

**File name:** Chapter\_4\_-\_EY\_Announcement\_-\_Rob\_Heron\_&\_Frank\_O'Keefe[1].mp3

**Moderator questions in Bold**, Respondents in Regular text.

**KEY: Unable to decipher** = (inaudible + timecode), **Phonetic spelling** (ph) + timecode), **Missed word** = (mw + timecode), **Talking over each other** = (talking over each other + timecode).

**Moderator: And now, a very exciting moment because we have news of an investment. I want to welcome to the stage, Rob Heron. Rob is the managing partner for EY Northern Ireland. Prior to his current role, Rob held the position of tax partner, leading a team of 100 tax professionals, delivering tax advice to a wide range of companies, to high net worth individuals and to various partnerships. A huge amount of experience, it includes advising on group reorganisations, raising finance, debt restructuring, international tax structuring, as well as acquisitions and disposals. And, he leads the EY Entrepreneur Of The Year programme here in Northern Ireland. So, a warm welcome please, for Rob Heron.**

Rob Heron: Thank you, Anita, for that warm introduction, and good morning, secretaries of state, ministers, your excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. As managing partner of EY Northern Ireland, it is an honour for me to be with you here this morning at such an important event for the economic future of Northern Ireland. I'm especially proud to be able to formally confirm that EY will create an additional 1,000 new jobs here in Northern Ireland over the next five years, in a move that will bring our total headcount to more than 1,900. This is a significant investment by EY that will have considerable economic and related societal benefits in the region. It is a clear signal of EY's confidence in Northern Ireland, and I hope sends a really positive message to the global investors we have in the room today. Northern Ireland is a place that I'm proud to call home and invest in.

Over the past number of months, we in EY have been working really closely with the Department for the Economy and Invest Northern Ireland to align EY's strategy for growth with a 10x vision for the Northern Ireland economy. These 1,000 new opportunities will be open to everyone, regardless of location or background. They include apprenticeships for school leavers, graduate training programmes, experienced hires and those who wish to reskill or return to the workplace following a period of absence. We are incredibly proud of the diversity of our existing team. Of course we've staff from all across Northern Ireland, but we also have 39 different nationalities here in our team. It is this diversity and quality that sets us apart in the market. We are very focused on ensuring that we continue to attract the best from right across the region, and with that in mind, we will establish a new hub in the North West, to help access the incredible talent in that area and also drive our growth in the years ahead.

We will continue to work closely with schools and further education colleges across all of Northern Ireland, and will run Assured Skills academies outside of Belfast so that we can give the widest possible

pool of talent the opportunity to come work with us and have an exceptional career at EY. Each of the 1,000 people who will join us over the next five years will benefit from a personalised career development plan. They will have access to a world class training, such as our award winning continuous education programme, EY Badges. We know that when we invest in our people and we help them unlock their full potential, well, that's when we're really at our best, that's when careers take flight and lives are changed. The new roles will include opportunities in the long standing areas of our business, such as assurance, tax and transaction services, as well as the fast growing areas such as data analytics, cyber, and the very exciting generative AI. We are confident that the innovative new skills developed will be crucial for the future of the Northern Ireland economy and very much aligned with the 10x ambition.

We, in EY Northern Ireland have the privilege of working closely with Northern Ireland government, locally based multinational businesses and exciting new start-ups. Through our much acclaimed All Ireland EY Entrepreneur Of The Year programme, we also work with fast growing entrepreneurial businesses. What better example of this than the current EY Entrepreneur Of The Year winner, the fantastic Martin McKay, founder of Texthelp, who, from a base in Antrim, is transforming so many lives around the world. With his game-changing technology, aimed at advancing the literacy and understand of one billion, yes, one billion people, by 2030. But being part of the EY global network of over 365,000 people in over 150 countries, provides all of our people with not only the opportunity to work with great local business, but also the most exciting global companies and household brands.

The individuals who will fill these 1,000 roles in EY Northern Ireland over the years ahead will enhance our diverse teams. The new skills developed and the inclusive nature of these opportunities will not only make a significant contribution to the NI economy, calculated by Invest NI to be over one hundred-, over 80 million pounds, but will also make a positive societal impact which is very much aligned with EY's purpose of building a better working world. As I hope you can tell, I am so proud, as are the local partner group, that despite competition from across our global network, that the UKI leadership teams selected Northern Ireland for this investment. And I'm particular delighted that Frank O'Keeffe who's part of that leadership team, is here with us today. Frank.

Frank O'Keeffe: Two for the price of one. Thank you, Rob. And good morning once again, secretaries of state, ministers, your excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. So, as managing partner for EY across the UK and Ireland for our markets, I'm really delighted to have this opportunity to speak with you this morning on behalf of our UK and Ireland regional business. This, as Rob has said, is a really proud day for all of us in EY. Here in Northern Ireland, across the UK and our wider business, globally, we know that invest-, that by investing at this scale, we have the opportunity to meaningfully transform people's lives. As we open a world of opportunity, enabling incredible careers, supporting fantastic clients here in Northern Ireland and around the world. This is something that we are enormously proud of in EY, and it does speak, as Rob said, to our purpose of building a better working world for all.

As this audience will appreciate probably better than most, the competition for jobs and investment is fierce right now, and no more than ever. And it is no different across our own EY global network as Rob has mentioned. So when putting the case together for Northern Ireland, we faced really stiff competition from several other EY locations. So you may ask, why would EY choose Northern Ireland, ultimately, for this investment? Well, the strength of the talent pool here in Northern Ireland is actually quite unique, as been mentioned earlier. Also, our ability to locally and remotely access our world class clients, leveraging our technology and also the ambition and the quality of our Northern Ireland practice, our 900 folks, led by Rob and all of our partners, who made this a really compelling and winning case for EY.

The support that we have received from Invest Northern Ireland and the Department of the Economy, it also played a key role in our decision making process. So, we are collectively very proud of the impact that we know that these jobs will have on the local economy and the legacy that it will also leave here in Northern Ireland. As an EY regional leadership team, we are determined to unlock the full potential of our firm here in Northern Ireland, where we have built an incredible business over decades. By investing in these new jobs, well, we want to play our part in contributing to the economic future and prosperity of this proud region. These 1,000 net new jobs will help to strengthen Northern Ireland's reputation as home to world class universities and the fantastic local talent, and they will spotlight the region as an attractive hub for global business and future international investment. Our firm here in Northern Ireland, provides a superb service to a broad and diverse range of clients across the island of Ireland, the United Kingdom and our global network. By doubling its size over the coming five years, well we see our business here transforming as we respond to the growing and evolving needs of our clients.

Rob set out the kind of skill sets and specialisms that we are targeting as we grow our business over the coming years. Our clients tell us everyday that they trust us to help them solve their most complex issues, and that is why we continue to invest heavily, so that we are always where our clients need us, when they need us. Ensuring that we have a diverse and inclusive EY team is always a top priority for us in EY and also for our clients. That is why the EY Skills Academy is such an important component of this jobs announcement today. Having our core values of diversity, social equity and inclusiveness at the heart of these new employment opportunities, well, it makes great sense for so many reasons and it guides us as we plant our investment here in Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland, as you've heard this morning, has such incredible potential, as recognised by all of us in this room. And when I attended the historic conference in Queen's University back in April to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Belfast Good Friday agreement, I was truly moved and inspired by the words of Senator George Mitchell, when he spoke of the possibility of hope here in Northern Ireland. And in many ways, it is hope that has actually led us here today. So each of us has an important role to play in ensuring that we optimise the opportunities right here in front of us for the benefit of the proud people of this region. When we come together like this behind a singular purpose, to drive Northern Ireland forward, great things will happen. EY is very proud to play our part in the collective effort and to be here with you today announcing these jobs. So we have ambitious plans for our Northern

Ireland firm and for our clients as we unlock the full potential of this moment. I really look forward to more interesting discussions later, on how we can continue to work together to deliver a more prosperous future for all. On behalf of EY, thank you very much.

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