one another on this journey and make the

transition to EO a viable business model. Thanks to the support from the DLD Fund, we are in a position to offer free membership to interested businesses and a number of fully funded feasibility studies for those seriously considering making the switch. Each month we are generating more and more momentum and it's been great to have such vociferous support from the Department of the Economy and the minister who sees and understands the economic benefits this model presents, particularly when it comes to retaining local business.

As we enter year 4 of our EOT journey, we're proud to say that employee ownership has reinforced who S&W are at our core and cement the firm's legacy, rather than erode it. Our values are embedded more deeply in how we operate day to day and qualities such as transparency, equitability and shared success are no longer just aspirations; they are a lived reality.



Member news

Power NI expands renewable offering for customers with solar panel installation service

Northern Ireland's leading provider of electricity is set to launch a new Solar Photovoltaic product for customers who want to generate their own renewable power.

The Power NI initiative is delivered in collaboration with Refresh NI. Refresh NI is a local business whose management team that has thirty years' experience providing energy-efficient home improvements and includes two IoD Chartered Directors (Nicola Cherry and Jack Peel). The initiative marks an important step in encouraging more homes to reduce CO2 emissions and lower their energy costs.

Power NI's solar PV offering guarantees an affordable

and eco-friendly solution for homeowners looking to reduce their carbon footprint and energy bills, while also benefiting from seamless installation and comprehensive support.

"At Power NI, we are committed to helping our customers adopt renewable energy solutions," explained William Steele, Power NI's Director of Customer Solutions. "We are evolving to be more than just your electricity supplier, becoming your one-stop-partner for all your energy-saving needs. Our new solar panel and battery packages are customisable, meaning that there is something to suit every home, helping customers make savings as well as environmental benefits."

He added: "We have been working with Refresh NI for several years to bring customers a range of market leading Electric Vehicle home chargers, with seamless and affordable installation.

"This exciting phase of Power NI's successful partnership with Refresh NI will allow us to help customers in Northern Ireland on the next stage of their energy transition journey."

Solar panels work by capturing the sun's energy and converting this into electricity to use in a home, but even when the weather is dull or overcast, they can still generate energy.

Refresh NI brings extensive experience and a proven track record in delivering high-quality solar installations. "We are delighted to work with Power NI on this important initiative," said Bill Cherry, Managing Director at Refresh NI.

"Our shared goal is to make solar energy more accessible and affordable for everyone. With our installation expertise and Power NI's decades of excellence in customer experience, we are confident that this partnership will deliver exceptional value to customers," continued Bill.

Power NI is now offering the new solar product line with tailored solutions designed to meet the varying energy needs and budgets of each and every customer. Anyone interested can learn more about solar panels and request a free consultation via Power NI's website.

For more information, please visit powerni.co.uk/solar



National Museums NI publishes Corporate Strategy 2025-2030

National Museums NI has launched its **Corporate Strategy 2025-2030**, emphasising its role as a cornerstone of society in Northern Ireland.

With its four museums – Ulster Museum, Ulster Folk Museum, Ulster American Folk Park and Ulster Transport Museum – National Museums NI is committed to being a catalyst for positive change, action and dialogue to help deal with some of the challenges faced by society today. Through this



strategy, the organisation aims to focus on four key areas of impact: Identity, Peacebuilding, Environment and Innovation – all aligned with the Northern Ireland Programme for Government's missions of People, Peace, Planet, and Prosperity.

Chief Executive of National Museums NI, Kathryn Thomson, added: "We are excited for this new chapter for National Museums NI, with ambitious plans that can strengthen our impact and secure a bright

future for our organisation. In a world that is constantly changing, our museums are forums for new conversations, new ideas and new ways to understand each other and the world we live in.

"Museums have the power to drive social change, and as custodians of over 1.4 million objects that belong to the people of Northern Ireland, we embrace our responsibility to share these stories in ways that inspire future generations."

Belfast lawyer appointed global DEI chair of Lewis Silkin

A partner in Lewis Silkin's Belfast office has been announced as the new chair of diversity, equity and inclusion for the firm covering Great Britain, Northern Ireland, Ireland and Hong Kong.

Paul Gillen is a partner in the Employment team in Lewis Silkin's Belfast office.

Having spent over 12 years in HR management and now over 15 years as an employment lawyer, Paul has developed a real passion for DE&I, both in terms of a key business strategy but also to ensure that businesses create a welcoming culture of inclusion, where each and every person can be their true self at work.

Looking forward to building on the DE&I successes at Lewis Silkin, Paul Gillen says, "We are at a point where DE&I has come

into sharp focus globally, and as chair of DE&I for Lewis Silkin I am committed to ensuring that DE&I remains central to the development and success of businesses and is showing care and compassion for all employees and he will continue to work with businesses in Northern Ireland to achieve true equity and inclusion.

He continues, "Lewis Silkin has experienced significant growth over the past five years but it testament to a strong culture that we have not lost our identity along the way. We pride our values of bravery and kindness, which epitomise who we are. Key to this is our people and our approach to DE&I ensures that each and every person is valued for what they uniquely bring to our team and can shine by being them."

Paul has just completed a three-year term as DE&I Ambassador for the Institute of Directors in Northern Ireland and has been involved with many DE&I initiatives, including working alongside Working with Pride, and Lawyers for Pride.



"One of my proudest achievements so far has been in my role within Businesses for Love Equality in advocating for equal marriage in Northern Ireland," Mr Gillen adds, "I have been really impressed at the value that NI businesses put on DE&I and the initiatives being undertaken to make organisations truly inclusive, and I look forward to developing this even further."

Software for all: Software NI and Workplus partner in female-focused apprenticeship project

Software NI has partnered with early talent experts Workplus to create more apprenticeship opportunities in the software industry, with the ambition to grow the number of female apprentices in the sector.

The two organisations are set to embark on an 18-month project designed to create more apprenticeships within the software industry, aiming to have 40 additional female apprentices in software roles by September 2026.

The project is being funded by the Department for the Economy - one of six successful bids awarded through the Apprenticeship Inclusion Challenge Fund.

Economy Minister Dr Caoimhe Archibald said: "My Department's Apprenticeship Inclusion Challenge Fund will help make our workforce more diverse and inclusive whilst increasing the supply of skills to employers right across the north. The project being delivered by Workplus will encourage more women into software apprenticeships, where they are currently underrepresented."

Richard Kirk, CEO of Workplus, said, "We are excited to be embarking on this collaborative, inclusive project with Software NI. As well coordinated apprentice recruitment campaigns, this project has been designed to support employers and help them better understand the 'what' and 'how' of software apprenticeships. On the applicant side, 'Software for All' will involve extensive engagement, educating and



informing schools, pupils, career-changers, community groups and parents about the fantastic opportunities available in this thriving industry."

Neil Hutcheson, CEO of Software NI, said, "This is an important project for Software NI in building awareness of the apprenticeships available, specifically for women. As well as creating more accessible job opportunities, this project also serves as a valuable education and engagement initiative allowing us to showcase the stories of women already in the sector, the careers available and to help address some software sector misconceptions that may exist. It will form a key part of our overall workstreams across schools, skills, sales and the future of the sector itself."

The software industry in Northern Ireland is one of the fastest growing tech centres in Europe. It contributes £1.7 billion annually and employs around 23,000 people across approximately 2,200 businesses.

The project will begin with an employer event on 13th May 2025, with the first apprenticeship recruitment campaign taking place in August 2025.

Software NI is a membership organisation for the software industry. Its '50 and 5 by 35' vision is to accelerate and double the software job footprint in NI to 50,000 jobs by 2035, at which point it is estimated the software industry will contribute around £5 billion in Gross Value Added to the local economy.

Workplus has developed bespoke software for early talent recruitment and specialises in creating collaborative and coordinated apprenticeship recruitment campaigns.

For further information or to register for the employer event, visit www.workplus.app

Gray's Communications announces full medical scholarship at Ulster University

In a significant move to invest in the future of the Northwest and support local talent, Gray's Communications has announced a new scholarship to fully fund a medical degree at Ulster University's Derry-Londonderry (Magee) campus.

Covering the full cost of tuition and living expenses for the recipient throughout their studies, the scholarship aims to encourage aspiring doctors from the Northwest to study and build their careers locally. This initiative supports the region's projected growth, driven by progress in both the local City Deal and the expansion of the Magee Campus. The investment not only highlights the growing importance of the campus for the Northwest region but also aims to help address the challenges of medical recruitment and retention locally.

Gray's Communications, a full-service marketing, communications, and design agency based in the heart of Derry's city centre, has a longstanding track record of supporting regional growth. Over the past eight years, the company has contributed over £5 million to the local economy through salaries and contractor fees, providing a steady source of income that has helped sustain local businesses and create jobs.

Chris Gray, Chief Executive of Gray's Communications, said: "Derry has always had a wealth of talent and potential, but too often, our young people feel they need to leave to find opportunities elsewhere. By funding this scholarship, we're making a clear statement that there is a future here, and we are committed to retaining the region's brightest minds. This initiative also closely aligns with the NI Executive's call for universities and private businesses to collaborate in building a stronger society. We're proud to play our part in delivering that vision."

Malachy O'Neill, Ulster University's Director of Regional Engagement praised Gray's Communications for its leadership and vision. He said: "Gray's Communications shares our vision for a pipeline of

medical talent for the Northwest and we would like to offer our sincere thanks for their generous support for one of our graduate entry medical students on our Derry-Londonderry campus. This scholarship will help a future medic to overcome the financial barrier that some face in realising their vocation in medicine. This announcement is particularly apt as we prepare to graduate our first cohort of doctors this summer, many of whom are going on to further training posts in the region.

"If you are an offer holder, or if you know an offer holder who might meet the criteria, then please encourage them to apply for this scholarship."

The scholarship announcement is part of a broader corporate and social responsibility programme being delivered by Gray's Communications.

The company became one of the first private businesses in their industry to become a fully accredited living wage employer in 2023 and have regularly supported a wide range of local charities and initiatives since their inception.



Dale Farm raises £65,000 for Cancer Focus

Well done to IoD members Dale Farm who have raised a fantastic total of £65,000 for Cancer Focus Northern Ireland over the past year through the support of their employees, farmers and suppliers.



Coca-Cola HBC Ireland & Northern Ireland has completed the acquisition of BDS Vending Solutions Ltd

BDS Vending, founded in 1993, is a well-established food and drink vending services business in Ireland, with a fleet of approximately 2,000 vending machines.

This transaction is part of Coca-Cola HBC's strategy to enhance its route to market and direct-to-consumer capabilities and will provide new opportunities across its well-rounded snacks, cold and hot beverage portfolio.

Simon Fitzpatrick, General Manager of Coca-Cola HBC Ireland and Northern Ireland commented:

"BDS Vending together with Coca-Cola HBC Ireland and Northern Ireland has the potential to transform the vending industry on the island of Ireland. This acquisition will see our business bring agile ways of operating to the market, harness innovative technology, while also building capabilities in our route to market.

"In turn, we will offer our customers greater choice through our 24/7 portfolio and further enhance our consumer experience. We look forward to welcoming our new colleagues to the Coca-Cola HBC Group."





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8-10 October 2025
The Merchant Hotel, Belfast



**Strategy for
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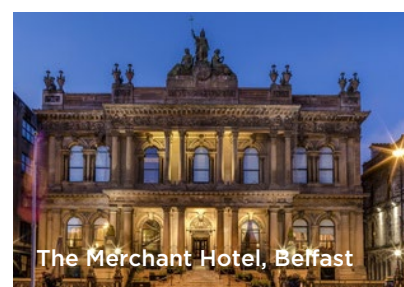
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Please contact
heather.white@iod.com





Spotlight on events

IoD NI Business 'Talk & Tour'
at MJM Marine Wednesday 12th
February 2025 ^ v >







Non-Executive Directors Breakfast with IoD, A&L Goodbody & Deloitte

The Post Office Scandal: a failure of governance

Wednesday 26th February 2025 ^ v >







IoD NI & EY: Finance Director Forum Breakfast

with guest speakers,
Tim Cush, EY Ireland
Technology Consulting
Partner & Head of
Intelligent Automation &
Katie Burns, EY Partner,
Finance Transformation

Thursday 27th February
2025 ^ v >





IoD NI Business 'Talk & Tour' at Hutchinson

Wednesday 26th
March 2025

^ v >





**IoD NI & RSM:
Emerging
Leaders
Launch - 'The
art of doing
business'**

Thursday 3rd
April 2025

^ v >





“ RSM were delighted to host the initial Emerging Leaders event at our new offices in The Ewart in Belfast.

It was hugely encouraging to see so many leaders in attendance and the discussions together of how we can build and maintain our networks for mutual support and benefit.

Leadership can be an isolating role and the key message from the panel discussion was the importance of networks in ensuring we are consistently growing and developing as individual leaders and seeing success in the businesses we represent. ”

*Richard Gardiner,
Managing Partner, RSM Belfast*





IoD NI & Queen's University Belfast CDir & Fellows Lunch

Thursday 10th April
2025 ^ v >





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