

Investin

The Corporate Magazine of Invest Northern Ireland

Issue 22 JULY 2011

Invest 
Northern
Ireland
Building Locally
Competing Globally



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CAN
HELP
YOU**

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Maximising impact

Invest NI's role in strengthening the economy

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Maximising impact



Alastair Hamilton
Chief Executive

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As we move into a new corporate plan period our focus is firmly on maximising the impact we can make on the economy within the constraints of our resources. We'll continue to focus on helping companies to innovate and export, as these are key drivers of productivity, but we'll also be looking at increasing the skills base and promoting employability.

One of our priorities in the short-term is to address the fall-out from the economic downturn by boosting business and job creation. Working with a range of stakeholders we're aiming to create 4,000 jobs by March 2014 through the Short Term Employment Scheme. More details about this new scheme are on page 18.

But even in difficult times there are always opportunities for resourceful businesses. In this issue we highlight opportunities for food and drink companies arising from the 2012 Olympics in London and also the range of opportunities opening up in Turkey, projected to be the second fastest growing economy in the world by 2018.

We also feature export success stories across a variety of sectors from IT to furniture to recycling machinery. These show how local small and medium

size companies are winning business around the world, helped by our trade services and often as a result of taking part in Invest NI trade missions. Their successes should inspire other businesses to widen their horizons and take advantage of export opportunities to offset the downturn in domestic sales.

Figures in recent years show that Northern Ireland companies are investing more in research and development. On page 10 we profile two companies that have profited from developing equipment for the agriculture sector. This is innovation at its most pragmatic and underscores the fact that research and development is not always about test tubes, laboratories and high tech equipment, but about identifying and solving problems and turning those solutions into commercial successes.

In this issue we also unveil our new solutions framework which aims to make our support easier to understand and easier to access. We've significantly rationalised our programmes and through our new website we are encouraging businesses to contact us to let us know the type of support they need. In this way we hope to improve our customer responsiveness and extend our reach across a wider business base.

NEWS

Minister considers corporation tax

Enterprise Minister, Arlene Foster, has commented on the findings of the Economic Advisory Group's (EAG) report on the impact of a reduced corporation tax on the Northern Ireland economy.

She said: "Lowering the corporation tax rate has the potential to create employment and strengthen the private sector, however, we need to fully understand just how significant this measure could be for the Northern Ireland economy. The paper highlights a number of very positive potential outcomes that would stem directly from a reduced rate of corporation tax. The report has given us much to contemplate, and I have circulated the findings to my Executive colleagues for consideration.

"This is a major decision for the Executive as there are many complex factors that will influence the choices to be made. It is a decision that could have a significant impact on us all."

The EAG paper 'The Impact of Reducing Corporation Tax on the Northern Ireland Economy' is available from www.eagni.com

Pioneering technology to aid surgeons



Invest NI has helped Belfast-based Endosim to develop a unique training device that has been endorsed by the influential Association of Surgeons in Great Britain and Ireland and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

Endosim's Laprotrain device is a portable simulator that abdominal surgeons, particularly those recently qualified, can use in the office or at home to develop their keyhole surgery skills. The device, now being made available by the Royal College at regional training centres throughout Britain, was developed with research and development and export marketing assistance from Invest NI.

Tracy Meharg, Invest NI's Managing Director of Innovation and Capability Development, said: "Laprotrain is a highly innovative device, which has substantial export potential and will also contribute to Northern Ireland's international standing as an important European

centre for the development of medical devices. This pioneering technology represents a quantum leap in training for keyhole surgery."

The company is projecting sales worth around £500,000, mostly outside Northern Ireland, during 2011.

Robert Bailie of Endosim, said: "The innovative device draws on the experience in keyhole surgery and the marketing of medical devices gained over many decades by our team of directors. What it does is to offer an efficient and highly cost effective alternative to existing training techniques and equipment."

>> Pictured with the new Endosim Laprotrain device, (left) Prof Walter Prendiville, Robert Bailie, and Dr Ray O'Sullivan of Endosim, Tracy Meharg, Managing Director of Innovation and Capability Development, Invest NI, and Ian Niblock of Endosim

£7 million investment for Strabane

Enterprise Minister Arlene Foster has announced a £7 million investment by Invest NI in the acquisition and development of industrial land in Strabane.

Part of Invest NI's land acquisition strategy, the investment will make 22 acres of land at Melmount Road available to support economic development in the area.

The Minister said: "Strabane was one of a number of priority areas identified by

Invest Northern Ireland where industrial land was needed to support and encourage investment. Despite budget pressures and competing priorities, this development was viewed of critical importance and sufficient budget was secured by my department to ensure it could progress as planned."

Serviced sites will be available for sale to qualifying companies by the summer of 2013.

NEWS



» Pictured with three of the most recently established businesses in the west Belfast area are (L-R): Melita Williams, Bespoke Belfast; Peter Dunphy, Abintus Production; Seamus O'Prey, Ortus; Andrew MacKenzie, Health & Safety Options and Enterprise Minister Arlene Foster

Ortus celebrates 100 business starts

Enterprise Minister Arlene Foster has congratulated west Belfast business development agency, Ortus, for supporting 100 new business starts over the past 12 months.

Ortus is one of two agencies responsible for delivering the Invest NI Go for it programme in the west Belfast area. The programme is delivered at locations across Northern Ireland and offers support to individuals starting a business.

Visiting Ortus, where she met with three of the most recently established businesses in the area, the Minister said: "Entrepreneurs are the lifeblood of any economy. During what remains a challenging time for all businesses, it is vital that we support and encourage the creation of new businesses and support

the growth of existing companies.

"The 100 new businesses created cover a diverse range of sectors including the creative industries, tradable services and tourism. Many of these companies have the potential to export their products and services which will help them to maximise their contribution to the local economy, and help it to become stronger and more resilient in the longer term."

Seamus O'Prey, General Manager at Ortus added: "Invest NI's Go for it programme is a brilliant initiative that stimulates and encourages entrepreneurship in Northern Ireland. This has the two-fold benefit of creating jobs and stimulating the local economy. The success witnessed at Ortus is testament to the resilience of Northern Ireland's entrepreneurial spirit."



» Pictured (L-R) are Noel McCracken and Brian Taylor of TES NI in Cookstown with Invest NI Chief Executive Alastair Hamilton

Into the west

Invest NI Chief Executive Alastair Hamilton was in Cookstown recently to visit local businesses and the South West College's InnoTech Centre.

Calling at engineering firm TES NI he congratulated the company on its ongoing trade successes including a £500,000 contract in Iraq which was completed earlier this year. TES specialises in the design, build and installation of water and wastewater treatment facilities and electrical control panels, and supplies these products to customers throughout the UK, Europe and the Middle East.

Mr Hamilton also visited Killymoon Living which manufactures bespoke upholstered furniture for customers across the UK and Republic of Ireland. During his visit to the family business, Mr Hamilton discussed Killymoon's plans to increase export sales through its e-commerce platform.

The South West College's InnoTech Centre was the final stop for Mr Hamilton who met local companies there that are using the facility to enhance their skills and develop new high tech products. The InnoTech Centre is financed by the Department for Employment and Learning. It helps businesses embrace innovation through high grade knowledge exchange and technology development and by providing training and technical mentoring.

NEWS

Going for gold



James Leckey Design, manufacturer of specialist equipment for the disabled, has agreed an 18-month sponsorship deal with athlete Michael McKillop, winner of the 800m gold medal at the Beijing Paralympics in 2008.

The sponsorship will take Michael through to the London Paralympic Games in September 2012. Over the coming 18 months Michael will join the Leckey team at disability exhibitions across the UK and Ireland.

CEO James Leckey says: "There's a real buzz around the company about Michael. We are very proud to associate ourselves with such an amazing young man. At Leckey our philosophy has always been

to design equipment that helps children with special needs reach their full potential, whatever that level is. Michael's story is extremely inspirational, and we look forward to following his progress and working with him in the run up to the London 2012 Paralympic Games."

James Leckey Design was founded in 1983 and employs 100 staff at its Dunmurry plant. It has received a range of Invest NI support including assistance for product development and help to increase its export sales.

>> Left to right: Michael McKillop, James Leckey (CEO), Gary O'Hagan (Managing Director), Gillian Parker (Marketing Manager)

IT company creates 72 jobs



>> Pictured are (L-R) Paul Rodgers, Micro Focus, Group HR Director; Enterprise Minister Arlene Foster and Stephen Jennings, Micro Focus, Director Customer Care

Supported by Invest NI, Micro Focus UK Ltd will create 72 new high quality software development support and software sales jobs over the next three years, generating £2.25 million annually in salaries.

Micro Focus UK Ltd specialises in the development of advanced enterprise software which supports a range of activities including application modernisation, software quality management, requirements management and configuration management, in thousands of companies worldwide.

Invest NI offered Micro Focus £864,000 of support to secure the expansion for Northern Ireland.

Making the announcement Enterprise Minister Arlene Foster said: "The 72 new software development and sales roles are

a boost for our ICT sector and the local economy, as they are high quality positions which will pay above the NI private sector average."

In 2009, Micro Focus UK Ltd acquired Borland Software which had a software development base in Belfast employing 48 people.

Paul Rodgers, Group HR Director, Micro Focus says: "We have been continually impressed with the performance of the Belfast operation as well as the support of Invest NI. At Micro Focus we pride ourselves on developing and supporting the most advanced enterprise software options available globally. We are confident that the skills available combined with a location which is close to many of our key European markets will play a key role in our future growth."

Yelo



>> Pictured are (left) David Simms, Sales and Marketing Director of Yelo Ltd in Carrickfergus, with Vicky Kell, Invest NI Trade Director

US success for Yelo

Yelo Ltd in Carrickfergus has won new contracts worth £250,000 for its cutting-edge test systems from major US telecommunications companies, following its participation in an Invest NI trade mission to the market.

The company designs, develops and manufactures sophisticated automated test equipment for testing and measuring the performance of lasers, radar systems and electronic products. It now supplies 70% of laser reliability systems used for the latest 40Gbps and 100Gbps networks to ensure the smooth operation of popular websites such as YouTube and Facebook.

Last year, the company secured contracts worth around £500,000. The latest contracts are with 'blue chip' clients in the Boston area and will

further strengthen Yelo's reputation as a pioneer of sophisticated laser technology for the global photonics industry.

David Simms, Yelo's Sales and Marketing Director, says: "Global companies in key industries such as telecoms are increasingly depending on our technology because systems have become so sophisticated and mission critical.

"Invest NI's encouragement and practical support has been invaluable. We have been able to develop our advanced technology through R&D assistance and then bring the technology to market by means of trade missions, particularly the US market, still our biggest and now our most successful source of business."

NEWS

Mivan's hat trick of cruise ships

Outfitting specialist Mivan has recently completed around £6 million of interiors work on the Grand Princess, Crystal Serenity and P&O Adonia.

Work on the larger of the projects, the Grand Princess began in mid April at the Grand Bahamas Shipyard and was completed over a 24 day period. In May the company undertook refits to the P&O Adonia and Crystal Serenity.

Stephen Mills, Business Development Director at Mivan, says: "The completion of these projects within such a short time frame demonstrates the capability of Mivan to continually deliver within the Cruise Ship sector. We are delighted to continue to work with long standing clients P&O and Princess Cruises, whilst establishing a new relationship with Crystal Cruises."

Alastair Hamilton, Chief Executive of Invest NI, adds: "This is yet another positive development for an internationally respected construction company. Despite the downturn, which has impacted significantly on the wider construction industry, Mivan has successfully looked to international market sectors, including cruise ship fit-out and refurbishment, and is continuing to grow its market share. I hope that Mivan's ability to diversify continues to pay dividends and helps to encourage other firms to seek out new business opportunities."



>> Pictured at the official opening of Solmatix Renewables' new premises in Lisburn are Richard Bell Managing Director of Solmatix and Invest NI Chief Executive Alastair Hamilton. The company manufactures a range of renewable energy products such as solar panels for domestic hot water. Mr Hamilton officially opened Solmatix's new office and showroom which will support the company as it targets export opportunities in the UK and Europe

WE CAN HELP YOU

Making Invest NI's support easier to understand and access is the aim of the recent rationalisation of its programmes, revision of its corporate website and its new client campaign with the clear message of 'We can help you'.

A new support framework

Invest NI has collapsed some 80 programmes and services into five themes: Starting a Business, Growing Your Business, Maximising Efficiencies, Product Development and International Trade and Investment within which are 21 solution areas covering all areas of its financial and advisory support. The new approach simplifies without compromising the support offered by

the agency and chimes more readily with the day-to-day activities and challenges faced by businesses.

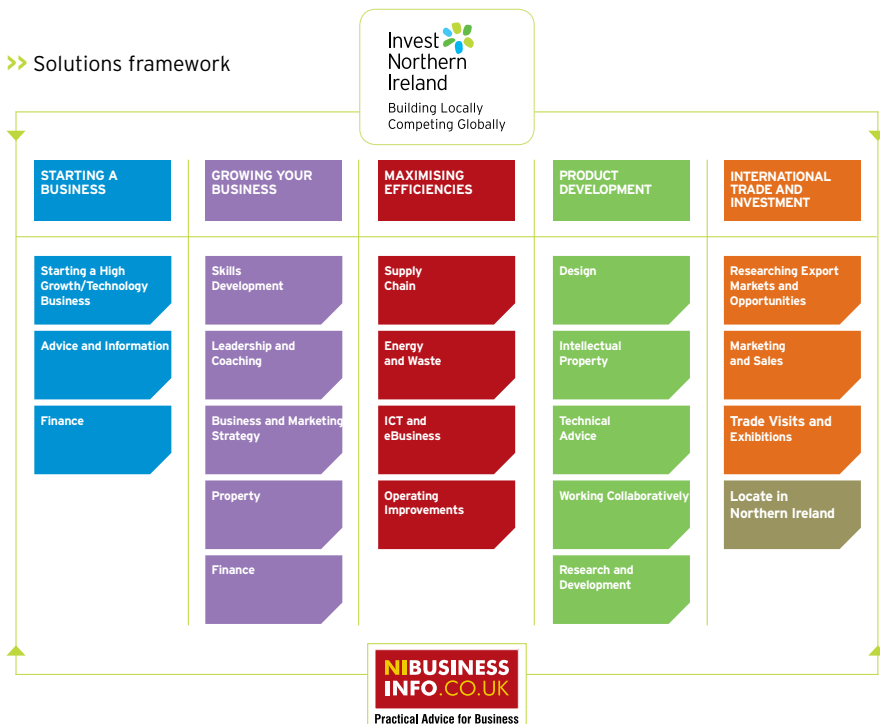
Alastair Hamilton, Invest NI's Chief Executive, explains: "We wanted to streamline our support and make the business community fully aware of what we offer, particularly in the area of expert advice. Rationalising the programmes was the first step and much work went into mapping our many areas of support into the new solutions framework.

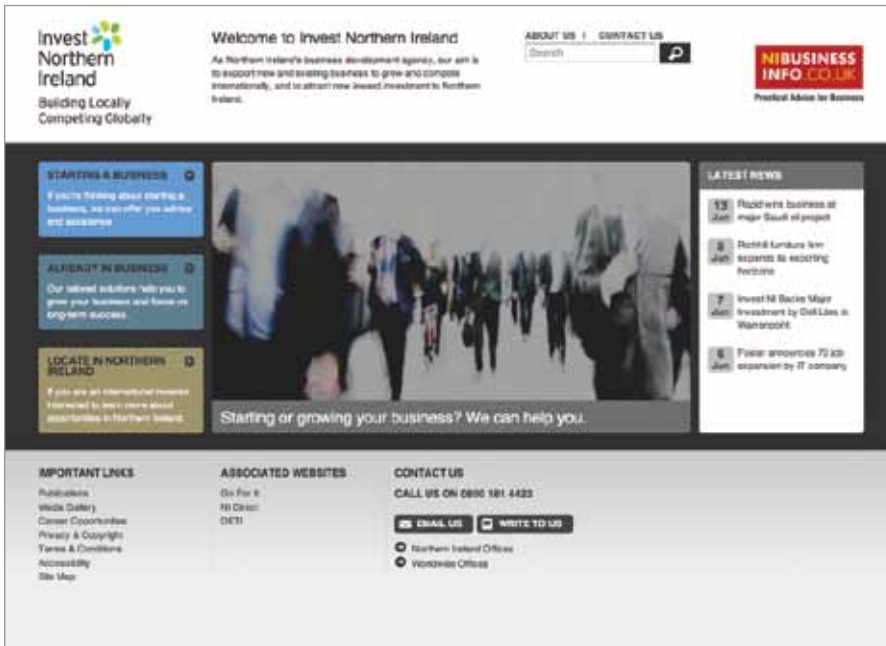
"Having achieved this, it was important to quickly and clearly communicate our new support structure. This meant overhauling our corporate website and developing a marketing campaign to build awareness of the new solutions areas and make it easy for businesses and individuals to contact us to access our support."

A tailored website

Invest NI's new website, launched at the end of May, reflects the new solutions framework and also recognises that the needs of business people vary according to their experience, their business's stage of development, its size and profile. The site therefore offers the user three entry points: Starting a Business, Already in Business and Locate in Northern Ireland.

The Starting a Business section of the site gives information relevant to





>> New website



>> Campaign e-zine

people thinking of starting a business or who are still at the very early stages of setting up. It covers advice and financial and specialist support and has valuable links to relevant publications and websites.

As most of Invest NI's support relates to helping existing businesses grow and become more competitive, the Already in Business section features the bulk of Invest NI's assistance organised under four key areas. Again relevant

publications and websites are featured as are events that may be of interest to local businesses.

The Locate section is targeted at international companies that are interested in setting up an operation in Northern Ireland and highlights very clearly the many business benefits on offer to foreign companies that choose to locate here.

"The website is very much about making the user journey easy and rewarding. The information given is brief and there is clear signposting on every page enabling the user to contact us. Existing customers should either contact their Client Executive or fill in the short online form indicating the kind of assistance they need. All other businesses have the option of either using the online form or calling a single free phone number, 0800 181 4422," says Alastair Hamilton.

The website carries dual branding - Invest NI and nibusinessinfo.co.uk - reflecting the significance of the nibusinessinfo website in delivering Invest NI's support.

The website also links to social media channels Facebook and Twitter, allowing users to share information that they find particularly useful.

Raising awareness

To raise awareness of the new solutions framework and to highlight Invest NI's range of support, the agency has also recently launched a marketing campaign. Branded 'We can help you', the first stage focuses on key areas of the solutions portfolio and is communicated through e-zines tailored to different audiences depending on their stage of business lifecycle.

"The campaign will run to the end of this financial year and will help us to build a pipeline of referrals for our support," says Alastair Hamilton.

The campaign will also include running a series of regional drop-in clinics hosted by Invest NI giving businesses the opportunity to call in and speak to staff about their business needs.

>> For more information on the new solutions areas please visit the 'Support for business' section of www.investni.com

"One of our key functions is to provide expert information and advice to businesses and the nibusinessinfo.co.uk website is our central channel of delivery for this," says Alastair Hamilton. "It's a great resource for businesses and we want to encourage people to go to it as their first step in accessing business advice."

New equipment for sowing and growing



In 2010 - 2011 Invest NI helped hundreds of businesses to invest in innovation, leading to total investment commitments of £147m. Two companies that have benefited from such investment are Ballymoney-based agricultural machinery specialists, Moore Unidrill and Agquip.

Sowing the seeds of success

Moore Unidrill develops and manufactures specialist seeding equipment for the agricultural and sportsturf sectors. Following an investment in research and development, the company created a new machine with enhanced seeding technology.

This new grass seeder was launched earlier this year and the company has already received a number of orders from customers in Great Britain, the Republic of Ireland and Germany.

Sam Moore, Managing Director of Moore Unidrill, says: "Support from Invest NI helped to accelerate our R&D activity, driving this project from initial idea through to final product and market launch within ten months. We have successfully developed a more efficient seeding method, which produces better results by reducing the space in between rows where weeds tend to grow.

"Our new technology has been very well received by farmers across the UK and

Europe. Motivated by our success to date, we aim to expand on our customer base and generate additional sales in new export markets."

Innovative slurry spreader

Agquip Ltd, a new manufacturing firm, has also secured export sales on the back of a new piece of equipment that will benefit farmers. The company was formed last year by James O'Kane to provide design and build services to the agricultural sector in the UK and Europe.

Following an investment in research and development, Agquip designed an innovative slurry application system which dispenses farmyard slurry directly onto grassland without leaving a residue on surrounding leaves or plants. The new slurry machine offers farmers a more affordable and efficient alternative to traditional slurry spreading. The product prototype has been well received by customers with a number of orders already secured in the Republic of Ireland, England and Scotland.

James O'Kane, owner of Agquip, says: "Invest NI's support has made a vital contribution to our business development. We've received a broad range of assistance across areas such as market research and prototype testing, through to product design, marketing and patent protection.

"The knowledge and experience gained from these activities will be invaluable as we progress our manufacturing operations to full scale production."

Carol Keery, Invest NI's Director of Innovation, Research and Technology, says: "Central to the recent export sales success of these two companies is an R&D project to develop a product which has substantial market potential. They have each used their knowledge of the agricultural sector to identify and develop equipment solutions that will help farmers work more efficiently. This is research and development with a very practical application and widespread market appeal."

>> Agquip's innovative slurry application system which dispenses farmyard slurry directly onto grassland

ALL FOR ONE AND ONE FOR ALL

More and more local companies are recognising the potential of the renewables sector and the benefits of collaboration in developing supply chain opportunities.



>> Pictured are (l-r) John Donaghy, Axon Power and Control, Dungannon, Paul McKenna, Eurofab Structural Engineering, Dungannon, Tracy Meharg, Invest NI Managing Director of Innovation and Capability Development, and Niall Donaghy, Pipesketch, Londonderry

The latest collaborative network to be formed in Northern Ireland to target the renewables sector is One Industrial. Comprising three Northern Ireland specialist engineering companies - Axon Power and Control, Eurofab Structural Engineering, both from Dungannon, and Pipesketch based in Londonderry - it will offer a turnkey service in the construction, installation and maintenance of renewable energy plants.

Speaking on behalf of One Industrial, John Donaghy, Managing Director of Axon Power, says: "We recognise how organisations benefit from working with one supplier to fulfil their engineering and industrial services, one contact for the plant owner, and one team of skilled

engineers to deliver projects on time and on budget.

"The businesses in the One Industrial collaboration have almost 50 years' experience in engineering services for the energy sector in the UK, Ireland and internationally. Together they offer a uniquely convenient and cost effective method for European companies to deliver their renewable energy projects anywhere in the UK or Ireland.

"Biomass power plants, for example, are one area of expertise, but our breadth of skills can be applied to almost any industrial build, from recycling and waste to energy plants, construction, mining, quarrying, oil and gas and pharmaceutical industries.

"It's our combination of experience, knowledge and quality engineering that enables us to deliver fully compliant plants, built to exact specifications. Our services include project management, process pipework, fuel handling systems, control and automation, electrical services and operations and maintenance," he adds.

The three member companies are ISO 9001 certified and adhere to the strictest quality guidelines and have carried out a number of projects.

Axon Power designed and installed the automated controls for an incinerator bottom ash processing plant at Brentford. Eurofab engineered and installed a state-of-the-art pellet storage and distribution plant for a biomass plant for Forever Fuels in Devon. Pipesketch designed, fabricated and installed the pipework at the Deutzbank ICT Data Centre in London.

Tracy Meharg, Invest NI's Managing Director of Innovation and Capability Development, says: "This is an important strategic initiative by three local companies which have identified the extent of new business opportunities particularly in renewable energy generation and have combined to maximise the potential of their extensive expertise and experience. The companies have teamed up to provide one accessible point of contact that will deliver end-to-end installations, commissioning, operations and maintenance."

One Industrial joins other successful collaborations set up in recent years in Northern Ireland to exploit the potential of the renewable sector. These include the Global Maritime Alliance, the Global Wind Alliance, the Biomass O&M, the Biomass Plant Manufacturing Consortium and Smartgrid Ireland, all supported by Invest NI.

BUSINESS BLOSSOMS ON THE BOSPHORUS



fiscal reforms as part of an IMF programme. The reforms strengthened the country's economic fundamentals and brought an era of strong growth - averaging more than six per cent annually until 2008, when global economic conditions and tighter fiscal policy caused GDP to contract.

Turkey's well-regulated financial markets and banking system weathered the global financial crisis and GDP rebounded strongly to 7.3 per cent in 2010, as exports returned to normal levels.

Invest NI is organising a trade mission to Turkey, centred on Ankara, in October.

Turkey is ranked among the most dynamic and attractive markets for UK companies. It's not a market, however, which has attracted many local companies but it does offer significant opportunities for Northern Ireland.

The Turkish economy is projected to be the second fastest growing economy in the world by 2018 and will outstrip those of Italy and Spain in the next decade. With its large, young and well-educated population it is already a member of the EU Customs Union and is negotiating for full EU membership.

Turkey is also ranked among the developing markets of Colombia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt, Turkey and South Africa (CIVETS) which will increasingly offer export opportunities to UK companies.

Bridging Europe and Asia, Turkey is investing heavily in its infrastructure projects including two new cities near Istanbul, the upgrading of the rail network and the ambitious Bosphorus Canal, which offers substantial scope

for Northern Ireland companies in the construction sector. The nation is also an obvious springboard into Asian markets and also northern Iraq.

Turkey's economy is increasingly driven by its industry and service sectors, although its traditional agriculture sector still accounts for about 30 per cent of employment.

State involvement in basic industries such as banking, transport and communication is declining and helping to fuel the emergence of middle-class entrepreneurs who are adding dynamism to the economy.

The country's traditional textiles and clothing sectors still account for one-third of industrial employment, despite stiff competition in international markets.

Other industries growing steadily include automotive, construction and electronics. These have surpassed textiles within Turkey's exports. Turkey, in addition, has significant oil and gas reserves and these are helping to drive economic growth.

After Turkey experienced a serious financial crisis in 2001, the government implemented severe financial and

OPPORTUNITIES

- Environment and water
- Ports
- Agriculture
- Airports
- Railways
- Construction services
- Products and machinery
- Financial services
- Education and training
- ICT

>> For more information or to take part in the mission, please contact Elaine Curran on:

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MISSIONS PLANT SEEDS OF SUCCESS

Trade



» Dr Vicky Kell, Invest NI Trade Director, with Laing Mewhort, Managing Director of MindMill in Carrickfergus



» Pictured is Paul Conlon, Owner and Managing Director of CK International Ltd, and Matti Turunen, CEO and Founder of Europress Group OY in Finland

Invest NI trade missions present a world of opportunities for local companies and through them all types of businesses are finding export success.

In the last six months almost 170 local companies have had the opportunity to explore opportunities in the Baltics, Spain, Brussels, Poland, Amsterdam, Russia, Sri Lanka, India, China, Hong Kong, Australia, South Africa and the USA.

Dr Vicky Kell, Invest NI Trade Director, says: "This year's market visits programme has been devised to help local companies, especially small and medium sized enterprises, which are vitally important to the local economy, to gain experience and find new customers in international markets. It is probably the most globally far reaching programme developed by Invest NI."

The success of the trade missions is reflected in contracts won. Carrickfergus-based MindMill secured a distribution agreement in Sub Saharan Africa for its advanced human

profiling software, following the company's participation in trade missions to South Africa.

The company clinched an initial £200,000 deal with EOH Group, Johannesburg, South Africa, one of the country's leading technology and services organisations. MindMill has also recently won substantial export business in key markets such as the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Syria for its psychometric assessment software.

Other successes include McGirr Engineering in Sixmilecross, which recently won its first export business after taking part in an Invest NI trade mission to South Africa last September. The company, which manufactures block making machinery at its base near Omagh, has signed a £100,000 deal to supply concrete block making equipment to a customer headquartered near Johannesburg.

Often it takes time to see the benefits of participating in a trade mission, but the contacts made can yield significant results. Anaconda Equipment International, for example, recently won its first export order in Canada as a result of taking part in Invest NI trade missions to the US, while CK International in Dungannon is now supplying recycling machinery to Scandinavia and Russia through a deal with a Finnish company,

following an Invest NI trade mission to the region last year.

In February Kitchenmaster NI, the Carryduff-based manufacturer of commercial cleaning and hygiene products, announced that it had secured its first business in the Netherlands after taking part in an Invest NI trade development programme in the region in October. The company, which employs 15 people, is now supplying a range of products to two distributors in Tiel and Zoetermeer in deals that could be worth around £50,000.

Dr Kell says: "Often companies use a number of our trade missions as part of an overall marketing plan to expand sales outside Northern Ireland. Their success demonstrates that companies from Northern Ireland, even small ones, can do business in the most competitive global markets by using the practical and experienced support available through our trade services."

» For more information about upcoming trade missions go to www.investni.com

DELIVERING MAXIMUM ECONOMIC IMPACT

Despite the biggest economic challenges in memory Invest NI delivered a strong performance last year, and is now looking to further increase its economic impact over the next four years.

LOOKING BACK - 2010-2011 PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

INWARD INVESTMENT

- 41 new inward investments were secured, including the Dow Chemical Company (USA), Allen & Overy (UK) and Rigney Dolphin (RoI).
- These investments secured 2,816 new jobs against a target of 1,800.
- Almost 81% of these jobs will pay salaries above the NI private sector median with over half paying at least 25% above the median.

Alastair Hamilton, Invest NI's Chief Executive, says: "Our strong selling proposition and success in attracting high calibre companies help put Northern Ireland firmly on the horizon of potential investors, particularly from those sectors and activities where we see the maximum economic benefit. These include higher

added-value functions of the Financial Services sector, the Business Services sector and the Creative Industries.

"Whilst jobs are often viewed as the main benefit of new inward investments, they also bring new management skills, new technology, market reach and supply chain opportunities for our local business base and drive up productivity," he adds.

INNOVATION

- £147m investment commitments.
- 114 businesses undertaking research and development for the first time.
- Creation of four Centres of Excellence by QUB/Bombardier, Almac and Schrader and the Centre for Secure Information Technology.

"Encouragingly, more of our businesses continued to focus on driving innovation and creativity as a means of either maintaining or enhancing their competitive position and preparing for future growth. This has been a central element of our 2008-11 Corporate Plan and the £147m investment commitments made last year contributed to £372m being committed over the past three year period," says Alastair Hamilton.

STRENGTHENING LOCAL BUSINESSES

- 56% of all support offered was to locally owned businesses, with 32% offered to small and medium sized enterprises.
- Businesses committed to invest some £18m in skills development.
- 190 businesses took part in their first trade mission and a further 585 sought to diversify into new markets.

"Increasingly our businesses are raising their sights and broadening their ambitions by preparing for export-led growth by attending our Export Skills and Knowledge Workshops or participating in our programme of trade missions and market visits. Companies report having won contracts worth an estimated £250m as a direct result of their participation in trade missions," says Alastair Hamilton.

"Our 2008-2011 Corporate Plan has been fully delivered. This Plan used pathways to growth that closed the productivity gap and stressed the importance of innovation and R&D, a strategic direction that was subsequently endorsed by the Independent Review of Economic Policy."

LOOKING FORWARD – THE 2011-2015 PERIOD

An overarching Economic Strategy for Northern Ireland is currently being developed by the Northern Ireland Executive, which will play a pivotal role in the rebuilding and rebalancing of the Northern Ireland economy. It will provide strategic direction to the shaping of policies contained within the 2011-2015 Programme for Government, some of which Invest NI will be tasked with delivering through our next Corporate Plan which will cover the period through to 31 March 2015.

“Although Invest NI received a reasonably positive outcome for the current budget cycle, we recognise that, over the four year period, there will be an overall decline in our budget position which we will need to manage extremely carefully if we are to continue to be able to support projects which come forward in future. Specifically, this will mean that we need to improve our ability to manage future commitments to ensure that projects supported offer the maximum potential return to the economy and deliver on the outcomes stated in their original business plans,” says Alastair Hamilton.

“There is a clear link between higher levels of research and development and business sophistication and the long-term driver of productivity growth, and through that, living standards. It is also closely related to increasing quality employment and improving the economic infrastructure. So we expect that much

of our focus will continue to be based around six key areas,” he adds.

These areas are:

- Stimulating innovation and creativity by driving market-led innovation throughout our business base, encouraging higher levels of collaboration and increasing commercial outcomes from knowledge transfer and open innovation activities.
- Enabling Northern Ireland to compete in the global economy by helping our companies to maximise their export sales and by attracting high quality inward investments.
- Driving business growth by encouraging local business formation and entrepreneurship, supporting ambitious companies to grow to scale and helping eliminate the real and perceived barriers to growth.
- Increasing skills levels to create an added-value workforce through staff training.
- Promoting employment and employability.
- Developing our economic infrastructure to build a modern, effective, infrastructure which is attractive to both local businesses and inward investors.

“There is no short-term fix for the Northern Ireland economy. Rather, we need to plan on the basis that it will take 20-25 years to fully transform our economy. The planning process needs to recognise this long term commitment to the economy in terms of budget allocations on an ongoing basis,” says Stephen Kingon, Invest NI’s Chairman.

“As we move into a new Corporate Plan period, we will ensure that our activities make the maximum positive contribution towards the next Programme for Government and deliver the maximum economic benefit in terms of rebalancing and rebuilding our economy.”

“We will work to harness the potential of a much wider business base through a new partnership approach to achieve export-focused growth. This will see a differentiated service delivery to each segment of the market, based on companies’ future contribution to the economy.”

“We will use those tools within our control and work round those which are not. The period of our next Corporate Plan will see the outcome of the current debate on Northern Ireland’s potential to set its own rate of Corporation Tax and the planned further reduction in EU State Aid ceilings and consequently we need to address these issues in the planning process,” he adds.

Publish and be DAMed

Belfast based software company Aetopia has just been selected by a major British newspaper group to provide their Digital Asset Management (DAM) software, proving that local home-grown technology can compete with the best in the world.

The innovative company, founded by Aidan McGrath and Mark Gowdy in 2005, was chosen for the six-figure contract in a tight competition against a large venture-capital backed US company. The success is the latest of many in the company's short history.

In 2006 Aetopia won the Northern Ireland stage of the Intertradelreland Seedcorn competition, which led to seed funding from a private investor, the former Managing Partner of Accenture Ireland, Andrew Hunter. In 2010, Deloitte Fast 50 ranked the company as one of the fastest growing technology companies in Ireland.

Aetopia specialises in building DAM solutions for clients primarily in the publishing, photographic and archiving sectors. Its main strength is its cornerstone software product, MediaCore - a scalable DAM system developed in Java and WebObjects and deployed on the Amazon Cloud.

MediaCore is a secure repository for the storage, distribution, indexing, retrieval, syndication, licensing and sale of digital assets - multiple formats of rich digital media such as images, PDFs, text, movies and audio files.

The company, which has a strong board including Andrew Hunter and Chairman Mark McCusker, CEO of TextHelp, is based in Queen's



University's ECIT Institute in the Northern Ireland Science Park. Aidan McGrath says: "We chose this location because we want to be close to leading research in image and video technologies, in particular, advances in content based image retrieval."

Aetopia has been continuously developing the software suite since its inception, and in 2010 it embarked on a major research and development project with the help of Invest NI to redevelop the entire technology platform.

The company has also benefited from a range of other Invest NI services including marketing support and design consultancy.

"Invest NI's support in these areas has made a huge difference to establishing Aetopia's presence and brand in industry specific exhibitions in Ireland and the UK," says Aidan McGrath.

Current customers include large publishing companies and major photographic agencies such as Independent News & Media, *The Racing Post*, Incisive Media, Harrison Photography, Press Eye, Belfast City Council, PRONI, and the *Belfast Telegraph*.

"Our technology suite includes several modules for specific functions so that the software can be tailored for different types of customer. These include photo sales, image workflow and distribution, online video and archives," explains Aidan McGrath. "Individually these modules deliver measurable benefits to media organisations but when combined as a multi-function package, it presents a very strong proposition."

Recently Aetopia has agreed a partnership with Ten Alps, one of the UK's largest factual TV and communication companies to provide MediaCore as their white-label video platform for its clients.

Says Aidan McGrath: "We are planning to capitalise in 2011 on our recent contract success by assertively marketing into the British Isles and Europe. We will also be seeking to form strategic alliances with large partners, such as Ten Alps, throughout the rest of Europe."

» Pictured receiving the Deloitte Fast 50 award are: Aidan McGrath (CEO), Mark McCusker (Chairman) and Mark Gowdy (CTO) of Aetopia

Improving the customer experience



Alastair Hamilton outlines the progress being made on Invest NI's ambitious programme of change.

When we launched Transform, our major programme of strategic change in February 2010, 18 different projects were identified to lay the foundations for future development and build a culture of change and continuous improvement. A third of these have now concluded with a series of recommendations, outputs and actions, some of which are externally facing and some internally. All, however, are designed to impact positively on our performance, embed a culture of continuous improvement and improve the efficiency of Invest NI.

The two which will have the greatest visibility to business are our rationalisation of programmes and proposals to service a wider business base than at present.

With over 80 individual programmes on offer, feedback from our customer base clearly stated that this was confusing and that accessing them was sometimes difficult. We worked to package our existing programme solutions in a way that is much more user friendly to our customers and reduced them down to five solution areas. This will help our customers focus on the area of business assistance they want and help us provide a clearer set of solutions to them. These new solution areas have been rolled out on our recently revised website.

The Customer Base team has developed a tiered service delivery model which aims to provide advice and support to the entire business base in Northern Ireland. Widespread business advice will be available to the entire Northern Ireland business community using a number of channels including our business portal, www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk, our own staff and by working in close partnership with local councils and key stakeholders. More tailored solutions will be available to businesses that meet agreed criteria.

We have also worked in partnership with DEL to provide an Assured Skills pilot programme. This helps us provide a stronger inward investment incentive by providing a guarantee that companies creating new jobs in Northern Ireland will be able to fully satisfy their skills needs. This has already produced tangible results with Heritage Administration Services Ltd announcing in February that it is establishing a fund services operation in Belfast, which could create up to 46 high quality jobs. At the time, Mark Huntley, Managing Director of Heritage Administration Services Ltd and Heritage International Fund Managers Ltd said: "Our strategy for growth depends on recruiting well educated, high calibre staff at all levels and ensuring that we develop our people to service the dynamic but challenging investment sectors in which we operate.

"Belfast can deliver on both of these requirements and the added support from Invest NI and the Department for Employment and Learning makes it a very attractive investment proposition for us."

Some of the other workstreams may be more internally focused but still have a very direct impact on our customers. In further developing Invest NI's purpose, vision, values and behaviours we are ensuring that we give our customers the best experience possible and shape the culture of Invest NI. This strategy has been rolled out across the organisation and informs everything we do including how we do it.

This is closely aligned to a new Performance Management System which not only measures individual performance but also addresses how we fulfill the visions, values and behaviours of Invest NI.

We have also introduced changes to the way we evaluate potential projects and internal approval levels, allowing us to become more responsive to our customers needs and make decisions on financial assistance much quicker – something which is being well received by our customers. In fact between June and December last year 75% of cases which previously would have been approved outside Invest NI were actually approved by our Board.

Through these, and the other Transform groups, we are changing many aspects of what we do and how we do it, whilst at the same time continuing to deliver business as usual.

NEW SCHEME

TO BOOST JOB CREATION

Recognising the need to focus on job creation in the current economic climate the NI Executive has asked Invest NI to deliver a new initiative, the Short Term Employment Scheme (STES), that aims to promote 5,000 jobs by March 2015 with 4,000 to be actually created by March 2014.



A budget of almost £19 million has been set aside to implement a range of measures under STES over the next four years. These measures, which cover the length and breadth of the economy, include specific financial incentives to help established businesses to grow as well as encouraging new business start-ups. In line with the NI Executive's overall strategic priority, STES will help to contribute to a sustainable economy that benefits all.

Invest NI's Donal Durkan explains: "When we were developing the STES measures there were a number of key challenges that we needed to address. We wanted to ensure that unemployed people did not become permanently detached from the labour market, so a key objective of STES is to give people the opportunity to secure a job, which, through time could lead to a better job and eventually to wider career development opportunities. We also wanted to ensure that we developed a range of measures that could be implemented quickly and that would have an immediate impact."

STES offers support to new and existing businesses and, whilst Invest NI has been tasked with its implementation, a lot of the activity will be undertaken with the support of a wide range of stakeholders. The range of measures include:

- Grant support of £1,000 will be offered to people, resident in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas (NRA), who complete the 'Go for it' Programme and come forward with an approved business plan and have in place a business bank account.
- Grant support of £1,500 to disadvantaged young people not in employment education or training (NEET), who complete the 'Go for it' Programme and also develop an approved business plan, with a business bank account in place.
- A number of initiatives delivered in conjunction with government departments to support and further develop employment opportunities in the social economy sector.
- A new Business Growth Programme will offer 20 businesses a year the opportunity to accelerate business growth through an intensive wrap-around support programme which will include a major focus on high quality mentoring.
- Invest NI will actively target new investment projects across the range of manufacturing and tradeable service sectors that have the potential to create new jobs in the short term. Employment grant support will be available and will be linked to the basic wage of the new jobs being created. Within this measure we will be working closely with the Department

for Employment and Learning (DEL) as its Steps to Work (StW) and Employer Subsidy initiatives can provide additional financial support to qualifying businesses.

"We believe, given the current economic climate, that the set of special measures within STES is required in the short term to stimulate job creation. The continued need for STES should decline once labour market conditions have improved," says Donal Durkan.

"We have been given challenging job creation targets under this scheme. We will be working hard together with a wide range of key stakeholders and partners to raise awareness of what support is available, to encourage widespread uptake across Northern Ireland and to ensure that these much needed jobs are created."

» For more information about STES please contact Claire McVeigh on 028 9069 8365, or e-mail claire.mcveigh@investni.com

INVEST NI'S TOP MANAGEMENT TURN 'DRAGONS'



>> Alastair Hamilton, Chief Executive of Invest NI, presents the prize to the winners of the event, the team from St Mary's Christian Brothers Grammar School

The top management team in Invest NI recently turned 'dragons' for the day to test the entrepreneurial flair of pupils from four local schools.

In a fun, practical and inspirational way of learning about business and enterprise, pupils from Girls Model, Belfast, St Mary's Christian Brothers Grammar School, Belfast, St Patrick's College, Banbridge and Cathedral Youth Club, Londonderry presented their business ideas to the team in a *Dragon's Den* type event.

Organised by Business in the Community, the event was the culmination of a 10-week Quick Start programme developed by Ulster Bank and Young Enterprise and sponsored by Invest NI, designed to promote student entrepreneurial creativity for 14-16 year olds.

Jill Smyth, Head of MoneySense at Ulster Bank, explains: "Through Quickstart, our business mentors have been working with young people across Northern Ireland as they experience their first taste of enterprise and business. We have

provided hands-on practical experiences to help young people develop business skills and encourage their entrepreneurial spirit and I am delighted to see the results of their hard work here today.

"There is a renewed focus on ensuring young people are equipped with appropriate economic skills, and this programme enables us to build on our financial education programme, MoneySense for Schools, which also contains an online business module."

Carol Fitzsimons, Chief Executive of Young Enterprise Northern Ireland, says: "We recognise that the world in which our young people will live and work is ever-changing, and we are continually developing our programme offering to involve business volunteers to support students in acquiring the skills needed to become enterprising, creative and commercially aware."

The products that had been developed by the Quick Start finalists and pitched to the dragons were varied. The Starbandz team from Girls Model School were making and selling bandanas. St Patrick's College had developed a range of costume jewellery while Cathedral Youth Club created pictures, postcards and diaries featuring photos that they took of Londonderry's historic buildings.

The winning team from Christian Brothers Grammar School had created chocolate gift bags for special occasions. All of the teams said they had learnt a lot from the experience of running their own business and had enjoyed it.

Alastair Hamilton, Invest NI's Chief Executive, comments: "Young entrepreneurs have a key role to play in the future success of the local economy, so it is essential that we encourage them to grow their skills and develop the confidence to use them in the business world. I was greatly impressed by the intelligence, creativity and enthusiasm demonstrated by all of the entrepreneurs involved in the initiative and hope that the experience proves to be invaluable in their future careers."



>> Back row: Jill Smyth, Ulster Bank; Tracy Meharg, Mel Chittock and Alastair Hamilton of Invest NI. Front row: pupils from Girls Model School with their teacher, Paula Leitch

Food

GOLDEN opportunity for food companies



The 2012 Olympics presents a tremendous opportunity for our food and drink industry to grow sales outside Northern Ireland and strengthen the industry's contribution to the local economy at this very challenging time.

Around 50 local companies attended the most recent briefing about business opportunities, including food and drink, associated with the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games in London.

The event was organised by the London Olympic Games Organising Committee (LOCOG) in association with Invest NI.

The games have been described as "the world's largest peace-time catering operation". Some 14 million meals for 16,500 athletes, 4,000 officials, 20,600 broadcasters and journalists, and nine million ticket

holders, across 40 different locations will be required. A further five million meals are likely to be required at rowing and sailing locations outside London.

Catering for the games is expected to be worth around £160 million. The business opportunity for local companies also goes well beyond the various venues. The event is expected to generate up to £230 million for restaurants in London and over £300 million, including food and drink, for hotels used by overseas visitors to the games.

The LOCOG Food Vision is to ensure a "tastier, healthier and greener games".

Invest NI is working closely with LOCOG to ensure that local companies are given the opportunity to bid for this potentially lucrative business. Local companies were given an opportunity during the International Food Exhibition in London to show their products to the caterers for the Olympics. LOCOG-related business could also lead to other worthwhile contracts from forthcoming

international events including the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.

Food and drink supply contracts will also be advertised through the established CompeteFor web portal. Companies wishing to be considered will need to register on the portal...and soon. They will also need to comply with the quality and other standards set by LOCOG.

LOCOG has set the Red Tractor standard as the benchmark for meat, fruit, vegetables, salads, cereals and dairy. All dairy products, beef, lamb and poultry must be British or of equivalent British standard.

The Food Vision also stipulates that master caterers and other caterers should source "fresh, local and organic food".

In addition, bananas, tea, coffee and sugar will be Fairtrade and traditional cheese such as cheddar must be British.

There's also a requirement to include regional specialities, particularly from small and medium sized companies and artisan producers from across the UK, to promote and celebrate the variety, quality and diversity of British food and drink.

Overall some 80 per cent of produce must be sourced from local suppliers.

Food required for the Olympics and Paralympics in London 2012 is estimated as:

- 25,000 loaves of bread
- 232 tonnes of potatoes
- 82 tonnes of seafood
- 31 tonnes of poultry
- 100 tonnes of meat
- 75,000 litres of milk
- 21 tonnes of cheese
- 19 tonnes of British Lion mark free-range eggs
- 330 tonnes of fruit and vegetables



Food



>> Robert Ditty, Managing Director of Ditty's Home Bakery with some of the company's produce used at the state banquet for Queen Elizabeth II in Dublin



>> Gourmet sandwich company Deli Lites supplies sandwiches, wraps and salads to many of the top convenience stores, hospitals, cafés and corporate catering customers across the island of Ireland



>> Boozeberries has won a string of international awards for its handcrafted products using cranberries, blackcurrants and blueberries in a grain spirit

BITE SIZE NEWS

Fit for a queen

Kettle Irish Foods, based in Lisnaskea, Co. Fermanagh and Ditty's, based in Castledawson, Co. Londonderry were selected to supply produce served at the historic state banquet in Dublin Castle, held in the Queen's honour as part of her official visit to the Republic of Ireland. Kettle Irish Foods supplied dry-aged ribeye beef for the main course, while artisan bakery, Ditty's, supplied its Traditional Irish Oatcakes for the cheeseboard.

Boozeberries' export drive

Award winning Dromore company Boozeberries is being assisted by Invest NI to expand sales of a range of innovative berry liqueurs for export. The company is investing over £450,000 to step up production and drive business in target markets outside Northern Ireland. Owner Stuart Hughes says: "We are implementing an aggressive marketing campaign to drive export sales and expect sales outside Northern Ireland to contribute around 75 per cent of business by 2013."

Healthier snacks launched

Mackle Snack Foods in Moy is developing a range of healthier snacks for export, with support from Invest NI. Its new All Yours brand includes a premium range of bite-sized, crispy rice clusters, oats, and healthy fruits such as cranberries and blueberries covered in yoghurt. Managing Director Joe Mackle says: "All Yours is a major product development and premium branding initiative by the company which builds on our successful experience in producing private label snacks for major retailers in Great Britain."

Big Pot steams ahead

Big Pot Company, the Cookstown producer of a range of fresh soups, including gluten-free and low-fat products, has been assisted by Invest NI to win business from Makro, its first sales in Britain. The new contract, the result of a partnership with Nicco Foods of Cheshire, has led to Big Pot supplying four soup lines to 30 Makro depots in Great Britain. Invest NI facilitated the business relationship between Big Pot and Nicco Foods.

Deli Lites expands

Deli Lites Ireland is investing £600,000 to expand, with support from Invest NI. Deli Lites produces sandwiches, deli wraps and salads and is planning to grow sales by over 25 per cent through an even sharper focus on the Republic of Ireland. Brian Reid, Managing Director, says: "At the core of the strategy are the acquisition of new and much larger premises and the achievement of British Retail Consortium (BRC) Accreditation Grade A. This enables us to bid for contracts from major retailers throughout the island of Ireland."

Dragon Brand fires up export sales

Invest NI is helping Dragon Brand Foods in Strabane, a manufacturer of sauces and gravy products, to grow exports through a £177,000 investment in innovative products, equipment and marketing. It will also enable Dragon Brand Foods to develop initial leads in markets including the US and Australia. The company aims to grow sales by around 30 per cent over the next three years through the development of new products including an Oriental sweet and sour sauce and a pepper sauce.

Regional NEWS

Regional News



>> Windflow's innovative windsock that can be used as part of the training regime for greyhounds

Run like the wind

Windflow, a start-up business in Crumlin, has used an Invest NI Innovation Voucher to turn a smart idea into a unique product, a tailored windsock, that can be used as part of the training regime for greyhounds to enhance their performance.

The windsock, the outcome of research over three years by business owner Michael McPeake, who has extensive experience in the rehabilitation of dogs from muscle injuries, is made from nylon and neoprene and was developed with advice and assistance from the University of Ulster, a collaboration facilitated by the voucher scheme. The scheme offers small enterprises £4,000 towards the costs of such collaboration over a period of 12 months.

Mr McPeake says: "Windflow enables trainers to enhance the training regime by the addition of a coat that has been designed to assist the animal to maximise its performance. Advice and practical support that I've received from the University of Ulster through the Innovation Voucher programme has been immensely beneficial. It has helped me to perfect the design of the coat and to successfully conduct initial tests.

"The next stage will be to conduct some further scientific tests and set up an e-commerce website to sell the coats worldwide."

Clarehill Plastics' fantastic savings

Invest NI has helped Clarehill Plastics to save over £1.5 million through a programme of efficiency measures.

The Moira-based firm designs and manufactures oil and fuel storage products for customers throughout the UK, the Republic of Ireland, Belgium, Denmark, the Czech Republic, France, Poland and Slovakia. Clarehill's products are sold under the brand name Harlequin. Clarehill also undertakes contract moulding for the environmental, construction services and food service sectors in a number of markets.

Invest NI supported the employment of an individual who implemented a programme of continuous improvement at Clarehill and looked at measures to help the company increase its capability to compete.

Michael Kinder, Finance Manager of Clarehill Plastics, says: "This improvement programme has been a resounding success. The savings achieved will bring long-term benefits to the company and ensure we maximise our profitability."

Support furnishes new opportunities

County Armagh furniture manufacturer Joseph Flanigan & Son Ltd has secured over £150,000 of new sales in the Republic of Ireland following support from Invest NI.

The 91-year-old family business, based in Richhill, manufactures a wide variety of office furniture, from one-off bespoke boardroom tables to large corporate fit-outs.

The company recently made a significant investment in export growth including recruiting a sales and marketing manager to develop and implement an extensive sales and marketing strategy, as well as an additional cabinet maker to support the anticipated increase in turnover. Invest NI offered £19,600 of support.

Andrew Flanigan of Joseph Flanigan & Son, says: "Invest NI's support has been invaluable as we focus on exploiting new business opportunities in Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland.

"The improvements we have made to our website, marketing materials and sales strategy are starting to pay dividends.

"In addition, our Forest Stewardship Council Chain-of-Custody certification, achieved recently with Invest NI support, will improve our business image by enabling customers to choose products which are made from sustainable sources."

>> Pictured (right) is Andrew Flanigan of Joseph Flanigan & Son with Mark Bleakney, Manager of Invest NI's Southern Regional Office





Wall to wall success

Glengormley-based design company Off The Wall Creations has secured a major contract in Dublin with Generator Hostels with support from Invest NI.

Off The Wall Creations specialises in the design and installation of bespoke wallpaper and wall graphics for domestic and commercial premises. This contract will see Off The Wall work, develop and install its wallpaper designs throughout a 106-bedroom hotel recently acquired by Generator Hostels.

Invest NI has worked with Off The Wall for a number of years, most recently in supporting export focused business development activities.

Patrick McGowan of Off The Wall says:

"This is a major contract for us, not just because of the size but also because it is an important development for us in a key export market. Generator has a reputation across Europe for providing high quality budget accommodation.

"Business at present is extremely competitive so we have worked hard to build our brand and promote our range of services in target markets. Invest NI support has been an important component in this, giving us the confidence to explore and secure export opportunities."

>> An example of the distinctive wall art created by Off the Wall for its commercial customers

Bedding company springs towards growth

Dream World Bedding Ltd in Warrenpoint is investing over £225,000 towards export development with support from Invest NI.

The company manufactures a range of mattresses and bed bases which are supplied to independent retailers, retail chains, hotels and the property management sector across Ireland.

Dream World Bedding had identified potential for growth in the hospitality sector and property management markets in Scotland and the Republic

of Ireland. Invest NI offered the firm £27,000 to help it capitalise on these opportunities.

As part of its investment, the company employed two new sales and marketing managers and implemented a co-ordinated sales and marketing strategy. The firm also plans to recruit three additional production operatives as well as an administrator over the next three years to help manage the anticipated increase in business.

John Mc Knight, Director of Dream World Bedding, comments: "Invest NI's support is enabling us to develop the overall marketing skills, knowledge and management expertise that will help us to grow our business and create employment in the Warrenpoint area."

LEAN TECHNIQUES DOUBLE OUTPUT

Draperstown-based Yardmaster International, which produces flatpack metal garden sheds and garages, has achieved £8 million worth of export business in the last 12 months following support from Invest NI.

Invest NI helped Yardmaster review its manufacturing processes and identify ways to make the business even more efficient. The company then incorporated a series of lean manufacturing techniques into its operations enabling it to double the number of sheds produced per week.

Willie McKeown, Managing Director at Yardmaster International, says: "Implementing lean manufacturing techniques into our operations has made an immediate and positive impact on our overall business performance. Working with Invest NI helped us to recognise the benefits we could gain by focusing on productivity improvement.

"We plan to further increase production and will continue to focus on improving our processes in order to maximize efficiencies and free up time to progress research and development on next generation products."



>> Pictured (left) is John McKnight, Director of Dream World Bedding in Warrenpoint with Mark Bleakney, Manager of Invest NI's Southern Regional Office

What's New?

WHAT'S NEW?



INNOVATION FOCUS FOR FOOD EXPORTERS

Invest NI has organised a major conference and workshops to help companies expand business through a sharper focus on innovation in products and processes.

This important event for the local food industry is being held on 8th September at the Loughry campus of the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise in Cookstown. Taking part in the event will be UK experts on consumer behaviour who will help local companies gain a greater understanding of what shapes purchasing decisions.

These include David Meade, an acknowledged expert on market-led innovation, and Camilla Bernard, Managing Director of Rude Health

in London, one of the UK's most innovative marketers of breakfast cereals.

A Northern Ireland focus on new product development in meat and condiments for food service in particular will be provided by Peter Hannan, Managing Director of Moira-based Hannan Meats, a company which has won a string of Great Taste Awards from the UK Guild of Fine Foods for its beef products.



>> Peter Hannan, of Hannan Meats

>> For more information, please contact Grainne Moody
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MONEY SAVING IDEAS SHORTLISTED

Invest NI customers, Learning Pool and SANYX International, were the only Northern Ireland SMEs to have been shortlisted as part of the Cabinet Office's Innovation Launchpad, a competition about saving money for the government.

Learning Pool's project, called 'Big Society School' is pitched to save at least £60m per annum by providing low cost online training nationally to the civil sector. SANYX's project, 'The Faxcop', aims to reduce the carbon footprint of government offices by reducing waste paper, the use of expensive printing ink, electricity, staff time, handling and disposal costs. Savings are estimated at up to £120m per year.

INNOVATION VOUCHERS UP FOR GRABS

The next call for applications for Innovation Vouchers will open on 1 September 2011 and run to 30 September 2011. Innovation Vouchers are designed to enable small Northern Ireland registered enterprises to access knowledge and expertise to develop innovative solutions to business issues.

The programme provides a voucher of up to £4000 which businesses can use to engage with one of the 41 universities, colleges and other publicly funded research organisations throughout Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. A company may apply for up to three vouchers for different projects, as long as only one voucher is 'live' at any given time.

>> For more information contact Claire Herron, Innovation Vouchers Programme Manager
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nibusinessinfo.co.uk

NIBUSINESS INFO.CO.UK

Practical Advice for Business

Tweet for expert advice

With over 2,300 followers and growing fast, nibusinessinfo.co.uk's Twitter channel is proving to be a popular and effective medium for businesses looking for immediate and practical business advice.

Got a question about tax? Need to find out how to trade in Russia, or investigate the availability of grants for R&D? Who you gonna tweet? twitter.com/nibusinessinfo of course.

Now ranked 64th in Northern Ireland, the nibusinessinfo.co.uk Twitter channel has become the quickest and easiest way to get reliable business information.

Behind its success is Invest NI's David Crozier, web editor for nibusinessinfo.co.uk. He explains: "We're finding that small businesses in particular are using this channel as it's quick and less intimidating than contacting a government agency through more traditional channels.

"We tweet about five times a day with updates about our website, news of upcoming events, new business support schemes and other relevant information. If I'm at an event I'll be tweeting throughout the day with information that I think businesses will be interested in. It means that people who follow us are really getting the most up-to-date information possible."

David receives tweeted queries from businesses on a daily basis. These range from asking advice about tendering to looking for information about drafting agreements with business partners in India.

The character limitations of Twitter mean that the response is short and to the point and often involves signposting the person to the relevant part of nibusinessinfo.co.uk. As a result almost 5% of traffic to the nibusinessinfo.co.uk website comes through Twitter.

"I think it's important that nibusinessinfo.co.uk's support for business can be accessed through a range of channels, and as one of the fastest growing online communications networks Twitter seems destined to become central to how we provide updates and advice.

"However, it's important to remember that it is just part of our multi-channel approach that includes online and telephone support. The idea is to engage with people through whichever channel they are most comfortable with and deliver our support in a way that best suits the customer," says David.

Certainly the response to the nibusinessinfo.co.uk Twitter channel has been very positive:

"nibusinessinfo has been invaluable to (us) in setting up our Ltd. Co. We regularly signpost our mumpreneur community to its online resources and tools."

"Found the site had info well organised so I could find what I was looking for quick. Now follow on Twitter, keep up the good work guys."

TOPICAL TOPICS

Paternity leave

Regulations introducing additional paternity leave and additional statutory paternity pay in Northern Ireland came into force on 3 October 2010. The provisions affect parents of children born on or after 3 April 2011 and give fathers the right to take up to six months' extra leave when the mother returns to work.

>> For more information go to www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/maternityandpaternity

Bribery Act 2010

From 1 July 2011 under the Bribery Act 2010, businesses may need to have a procedure in place to prevent acts of bribery. This will only be necessary if there is a risk that an agent, subsidiary or other person performing services for your business might carry out such acts.

>> Find out more on the Bribery Act 2010 at www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/briberyact - or create your own personalised regulation checklist allowing you to see at a glance the regulations that apply to your business at www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/regulationchecklist

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