

Investin

The Corporate Magazine of Invest Northern Ireland

Issue 18 November 2009

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Northern
Ireland
Building Locally
Competing Globally



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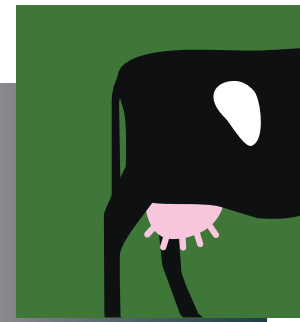
The Independent Review of Economic Policy

Find out what Invest NI can do for your business at www.investni.com

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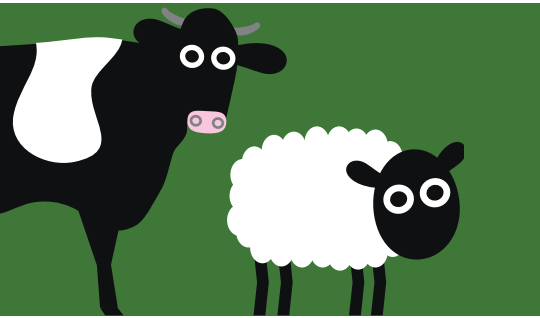
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Moving forward



Alastair Hamilton
Chief Executive

Several significant events have occurred in the last couple of months that will help to shape the future of the economy in Northern Ireland. Foremost in our minds is the Independent Review of Economic Policy that was published at the end of September. There have been many column inches filled with debate following its recommendations and in the centre pages of this issue we give our response to the findings and outline the way forward.

The NI Energy and Environment Conference 09, which took place in October, was the biggest renewable energy conference ever to be held in Northern Ireland. I'm delighted to say it was a great success with over 650 business people attending and very positive feedback received. On pages 24 and 25 you'll get a flavour of the stimulating masterclass that opened the conference and highlighted the huge potential of the renewables sector.

In this issue, as usual, we showcase the successes of our client companies, big and small, that are winning contracts around the world by differentiating themselves and responding to changing global demands. Whether designing

a guitar, a piece of software or a break-through pharmaceutical product, at the heart of their success is innovation.

Innovation also extends to the world of marketing and corporate communications and on page 9 we ask the question, 'Should you be tweeting?'. As social media becomes embedded as a tool of mass communication, it is timely to consider whether it is an appropriate medium for business or just a passing trend.

Increasing Northern Ireland's level of exports remains a principal objective for Invest NI and in this issue we highlight the opportunities in Hungary and Slovenia. We will be running a trade mission to these countries in January, which will offer a chance to explore the potential of these markets. Our support for exporters includes our highly successful mentoring scheme, which is also featured in this issue.

In the coming months the Board and our senior management team will be reviewing the output of the public consultation on the Independent Review of Economic Policy, together with the feedback that I have gathered from staff, clients and stakeholders over the past few months, before deciding on our approach to the future. But whatever changes may result, our focus will remain firmly on delivering a quality service that meets the needs of our clients.

NEWS

FIAT deal for conversion company

Dungannon company Premier Vehicle Solutions (PVS) has secured a major deal with Fiat Ireland, potentially worth £2.1 million, with help from Invest NI.

PVS specialises in the conversion of taxis, minibuses and vans from a number of global vehicle manufacturers so the vehicles comply with accessibility legislation.

Invest NI support enabled the company to develop the capability to convert a specific Fiat model into a wheelchair accessible vehicle. Within three months, this resulted in the significant contract to convert and initially supply 50 of these taxis for Fiat Ireland.

Bill Scott, Invest NI's Director of Engineering and Business Services, says: "PVS has demonstrated a high level of entrepreneurship and a clear focus on product and process development, demonstrating the importance of innovation for business success."

Kevin Quinn, Managing Director of PVS, said: "Thanks to Invest NI's help, our potential market is much larger as we can now convert vehicles to meet required specifications in the Republic of Ireland and Europe. This contract represents a real breakthrough for our company."



>> Pictured are (front l-r) Michael McClintock and Aoibhin O'Neill, two graduates currently taking part in the Options Programme, (at back) Brian Conlon, First Derivatives, and Enterprise Minister Arlene Foster

New 'Options' for young talent

First Derivatives in Newry has invested £2 million in a programme that offers recent graduates experience of international client assignments and internal company projects. The company's 'Options' programme, supported by Invest NI, gives candidates the opportunity to work alongside experts in a range of fields, including capital markets, finance, IT, business consulting, marketing and operations.

First Derivatives is a leading global services provider in the capital markets technology sector, with offices in New

York, London, Stockholm, Sydney, Singapore and Newry.

Brian Conlon, Chief Executive Officer at First Derivatives, says: "At First Derivatives we really do value our employees and consider them our strongest asset. By offering successful individuals a fast track consulting programme to develop their skills and accelerate their career development in the international financial services industry, the Options programme will play an important role in ensuring that we continue to recruit and retain the most talented people."

Major contract for Fermanagh company



>> Enterprise Minister Arlene Foster with George White and son Rodney, joint managing directors of the company

Fermanagh company, G R White & Son Ltd, has secured an export contract worth £1.3 million. The family-run company provides electrical installation services to the industrial, commercial and domestic sectors and has recently diversified into electrical design.

The contract will see it provide the complete electrical services for the headquarters building of the Edinburgh tram system project. The company anticipates that it will lead to the creation of additional jobs.

G R White & Son recently received support from Invest NI to help with

the recruitment of a quantity surveyor and to increase its marketing activities.

George White, Director, G R White & Son, says: "Our strategy going forward is to focus our resources on developing the design and installation of high specification electrical services, particularly for the Republic of Ireland and Scotland markets.

"The support we received from Invest NI was both valuable and timely, enabling us to further develop our range of services and raise the profile of the company in our target markets."

NEWS

Radox invests £9 million

Radox Laboratories is investing £9.2 million in research and development. Invest NI, through its Grant for R&D programme, has offered £3.1 million support.

The company specialises in the development of sophisticated chemical diagnostic tests and devices, primarily targeted at hospital, clinical and veterinary laboratories worldwide. The investments will support R&D across three distinct projects that will investigate the latest diagnostics solutions.

The company employs over 500 people in Northern Ireland and a further 190 overseas in a network of sales and distribution offices serving more than 100 countries.

Founder and Managing Director of Radox, Dr Peter Fitzgerald, says: "More than one third of our staff based here in Northern Ireland are engaged in key R&D activities. This helps us continuously refine and add to our range of diagnostic tools and, crucially, enables us to retain our existing clients and attract new ones."

NEWS

Eastern promise

In September, Enterprise Minister Arlene Foster led an Invest NI trade mission to India visiting New Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore.

Twenty-six companies went on the mission. Invest NI's offices in Mumbai and Belfast arranged meetings for them with prospective Indian companies.

Commenting on the mission, the Minister said: "The growth in the Indian economy holds a great deal of promise for trade and investment opportunities and the potential to attract more Indian visitors to Northern Ireland."

During the mission Arlene Foster visited New Delhi-based HCL, which has been operating in Northern Ireland since 2002 and currently employs around 2,000 people at Belfast and Armagh on inbound and outbound call centre activities.

Invest NI Chief Executive, Alastair Hamilton, who was also on the mission, toured Inpac Delta, Belfast-based Delta Print and Packaging's joint venture packaging business in India.

Norbev wins contracts worth £30 million



Enterprise Minister Arlene Foster has announced that Norbev in Ballymena has won contracts worth more than £30 million, including a substantial contract from Aldi, the leading German-owned discount store group. Norbev, an Invest NI client company, is a specialist in contract bottling for soft drinks and is celebrating its 90th anniversary this year.

David Halliday, Norbev's Managing Director, said: "As well as enabling us to strengthen our partnerships with major developers of soft drinks, the contracts are an important endorsement of our

technical capability and strong customer focus that underpins our overall business approach.

"Invest NI was very supportive and helped us to reach the right buyers in major soft drinks companies. Invest NI's Food Marketing Advisors played a key role in bringing potential customers to our bottling plant in Ballymena."

>> Pictured at Norbev's premises in Ballymena are Enterprise Minister Arlene Foster and David Halliday, Norbev's Managing Director

R&D success for Norbrook

Newry based pharmaceutical company, **Norbrook Laboratories**, has launched a new product expected to take the lead within a US\$1 billion global market. The product, called **Closamectin Pour-on Solution**, provides the international agriculture sector with a treatment for a range of internal parasites that impact severely on the health and productivity of dairy and beef herds.

The product, which combines effective disease control with ease of use, was

developed over five years with £210,000 of R&D support from Invest NI.

Congratulating the company on the launch of the new product, Enterprise Minister Arlene Foster said: "Research and development activities have been integral to Norbrook's global success and in securing its reputation for clinical excellence. With this new product Norbrook has once again set the bar for research excellence in the veterinary pharmaceutical sector."

NEWS



>> A £500,000 development of five-star tourist cottages, situated near the Giant's Causeway, has achieved a successful first summer of trading thanks to support from Invest NI. Pictured outside Bayview Farm Cottages are Kevin McCann, Invest NI's Director of Transport, Construction and Tourism and Lorna Boyce, the cottages' General Manager

Tourist cottages' summer success

Established with support from Invest NI, a development of five-star self-catering cottages close to the Giant's Causeway achieved almost 100 per cent occupancy in its first summer trading.

The three high quality cottages were converted from an original 19th-century farm courtyard in a £500,000 investment. They have proved popular with visitors from across the UK, the Republic of Ireland, continental Europe and the USA.

Kevin McCann, Invest NI's Director of Transport, Construction and Tourism,

says: "Bayview Farm Cottages is meeting an identified market opportunity for high quality self-catering accommodation in this part of Northern Ireland, and this is reflected by the cottages' impressive early success."

Lorna Boyce, General Manager of Bayview Farm Cottages, says: "With international interest in Northern Ireland currently very high, we felt that it was an excellent time to take forward the venture and the support and advice of Invest NI has been invaluable in making the cottages a reality."

'Green' energy system

Larne company Biomass CHP is developing a revolutionary renewable energy generator with global market potential, as part of a £600,000 investment supported by Invest NI.

Biomass CHP develops technologies that convert wood chippings into biogas, which is used to generate heat and electricity for industrial and civic use. The innovative modular unit being developed by Biomass CHP will produce no effluent waste, typically a common problem with existing wood to gas systems.

In addition to R&D support from Invest NI, Biomass CHP has also secured venture capital support from a range of investors.

Ralph Pickles, Chairman of Biomass CHP, says: "We are very excited about this new system and its clear market potential. There is a growing worldwide need for new ways to effectively produce sustainable forms of energy. We believe that our new system can address that need and help customers to meet legal requirements in relation to carbon dioxide targets."

MOVING UP A GEAR

Enterprise Minister Arlene Foster has officially opened Limavady Gear Company's new mechanical engineering and wind turbine manufacturing facility.

The business produces wind turbines and refurbishes gear boxes for machinery in a range of industries including renewable energy, textiles, food processing, quarrying and engineering.

The Minister said: "This new operational facility will enable Limavady Gear Company to further grow its engineering and production operations, including the manufacture of its new wind turbine. It will help the company to meet increasing demand from customers in a variety of global markets, including the fast-developing sustainable energy sector."

Mr Richard Hogg, Managing Director of Limavady Gear Company, said: "The progressive expansion of our business, culminating in the opening of our new facility, is testament to the dedicated efforts of the workforce at Limavady Gear Company, and their strong emphasis on customer satisfaction and operational excellence."

WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH

At the best of times every business will jump at the chance to increase profitability, but when times are tough it's essential.



Vion provides a wide range of pork products to customers in retail and foodservice sectors throughout the UK and Ireland.

The company employed a business improvement agent for a three-year period. After evaluating processes throughout the business and identifying areas for improvement, the agent implemented efficiency measures.

Seamus Carr, Managing Director of Vion, says:

As part of this Invest NI programme, we monitored energy usage levels closely and made a number of improvements to reduce fuel costs in areas where it was being wasted. Other unnecessary expenditure was avoided in relation to refuse disposal by refining our waste management procedures. We also introduced better maintenance processes, resulting in a significant reduction in equipment downtime.

John Quinn, Managing Director of Chieftain Trailers, says: "As a result of the programme our forecasting and purchasing function has been improved and there is less excess stock on our premises leaving more space on the shop floor for other value added operations. Manufacturing techniques have also been enhanced, leading to more effective use of raw materials whilst ensuring even higher standards of workmanship.

"In addition, waste management procedures at our factory have been improved, helping to reduce costs associated with rubbish disposal. Greater energy awareness amongst our staff has cut our fuel bill considerably, and better continuous maintenance methods are helping us to avoid unnecessary expenditure relating to machinery repairs and replacement," adds Mr Quinn.

Niall Casey, Invest NI's Director of Business Improvement Services, says: "A strong ethos of process innovation is particularly important during the economic downturn, when demand is relatively low and profit margins are being squeezed. By introducing leaner and more effective procedures now, Northern Ireland companies will continue to benefit in the longer term."

The Business Improvement Agent programme is available to Invest NI clients that have completed the Business Health Check.

Invest NI's Business Improvement Agent programme is helping businesses to cut costs and increase profitability, a powerful combination in these difficult trading times.

A business improvement agent is a dedicated in-company resource whose role is to promote and plan the ethos of continuous improvement for the business. Invest NI advisors help with the appointment of the agent, and are on hand with advice as the continuous improvement activities evolve.

The programme includes salary support for the agent and the improvements generated over the duration of the project should result in a minimum return on investment of 3:1.

Companies that have recently benefited from the programme include Cookstown company Vion, which saved over £470,000.

Dungannon company Chieftain Trailers saved £500,000 as a result of the programme, significantly exceeding the cost reduction target.

The manufacturer of trailers, low-loaders and forklift machinery now has a much leaner and more effective overall operation in place.

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Should you be tweeting?



Social Media

CELEBRITIES are doing it, corporations are doing it – even the government is doing it. Is microblogging a fad or a serious business tool?

Microblogging is posting short messages in real time via web browsers or mobile phones. It's part of the social media landscape that includes Facebook and YouTube and its popularity is growing exponentially. While there are several microblogging platforms, Twitter is the most widely used at the moment. Every day up to 10,000 new people join Twitter and current estimates of total users stand at around five million.

Given its reach and impact, it's not surprising that organisations are queuing up to start tweeting. Even the government, in guidance recently launched on the Cabinet Office website, is urging civil servants to "tweet" on "issues of relevance or upcoming events".

Many businesses are already reaping the benefits, reporting that Twitter is giving them access to high profile people, helping build brand, and importantly gives an unprecedented insight into what people are saying about their products or services. Among the major corporations that are tweeting are Kodak, Dell and General Motors.

However, as with every marketing tool, businesses need to weigh up the pros and cons before jumping on the microblogging bandwagon.

"Businesses need to be aware of what's involved," says Noyona Chundur, Invest NI's Head of Corporate Marketing. "The decision to use any kind of social media must be made within the context of your overall marketing strategy. You really need to know your audience and what they're interested in and consider whether you can provide something useful to them via a microblogging platform, and whether you will gain anything from the engagement.

"The biggest investment for a company using Twitter, or any other microblogging channel, is time, and for a small business that can be prohibitive.

"If you do decide to add Twitter to your PR or marketing channels it's important to know the rules of good practice. Twitter is about conversation, not about plugging your product. You need to understand the protocols around following and being followed, and 'retweeting'. It's important to be authentic but you also need to be careful about what you say. Getting the hang of tweeting for your business can take a while even if you already do it personally.

"Finally, make sure you evaluate it. If microblogging is not adding value to your business within about three months it may not be worth continuing."

Invest NI has recently set up three Twitter channels:

- **Twitter.com/investinnews:** used to broadcast corporate news, case studies, client testimonials and specific information about programmes, advisory services and forthcoming marketing initiatives.
- **Twitter.com/goforitnews:** this is the Go for it channel for broadcasting news relating to the new programme, as well as case studies and client testimonials, information about the programme, events and seminars, and forthcoming marketing initiatives.
- **Twitter.com/nibusinessinfo:** this channel broadcasts news about the website, case studies, client testimonials and specific information about key tools or guides.

Noyona Chundur says: "We feel it's important for the organisation to extend the reach of our existing corporate messages and information to the online community. Twitter gives us the opportunity to engage a wider audience, increase understanding of our role and provide ways for key audiences and individuals to subscribe to updates by RSS feeds, SMS or e-mail. We'll be monitoring the success of these channels over a pilot period."

positive

IMPACT

Research & Development

Investment in R&D, even on a modest scale, can deliver major long-term business benefits, as many local companies are discovering.

In its Corporate Plan 2008-11, Invest NI placed innovation centre stage announcing that it was increasing expenditure on innovation programmes by one third. Of the £150 million earmarked for promoting investment by businesses in research, development and innovation projects around £50 million is channelled through the Grant for R&D programme.

Grant for R&D offers companies a simple, user-friendly way of accessing funding to help with investments in R&D and innovation. Since the initiative came into effect on 1 January 2009, Invest NI has already offered over £10 million in financial assistance to companies of all sizes to promote R&D. This has contributed towards investments of over £32 million by the companies involved, in almost 130 separate projects.

Carol Keery, Invest NI's Director of Innovation, Research and Technology, says: "The Grant for R&D is helping companies of all sizes and from all sectors to achieve growth by enhancing their products and processes or by developing new ones.



We want to encourage many more companies to engage in R&D. It does not necessarily mean a huge investment; even a small R&D project that results in a new or improved product or process can make a significant difference to company success.

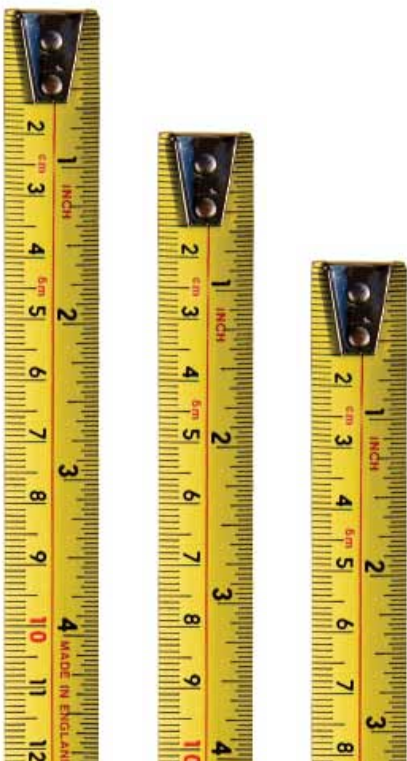


How the offers break down

- Almost £3 million has been offered to businesses in the engineering, transport and construction sectors, towards projects worth over £8.3 million in areas such as kitchen components, automotive fittings and renewable energy.
- In the health, life and food industries, offers worth over £3.5 million are helping companies invest almost £9 million in R&D activities, promoting investigation into areas such as animal feeds, pharmaceuticals and packaging.
- More than £4 million has been offered to companies operating in the tradable services sector towards investments worth over £15 million.
- Invest NI assistance ranges from under £3,000 to almost £1 million depending on the size of the project and overall investment.
- Company investment ranges from around £6,000 to almost £5 million.

Businesses that have never invested in R&D before and that have fewer than 50 employees could be eligible for support of up to 75 per cent of their project costs. The support is also available to entrepreneurs who want to set up an innovative business that has the potential to export to international markets.

As well as financial support, Invest NI provides an advisory service through its Innovation Advisors who are available to help companies throughout the process from identifying R&D projects and completing grant applications, through to implementation and evaluation.



CONVERTING RESEARCH INTO SALES

Dungannon-based company, Taxi & Bus Conversions, is set for export success, thanks to R&D support from Invest NI.

The company specialises in adapting wheelchair accessible vehicles, including taxis and minibuses, to meet Motability and safety legislation. R&D support totalling £20,900 from Invest NI helped the company to secure European Type Approval for the Volkswagen Caddy Maxi Life – a first for this vehicle in the UK.

With the Approval, the company can now sell adapted Volkswagen Caddy Maxi Life vehicles in a number of export markets, without the need for costly and time-consuming additional testing in-market.

Terence Donnelly, Co-founder of Taxi & Bus Conversions, says: "R&D support from Invest NI enabled us to accelerate the design of new components for the Volkswagen Caddy and the extensive testing to obtain full European Type Approval. A lot of hard work went into gaining the award but the positive impact of this on the business and our export capability is already apparent."

>> Graham Davis, Invest NI (left), congratulates Ivan McMurray of Taxi & Bus Conversions on the company's success



STRIKING THE RIGHT CHORD

Bangor consultancy, IBC Trading, specialises in product design, sourcing, sales and marketing consultancy for the global musical instrument sector. The company has been responsible for worldwide sales for many companies, including Fishman, Breedlove, G7th, Techra, Avalon and Lowden – managing worldwide distributors, agents and liaising with retail stores.

With assistance under the Grant for R&D, the small business is developing an innovative adjustable wooden guitar neck that can withstand extremes of humidity and moisture, making it very attractive to guitarists in hot climates. This kind of product improvement could give the company the edge in new foreign markets and help bolster its export performance.

>> Graham Davis of Invest NI pictured with Iain Wilson of IBC Trading at the firm's Bangor office

SOLAR SUCCESS

In February, Willis Solasyphon won its first order from a major solar equipment manufacturer in the US for its innovative product that was developed with assistance from Invest NI R&D programmes.

Willis, a local market leader in plumbing and heating equipment and services, developed Solasyphon to enable householders to use solar technology for water heating. The product is unique in that it can be retrofitted to existing water heaters without expensive outlay on installing a new boiler.

John Willis, Willis Managing Director, says: "Solasyphon offers homeowners in particular a very cost-effective means of harnessing solar energy for water heating. The contract with Apricus in the US is a great starting point for us in what is potentially a huge market."

>> Tracy Meharg, Invest NI Managing Director of Innovation and Capability Development, with John Willis of Willis Solasyphon



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MISSION TO EASTERN EUROPE

Trade Mission



A forthcoming trade mission to Hungary and Slovenia will enable companies to explore business opportunities in these developing European markets.

Invest NI's Trade team is now recruiting companies keen to explore business in these markets for a mission in January. The mission centres are Budapest and Bratislava. Both have close links with the UK, and several local companies are already doing business there.

HUNGARY (population 10 million) is the UK's third largest export market in Central and Eastern Europe, with sales worth £854 million in 2007. GDP grew by around three per cent in 2008. The reputation of British companies is high there.

It joined the EU in 2004 and hopes to join the euro by 2012. It is benefiting from substantial EU funding particularly for infrastructure improvement.

Hungary has a strong farming and food processing sector and an engineering heritage. The automotive industry is well advanced with several big OEMs

(original equipment manufacturers) located there (Audi, Mercedes, Suzuki, Opel). There are outstanding opportunities for joint production with companies in the region to follow big OEMs.

The Hungarian government operates a Suppliers' Development Programme to support the development of first and second tier subcontractors of big foreign investors. There are also specific new opportunities in technology, know-how transfer and R&D co-operation. Biotechnology is one of the fastest growing knowledge-based high-tech industries. The main driving forces have been the launch of the new biotech knowledge centres, TTOs and clusters (in Budapest, Szeged, Debrecen and Pécs).

OPPORTUNITIES

- Aerospace
- Airport development
- Automotive
- Agriculture
- Biotechnology
- Clothing, footwear and fashion
- Construction
- Education
- Food and drink
- Healthcare
- ICT
- Power, especially renewable energies and combined heat and power systems
- Urban regeneration
- Water environment

SLOVENIA (population two million) is one of the most stable and prosperous nations in central Europe. It has experienced GDP growth of around four per cent. UK exports of goods to Slovenia were worth £201 million in 2007. One of central Europe's most economically advanced countries, it has made extraordinary progress in the transition from command-driven to market economy. Slovenia's main imports are raw materials, food and semi-finished products.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Electrical appliances
- Office machines
- Road vehicles
- Specialised industrial machinery
- Medicinal and pharmaceutical products

UKTI has identified the following as priority sectors: construction; regeneration; financial services; education and skills; ICT; leisure and tourism.

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such as aerospace, oil and gas, renewable energies and automotive engineering, benefited substantially from the practical support and guidance provided by David Raymond of Kiang Consultancy in Belfast.

Mr Raymond helped Base develop strategic relationships with international companies including Jet Aviation of Zurich and UK businesses, Altair and Todds, in key technologies such as the advanced composite materials being used increasingly in aerospace and other industries. The consultancy guidance helped with restructuring the company and creating a sharper marketing focus. Ian Kelly, Base's Managing Director, says: "The guidance we received from David Raymond about how best to grow our business was immensely important. It has given us confidence and helped us to position the business for faster growth in export markets."

>> Pictured is David Raymond of Kiang Consultancy in Belfast

EXPERT

mentors aid export growth

Trade

Experienced mentors are playing an increasingly important role in an Invest NI programme that helps smaller companies to build export sales. Among companies benefiting from the service, provided by a panel of Passport to Export mentors with significant experience in strategic sales and marketing abroad, are Texthelp Systems of Antrim and Base Ltd.

Accessing French markets

Texthelp Systems, the worldwide leader of literacy software solutions, was assisted by Norbert Sagnard, a French IT expert now living in Belfast, to sign strategic deals in France for its innovative text-to-speech software, BrowseAloud. BrowseAloud assists those with literacy difficulties, dyslexia, mild visual impairments and those who speak English as a second language.

BrowseAloud has already proved immensely successful in the UK, North American and Australian markets. This success encouraged the company

to explore other global markets in which accessibility requirements are either already being implemented or are planned.

Mr Sagnard helped Texthelp to identify potential customers and to develop a market entry strategy for the challenging French marketplace. As a result of this focus on France, they identified and agreed a strategic partnership with Jouve in Paris, a leading provider of accessibility services to public sector organisations across the country. The company has also signed agreements with IPOP and NVN Studios to become resellers for France.

Nigel Cunningham, BrowseAloud's International Business Manager, says: "The advice and practical support provided by Norbert Sagnard through Invest NI's Passport to Export programme have been invaluable. He has helped us with information about market requirements and how to do business successfully in France, as well as identifying suitable resellers for BrowseAloud in target sectors such as public bodies across the country."

Stressing opportunities

Base, a company focused on sophisticated stress analysis for exacting industries

EXPORT SCHEMES ATTRACT SMES

Over the past year, participation in Invest NI export programmes has risen by more than 20 per cent. A first-time trade mission to Russia attracted 16 companies and more than 40 companies are taking part in our mission to China at the end of November. Fifteen companies visited South Africa, most of them new to the market and the same number took part in a mission to Taiwan.

Upwards of 50 companies, including many in the hard-pressed construction sector, have explored business in Saudi Arabia on a series of Invest NI missions there. The popular Going Dutch programme has helped many smaller businesses secure business in the Netherlands.

Dr Vicky Kell, Invest NI's Trade Director, says: "Small companies have been quick to seize opportunities provided by us to pursue business in markets generally faring better in the recession."

EG Information Consulting (EG), set up in 1999 by its two directors, now employs 26 in its premises in central Belfast. Having already established several partner channel clients within Great Britain, it recently worked independently to win its first 'open' tender in England, the latest in a series of successes built on its reputation for delivering high quality solutions to complex client briefs.

The company provides IT consultancy, database and application development, database integration, mobility solutions (including iPhone), web design and Internet services. Recently the company won the public tender competition to develop a new web application for an orthopaedic hospital at Oswestry, near Wrexham.

The successful tender followed several recent Invest NI backed initiatives. EG participated in an Invest NI marketing support programme designed to provide practical support to local companies seeking to expand business outside Northern Ireland. The company also took part in the International Selling Programme run in partnership with Enterprise Ireland and DIT.

Stuart Cosby, EG's Business Development Manager, describes the tender as a "most significant development for the company in a key technology market".

It's not the first time that the company, a Microsoft Gold Partner, has used Invest NI support to strengthen its hand. It has previously benefited from marketing support and assistance for product and process development. The company has also taken part in Invest NI trade missions and got in-market support from the Northern Ireland Technology and Development Centre to help identify and develop opportunities in the US.

As a result it won a significant contract last year to provide its ENGAGE4BUSINESS online business network software to CORE, an organisation in Colorado. Following that success, EG has also implemented a variant of this solution in Fáilte Ireland and locally within Momentum and the Northern Ireland Science Park.

Peter Shields, a director in EG says:

Our technology enabled CORE to create an online platform to communicate with its members and delegates, to enable them to network with each other and to download data much faster than has previously been the case.

"Through excellent support from Invest NI locally and on the ground in Denver, we were able to trial our ENGAGE platform with CORE and talk to several other potential clients in Colorado," he adds.

Currently Invest NI is helping EG with two aspects of its ongoing business development. Through its Grant for R&D Invest NI is supporting the development of a new business networking product specifically for professional bodies and membership organisations. The project will help the company expand its technological capability, broaden its customer base and will provide a new income stream.

EG has also recently completed Invest NI's Design Development Programme, which pairs participants with an experienced design consultant to develop concepts to meet their specific design need. EG worked with design company, Triplicate, to look at redesigning its current branding.

Peter Shields says: "We wanted to reposition the company in what is a very competitive market place. We needed a design that could roll out to all aspects of the company's communications and could be protected against third party infringements. A major factor in this rebranding exercise has been achieving international protection for the name and mark - the support from Invest NI has been superb in this respect."

The new brand is currently being rolled out.



DELIVERING quality solutions

Customer focus and quality have been the watchwords of EG Information Consulting, which this year celebrates 10 years of success through innovation.

>> Peter Shields, Director, EG Information Consulting

[Company Profile](#)

MAJOR EXPANSIONS ANNOUNCED

Special Feature

In the last month several indigenous and foreign investors have announced major expansions of their Northern Ireland operations supported by Invest NI.

NYSE

Creating up to 400 jobs, NYSE Euronext is to expand the business operations of its NYSE Technologies division in Belfast.

Invest NI will provide up to £9.6 million to support the move of NYSE Technologies business operations into a new state-of-the-art development facility in 2010 and the job creation.

NYSE Euronext recognises its operations in Belfast as a centre of excellence for the delivery of innovative technology solutions, specifically low latency messaging capabilities, data distribution and securities operations to serve its expanding global client base.

Duncan Niederauer, Chief Executive Officer, NYSE Euronext, said:

"We welcome the opportunity to partner with Invest NI and to expand our presence in Belfast. Northern Ireland will become increasingly important to our global growth strategy and complement our technology centres in Paris and London. Together, these centres of excellence will enable us to effectively address the growing technology and trading needs of our customers and our company."

NACELLE

The Belfast aerospace company Nacelle Systems Consultancy (NSC) is investing £870,000 in an expansion project which will see the company move to new dedicated premises and create 13 new high quality posts. Invest NI has offered over £115,000 towards the expansion investment. NSC primarily designs, develops and integrates high-tech electrical, hydraulic and control equipment to connect aircraft engines to wings. The company has recently won a number of lucrative contracts, including multi-million pound deals with global players including Parker Aerospace of USA and BAE Systems.

Tom Mallon, Managing Director of Nacelle Systems Consultancy, said:

"In less than five years we have grown our turnover primarily by subcontracting out much of the international work we secure to freelance engineers. We now wish to develop a permanent, in-house capability to deliver the best possible service to our clients. The support of Invest NI is crucial in making our expansion a reality, reducing the need to subcontract work whilst significantly improving our ability to attract even more work packages in the future."

BRUNCH BOX SANDWICH COMPANY

A multi-million pound investment by the Brunch Box Sandwich Company will create 41 new jobs. The Invest NI backed company produces a wide range of high quality 'food to go' products, including pre-packed sandwiches, rolls, wraps, salads, scones, paninis and ready meals for retail and food service customers.

John Weatherup, Brunch Box Managing Director, said: "This important investment is being made to enable us to build on the growth in sales over the past few years. We are operating in an extremely competitive marketplace and need to continually invest in our premises, process and people to provide our customers with a consistently high quality product at a good value for money price point.

"Our objective is to drive sales to markets such as the Republic of Ireland to beyond 60 per cent of business. Invest NI has encouraged and facilitated our expansion plan through expert advice and very practical support," he added.



Looking to the future

Issue Focus

The publication in September of the Review Panel's Independent Review of Economic Policy, led by Prof Richard Barnett, stimulated substantial debate. Here Alastair Hamilton gives his view.

“ I believe the review offers an important contribution to the overall agenda for change in the medium to long term. Invest NI has welcomed its publication and we look forward to the outcome of the public consultation which will be published within a couple of weeks.

It may come as a surprise to some that I, and the board and senior managers in Invest NI, actually agree with many of the recommendations made by Professor Barnett and can immediately see the benefit that they would deliver once implemented.

For example, we welcome the proposals to give Invest NI more freedom to operate, greater levels of delegated authority, a more flexible budgetary regime and a central role in economic development policy moving forward. All of these would make our job of growing the economy

much more effective, as we would be released from some duplicated or unnecessary administrative constraints and allow us to respond more flexibly and promptly to the needs of the business community.

MUCH TO COMMEND

Contained within the key findings and recommendations of the Report there is much to commend the agency's performance to date, particularly in terms of job creation and inward investment. The review concluded that:

- Invest NI has contributed significantly to NI's economic performance in terms of employment growth. Offers of assistance through Selective Financial Assistance were associated with 28,000

new jobs, 15,000 safeguarded jobs and £2.4 billion of investment over the period 2002-03 to 2007-08.

- When compared to other UK regions, Northern Ireland has attracted a higher number of new foreign-owned investment projects and promoted a higher number of jobs per head of population.
- Invest NI has been particularly successful in promoting higher value investments in ICT, where 93 per cent of new jobs promoted pay above the NI private sector median.
- The projects assisted by Invest NI have been successful in job creation, however, their impact on productivity has been limited.

This last point is, of course, an important one given the target set in the Programme for Government. The reduction of the

Issue Focus

productivity gap was a key element of the Programme for Government introduced in 2007 and as such was reflected fully in our third Corporate Plan issued in 2008. It is reasonable to argue that our performance before 2007 cannot be fairly measured against a target that did not exist pre 2007.

However, the facts clearly show that Invest NI's support for business has had an impact on productivity. Our clients' labour productivity (GVA per head) is some 36 per cent higher than the Northern Ireland average and within manufacturing it is almost seven per cent higher than the Northern Ireland average, and 18 per cent higher in the services sector.

We also know that productivity is higher in large businesses, illustrating the importance of helping more companies to grow to scale. This need to stimulate a sectoral shift by growing high productivity sectors to sufficient scale is already a key priority in our Corporate Plan.

And, as the Report recognised, there are many other factors that impact on the overall productivity of our economy including high levels of economic inactivity, the structural composition of our economy and our predominantly small business base. Addressing these challenges requires a collective and focused government-wide response, which is well beyond the scope of Invest NI, and could be significantly assisted by some of the other recommendations within the report.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

I am not interested in defending performance where it has clearly fallen short of expectations or failed to achieve its goals. Where that is the case we will focus on raising the bar in our own performance and be increasingly ambitious in our contribution to overall Programme for Government goals, and against the expectations of the business community in which we operate.

We have already started to update our processes and paperwork to ensure proportionality and remove unnecessary steps. We have rationalised and amalgamated our programmes



>> Enterprise Minister Arlene Foster is pictured receiving a copy of the Independent Review of Economic Policy from the Review Panel Chairman, Professor Richard Barnett, Vice Chancellor of the University of Ulster in Belfast

- the Grant for R&D being a good example, but more can, and will, be done to make it easier for businesses to identify and obtain the most appropriate form of support.

IN CONTEXT

However, I think I am justified in addressing some of the criticisms levelled at the organisation, that need to be set in context. One of these was the fact that 10 companies received almost 30 per cent of our support. These companies employ some 14,500 people, roughly 10 per cent of total employment in manufacturing and tradeable services in Northern Ireland, and they make a significant contribution to exports and innovation, two of our primary goals.

These large companies are also important for small businesses that are part of their supply chains, and they often introduce new skills and technologies to Northern Ireland. If our support helps to embed them as anchor tenants in Northern Ireland, which is another recommendation of the report, it should be seen in the context of the wide range of economic benefits that result.

The Report suggested also that Invest NI focused too much on attracting low-paid jobs, such as contact centres. It is important to note that the Agency had mainly a job creation focus in the earlier stages of its life. More importantly it should be recognised that a third of jobs promoted in contact centres pay salaries above the Northern Ireland private sector median and that these jobs give people, such as the long-term unemployed or economically inactive, the chance to get employment within a service-based environment and to acquire or develop transferable skills.

MOVING FORWARD

My priority is to ensure that Invest NI has the right products and services, delivered in the most efficient and effective manner, to support businesses and entrepreneurs across Northern Ireland and to bring the greatest economic benefit to the region.

I am looking forward to the outcome of the consultation and to taking forward agreed actions that will help us to deliver those priorities.



The national Global Entrepreneurship Week is set to kick off on 16 November, encouraging people to think about starting their own business, now or in the future.

With its focus on entrepreneurs of the future Invest NI is marking the Week by running the Make Your Mark Challenge, which targets young people aged 14 to 19.



>> Aiming to become the future giants of the business world are (l) Mary McGurk, Dominican College, and (r) Calum Hutchinson, Wellington College. Pictured with the young students at Invest NI's launch of the Make Your Mark Challenge are (back) Martha Jennings, Make Your Mark; Ian Murphy, Invest NI; and Katrina Godfrey, Department of Education.

Entrepreneurship

students

MAKE THEIR MARK

>> For more information please visit www.makeyourmarkchallenge.org.uk or e-mail Karen Wilson
E: karen.wilson@investni.com

The Make Your Mark Challenge is the UK's largest one-day enterprise competition. This is the first year that a Northern Ireland heat has been held. Following regional heats the Northern Ireland winners will go on to the UK national final in London.

This year's theme is 'Don't be a carbon copy', but the actual challenge won't be revealed until the day of the event. Teams of four to six young people will then be given 24 hours to work intensively and come up with innovative business ideas in response to the brief.

Ian Murphy, Invest NI's Managing Director of Clients and Entrepreneurship, says: "Young people in Northern Ireland have a vast amount of entrepreneurial talent. It is imperative that we harness this capability now and prepare our next generation of business leaders, by giving them the opportunity to put their enterprising skills into practice.

"The Make Your Mark Challenge will provide an opportunity for participants to demonstrate their commercial

acumen by thinking creatively, collaborating with fellow team members, and problem solving. It will also encourage young people to exploit commercial possibilities, and learn how to develop products or services that can be exported to generate significant profits."

The competition complements the Revised NI Curriculum which came into full operation this year and incorporates Learning for Life & Work and Employability.

Katrina Godfrey of the Department of Education, which is sponsoring the event, says: "Initiatives such as this can play an important role in helping our young people, particularly those who wish to be entrepreneurs or business leaders, to understand crucial principles which will enable them to perform effectively in their future careers."

SUPPORT FOR FAST GROWTH START-UPS

In August Invest NI launched a new £1 million programme tailored for entrepreneurs with an innovative hi-growth concept capable of becoming a significant export business and employer in Northern Ireland.

The Propel programme provides 15 entrepreneurs with salary support and the skills, expertise and networks to fast-track the development of their business ideas. Successful participating companies should be ready to look for significant investment to grow the business within 14 months.

Propel offers its participants:

- initial seed investment;
- best in class business start-up training from industry experts;
- access to local and global contacts and networks;
- accelerated business development;
- access to potential investors;
- incubation facilities;
- a personal mentor; and
- participation at cross-border networking events.

Invest NI's Director of Regional Economic Development, Graham Davis, says: "The Propel programme will help participants to maximise the commercial potential of their ideas and generate the best possible return for the entrepreneurs and the local economy."



>> Pictured launching Invest NI's Propel programme are (l-r) Sharon Polson, Invest NI's Head of Entrepreneurship Development, Graham Davis, Invest NI's Director of Regional Economic Development, and Diane Roberts of xCell Partners, who are delivering the programme

GOING FOR GROWTH?

Invest NI is looking for 800 businesses with growth potential to take part in its new Growth Programme. The programme is part of the agency's Enterprise Development Programmes launched earlier this year, which include the Go for it programme.

To qualify for the Growth Programme businesses must have achieved VAT turnover. Once accepted onto the programme, participating businesses are assigned a Personal Business Advisor to assess their needs and guide them towards the right mix of training and advice. Training includes taking part in three of six available workshops that address the most common skills gaps among growing businesses, such as planning, finance, leadership, training and marketing.

In the Pipeline

Those businesses with clear growth potential, and which can meet certain criteria, can enter the Growth Pipeline element of the programme. The criteria are:

- 1 The business must be involved in manufacturing or be a tradable service.
- 2 The business must have the potential to have a sales turnover of £100,000 within three years.
- 3 The business must have the potential to achieve sales outside Northern Ireland greater than 25 per cent of turnover or greater than £250,000 per annum within three years.

The Pipeline element offers businesses up to a year of intensive mentoring. It is hoped that many of

the businesses that enter the Pipeline will become Invest NI client companies and be able to access the comprehensive range of support offered to clients.

The Growth Programme is delivered by Enterprise Northern Ireland and its network of local enterprise agencies, in collaboration with a number of highly qualified mentors bringing a variety of both sector and functional expertise.

>> For further information on the Growth Programme, please contact Alison McGreevy
T: 028 9069 8823
E: alison.mcgreevy@investni.com

Food

BEEFING up exports



THIS month sees the launch of a new two-year campaign by Invest NI's Food Division to accelerate sales of beef and lamb to Europe.

The campaign consists of a structured programme of activities which aims to expand sales of red meat to retailers and foodservice customers in France, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Scandinavia by 2011.

It includes the appointment of dedicated marketing advisors in each of the five markets. These are experienced food marketing professionals who will help to pinpoint sales opportunities and convert these into firm business by arranging face-to-face meetings with key buyers and Northern Ireland processors. There will also be visits to Northern Ireland by European retail and foodservice buyers.

The move follows the success of Invest NI's food advisors working in England,

Scotland and the Republic of Ireland over the last three years. They have helped food companies across all market sectors to win business with all the main retail chains and key foodservice organisations throughout Great Britain and RoI.

Recent research commissioned by the Food and Drink Federation indicates that the UK red meat sector is buoyant with export sales increasing significantly in recent years. Currently Northern Ireland beef and lamb processors sell to the Netherlands, Belgium, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Italy, Spain and Portugal. The industry contributes almost £700 million annually to the local economy and around 10 per cent of beef and 30 per cent of lamb are now shipped to customers in Europe.

Maynard Mawhinney, Director of Invest NI's Food Division, says: "Although our local meat industry is already one of Northern Ireland's most significant and successful industries there is still potential for increasing the levels of exports.

"Over the past 18 months Invest NI has proactively marketed the local

meat industry across Europe resulting in over £25 million worth of new business for the industry. Northern Ireland has a tremendous marketing advantage from the fact that grass-based beef is a relatively rare commodity in Europe.

Our beef and lamb are raised to the highest standards of husbandry on rich green pastures and processed in plants operating to exacting European standards. As a result we've found a high level of interest in Northern Ireland products, particularly among major retailers such as Carrefour and foodservice businesses across all of the markets.

"Our objective is to identify customers in Europe prepared to pay a premium for our beef and lamb. We've also been working closely with companies on measures to help them to achieve higher margins, for instance, through processor-led production schemes that also offer better returns to farmers," he adds.

The new campaign's approach has been guided by the findings of the Red Meat Industry Taskforce and Invest NI's review of issues such as consumer preference, pricing and barriers to market entry, real and perceived, in European markets for beef and lamb.

**>> For more information about Invest NI's support for the agri-food industry, please contact Invest NI's Food Division
T: 028 9069 8764
E: shauna.magill@investni.com**



» Pictured with a fresh salmon are John Russell, Managing Director, Glenarm Organic Salmon, and Enterprise Minister Arlene Foster, during the Minister's visit to Glenarm



» Enterprise Minister Arlene Foster met Michael Hall, Managing Director of Kestrel Foods, when she visited the Portadown company to announce their expansion plans



» Maynard Mawhinney, Invest NI Food Director, with Lucy McDowell, Managing Director of Mallusk-based Golden Popcorn

BITE SIZE NEWS

Salmon success

Glenarm Organic Salmon is enjoying strong demand for its premium seafood two years after salmon stock in its seawater farms was totally wiped out by an unprecedented jellyfish invasion. Previously known as the Northern Salmon Company, the company has rebranded and developed its processing capability with help from Invest NI. Orders have already been received from Michelin-starred chefs and gourmet restaurants in the UK, France, Belgium, Germany and the US.

Kestrel spreads wings

Portadown company Kestrel Foods has announced plans to invest in new production facilities, management and extensive employee training, as well as the expansion of the company's product range to increase sales outside Northern Ireland. The investment, supported by Invest NI, in new products and further development of its successful Forest Feast brand, is projected to double turnover and result in a 60 per cent growth in sales outside Northern Ireland over the next three years.

Popcorn ranked top

With help and advice from Invest NI, Mallusk-based Golden Popcorn achieved top quality ranking from the influential British Retail Consortium. It has since won new business from cinema operators and retail outlets in the Republic of Ireland and aims to have its large bags of popcorn available in symbol groups throughout Northern Ireland and to launch a new snack-sized bag of popcorn towards the end of the year.

Jobs secured

Dunbia has created almost 100 new jobs at its pork processing plant in Ballymena following support from Invest NI. In January Dunbia bought Cullybackey pork processing company Stevenson & Co, which was facing closure and the loss of 100 jobs. Invest NI has been working closely with Dunbia since the acquisition, and has offered £600,000 of support to help the company push its growth plans forward.

Great tastes take gold

Twenty-three Northern Ireland food companies gained almost 50 awards, including four highly prestigious 'triple golds', in the Great Taste Awards 2009. The coveted awards are organised annually by the Guild of Fine Foods and recognise innovation and quality product development, particularly by smaller companies. Triple gold winners were The Offbeat Bottling Company for its Thick Cut Marmalade; Glen Tender for 21-day matured Aberdeen Angus Sirloin Steak; Crossgar Free Range Whole Duck; and O'Kane for Southern Fry Chicken Portions.

Training gains

Cloughbane Farm Foods in Pomeroy has increased its operational efficiency and sales capability through an Invest NI-backed staff training programme. The skills development programme enabled staff to improve performance throughout the business, achieve major operating efficiencies and help the company prepare to ramp up its cross-border trade.

Regional NEWS

Regional News



Building blocks of success

Londonderry-based Ardmore Pre-Cast is manufacturing high quality concrete blocks for Inis Mór's new Cill Rónáin Quay project, a major infrastructure scheme in Co. Galway.

Invest NI has been helping the company market its expertise in the Republic of Ireland. Des Gartland, Invest NI North West Regional Officer Manager, says: "This is an important development for this ambitious company in the marine market, which it has been targeting as part of a business growth strategy. We've been assisting the company

to develop and implement this export-led strategy."

Eamonn McLaughlin, Ardmore Pre-Cast's Managing Director, says: "This is a hugely important project for the company because it is helping us to develop our position in the Republic, a key market for us."

>> Des Gartland (left), Manager of Invest NI's North West Regional Office in Derry, looks on as Eamonn McLaughlin, Managing Director of Ardmore Pre-Cast, shows the company's operations at Lisahally Port

Leading lab chooses Elite technology

Elite Electronics in Enniskillen has won a contract to provide electronic units to CERN in Geneva.

CERN, the European Organisation for Nuclear Research, is the world's leading laboratory for particle physics. It will use the electronic units as part of the revolutionary Large Hadron Collider.

The contract is a direct outcome of Invest NI's focus on building links with CERN's procurement team.

Ronnie Balfour, Managing Director of Elite Electronics, says: "The contract is a substantial endorsement by CERN of our expertise in the development and assembly of electronic systems including highly sophisticated circuit boards for international customers. We appreciate greatly the support provided by Invest NI that included bringing the CERN team to our plant in Enniskillen."

Investment leads to export contract

Cookstown company Colloide Engineering Systems has secured contracts worth over £1.75 million in the environmental technologies industry with help from Invest NI.

Colloide specialises in providing advanced water, wastewater and process engineering solutions to the public and private sectors. The success follows investments by the company in marketing, management structure, IT systems and R&D, totalling almost £160,000 and backed by offers from Invest NI amounting to over £50,000. As a result, Colloide now generates around 90 per cent of its turnover outside Northern Ireland.

Managing Director of Colloide Engineering Systems, Paddy McGuinness, says: "Financial backing and expert advisory support from Invest NI has been crucial in helping us boost operational efficiency,

maintain a technological edge over our competitors and build our reputation through targeted marketing campaigns."

>> Alastair Hamilton, Chief Executive Invest NI, with Patrick McGuinness, Managing Director, Colloide Engineering





Agreement has £20 million potential

Learning Pool, the Londonderry based specialist in e-learning solutions in the public sector, has signed an agreement with the Chartered Institute of Purchasing & Supply (CIPS) to market its product for public sector procurement internationally. CIPS estimates that the business generated could be worth around £20 million over the next four years.

Invest NI has assisted the company to actively move into export markets including identifying an experienced trade advisor in South Africa.

Director Paul McElvaney says: "Since our business is currently with local authorities in Great Britain, it made sense for us to seek expansion by looking at countries such as South Africa, where we identified an opportunity to sell our 'Passport to Procurement' product for more effective and secure procurement of public contracts.

"Invest NI has assisted the growth of the business here in Derry through a range of programmes including export development. The Invest NI trade mission to Johannesburg will enable us to support CIPS as it seeks to build business for our product throughout the country," he adds.

Accessory success for Quad-x

Invest NI has helped Ahoghill company, Quad-x, to secure a 100 per cent increase in sales, primarily in export markets. Quad-x manufactures a range of products for the quad bike market, including accessories such as sprayers, herbicide applicators, mowers, spreaders and snow ploughs. These are sold to more than 14 countries worldwide.

R&D support from Invest NI helped the firm to engage in new product development. Additional targeted support helped Quad-x to strengthen

its export marketing activities and make a number of wider capability based improvements.

Gillian Bonner, Quad-x Export Manager, says: "Invest NI support, ranging from general advice on business improvements to financial support to assist with our product development activities, really gave us the confidence to take our plans forward. Previous assistance helped us to secure a patent on key products which is now paying dividends by preventing our unique designs from being copied."

Investing in a sound future

With support from Invest NI, Downpatrick small business George Lowden Guitars is investing around £75,000 in an extensive marketing campaign and the recruitment of a Business Development Manager.

The objective is to enhance the company's international profile and deliver a one third increase in overall turnover, with exports accounting for the vast majority of sales.

Mark Bleakney, Manager of Invest NI's Southern Regional Office, says: "By combining craftsmanship with a strong entrepreneurial spirit, George Lowden has converted his considerable expertise in acoustic guitars into international

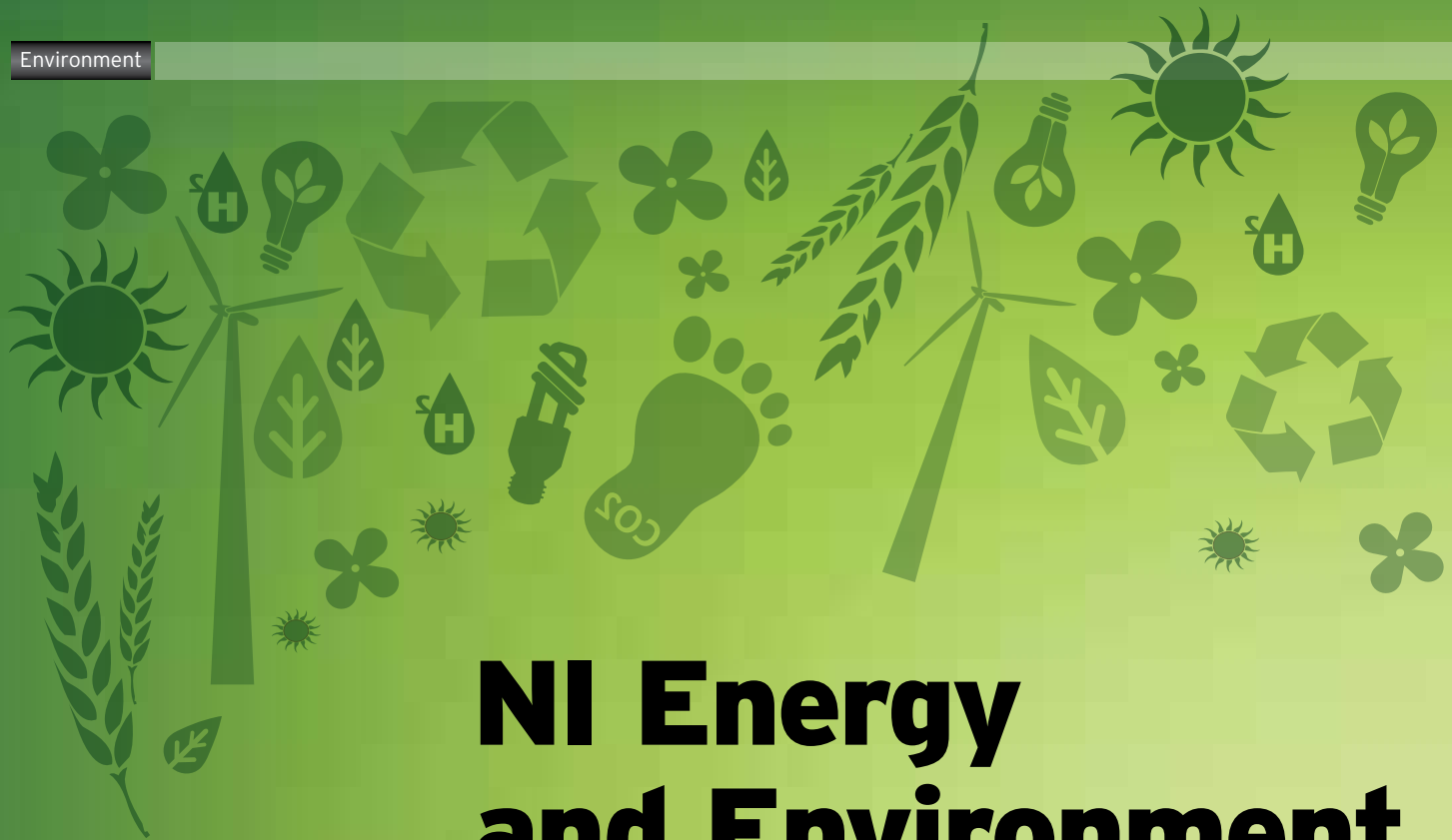
business success. The company is now seeking to increase sales in the American, European and Far East markets."

Company founder and Managing Director, George Lowden, comments: "Our guitars are designed first and foremost for their sound quality. This approach differentiates us from many other manufacturers and has helped us attract discerning and virtuoso guitarists from around the world.

"This project will help us better communicate our strengths and selling points to potential customers through attendance at trade shows, the establishment of new dealer networks and an improved online presence."



Environment



NI Energy and Environment Conference 09

Invest NI's NI Energy & Environment Conference 09 highlighted the huge potential for local companies to profit from the \$500 billion global energy and environmental industries. It attracted over 650 delegates drawn by its promise of delivering real opportunities for business.

» Tracy Meharg, Invest NI's Managing Director of Innovation and Capability Development; Tom Whitehouse, CEO of Carbon International; David Sterling, Permanent Secretary of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment; and Tom Delay, Chief Executive of the Carbon Trust



MASTERCLASS

The conference opened with a masterclass featuring two international experts who gave an overview of the renewables sector worldwide and highlighted the central elements of success in the sector - working in partnership, cost reduction and the awareness that the environment affects every business.

Tom Delay, Chief Executive of the Carbon Trust, outlined how the Carbon Trust is helping organisations to transfer innovation into enterprise. He stressed the importance of speed in getting a project to the point of commercial viability, putting cost reduction central to that aim. Speaking about the potential of Northern Ireland's natural resources he said that the region and the UK as a whole is well placed in terms of political support, academic and industrial capabilities to develop leading low carbon industries.

The second speaker, Tom Whitehouse, founder and CEO of Carbon International, made the point that the environmental sector has moved on from the idea of tree huggers. He

said: "Money is now the motivator. We need to connect the environment with industry rather than lifestyle."

Discussing the Carbon Disclosure Project he said that more companies will be asked to disclose their greenhouse gas emissions, meaning that "there is no business that will not be in the environmental sector".

COMMENTS FROM THE FLOOR

"Very good presentations - showing us the way forward."

"This is a very significant day for the sector."

"We found the conference stimulating."

"Tremendous event which showed just how suited Northern Ireland is to playing a significant role in this 'new' industry."

"Well organised event. Probably the best energy conference yet to be held in Northern Ireland."

Environment

WORKSHOPS

Six specialist workshops on the subjects of wind energy, bioenergy, low carbon technologies, monitoring control, marine energy and R&D allowed delegates to hear expert speakers relevant to their fields. Each workshop featured four expert speakers, most of them local, followed by a question and answer session.

The workshops outlined opportunities for local companies in the supply chains associated with each specialist area. For small businesses wondering how they could get into the sector without major investment the advice from more than one speaker was to match the skills and services a business can offer with what's needed in the sector at every point in the supply chain. This might be anything from the ability to repair components in machines right through to providing toilets on wind turbine platforms. Clifford McSpadden of the Global Wind Alliance stressed: "It's not just about the big stuff, it's about large volumes of the small stuff."

BUSINESS ADVICE

Over 170 people had one-to-one meetings with Invest NI business advisors at the conference. They ranged from businesses wanting to get on to the first rung of the renewables ladder to businesses well established in the sector that wanted to explore new opportunities. Advice was sought in a variety of areas including diversifying products for sustainable energy markets, R&D, reducing energy costs, collaborating with other companies and business development.

NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

One of the most valuable aspects of the conference was the networking afforded the delegates, in particular the chance to speak to representatives from major players in the sector and venture capitalists attending the event. Some 80 meetings to explore international supply chains were organised between conference speakers, global businesses and attending local businesses.

Tracy Meharg, Invest NI's Managing Director of Innovation and Capability Development, said: "Stimulated by a need to secure diversity of power generation sources and promote environmental good practice, the global renewable energy and environmental sectors are flourishing. Northern Ireland companies are well placed to succeed in these sustainable industries, which are projected to be worth over \$500 billion by 2013.

"Those local businesses with expertise in sectors as diverse as heavy engineering, composites, control systems, site investigation and many more areas, have the capacity to profit. The high standard of research and development capability that exists here can further support greater local involvement."

WHAT SHAPE IS THE NORTHERN IRELAND RENEWABLES SECTOR IN?

- The sector is still in its infancy, though there are a number of well-established players.
- More international companies are now operating in the sector, increasing the potential opportunities for local businesses.
- Many of Northern Ireland's traditional areas of excellence, such as engineering and composites, offer readily transferrable skills to the renewables sector.
- Demand is driven by:
 1. Government targets to deliver a percentage of energy from renewable sources.
 2. Concerns over security of supply and Northern Ireland's dependence on imported fuels.
 3. Market pressures to deliver 'greener' product offerings.
- The island of Ireland has natural resources, which position it strongly as an area of expertise in both wind and marine energy.
- **Wind energy:** Northern Ireland is ideally situated for easy access to the proposed wind farmsites in Great Britain giving opportunities in the areas of wind turbines and associated sub-sea structures.
- **Marine:** Queen's University Belfast is recognised globally as a leading pioneer in the research and development of marine energy technologies.
- **Composites:** for over 20 years, Northern Ireland has been at the forefront of the research and development of composite materials.

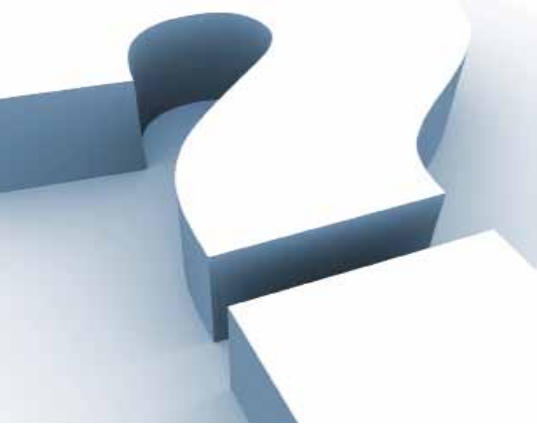
- R&D is strong within the renewables sector and a number of highly respected research centres exist.
- Four key areas offer the greatest potential for Northern Ireland: offshore energy; integrated building energy; bioenergy; and energy storage.
- 2008 figures indicate that there is now 2,400 MW of installed wind capacity in Northern Ireland, which represents around two per cent of the UK total, indicating a rapid acceleration in this field.

WHAT'S THE GLOBAL MARKET OPPORTUNITY?

- The International Energy Agency estimates that \$16 trillion will need to be spent on the energy supply infrastructure between now and 2030.
- The UK has signed up to EU targets of 20 per cent of energy from renewable sources and 10 per cent of transport fuels from biofuels by 2020.
- The UN procures annually more than \$10 billion and is one of the leaders in energy efficiency.

» For advice and support please contact Invest NI's Renewables Team
 T: 028 9069 8868
 E: sustainabledev@investni.com

WHAT'S NEW?



NEW SUPPORT FOR SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS

A new £2.5 million support programme for social enterprises is offering tailored mentoring, business planning support, and capability advice to groups who want to develop a socially-oriented business. Disadvantaged groups and groups in areas of high social and economic need are being specifically targeted to ensure wide-ranging accessibility to the programme.

>> Pictured with Enterprise Minister Arlene Foster at the launch of the new Social Entrepreneurship Programme at Crumlin Road Gaol, Belfast, is Graham Davis, Invest NI

Social enterprises are non-profit-taking organisations. They operate as a commercial entity and re-invest any profits back into the business or local community. Voluntary bodies, co-operatives and charities across a range of sectors including property, financial services, and health, are amongst Northern Ireland's range of social enterprises.

>> For more information please contact Catherine O'Neill
T: 028 9069 8157
E: catherine.oneill@investni.com



FIT FOR BUSINESS PILOT

A new pilot programme, Fit for Business, began in September. The programme aims to help companies with financial management, cost reduction and strategic positioning through a hands-on practical approach. Fit for Business will initially be delivered on a pilot basis to Invest NI's Regional Office clients, with wider recruitment, if the pilot is successful, taking place in the new year.

>> For further information please contact Bronagh Logue
T: 028 9069 8405
E: bronagh.logue@investni.com

NEXT WAVE OF INNOVATION VOUCHERS

The next call for applicants for the Innovation Voucher initiative has been announced. The initiative is open to all Northern Ireland registered small enterprises to enable them to access expertise from participating Knowledge Providers (universities, further education colleges or publicly funded research bodies) in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The voucher is worth £4,000.

>> For further information please visit
www.innovationvouchers.com

E-BUSINESS SEMINARS

A series of e-business seminars being held across Northern Ireland began in September. Covering all six counties and running until March 2010, the events will promote the integration of ICT into business operations, particularly by companies that may not have considered its use before. The seminars are examining, at an introductory level, aspects of ICT including making use of websites and e-mail, trading online and computerisation of stock control and ordering.

>> More information on the seminars is available at www.investni.com/eseminars or by contacting Michael Hughes
T: 028 9069 8201
E: michael.hughes@investni.com

KEEP A BUSINESS GUIDE BY YOUR SIDE

Businesses and entrepreneurs that register with Invest NI's nibusinessinfo.co.uk website can benefit significantly from the automatic delivery of relevant, high quality and timely advice to them via e-mail.

That's the message of the new marketing campaign that Invest NI is hoping will attract hundreds more businesses and entrepreneurs to register on the site and benefit from its interactive content.

The website has in-depth information provided by expert organisations and tailored to a local audience. It is the most comprehensive free source of online business advice

in Northern Ireland and features hundreds of interactive tools to help businesses with everything from filing tax returns and completing export documentation, to creating employment contracts.

Shauna Fenton, Head of nibusinessinfo.co.uk's team, says: "The real benefits of the site come from registering as this enables businesses or those thinking about starting up to get regular e-mail updates on issues, events and regulations that are relevant to their business and sector. It is really like having a personal business guide on hand.

"When a user registers on the site they can use the online tools, and all their individual information is saved in the My Business account. It's very straightforward and a quick and easy way for businesses to keep up with what's new."

Delivery of the new marketing campaign is predominantly through online channels and will include pay per click advertising, online display ads and social media channels (Twitter and YouTube), as well as 60-second drive time business tips on Cool FM and PR activity.

The campaign is focusing initially on highlighting the extensive information that is available to help people start a business. To find out more visit www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/startingup

TOPICAL TOPICS

National minimum wage

On 1 October the national minimum wage rose to £5.80 an hour for workers aged 22 and above and to £4.83 an hour for workers aged 18 to 21. The rate for those under 18 but above compulsory school age rose to £3.57 an hour. Tips paid to a worker through the employer's payroll will no longer count towards it.

Flexible working

Employers faced with requests from their employees for flexible working can get advice on nibusinessinfo.co.uk about how these requests should be managed and how to ensure that the business benefits as much as the employee.

For more information on both of these topics go to the Employing People section of nibusinessinfo.co.uk (www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/employingpeople).

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View from overseas

THE INVEST NI TEAM IN BRUSSELS



Damian Nicell, has headed up the Invest NI team in Brussels, Belgium, over the last number of years. The office is part of the wider Invest NI European office network. Here Damian talks about how he and his team approach potential inward investment projects and the support they receive from the other Invest NI offices.

“

Brussels is the de facto capital city of Europe and is home to many of the institutions of the European Union. With our offices overlooking the home of the European Parliament, Invest NI feels very much at the centre of Europe. Invest NI was one of the first of the UK Regional Development Agencies to open an office in Brussels and we share our office accommodation with the Northern Ireland Executive.

”

THE TEAM

The team currently comprises two staff members located in Brussels: me as Business Development Director and Amy Dalton, Business Development Manager. As well as this, Declan Barry, based in Belfast, is Business Development Manager. The team is part of the European office network, which has offices in London, Dublin and Düsseldorf and we are ably supported by the Invest NI teams in Belfast and around the globe.

THE GEOGRAPHY

Brussels is the capital city of Belgium and since the late 1950s it has been the location for many of the institutions of the European Union. The city is strategically located at the very heart of Europe and Belgium's

Overseas

central geographic location means that Brussels is served by excellent infrastructure. Thanks to Eurostar, Brussels is now just under two hours away from London and one hour thirty minutes from Paris, making the city an ideal location from which to reach the rest of Europe. The excellence of the transport systems makes it very easy for me to reach every part of Europe. With a hectic schedule that means I may be in Paris one day and in Oslo the next - that's essential. Meanwhile, Amy mans the fort back at the office.

Europe remains one of Invest NI's key target markets for foreign direct investment. French shared services company, Teleperformance, already calls Northern Ireland home with two centres in Bangor and Newry. Together they employ over 1,600 people with plans for further expansion. German company SAP, one of the world's leading suppliers of business software, established a campus-based Engineering Centre at the University of Ulster in 2006, and continues to expand.

ENGAGING IN FRENCH MARKETS

The inward investment strategy of the Brussels office is focused on the key sectors of ICT, financial services and financial services technology. The team directs its efforts not just to the Benelux area but also throughout the rest of Europe. In the past year our strategy in this area has concentrated on marketing to niche events in our main sectors. In the first quarter of 2009 Invest NI hosted a series of roundtable events in Luxembourg. The events were aimed at senior level executives within the Luxembourg financial services institutions and provided a perfect opportunity to have direct contact with decision makers within those companies.

The Brussels office is a member of the French Chamber of Commerce in Great Britain. This is a membership organisation with over 600 of the leading French companies and its prestigious events have given Invest NI access to many top level executives.

This is particularly important in the French market where companies are difficult to engage with through the usual sales methods of calls and events.



>> Damian Nicell, Business Development Director at Invest NI's Brussels office

NEW HORIZONS

In 2009 the team have turned their attentions to opportunities further afield with increasing focus on Nordic companies in Northern Europe. We participated in a number of marketing events in Finland including a series of breakfast seminars and roundtable discussions. These events were focused primarily on the mobile telecoms and eHealth sectors. Like the Luxembourg series they provided Invest NI with a unique opportunity to meet decision makers within companies.

In September of this year I had the pleasure of going to the European Offshore Wind Conference in Stockholm. We have identified renewable energy as a potential growth sector, and with Northern Ireland's experience in wind and marine energy we feel we have a good proposition to share with companies around Europe. The conference gave me an excellent opportunity to meet companies in the offshore wind sector

and to promote the Northern Ireland offering.

Another important sector that we target in Europe is the aerospace industry. Northern Ireland has a rich heritage in this field and we promote Northern Ireland expertise in the sector at events such as the annual Paris Air Show.

Throughout the year the Brussels team, in partnership with the other Invest NI offices, attend a variety of other exhibitions and trade shows. These provide an opportunity to proactively promote the Northern Ireland proposition to as many influencers and companies as possible. Among the financial services events that we have attended this year was Fund Forum International in Monaco in June. This is one of the premier financial services events held each year, attracting over 1,200 senior industry attendees and featuring over 150 expert speakers, and we took the chance to network with the delegates and key speakers to promote all that Northern Ireland has to offer.



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