



# **Northern Ireland Assembly and Business Trust China Educational Programme**

## **Post -Visit Report**

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June 2017

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# 1. Background

1. The Northern Ireland Assembly and Business Trust (NIABT) works to forge links with and promote the exchange of knowledge between local businesses and parliamentarians.
2. In partnership with the Confucius Institute at the Ulster University (CIUU) the NIABT hosted a visit to China from **25 October 2016 to 5 November 2016**.
3. In July 2011, the university was chosen by the Confucius Institute Headquarters to be home to a prestigious institute aimed at fostering closer ties between China and Northern Ireland (NI). The CIUU develops academic, cultural, economic and social ties between the two countries. The institute is part of a network of 322 institutes in over 50 countries which promote and teach Chinese language and culture and facilitate cultural exchanges aimed at fostering trade links with China.
4. The programme was developed in conjunction with the Northern Ireland Bureau and the Confucius Institute. The bureau led arrangements in Beijing and Shenyang, and the institute in Hubei.
5. The Northern Ireland Bureau was established by the Executive in 2014 as its diplomatic and representative office in Beijing. The bureau's role is to strengthen the relationship between NI and China and establish contacts with the national and provincial government departments and organisations.
6. The NIABT China Programme aimed to:
  - Encourage an open and frank discussion of how parliamentarians and business representatives engage successfully with China to promote economic growth.
  - Create stronger links through engaging and developing relationships with relevant political and business representatives in China. Relationship building is of particular importance in Chinese culture.
  - Consider, from examples of best practice which may be useful to consider from a NI perspective, exploring the benefits and risks involved.
  - Visit businesses linked to NI to hear about their successes and challenges in entering the Chinese market.
  - Visit regions in China which have established links to NI and investigate the opportunities, politically and through business, which can be maximised.

7. In summary, the purpose of the programme was to bring politicians and business leaders from NI together in an educational environment whereby they could learn lessons which could be taken back to NI to make the relationship with China more successful.
8. The visit supported the NI Bureau's strategy and objectives (**Annex A**) and demonstrated that NI is serious in its commitment to develop lasting relationships with China, both at a political and business level.
9. This was an important visit in the development of the Northern Ireland – China relationship as it demonstrated Northern Ireland's commitment to visit and meet with our partner regions, develop connections between legislatures, share experience and support the future work of NI Executive and its stakeholders.
10. The final programme can be found at **Annex B**.
11. The delegation comprised twelve business members and six politicians:

Kellie Armstrong MLA	
Clare Bailey MLA	NIABT Board
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA	
Danny Kennedy MLA	Member of the Committee for the Executive/ Deputy Speaker
Colin McGrath MLA	
Conor Murphy MLA	NIABT Board, <b>NIABT Interim Chair</b> (referred to as Chair)
Norah Anne Barron	Pi Communications, NIABT Board
Michael Bell	NIFDA, NIABT Board
Glenn Bradley	Hardscape Products Ltd
Chris Brown	Representing MCE PR Ltd at the time of trip, NIABT Board
Stephen Kelly	Manufacturing NI, <b>NIABT Vice Chair</b>
Carol Little	Alana Interiors
Paul McAlister	Paul McAlister Architects Ltd
Catriona McCarthy	Ulster University
Wilfred Mitchell OBE	FSB
Paul Murray	Foyle International Ltd
Colin Neill	Hospitality Ulster
Dr Joanne Stuart OBE	Catalyst Inc
Louise Close	NIABT Deputy Secretary
Frances Leneghan	Private Secretary to Speaker

12. Briefings were provided by the Northern Ireland Bureau and the Confucius Institute to all delegates before and during the visit, covering language, etiquette and doing business in China.

13. Press coverage of the visit can be found at **Annex B**.

## **Locations**

14. The delegation visited three regions in China that NI currently has a relationship with or have been identified as areas for potential growth.

### **Beijing**

Beijing is the capital of the People's Republic of China and the world's third most populous city proper. It is also one of the world's most populous capital cities. The city, located in northern China, is governed as a direct-controlled municipality under the national government with 16 urban, suburban, and rural districts.

Beijing is the second largest Chinese city by urban population after Shanghai and is the nation's political, cultural, and educational centre. It is home to the headquarters of most of China's largest state-owned companies and is a major hub for the national highway, expressway, railway, and high-speed rail networks. The Beijing Capital International Airport has been the second busiest in the world by passenger traffic since 2010, and, as of 2016, the city's subway network is the busiest and second longest in the world, after Shanghai's subway system.

Beijing has seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites – the Forbidden City, Temple of Heaven, Summer Palace, Ming Tombs, Zhoukoudian, as well as parts of the Great Wall and the Grand Canal, all popular locations for tourism.

Many of Beijing's 91 universities consistently rank among the best in China, of which Peking University and Tsinghua University are ranked in the top 60 universities in the world. In 2015, 52 of the Fortune Global 500 company headquarters were located in Beijing, more than in any other city in the world, including state-owned enterprises State Grid, China National Petroleum, and the Sinopec Group, ranked 2nd, 3rd, and 4th, respectively. Beijing Central Business District is quickly becoming the centre for Beijing's economic expansion, rapid modernisation, and radically changing skyline, with the ongoing or recently completed construction of multiple skyscrapers. Beijing's Zhongguancun area is also known as China's Silicon Valley, China's centre of innovation and technology entrepreneurship. According to the 2016 InterNations Expat Insider Survey, Beijing ranked first in Asia in the subcategory "Personal Finance Index," a measure of expats' salaries versus cost of living in the city.

## **Shenyang, Liaoning**

Liaoning is located in the northeast of the country. Liaoning is in the southernmost part of Manchuria, is known as Northeast China. It is also known in Chinese as "the Golden Triangle" from its shape and strategic location, with the Yellow Sea (Korea Bay and Bohai Sea) in the south, North Korea's North Pyongan and Chagang provinces in the south-east, Jilin to the north-east, Hebei to the south-west, and Inner Mongolia to the north-west.

Shenyang is the provincial capital and largest city of Liaoning Province, People's Republic of China, as well as the largest city in Northeast China by urban population. According to the 2010 census, the city's urban area has 6.3 million inhabitants, while the total population of the Shenyang municipality, which holds the administrative status of a sub-provincial city, is up to 8.1 million.

Along with its nearby cities, Shenyang is an important industrial centre in China and serves as the transportation and commercial hub of China's north-east — particularly with Japan, Russia and Korea. As a centre of heavy industry in China since the 1930s, it has been focused on heavy industry, particularly aerospace, machine tools, heavy equipment and defence, and recently on software, automotive and electronics and the spearhead of the Chinese central government's Northeast Area Revitalization Plan, the city has been diversifying its industry. The economy of the city has revived significantly in recent years, thanks to the central government's "Revitalize Northeast China" campaign and the rapid development of software and auto manufacture industries. Investment subsidies are granted to multinational corporations (MNCs) that set up offices or headquarters in Shenyang.

## **Wuhan, Hubei**

Hubei is located in the Central China region. Important agricultural products in Hubei include cotton, rice, wheat, and tea, while industries include automobiles, metallurgy, machinery, power generation, textiles, foodstuffs and high-tech commodities.

The Hubei Jingzhou Chengnan Economic Development Zone was established in 1992 under the approval of the Hubei Government with three major industries include textile, petroleum and Hi-Tech.

Wuhan is the capital of Hubei Province, China, and is the most populous city in Central China. It is a major transportation hub, with dozens of railways, roads and expressways passing through the city and connecting to major cities in mainland China. Holding sub-provincial status, Wuhan is recognized as the political, economic,

financial, cultural, educational and transportation centre of Central China.

Wuhan has attracted foreign investment from over 80 countries, with 5,973 foreign-invested enterprises established in the city with a total capital injection of 22.45 billion US dollars. The municipal government offers various preferential policies to encourage foreign investment, including tax incentives, discounted loan interest rates and government subsidies.

Wuhan is an important centre for economy, trade, finance, transportation, information technology and education in China. Its major industries include optic-electronic, automobile manufacturing, iron and steel manufacturing, new pharmaceutical sector, biology engineering, new materials industry and environmental protection.

There are 35 higher educational institutions which makes it a leading educational hub for China. Wuhan ranks third in China in overall strength of science and technology.

## 2. Meetings and Site Visits

Meetings took place in each location with representatives from political, business and education backgrounds. The following section details the discussions which took place at each meeting.

### Day 1

#### 1. British Embassy

- The delegation was hosted at the British Embassy in Beijing by the Northern Ireland Bureau and briefings were provided on the cultural and economic relationship between NI and China by the British Embassy Economics Team, British Council, Department for International Trade, Invest NI China and the Northern Ireland Bureau.





## 2. Northern Ireland Bureau Reception

- The Northern Ireland Bureau hosted a reception in the China World Hotel to help raise Northern Ireland's profile with key stakeholders in Beijing from the government, diplomatic and business community. The Northern Ireland Bureau invited guests including diplomats from the British, Irish and EU delegations to Beijing, Department for International Trade, Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries as well as university and business representatives.



## Day 2

### Political Delegation Only

## 3. Ministry of Culture

- The meeting with the Ministry of Culture provided the opportunity for the Northern Ireland Assembly to lend its support to the Cultural Memorandum of Understanding that was signed between the former DCAL and the Chinese Ministry of Culture.

- NIABT provided an overview from the politicians of the various cultural festivals and programmes operating in NI and the opportunities to showcase Chinese cultural performances at these events.
- The importance of culture in developing strong relationships was discussed. All sides agreed that culture provides the opportunity to get a better understanding of the regions and their people and provides a strong message of relationship building and trust.
- Various cultural opportunities were discussed including possible Chinese participation at NI festivals. NI was encouraged to promote various cultural activities in China and these could include traditional as well as modern activities.
- The Ministry also spoke of the opportunities to share best practice in the management of cultural programmes and specifically referred to opportunities with museums.

#### **4. Visit to the Ministry of Education**

- The meeting with the Ministry of Education focused on promoting our universities and colleges and positioning them more strategically in China as strong, international centres with reputations for research across a variety of sectors.
- NIABT also promoted the colleges in terms of training employees in new skills and retraining older employees with skills required in the new knowledge economy.
- Professor Feng Guoxin from Hubei Normal University also attended the meeting and raised the issue of recognition of some of the new degree courses they were developing with Ulster University. The Ministry acknowledged the NI emphasis on education and were aware of the previous work of our universities through Vice Premier Liu Yandong's visit to NI in 2012.
- The meeting also discussed the forthcoming People to People Dialogue and emphasised that education was a major theme of (P2P) and supported by Vice Premier Liu Yandong.

#### **Business Delegation Only**

#### **5. COFCO**

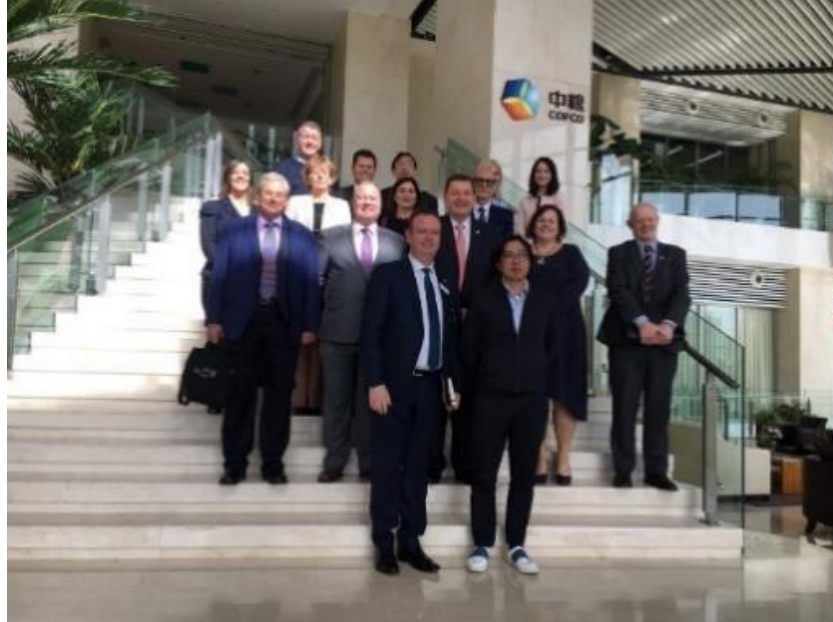
- The China National Cereals, Oils and Foodstuffs Corporation is one of China's state-owned food processing holding companies. The COFCO Group is China's largest food processing, manufacturer and trader.

- It is one of the largest state-owned enterprises of the 49 directly administrated by China's State Council. Between 1952 and 1987, it was the sole agricultural products importer and exporter operating under direct control of the central government. In 2007, COFCO had just over 60,000 employees in multiple locations in China as well as overseas operations in countries such as the US, UK, Japan, Australia and Canada.



- Besides the foodstuff business, COFCO has developed itself into a diversified conglomerate, involving planting, cultivation, food-processing, finance, warehouse, transportation, port facilities, hotels and real estate. It is one of the top 500 enterprises chosen by the US 'Fortune' magazine.
- The delegation was provided with a presentation on the background of the company and a tour of the facilities.
- The main areas of discussion were:
  - a) Food safety is a rising issue in China and there is a greater focus on this area at COFCO. Delegates highlighted that the world's number one Institute for Global Food Security is based in NI at Queen's University and there were discussions about the need for greater links between COFCO and the institute.
  - b) Organoleptic analyses – The delegation was shown the research centre focusing on sensory organs to analyse the taste experience. Similarities were noted between the technology being used in China and NI.

- c) Consumer science – The delegation was shown a smart supermarket and eye-tracking technology which is helping to monitor consumer interactions.





## Full Delegation

### 6. Embassy of Ireland

- The delegation was hosted by Ambassador Kavanagh who provided an overview of the history of the embassy and an insight into Ireland's relationship with China.
- China–Ireland relations are interstate relations of China and Ireland. Both countries established diplomatic relations on 22 June 1979. Both countries exchanged ambassadors in 1980. Ireland has an embassy in Beijing, a general consulate in Shanghai and an honorary consulate in Hong Kong.
- The embassy supports the community of Irish people who are resident, those travelling to China, businesses, public bodies and institutions which are engaged in targeted activities towards China. It supports Chinese investment and tourism to Ireland and student exchanges.
- Areas where successful business relationships have been developed are in agri-food, food safety, education, new technologies and financial services.



## **7. Hanban**

- Hanban/Confucius Institute Headquarters, as a public institution affiliated with the Chinese Ministry of Education, provides Chinese language and cultural teaching resources and services worldwide.
- The delegates were given a tour of an exhibition which showcased Chinese language and culture. A briefing was then given by Professor Ma Jianfei, Deputy Director General of Hanban and Deputy Chief Executive of Confucius Institute Headquarters. He spoke of Hanban's policies and development plans for promoting the Chinese language internationally and their support of Chinese language programmes at educational institutions.
- He made particular reference to the Confucius Institute in NI and thanked the political representatives for their support in its establishment and continued success.



## **Day 3**

### **8. Visit Great Wall of China and Tiananmen Square**

- The delegation visited the world renowned and culturally significant Great Wall of China and Tiananmen Square. The delegation gained an insight into the history and culture of the region.

## **Day 4**

### **Travel to Shenyang**

#### **Political Delegation Only**

#### **9. Meeting with National Congress/ Liaoning Foreign Affairs**

- The delegation met with the National Congress, highlighting the similarities between the two legislatures, with the National Congress having similar functions to the Northern Ireland Assembly including the creation of legislation. The Congress noted their particular interest in the UK currently due to Brexit.
- The NIABT Chair reflected on the strengthening relationship between the two regions, including the Sister City Agreement between Belfast and Shenyang and the many educational exchanges.



- A number of issues were discussed:

#### **Investment**

- There was discussion about the great similarity between the two regions. Both economies are based on old industry which both regions are now keen to rebalance.
- The NIABT Chair noted that NI is not only looking for inward investment but mutually beneficial opportunities for business in NI and China.
- Shenyang has seen rapid growth in recent times and is interested in developing relationships in the areas of food processing, IT and the creative industries.

### **Education and Reskilling**

- The NIABT Chair highlighted the strong education system in NI, attracting students from across the world.
- The excellent relationship that has developed between China and NI via the links between QUB in Shenyang and the establishment of the Confucius Institute in the Ulster University was also noted.
- Both regions are focusing on reskilling and the education of young people.
- The National Congress stated that they have a department responsible for the reallocation of workers to new roles and matching skills development with the needs of the market.

### **Infrastructure**

- The importance of infrastructure in economic development was discussed and how decisions and funding is devolved. Congress stated that the decisions for infrastructure projects are devolved from Beijing and there is increasing investment from the private sector.
- Central government still influence the decisions of the regions and projects require the support from central government

### **Food**

- The strength of the food industry was also discussed.

## **Day 5**

### **Political Delegation**

#### **10. Shenyang People's Congress**

- The Deputy Secretary-General of the Shenyang People's Congress provided an overview of the region's economic history. Historically, it was focused on old industry- manufacturing, automotive, construction and agri-food and processing. However, it is currently rebalancing its economy.
- Shenyang currently has trade relationships with 180 countries and there are 19 sister cities from 14 different countries, including Belfast.
- 87 Fortune 500 companies, including GM, BMW and Michelin are based in this region, with an international airport with access to 16 routes to different international cities.
- In 2013, the Shenyang Party Congress met the Lord Mayor of Belfast and on 18 May the Lord Mayor signed the formal Sister Cities Agreement.



There already is cooperation on the Bombardier Q400 and Queen's University has a joint university agreement with medical students.

- The Deputy Secretary-General stated that, given the similar economic histories, the Shenyang People's Congress is keen to see what each Parliament can learn from the other and would support political exchange between the two institutions.



- The NIABT Chair provided an overview of NI's economic history, highlighting the similarities between the two regions and that NI too needs to look at new ways to rebalance the economy, with a new focus on IT, health, infrastructure and the creative arts.
- The NIABT Chair stated that NI welcomes investment but is also looking for ways to export NI product to China and grow local business.
- The NIABT Chair highlighted that the delegation also comprised business representatives who were looking at opportunities within their sectors for mutual exchange.
- Several specific topics were raised at the meeting:

#### **Infrastructure**

- The importance of a successful infrastructure system for strong economic growth in Shenyang was discussed. Reference was made to the integrated transport strategy currently being developed in NI and that it would be useful to reflect on how the system in Shenyang is coordinated.
- Representatives were invited to Belfast to see current infrastructure programmes.

- The Deputy Secretary-General highlighted that their air links have been important to their economic growth and that a big effort is currently being made to increase the number of international lines (currently 16).
- Links by land and sea were also highlighted, with over 180 trade agreements currently in place.

### **Skills**

- Given that Shenyang is successfully rebalancing its economy by moving from old industry to new, similar to the economic strategy in NI, discussion took place about what programmes have been developed to reskill its workforce.
- The Deputy Secretary-General highlighted that the region had a very strong education system, with over 40 colleges and universities with a particular focus on health, arts, culture and science. There is also a large focus on vocational courses, with 40,000 to 50,000 student studying courses each year. He stated that they are extremely keen to facilitate reciprocal exchanges in training and skills.

### **Health**

- Members identified the similarities in the pressure on the health service in Shenyang as in NI including issues of an aging population, long waiting lists, retention of expertise and the requirement of additional GPs, particularly in rural areas, given that 50% will retire in the next five years. The Member offered an invitation to meet with the Health Committee if they were in NI.
- The Deputy Secretary-General stated that they have similar problems. Twenty per cent of the population is over 60. Six-hundred million people live in rural areas; 100 million of those are children. He stated that regulations have been developed ensuring notable experts visit rural areas, to ensure they get similar resources to big cities.
- He stated that one of their biggest challenges is how to take care of an aging population and that they would be interested to hear more about our care in the community, including new technologies that would help to support this sector.

### **Youth**

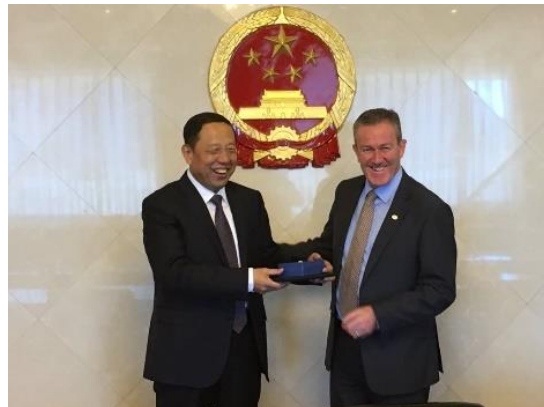
- Members also asked if there was a system for children and young people who are outside the school system.
- The Deputy Secretary-General stated that the statutory services were in education, however there are voluntary organisations that organise activities outside of education. These are different in different districts. Many parents also personally organise activities separately.
- The Deputy Secretary-General stated that there was the opportunity to have more exchanges in the youth sector.

## **Culture**

- Members noted that the largest Chinese community in NI is in south Belfast.
- It was noted that culture and arts are a good way to grow an economy and reflected that these experiences will support engagement with the Chinese community on their return.
- The Member noted that the reinstated All-Party Group on China should look at the arts sector, hospitality and tourism and how the Chinese community can contribute to NI economically and socially.
- The Deputy Secretary-General stated that the two regions should investigate the possibility of exchange tourism personnel.

## **Other Actions**

- There was a commitment from all at the meeting to continue to support and develop the Sister Cities relationship to further the discussions in relation to exchanges in relation to infrastructure, education, tourism health and youth.
- There was an aspiration for direct flights from Shenyang to Belfast in the future and that a branch of the NI Bureau be established in Shenyang.
- Warm greetings were expressed from the Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly and an invitation was given to the Shenyang People's Congress to come to Parliament Buildings in the future.
- The possibility of a formal political exchange between the two institutions will be investigated.



## **11. Liaoning MOFCOM**

- The Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) of the Government of China, formerly the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Co-operation, is an executive agency of the State Council of China. It is responsible for formulating policy on foreign trade, export and import regulations, foreign direct investments, consumer protection, market competition and negotiating bilateral and multilateral trade agreements.

- Currently, over £80 million is invested in the UK, and they are interested in attracting national investment from NI. They are encouraging business in Shenyang to invest abroad. They stated that bilateral trade will be better supported through the NIABT visit.
- There are 14 cities (eight inner cities and six coastal) in the Liaoning region with a population of 43 million people. The region has the only access to the sea in the north-east making it a distribution centre for Asia.
- The region has traditionally been focused on manufacturing and agri-food.
- The NIABT Chair highlighted the strong links and similarities between the two regions and noted that NI is interested not only in investment but in exporting to the region. The Chair also noted that strong relationships have been built between NI and the region through the establishment of the Queen's campus and the Sister Cities Agreement.



- Several specific topics were raised at the meeting:

#### **Investment**

- Liaoning has a larger consumer market than the region itself as it serves as an access point to other regions.
- MOFCOM will provide a list of products that could be supplied to the Chinese market and invited a delegation providing those products to visit the region to look at how to distribute their goods.
- MOFCOM will also provide a list of products from their local markets which may be exported to NI.
- The region is famous due to economic development and it has a strong economic strategy for growth.
- Currently, it has over 50 economic zones and the new national economic strategy and railroad will boost economic development.

- The NIABT Chair highlighted that the NI market is English-speaking, close to the US and with a very good education system. NI is keen to develop relationships with China in the areas of food, financial services, engineering/environmental product, tourism and the creative arts.

### **Transport and Infrastructure**

- Shenyang has excellent shipping transportation with six international seaports.
- The railroad now has access from Dalian to Shenyang, north across to Russia and west to Germany and is cheaper than marine transportation (BMW auto parts are transported by railway). MOFCOM stated that it would like to see more components being imported from NI.
- Cargo is handled by logistics companies, which can support NI companies entering the China market.
- MOFCOM handles all domestic trade in the province and can support the ongoing distribution of products from NI.
- The NIABT Chair offered the opportunity for representatives from MOFCOM to visit NI and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

### **Business Delegation Only**

#### **12. Business meet China-Germany Industrial Park**

- The meeting took place between representatives from the Tiexi District of Shenyang and business members of the NIABT to discuss Enterprises Co-operation.
- The Standing Deputy Director gave an overview of Shenyang and its industry.
- The Cooperation Park provides direct investment in the global manufacturing industry including but not limited to the German manufacturing industry.





- The park gives priority to the development of the intelligent manufacturing sector such as robotics, intelligent equipment and additive manufacturing. It specialises in the production of general equipment, mobile machinery, key components for the automotive manufacturing sector, focusing on intelligent and lightweight such as finished vehicle engines, supporting spare parts systems and new energy vehicles, architecture, machinery manufacturing and industrial service.
- The park has drawn great attention from overseas and would like to encourage cooperation with other countries.
- Presentations were made by NIABT members on manufacturing in NI, the NI food and drinks industry, the hospitality industry and by Ulster University.
- It was agreed that much could be achieved with continued interaction between the groups and that there was a potential market for the future.

## **Full Delegation**

### **13. Liaoning Development Research Centre (DRC)**



- The Director of Liaoning DRC provided an overview of the economic situation of the region. Over 100 million people live in the province and there are not enough industries to support economic growth. State-owned enterprises face challenges and there is a need to rebalance the economy. There is a focus on the north- east region and a new plan has been devised to revitalise it with the following targets, policies and reforms.

### **Targets**

- Economic growth rate of 6.6% — steady
- Raise level of innovation
- Optimise economic structure
- Open up to outside world
- Comprehensive culture and society
- Improve the environment
- Improve people's lives — no longer economic growth at cost of environment

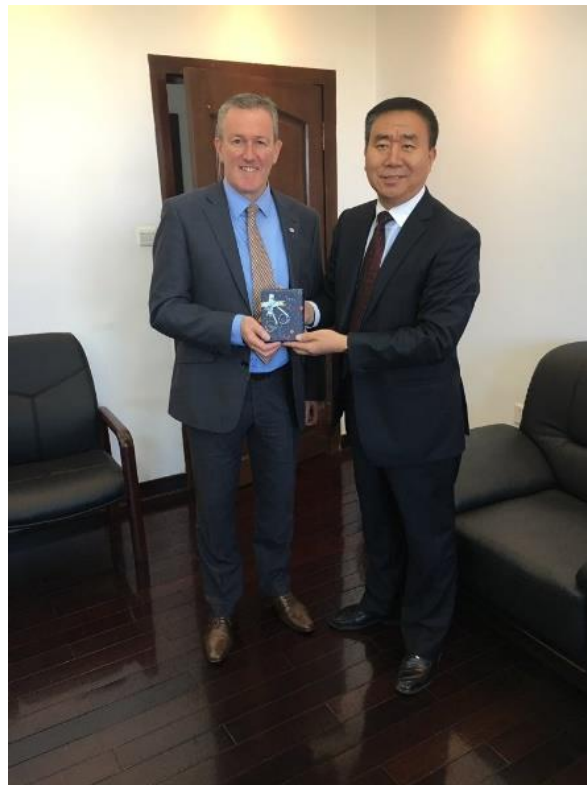
### **Policies**

- Reform market economy
- Not use traditional policies but what the market needs
- State-owned 50%
- Major infrastructure projects
- Innovation as a strategic goal — for development as a way to develop the economy and to open up to the outside world
- One World, One Belt project — take advantage of geographic and industrial base
- Liaoning to Europe by air/sea/train
- Integrated shipping and railway
- Seven free-trade zones including Liaoning Province

### **Reforms**

- Administrative reform
  - Investment reform
  - Trade reform for more convenience
  - Open up service industry — education/ health/ finance
- 
- Currently, \$1.1 billion is traded with the UK, with \$770 million exported and \$320 million imported.
  - Total trade was \$96 billion last year, therefore the UK tapped into less than a tenth of the total volume. Trade with NI is a very small proportion of that and the Director stated that it would be encouraging to see additional trade between the two regions.
  - The NIABT Chair stated that due to the similar backgrounds of the two regions there should be more collaboration, especially in the following areas:
    - Advanced manufacturing
    - New IT industry
    - Biochemical
    - Environmental protection
    - New energy
    - New materials
    - New green automobile

- He noted that links should be made with regional innovation centres such as the science parks and Smart Cities pilot projects. NI companies should be tapping into the shipping and railway links, in particular exporting their products to China on the returning trains and ships.
- The NIABT Vice Chair then highlighted that although NI is a small country it has a big reputation for innovation and in bringing products to the marketplace. It is a growing economy especially in the areas of infrastructure and green energy.
- He stated that business must work closely with politicians to achieve the goals of both states, and the joint trip to China has underlined the need for mutual understanding to ensure economic growth. The Government in NI are providing tools for research and development through money and taxation relaxation to ensure that it can be done more quickly, more successfully and more cost-effectively.
- It is clear that there is room to develop links between the regions in relation to food, education, tourism, science and technology and manufacturing.
- An invitation was extended by the NIABT Chair to Liaoning DRC to visit NI.





## 14. Liaoning Foreign Affairs



- Liaoning Province is an important region for the One Belt, One Road initiative. It is a development strategy and framework that focuses on connectivity and cooperation among countries, primarily between the People's Republic of China and the rest of Eurasia, which consists of two main components, the land-based Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) and the ocean-going Maritime Silk Road (MSR). The strategy underlines China's push to take a bigger role in global affairs and its need for priority capacity cooperation in areas such as steel manufacturing. Liaoning is the only coastal province in the north-east and is therefore a very important region.
- The region has a heavy industrial base, including shipbuilding similar to NI, however it is now looking at restructuring the economy to innovative and high tech industries. Although industry will always be important to the region, service sectors are increasingly important. Retraining and redeployment are central to rebalancing the economy. Mass entrepreneurship will also be key.
- Liaoning Foreign Affairs stated that it was good to see a political and business delegation visiting Shenyang.
- Liaoning Foreign Affairs sees that there is a lot of room for collaboration with a strong track record of relationship-building between the two nations, even though Northern Ireland is a small nation. Due to the similarities of the regions and the importance of strong legislation for economic growth, it was suggested that legislative exchanges be undertaken where joint research could be done.

- They would also like to see more academic exchanges, giving the example of two lecturers from Northern Ireland who visited Dalian technology exchange in robotics involving SIASUN.
- Other topics discussed included:

#### **Youth**

- A discussion took place about young people exchanges between Northern Ireland and China. Liaoning Foreign Affairs felt that there could be opportunities for youth exchange with the Communist Youth League through summer camps/youth forums. This could be done through government or privately through the International Cultural Exchange Institute.

#### **Environment**

- Liaoning Foreign Affairs stated that their economy growth policies are now not prioritised over people's lives and that the awareness on the impact to health is greater. This is reflected in the signing of the Paris Agreement.
- China has to address the issues with smog etc and has a strict measure for carbon reduction by 20% by 2020 to which all provinces have to act through the Environmental Protection Agency.

#### **Transport**

- Discussions took place about increased collaboration on transportation.
- The focus of the collaboration would be on research and development testing (the UU transport and logistics division was highlighted), distribution hubs, electric cars and electric buses.
- Liaoning Foreign Affairs stated that China has good expertise in battery technology and successful integrated transport systems.

#### **Health**

- A discussion took place about the similarities in the challenges faced by both regions due to their aging populations for both regions, an aging population means a shrinking working population, impacts on health care services and the increase in the number care homes needed.
- This is a particular issue for China and Liaoning. They would be keen to hear of solutions, including technology, to support people that is morally acceptable and enjoyable.



### **15. Shenyang China Council for the Promotion of International Trade**

- The business delegation was welcomed by the Director of the Shenyang Chamber of Commerce. He outlined the role of the Chamber of Commerce in promoting Trade and Investment (CCPIT).
- He explained that Shenyang CCPIT is a branch of the National Chamber of Commerce and that their main purpose is to promote international trade. They are responsible for arranging and identifying exhibitions to be approved by government where products from Shenyang can be exhibited. They travel to other cities and countries to promote what Shenyang has to offer. A visit to the Middle East in November will have 20 companies participating, and in April 2017, a visit is being organised to an Expo in America with companies specialising in mechanical engineering.
- They also provide legal services for companies who require export certificates, and the Economic Development Department works with companies in Shenyang to promote their products.
- The Director said that businesses are happy to organise meetings and share information and it was good to see the wide range of businesses represented from Northern Ireland.
- The NIABT Vice Chair on behalf of the NIABT, thanked the Director for his warm welcome and explained that the visit was about learning, making connections and building partnerships. NIABT members were then invited to give a short overview of their industry areas.

- Prior to the conclusion of the meeting, the Director said that there was great potential for both sides to work together. Platforms were currently being developed to promote businesses and might provide an opportunity for both sides to promote their products.
- As a first step, members were encouraged to send links to their products which could then be uploaded on the relevant platforms and accessed by a wide audience.

## 16. NIABT Reception

- The NIABT hosted a reception for 50 guests from political and business backgrounds including representatives from Queen's University, Bombardier and the Director of Foreign Affairs in Shenyang City.



## Day 6

- **Visit to Shenyang Palace**

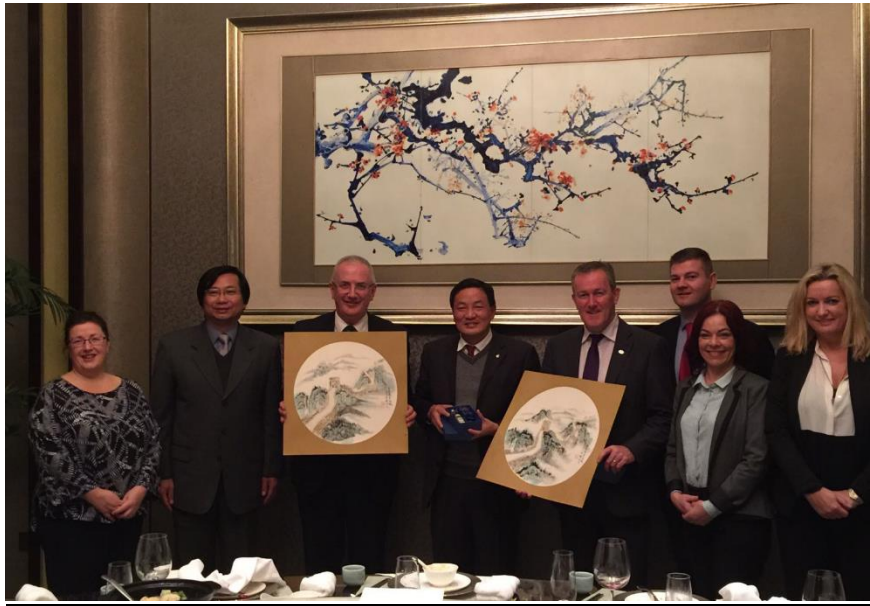


- The delegation visited the historically significant Shenyang Imperial Palace. It is the only existing royal palace in China outside of the Forbidden City in Beijing.

## **Travel to Hubei**

### **Full Delegation**

#### **17. Welcome dinner by Hubei Normal University**



- Hubei Normal University hosted a welcome dinner for the delegation on their arrival to Wuhan.
- Hubei Normal University is the partner university with Ulster University and the Confucius Institute and generously supported the NIABT China visit.
- A formal meeting with Hubei Normal University took place on Day 8.

## **Day 7**

### **Full Delegation**

#### **18. Meeting with China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, Hubei Sub-Council (China Chamber of International Commerce, Hubei Chamber of Commerce)**

- Hubei Chamber of Commerce stated that the strength of the delegation demonstrated the commitment of the NI business sector.



- Hubei Chamber of Commerce takes part in international exhibitions, taking large delegations to other countries' economic and trade forums. Around 2,000 enterprises have gone abroad in the last number of years including to the Milan World Expo.
- They welcome international businesses to promote their products and services and have relationships with over 100 organisations in different countries.
- The region has seen rapid progress in trade in recent years.
- Business members highlighted the strengths within the Northern Ireland economy and the areas where working together could be mutually beneficial.

### **Manufacturing**

- Northern Ireland has modern manufacturing production, with manufacturing remaining the third-biggest contributor to the NI economy.
- It is making the transition from old industry to modern by investing in innovation. Manufacturing companies were invited to visit Northern Ireland.

### **Creative Industries**

- The 'Opening Doors', transform screen strategy has seen the creative industry sector in Northern Ireland develop into the strongest in the UK outside London.
- There is a rich talent that supports creative enterprise with many university students graduating in creative arts.
- There are now over 250 media companies, with Titanic Studios the best of its kind in Europe. It is the location of choice for film and television, including the location for Game of Thrones.
- It was highlighted that there was a lot of opportunity for partnerships.

### **Hospitality**

- Tourism can create better understanding and respect for different cultures.
- There are opportunities not only to exchange staff to improve skills but to address the skills shortage by twinning hotels.
- Northern Ireland has ambitious tourism targets and partnering with Chinese companies would help meet these targets.
- An invitation was offered for tourism companies to visit Northern Ireland.

### **Food and Agriculture**

- Trust is very important to the NI food and drink industry. Five key areas in research and expertise that they can share are as follows.
  1. Clean
  2. Green and very fertile

3. Transport
  4. Honest — controls are very strong/best standards in the world
  5. Efficient
- It was identified that there is a lot of potential for future economic development through developing relations between the two regions due to the similar priorities in Hubei and Northern Ireland.

## **19. Meeting with Bureau of State Farms and Land Reclamation**



## **20. Bureau of State Farms and Land Reclamation - Working lunch**

- Hubei is a self-administered trading zone, a geographic area where goods may be landed, handled, manufactured or reconfigured, and exported without the intervention of the customs authorities. Only when the goods are moved to consumers within the country in which the zone is located do they become subject to the prevailing customs duties.
- This includes modern service industries such as international commerce and trade, financial services, modern logistics, R&D design etc and emerging industries including electronics, information, advanced manufacturing and biomedicine.
- There is a huge demand for food. They are eager to buy high-quality milk and are not concerned by price and are aware that Northern Ireland has high quality milk. New Zealand and Australia have recently

taken advantage of the free trade zone and signed a contract to supply milk to the region.

- Quality food standards are becoming increasingly important and a knowledge base in China is needed. Northern Ireland could look at what exports it could provide and support that could be provided in relation to food safety in China.

## **21. Meeting with Department of Education Hubei**



- The Deputy Director General, Hubei Provincial Department of Education, detailed the Department's five-year plan. They wish to promote further cooperation and there is the potential for scholarships for students going to NI in recognition for our contribution, particularly in the areas of bioscience, arts and sport.
- Hubei Provincial Department of Education strongly supported the CIUU's application for "The Excellent Confucius Institute of the Year" and "The Excellent Confucius Classroom of the Year" from the Confucius Institute Headquarters/Hanban this year.
- Hubei Normal University is to establish a Northern Ireland Research Centre jointly with the Ulster University. The objective of the research centre is to promote understanding of Northern Ireland in China and promote communication between NI and China. Hubei Provincial Department of Education strongly supported this proposal.
- Hubei Normal University and the Ulster University are interested in the establishment of an Ulster campus in Hubei Normal University, which would be the extension of the Ulster University in China. It will significantly promote the Ulster University and encourage the enrolment of Chinese



students in NI. There will be a series of formal application procedures to go through and Hubei Provincial Department of Education also strongly supports this proposal.

- The Deputy Director stated that the visa office in Wuhan is a very convenient service and helps with the exchange of students and noted his desire for a direct flight from Wuhan to Belfast.

### **Physical and learning disabilities**

- The Department of Education stated that schools for those with special needs are divided into three areas: eyes, mouth and ear and those with mental health challenges.
- They noted that students are talented, with many students graduating from the School of Special Needs.
- Lecturers have won awards from the School of Special Needs.
- Professional training is offered so that students can live independently (for example blind massage) however, they believe there is more that can be learned from Northern Ireland for the education of the 18+ sector.
- The Department of Education stated that there is a focus on financial and emotional support for families of young people with a disability. Special subsidies are provided for the disabled, with students being exempt from tutoring fees, including subsidies for daily needs. Carers are offered care and support.

### **Teaching of English**

- The Department of Education stated that teachers come from the UK to teach English, however there is huge demand to learn English in China and more exchanges would be possible.
- They have a challenge with grammar and pronunciation.
- There is a need to tackle language and cultural differences which could be solved by frequent opportunities for communication, and there should be a further discussion about bringing Northern Ireland teachers to China.

### **Skills Training**

- Training institutions in China are the same as technical colleges. In Hubei, 50% of students are registered in technical colleges with the aim of acquiring on to two science qualifications.
- They try to strike a balance between academic study and experiential learning. They have a dual-diploma certificate system with two accreditations — academic and skills.
- There are areas where they don't have enough lecturers in required disciplines.

### **Confucius Institute at Ulster University**

- The Director of the Confucius Institute at Ulster University stated that without the support of the Department of Education the Confucius Institute at Ulster University would not have achieved such success.

- Hubei have sent 200 teachers to the UK for three weeks to three months. The Director of the Confucius Institute at Ulster University stated that they hoped NI can receive more teachers from Hubei in the future.
- There is a huge demand for teachers to travel from Hubei to NI.
- The Confucius Institute at Ulster University receives enquires from companies with links to China, such as Randox, which would like to recruit Chinese students from Hubei.
- Several areas of cooperation were identified.
  - i. Consideration would be given to recruiting teachers from throughout Hubei Province to work with the Confucius Institute.
  - ii. Exchanges would be investigated with the Education Research Centre for training for people with disabilities.
  - iii. NI teachers to lecture in China and conduct more student exchanges therefore building the relationship between campuses.

## **22. Visit to Hubei Museum**

- The Hubei Provincial Museum is a primary institution of cultural relics collection, exhibition and promotion as well as being an important research centre for archaeological exploration, discovery and relic protection in the province. It is a state-level museum and one of the eight key museums sponsored jointly by the central and local governments.



## **23. Meeting with Hubei National Congress and Dinner**

- The delegation attended a formal reception hosted by Madam Wang Ling, Deputy Chairperson of the Hubei Provincial Government. The meeting

was covered by China Central Television China's national broadcaster, to over 63 million people.



- The NIABT Chair and Madam Wang Ling discussed the growing relationship between Northern Ireland and the Hubei region and the friendship and trust that has developed.
- Both expressed a desire to increase the exchange of knowledge and expertise to create opportunities for Hubei and NI.
- The success of the Confucius Institute at the Ulster University was discussed, with both regions committing to the continued support of the institutes.
- It was noted that industries which would be mutually beneficial to develop further include agri-food, bioscience, education, creative industries, advanced manufacturing and hospitality.
- Danny Kennedy MLA, as Deputy Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, extended an invitation to Madam Wang Ling to visit Northern Ireland.
- The meeting was followed by a formal dinner.



## 24. Catalyst Inc visit to Hunan Provincial Department of Science and Technology

- Joanne Stuart travelled to Changsha to visit with the Hunan Provincial Department of Science and Technology, organised through the Chinese Embassy and Consulate.
- During the visit she met with the Changsha High and New Technology Innovation Centre, Changsha CEC Software Park and Hasky Environmental Protection, all located in Changsha National Hi-Tech Industrial Development Zone.



- Discussions were focused on innovation and entrepreneurship. There were many areas of synergy between Catalyst Inc and the organisations visited. The Confucius Institute arranged for two students to accompany Dr Stuart, which was much appreciated.

## **Day 8**

### **Full Delegation**

#### **25. Visit to Hubei Normal University (HBNU)**



- Hubei Normal University (HBNU) is a key provincial university which specialises in teacher education and focuses on such disciplines as humanities, social sciences and natural sciences. Adhering to the strategies of serving basic education, the university is characterised by its teacher education as well as research in education.
- HBNU consists of 17 colleges, departments and three secondary institutes. It offers courses for 26 master's degree programmes, 39 bachelor's degree programmes and 18 diploma programmes, covering



seven disciplines, including literature, history, economics, law, education, science and engineering.

- Professor Li Hong, the president of HBNU hosted a very warm welcome ceremony for NIABT's visit. Professor Li stated that the CIUU is very successful and has become the platform for cooperation not only for Ulster University and Hubei Normal University but for NI and China. He appreciated the strong support for the CIUU from the local communities and Government as well as from the NIABT, which led to the success of the CIUU. He expressed his expectation for more frequent communication between NI and China.
- Both the NIABT Chair and the Vice Chair expressed gratitude to Hubei Normal University for their invitation and support for this visit. They briefed on the pleasant cooperation with the CIUU and what they had experienced in the previous days in China. They extended an invitation to Professor Li Hong to visit NI in the coming year.

## **26. Welcome Performance by HBNU staff and students**

- The NIABT delegation were treated to an amazing performance by the HBNU staff and students.
- The performance included dance, traditional music and opera and was truly world class.
- The Performance Centre of the HBNU is a state-of-the-art performance centre among the universities in China.





## 27. Wuhan Citizen Museum

- The delegation visited the Wuhan Citizen Museum, which looks at the history and future of Wuhan City. It hosts an impressive presentation of the plan for the development of the city, focusing on a progressive transport and infrastructure system and planned economic, residential and social zones. A focus on developing a city for the future while recognising the environmental needs was clear.







### 3. Key Findings and Actions

The following section of the report details the key findings and actions from each meeting by sector.

#### 1. AERA

- Food safety is an increasingly important issue in China. The world's number one Institute of Global Food Security is based in Northern Ireland at Queens University and there is the potential for greater links between Chinese organisations focusing on food safety and the institute.
- Quality food standards are becoming increasingly important and a knowledge base is needed in China. Northern Ireland should look at what exports and support it could provide in relation to food safety in China.
- There is a huge demand for food. China is eager to buy high-quality milk and cheese. They are less concerned with price and more concerned with quality.
- There is huge potential for the exchange of knowledge and research with respect to food production, skills and aquaculture.
- Businesses suggested that it would be useful to have a forum where businesses hoping to export to China could meet companies who are already exporting food to look at the practical issues around doing business in China.
- There was a suggestion of a funded ambassador for the food sector in China given the size of this market, perhaps concentrated in Hubei Province initially due to the willingness to engage.
- Northern Ireland agri-food businesses should be aware of the One Belt, One Road project, in particular the train network from China to Europe. This was highlighted in a number of meetings, where it was stated that trains leave full but return empty and there is the potential to use this transport system to export goods faster and with more competitive transport costs.
- It was noted that food trends experienced in the West will follow on to the China market especially in cities eg, free from gluten, free from lactose, reduced sugar levels and increased demand for protein rich products. These present real opportunities for NI food and drink companies.
- Follow up with state farms in Wuhan is required to inform them of who and what is available for business.

#### 2. Communities

- Various cultural opportunities were discussed, including possible Chinese participation at NI festivals. NI was encouraged to promote various cultural activities in China.
- Opportunities to share best practice in the management of cultural programmes was highlighted, specifically the opportunity for museums in NI and China to work together.

- As mentioned in the education sections, Liaoning Foreign Affairs felt that there could be opportunities for youth exchange with the Communist Youth League through summer camps/youth forums. This could be facilitated through the government or privately through the International Cultural Exchange Institute.

### **3. Education**

- It was suggested that NI could promote our universities and colleges, positioning them more strategically in China, as strong, international centres with reputations for research across a variety of sectors.
- Both regions are focusing on reskilling and on the education of young people. NI could look at the strategies employed by the department in the National Congress in Shenyang responsible for the reallocation of workers to new roles and matching skills development with the needs of the market.
- There is scope to exchange knowledge and expertise on further education for adults with special needs. Exchanges are possible with the Education Research Centre in training for disabilities.
- There are opportunities for NI teachers to teach English in China.
- There is an opportunity to encourage Chinese students to study food safety, food management, factory maintenance at high level and general business management at NI colleges.
- Liaoning Foreign Affairs felt there could be opportunities for youth exchange through summer camps/youth forums with the Communist Youth League. This could be facilitated through the government or privately through the International Cultural Exchange Institute.

### **4. Economy**

- More collaboration could take place between China and NI, especially in the following areas:
  - Advanced manufacturing
  - New IT industry
  - Biochemical
  - Environmental protection
  - New energy
  - New materials
  - New green automobile
- In Shenyang, there is a large focus on vocational courses and there is the possibility of reciprocal exchanges in training and skills.
- The possibility of exchange tourism personnel should be investigated between the Shenyang region and NI.
- NI businesses should be aware of the One Belt, One Road project, in particular the train network which reaches from China to Europe. This was highlighted in a number of meetings. Utilising the train network could enable NI companies to export goods faster and with more competitive transport costs. NI should be aware that an agreement with the EU may be required to ensure no legislative barriers will prevent opportunity for NI businesses using this facility.

- MOFCOM will provide a list of products that could be supplied to the Chinese market. A delegation of NI companies was invited to visit the region to look at how to distribute their goods.
- MOFCOM will provide a list of products from their local markets which may be exported to NI.
- MOFCOM handles all domestic trade in the province and can support the distribution of products from NI.
- Cargo is handled by logistics companies which can support NI companies.
- It was agreed that there would be continued communication with the China-Germany Industrial Park.
- Information should be sent to Shenyang CPPIT about NI products available for export. Shenyang CPPIT stated that they would promote them on the relevant platforms in China.
- After presenting in Hubei Province we were asked "What's the next step?" by our Chinese hosts stating " This is the third delegation we have hosted and we are interested in moving forward, so what's next?" It is clear that an action plan is required to be communicated to the Chinese stakeholders.
- Businesses require training such as in how to present NI to a non-NI market and how to provide sales literature suitable for China or other countries
- To develop a network of businesses who are already doing business in China with those who are investigating the possibility of exporting their products to share knowledge of the practical issues around doing business in China.
- NI needs to find more ways of moving from relationship building to business dealmaking. Certainly, in Shenyang and Wuhan, there was visible interest in now making things happen – it is not clear whether there are structures in place to make this happen.

## 5. Health

- Members identified the similarities in the pressures on the health service in Shenyang as in NI due to an aging population. Issues included long waiting lists, retention of expertise and the requirement of additional GPs, particularly in rural areas. The Member offered an invitation to the Shenyang's People's Congress to meet with the Health Committee if they were in NI.
- Given China's growing elderly population, they would be keen to hear about technological solutions to support elderly people.
- Cancer research being conducted by Queen's University in Shenyang was of interest to Members and a follow up meeting with the APG on Cancer will be arranged.
- It was suggested that NI may wish to look further at China's policy for giving support to parents to enable them to send young adults to college.

## **6. Infrastructure**

- Reference was made to the integrated transport strategy currently being developed in Northern Ireland and how it would be good to reflect on how the system in Shenyang is coordinated.
- Infrastructure/transport planners need to consider the Wuhan urban development model, which focuses on integrated transport and economic access needs.
- More collaboration could take place between China and NI on research and development testing (the UU transport and logistics division was highlighted), distribution hubs, electric cars and electric buses.
- Liaoning Foreign Affairs stated that China has good expertise on battery technology and successful integrated transport systems.
- Infrastructure/transport planners may wish to review the Hubei live data streaming of transport that ensured traffic management was monitored and controlled to reduce congestion (as seen at the Wuhan Citizen Museum) and look at how investment into rail and road networks is co-ordinated to enable the economic plan to be realised.
- If political representatives from Shenyang or Wuhan visit NI, they should be invited to speak with the Infrastructure and Economy Committees to compare and contrast planning and investment opportunities.
- Greater efforts to capitalise on the UK trade networks and engagement – the sense was that there are efforts on trying to land a big deal on food but there are opportunities for smaller, individual deals.

## **7. Justice**

- Delegates stated that it was beneficial to hear that efforts are being made to start written laws in China, including a law on domestic violence. NI may wish to review the development of this law particularly given that the Justice Committee and Department are keen to introduce one.

## **8. Other**

### **APG**

- An All Party Group on China to be re-established.
- The re-instated APG on China should look at the arts sector, hospitality and tourism and how the Chinese community can contribute to NI both economically and socially.
- The APG should connect the work of the NIABT to what the Department and Ministers are doing, and regular updates from China Invest NI and the NI Bureau should be provided.

### **NI Bureau**

- The NI Bureau office is effective but probably needs more support.
- It was clear that the time and investment put in by the NI Bureau in developing relationships, particularly in Liaoning and Shenyang (28

visits by the time of the visit and two specifically to plan for the NIABT delegation) is critical, leading to the formal signing of the Friendship Agreement between NI and Liaoning governments.

- It was clear that a presence in China is essential and that it is important that Ministers and NI politicians maintain relationships by working with the NI Bureau.
- The situation in Beijing appears crowded with other international competition, but there appears to be opportunities in Shenyang and Hubei regions. A targeted approach in these regions may be more effective and perhaps sub-offices of the NI Bureau should be considered.

### **Institutional Twinning**

- Shenyang People's Congress is keen to see what each Parliament can learn from the other and would support a formal political exchange between the two institutions. The possibility of a formal political exchange between the two institutions will be investigated.

## **4. Actions by Business after the Visit**

The following section of the report details the actions committed to by business delegates or information that their industries should be aware of.

### **1. Pi Communications**

- Promote the Confucius Institute agenda by providing a number of promotional videos for use in NI to promote their important work.
- Help find an Internet Protocol Television route to allow easy access to Chinese TV stations in NI hotels, helping therefore to promote the Confucius Institute in conjunction with Hospitality Ulster.
- Supporting a TV station that is interested in finding UK partners.
- Help visitor centres in how to welcome Chinese visitors.

### **2. Hardscape**

- Communicate learnings from the visit to the Chamber of Commerce, the Ethical Trading Initiative and the Northern Ireland Business and Human Rights Forum (of which Glenn Bradley is Chairman)
- Continue to forge links that will see Hardscape buy stone from different regions in China (Hubei and Shenyang). This is happening at the time this report goes to press.
- Hardscape will commence exports to China of Carlow Blue limestone that is quarried in Old Leighlin then fabricated in Belfast. Small export orders have been secured at the time this report goes to press.

### **3. Manufacturing NI**

- Deliver a number of press articles and TV media coverage of the China opportunity for NI businesses.
- Have direct engagement with NI companies that have a Chinese presence or ownership.

### **4. MCE PR Ltd**

- 'Business First' article (800 words for November edition).
- Blog for MCE website (400 words)
- Develop as a focus for specialism in multicultural communications/PR.

### **5. NIFDA**

- Clean, Green, Seen, Mean and Lean message received VERY positively in all meetings.
- Huge willingness to negotiate trade.
- China, the world's growing economy and superpower has been dogged by a long series of food scandals.
  - Melamine in milk, (that brought about the hospitalisation of hundreds of thousands of babies).
  - Gutter oil scandal that is poisoning millions of Chinese citizens.



- Fox meat scandal that closely mirrored the European horsemeat scandal.
- In a 2016 survey, food safety was listed as the number- one concern for Chinese citizens.
- The Chinese President, Xi Jinping, has made a number of speeches on the topic over the past year and clearly it is a matter of grave political concern in China.
- Work by Professor Elliott at Queen's recently found that Chinese citizens, (the growing middle class), care that what they purchase for themselves and their families does NOT come from China.
- The Northern Ireland food and drink opportunity is **immense**. In Beijing, Irish and Scottish crisps were on sale in Ole supermarket (Waitrose equivalent) at £3/pkt!
- Our biggest barrier is trading permissions; DEFRA is far too slow. (However they are now increasing staff).
- Follow up meeting with Tim Losty in December 2016 highlighted lack of resources in China compared to our competitors.
- NIFDA would like to resource more follow up in China but Brexit is currently consuming all resources.

## 6. Foyle International Ltd

- Signed a memorandum of understanding during their visit.
- Will continue to develop links with a new agent in Wuhan introduced through the Chamber of Commerce in Wuhan.

## 7. Hospitality Ulster

- Hospitality Ulster identified a number of possible projects:
  - **Cultural Training**
    - Potential Partners: Hospitality Ulster, the Confucius Institute, Pi Communications
    - Rational: Enhance the cultural knowledge of the Hospitality Sector(s)
    - Funding: If all partners give freely of their resources and expertise nil or limited funding would be required.
  - Phase 1 – To develop a range of Chinese cultural training materials made available free of charge through the Hospitality Ulster, HU Academy App platform
    - This could also be used to support the twinning exchange programme as outlined below
  - Phase 2 – (optional) To develop a range of European cultural training material to be made available to the Chinese hospitality industry.
    - This could possibly utilising the HU Academy app platform for delivery, although further development / funding would be required

- **Essential Language Training**
  - Potential Partners: Hospitality Ulster, the Confucius Institute, Pi Communications
  - Rational: Enhance the language skills of the hospitality sector(s)
  - Funding: If all partners give freely of their resources and expertise no, or limited, funding would be required.
- Stage 1 – To produce a number of essential Chinese language training videos made available free of charge through the Hospitality Ulster, HU Academy App platform
  - This could also be used to support the twinning exchange programme as outlined below
- Stage 2 – (optional) To develop a number of essential European language training videos to be made available to the Chinese hospitality Industry.
  - This could possibly utilising the HU Academy app platform for delivery, although further development / funding would be required
- **Twinning of Hotel(s)** [potential to expand to restaurants and or chefs]
  - Potential Partners: Hospitality Ulster, the Confucius Institute
  - Rational: To develop a better understand of the needs of the visitor and enhance the future visitor experience and support growth in visitor numbers.
  - Funding: This project will require the identification of funders
- Identify one or more hotels in NI that would have the potential to attract Chinese visitors and that could benefit from enhanced skills and knowledge to enhance the visitor experience.
- Identify one or more hotels in China that would have the potential to attract European visitors and that would benefit from enhanced skills and knowledge to enhance the visitor experience.
- Utilise the HU Academy Cultural and Language training resources (above) to enhance training in the respective cultures, language and visitor expectations.
- Establish an exchange programme of key personnel to facilitate the first-hand experiences of the different cultures / service expectations
- Disseminate the learnings through post-exchange seminars to both the participating hotel(s) staff and other hotels within the regions.
- **Placement initiative**

- Potential Partners: Hospitality Ulster, the Confucius Institute, Foyle International
  - Rational: Provide an enhanced experience for Chinese students
  - Funding: Nil funding required at this stage
  - To explore the establishment of a hospitality placement scheme for Chinese students studying in NI.
- **Explore the develop a Chinese version of the Hospitality Ulster HU Academy app**
    - Potential Partners: Hospitality Ulster, the Confucius Institute, App Qual
    - Rational: Provide innovation in the delivery of hospitality training in China
    - Funding: Limited funding would be required to further scope the potential of this project.
  - **Beyond Hospitality** – Projects 1 and 2 could be expanded to provide introductory cultural and language skills and made available to business outside the hospitality industry who are undertaking a visit to China.

## 8. Catalyst Inc

- Follow up with Department of International Trade with regard to energy technologies — Senergy NI and Pure Marine Gen Ltd.
- Send through details of US-NI mentorship to DIT and Paul Murphy's contact.
- Write local article on science and innovation in China.
- Check out DIT Prosperity Programme on science and innovation.
- Speak to British Council about mentorship programme.
- Write to London Embassy about trip to Changsha.
- Send information on property at Catalyst Inc to Changsha — building 42-hectare science plc.
- Send through details of Pipeline event — same with China — 50 entrepreneurs meeting with 50 local entrepreneurs.
- Check out any NI companies working in area of 'Water Resources'.
- Send through details of Catalyst Inc programmes to Changsha, and details of US-NI mentorship.
- Follow up with Egyptian contacts who were met at the Silk Market.
- Follow up with business delegation and agree areas of collaboration

## 9. Ulster University

- Adopt a strong focus to developing strategic, regional links within Hubei and Liaoning provinces, respectively.
- Undertake further, specific discussions with regards to UBS partnership with Hubei Normal University.

- Review options for the appointment of a university representative in China.
- Following on from discussions at the networking reception in Beijing, develop options for engagement through Sport in China (Beijing and Hubei Province).
- Investigate extended, international placement opportunities for Ulster students in China.

## **5. Acknowledgments**

The Northern Ireland Assembly and Business Trust would like to take this opportunity to thank the Confucius Institute at the Ulster University for their support in hosting the delegation in China and for their contribution to the development of the programme and support provided during the visit.

The Trust would also like to extend its thanks to the NI Bureau for their contribution to the development of the programme and support and advice before and during the visit.



### Our strategy

The Northern Ireland Executive are encouraged with the growing relationship we have with China and through the Bureau we will be able to identify more mutually beneficial areas of work.

The Executive's International Relations Strategy for China provides a coordinated and focused approach across all government departments. It will complement the other key strategies of the Executive including the Economic Strategy for Northern Ireland, the work of Invest NI and other departments.

This collaboration will help to create a corporate presence and identity in China that will add value to the work of all relevant organisations and stakeholders.

This high level strategy recognises that departments and organisations such as Invest Northern Ireland have a lead role in particular sectors. The responsibility of the NI Bureau in China is to establish government to government relations, identify opportunities and work with organisations to create mutually beneficial partnerships with its government and people.

This is a short term strategy covering the initial period for setting up the Bureau.

### Our objectives in China

- develop and maintain effective relationships with the government of the People's Republic of China
- increase trade and investment between Northern Ireland and China
- raise our profile in China
- raise understanding of Chinese culture and language in NI
- strengthen bilateral science and technology collaboration
- attract increased Chinese tourism
- expand cultural and sporting connections between Northern Ireland and China
- proactively seek opportunities for sharing information and best practice
- collaborate on environmental challenges
- establish partnerships with regions in China
- contribute to international development objectives by providing relevant expertise and establishing partnerships with key organisations in China
- work with the British and Irish Embassies and the European Union to help promote our objectives and identify opportunities
- encourage Chinese students to enrol at NI universities



## **Coverage of the Visit**

### **Belfast Telegraph**

#### **Six MLAs join business leaders' China trade mission**



A group of business leaders and MLAs from Northern Ireland are currently on a fact-finding trip to China.

The visit has been organised and part-funded by the Northern Ireland Assembly Business Trust (NIABT).

NIABT, which was set up to enable politicians and businesses to share knowledge, said non-MLAs on the trip were paying their own flights, with a £500 subsidy from the trust.

And cultural organisation the Confucius Institute, which fosters links between Northern Ireland and the Asian superpower, is paying for all costs incurred within China, while the Assembly is paying for the travel costs of the six MLAs.

However, NIABT said the visitors would not be raising China's record on human rights during the trip.

The country rejects international criticism of its human rights record and the treatment of those dissenting from the policies of its ruling Communist Party.

A spokeswoman for NIABT said it was "not a lobbying organisation". Instead, she said the purpose of the trip was to create links with political and business representatives in China.

Stephen Kelly, the chief executive of Manufacturing NI, and Colin Neill, the head of Pubs of Ulster, have joined the six MLAs for the visit.

The MLAs are: Colin McGrath (SDLP/South Down); Conor Murphy (Sinn Fein/Newry and Armagh); Danny Kennedy (Ulster Unionist/Newry and Armagh); Clare Bailey (Green Party/South Belfast); Kellie Armstrong (Alliance Party/Strangford), and Jo-Anne Dobson (Ulster Unionist/ Upper Bann).

The NIABT spokeswoman added: "The purpose of the visit is to create stronger links through engaging and developing relationships with the relevant political and business representatives in China, something that is very important for any future economic development.

"The group will also visit regions which have established links to Northern Ireland and have links with Northern Ireland businesses, to investigate the opportunities, both politically and through business, which can be maximised."

In recent days the delegation have visited Shenyang, where they have held meetings with Shenyang Party Congress and Department for Commerce.

They have also visited the Irish Embassy in Beijing, and been hosted by the NI Bureau in the capital of the world's most populous country.

And they have met the China-based employees of Northern Ireland medical devices company Radox.

## Belfast Telegraph

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# Six MLAs join business leaders' China trade mission

BY MARGARET CANNING

A GROUP of business leaders and MLAs from Northern Ireland are currently on a fact-finding trip to China.

The visit has been organised and part-funded by the Northern Ireland Assembly Business Trust (NIABT).

NIABT, which was set up to enable politicians and businesses to share knowledge, said non-MLAs on the trip were paying their own flights, with a £500 subsidy from the trust.

And cultural organisation the Confucius Institute, which fosters links between Northern Ireland and the Asian superpower, is paying for all costs incurred within China, while the Assembly is paying for the travel costs of the six MLAs.

However, NIABT said the visi-



tors would not be raising China's record on human rights during the trip.

The country rejects international criticism of its human rights record and the treatment

of those dissenting from the policies of its ruling Communist Party.

A spokeswoman for NIABT said it was "not a lobbying organisation". Instead, she said the purpose of the trip was to create links with political and business representatives in China.

Stephen Kelly, the chief executive of Manufacturing NI, and Colin Neill, the head of Pubs of Ulster, have joined the six MLAs for the visit.

The MLAs are: Colin McGrath (SDLP/South Down); Conor Murphy (Sinn Fein/Newry and Armagh); Danny Kennedy (Ulster Unionist/Newry and Armagh); Clare Bailey (Green Party/South Belfast); Kellie Armstrong (Alliance Party/Strangford), and Jo-Anne Dobson (Ulster Unionist/ Upper Bann).

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## Ulster Tatler



## Randox

### NI business leaders and MLAs take a trip to Randox China

A number of business leaders and MLAs from Northern Ireland took time to meet with members of our Randox team based in China this week.

The group visited China in a bid to develop and nurture business relationships between the two countries, during a trip organised by the Northern Ireland Assembly Business Trust.

The Trust works to forge business relationships between local businesses and parliamentarians in Northern Ireland, offering a unique opportunity for each to better understand the industry in which they operate. The Trust organises educational visits, fellowships, seminars and trips for local businesses and MLAs to encourage participation on issues of mutual interest.

David Hu and Karen Li, members of Team Randox based in China, met with the group made up of MLAs Colin McGrath, Conor Murphy, Danny Kennedy, Clare Bailey, Kellie Armstrong, and Joanne Dobson, Stephen Kelly, Chief Executive of Manufacturing NI, Colin Neill, the head of Pubs of Ulster, and representatives from

the Confucius Institute at Ulster University, an organisation which aims to develop academic, cultural, economic and social ties between Northern Ireland and China.

The group's trip also involved a visit to the Shenyang Party Congress and Department for Commerce, and to the Irish Embassy in Beijing.

**Susan Hammond, Radox China Sales Manager, commented;**

"As a key market we have for the past 20 years exported to and worked across China, where Radox is a well-known and respected brand within the healthcare landscape. It is our dedication and hard work within this dynamic market, through both our HQ based team in Northern Ireland and our dedicated local team spread across China, that has enabled this. Our success so far drives us in our continued efforts in growth in this market, and our continued investment in introducing new and innovative products to the market."

**David Hu, Business Development Executive at Radox China, commented;**

"It was a fantastic occasion meeting with the delegation from Northern Ireland. We work very closely with the team at Radox HQ in County Antrim, and so we relish the opportunity to engage and develop relationships with relevant representatives from Northern Ireland, whether in the political or business sphere. We're delighted to be able to gain further insight into the relationships that exist between our two prosperous nations and look forward to nurturing these relationships in the future."



***Pictured left to right are:***

***Stephen Kelly, Manufacturing NI; Jill Xie, David Hu and Karen Li, Radox China.***

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## NI Eyes On The China Prize

10th November 2016 [Events](#)

Last year the Chinese government set up a consulate in Belfast to cement closer ties with Northern Ireland. We should regard this as an honour as the super power has the world at its feet and can call all the shots it want. At the start of December the First Minister Arlene Foster and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness will travel to Beijing to officially open the new Northern Ireland Executive Office headed up by Tim Losty. They are also expected to travel to Shenyang to sign a Memorandum of Understanding to create deeper ties with the city twinned with our very own Belfast.

Last week, I had the opportunity to be part of the Northern Ireland Assembly Business Trust delegation that travelled to Beijing, Shenyang and Wuhan to help develop greater connections with the various cities, business organisations and political representatives in these regions.

During my visit I was struck by the size and scale of China, not just physically, but in terms of what they need to consume to function and develop. Due to the volume of people and services they are seeking to tap into best practice all around the world to make sure they are learning from best in class. We have plenty to trade with them in terms of products, people and skills, however market access is often difficult and the key obstacle before actual trade can take place.

This is the very reason why many of our own elected reps have been going back and forward to China in the last couple of years. Business culture in China dictates that they will only cut deals with us after a level of trust between the two parties is built up. The likelihood of doing a deal after a first meet is non-existent which means that several face to face meetings must take place before any movement. Some of the most senior Chinese representatives have been here in Northern Ireland, often under the radar, but we must make more of their presence to help build the relationship. Many often question these overseas trips and the benefit of what they cost, however the investment in plane tickets now is money well spent.

Chris Brown was part of the Northern Ireland Assembly Business Trust delegation which travelled to China between 25 October – 5th November 2016. He is also a board member of the Trust.