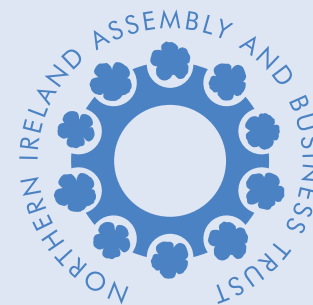


Northern Ireland Assembly and Business Trust



"To advance and encourage business understanding of the Assembly and the Assembly Members' understanding of business."

Issue 5:
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Economic Envoy Speaks of Bright Future for NI Businesses



Top: L-R Sean Neeson MLA, NIABT Chairman; Declan Kelly, US Economic Envoy; William Hay MLA, President of the NIABT.

Above: L-R William Hay MLA, President of the NIABT; Declan Kelly, US Economic Envoy; Sir Reg Empey MLA, Minister for Employment and Learning.

The Long Gallery, Parliament Buildings was the setting for this year's Northern Ireland Assembly and Business Trust dinner.

This annual event, hosted by the NIABT President and Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, William Hay MLA brings together members of the Trust, including MLAs and representatives from across the Northern Ireland business community.

At this year's event the NIABT were delighted to welcome guest speakers Declan Kelly, US Economic Envoy to Northern Ireland and Sir Reg Empey MLA, Minister for Employment and Learning.

Declan Kelly's remarks from the President's Dinner can be read in their entirety at: http://www.niabt.org.uk/SE.KELLY_Remarks.pdf

Mr. Kelly, a prominent Irish businessman originally from Tipperary was appointed to the role of US Economic Envoy to Northern Ireland by the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in September 2009. Since his appointment he has been instrumental in fostering and promoting trade and investment links between the United States and Northern Ireland.

In his speech Mr. Kelly underlined the new era of economic optimism that exists and continues to develop within Northern Ireland. He emphasised that as a people we are now on the cusp of unprecedented opportunity in terms of inward economic investment and transatlantic trade.

Sir Reg Empey Minister for Employment and Learning stated that we can not underestimate the important contribution made by people in terms of ensuring the success of Northern Ireland's economic future. He went on to state that it is crucial that we focus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects as a way of investing in enhancing the skills of young people entering employment.

Both speeches were well received and the event proved to be an excellent opportunity for both Trust members and business guests to network and to learn more about the work of the NIABT. We are delighted to report that following the event a large number of applications to join the Trust have been received from local businesses.

NIABT Education Programmes

Building Bridges Between Business and Parliament

The NIABT's ongoing education programme, provides MLAs with the opportunity to experience the day-to-day running of local businesses. Last November MLAs visited Trust member Paul McAlister's architect studio in Portadown which specialises in sustainable design. The programme included a visit to Excite Exhibition and Displays' recently opened flagship office, designed by Paul McAlister Architects, and provided an opportunity for MLAs to learn about current issues concerning sustainable development and 'green' housing.

Inside: Northern Ireland Assembly and Business Trust returns to Europe: Following a visit to Brussels in April 2009, the Business Trust returned this year to launch its European Education Programme, hosted by the Leuven Institute for Ireland in Europe.



L-R Samuel Gardiner MLA, Paul McAlister, Jonathan Craig MLA, Paul Butler MLA

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NIABT Returns to Europe

Following a successful visit to Brussels in April 2009, the NIABT launched its European Education Programme in February 2010, hosted by the Leuven Institute for Ireland in Europe. This was an invaluable opportunity for businesses and MLAs to learn about European Institutions and see first-hand the relevance that the European Parliament has to local issues and the importance of having representation in Brussels. In addition to a series of lectures and presentations in both Leuven and Brussel, the group visited the Northern Irish MEPs as well as Enterprise Ireland where the group received a presentation on the Framework 7 Programme.



NIABT visits the Biogas plant

The visiting group particularly found the one to one meetings with Northern Ireland MEPs valuable. The MEPs spoke practically about their role in Parliament and emphasised the importance of Northern Ireland having a constant presence in the European Parliament to monitor legislation in the development stages. This is, of course, as important for businesses as it is for politicians.

The Programme also took in a visit to an innovative, family run, biogas plant near Brussels, where a local farmer had diversified his business to run a biogas sustainable energy plant.



L-R Edward Haughey, Norbrook Laboratories; Suzie Fisher, DCP; Fiona Rice, Next Level Impact; Con McNeill, NI Manufacturing; Billy Leonard MLA; Paul McAlister, Paul McAlister Architects; Helen Gregory, Bombardier; Jenni Barkley, Asltis; Melanie Humphrey, Mallusk Enterprise Park

Answering the Difficult Questions

AGM and Panel Debate



Business People and MLAs at Panel Event

The Annual General Meeting of the NIABT was held on 7th December 2009 and featured a question and answer session with a panel comprising of Sammy Wilson, MLA Minister for Finance & Personnel; Sir Reg Empey, MLA Minister for Employment & Learning; Jennifer McCann, MLA Chair of the Finance & Personnel Committee; Alban Maginness, MLA Chair of the Enterprise Trade & Investment Committee; and Steven Kingon, Chair of Invest NI.

A wide section of the business community from throughout Northern Ireland attended, raising issues that face the local business community directly with the panel and in particular the continuing difficult economic climate.

Although there were many serious concerns addressed to the panel, there was a note of optimism to the evening as various business members spoke of successes despite the economic climate, with discussions turning to overseas business links and the benefits of having a relationship with Europe.



The panel—L-R Stephen Kingon; Jennifer McCann MLA; Alban Maginness MLA; Sammy Wilson MP MLA; Sir Reg Empey MLA



L-R Lord Ballyedmond, Norbrook Laboratories; Sir Reg Empey MLA

NIABT Breakfast Briefings

Keeping Members Informed

Breakfast Briefings are a new initiative by the NIABT, open to all our business members and MLAs and focussing on current Assembly Committee business relevant to the business sector. Hosted by the Committee Chairs, the sessions provide attendees with an excellent opportunity to put questions to the Chair in a relaxed environment in Parliament Buildings.

The first Breakfast Briefing on the OFMDFM Committee's Report into European Considerations was delivered shortly before the NIABT visited Europe and served as a useful introduction for those attending the programme.

A second Briefing was held on the Finance & Personnel Committee's report into Public Procurement Practice in Northern Ireland, which was well attended and enjoyed by the business community and politicians alike.



Time to engage with Europe — L-R John Rooney, Rooney Fish; Danny Kennedy MLA, OFMDFM Committee Chair; Katherine McDonald, Stratagem

A Fresh Programme of Fellowships

Helping MLAs Get to Grips with Local Business

In October 2009, Danny Kennedy MLA, Chair of the OFMDFM Committee, was provided with the opportunity to get a fresh angle on lobbying when he spent a day shadowing employees from Stratagem.

As part of a bespoke programme, Mr. Kennedy experienced first hand how Stratagem assists organisations from throughout Northern Ireland to effectively engage with the Northern Ireland Assembly and with political life in general.



PJ Bradley MLA & Jim Shannon MLA
at Rooney Fish



Alastair Ross MLA at the International Airport



Simon Hamilton MLA at Royal Mail

During the visit Mr. Kennedy was briefed on a number of issues of specific interest to local individuals and organisations such as equality and the renewable energy sector, he was also introduced to the growing significance and future potential of new social media.

Following his participation in the Stratagem programme, Mr. Kennedy said that he had found the visit to be an "extremely useful illustration of the importance of effective dialogue between legislature and the Community".

Mr. Kennedy said "This was an invaluable opportunity to observe how Stratagem works as a business and to understand the concept and significance of lobbying to the wider community.

"As elected representatives, it is vital that we familiarise ourselves with how the local business sector operates as this in turn will enhance our understanding and help us to make informed decisions on policy and legislation as it relates to the local economy."

Rooney Fish in Kilkeel was the destination for NIABT members, PJ Bradley MLA and Jim Shannon MLA in October 2009. For Mr. Bradley this was an opportunity to experience the day to day workings of a business in his constituency, while Mr. Shannon who has a particular interest in the fishing industry found that the programme provided a comprehensive and interesting insight into the fish processing industry.

Further Fellowship programmes that have taken place this year to date include a visit by Simon Hamilton MLA to the Royal Mail and by Alastair Ross MLA to Belfast International Airport.



Alastair Ross MLA at the Airport

Business Members

Andras House Ltd.
Anglo North Irish Fish
Producers' Organisation
AsItIs Consulting
Belfast International Airport
Bombardier Aerospace
BT NI
Carecall Ltd.
Davidson Cockcroft
Deloitte
Early Years
Enterprise Equity Fund
Federation of Small
Businesses
Firmus Energy
NI—ICTU
James Brown Funeral
Services NI
Lafarge Cement
Lagan Holdings Ltd.
Law Society of Northern Ireland
Londonderry Chamber of
Commerce
Mallusk Enterprise Park
MCE Public Relations
Mesh Technology
Mivan Ltd.
Next Level Impact
NI Chamber of Commerce
NI Independent Retail Trade
Association
NI Manufacturing
Norbrook Laboratories
O'Kane Poultry
Paul McAlister Architects
Rooney Fish
Royal Mail
Sandy Cove Holiday Homes
Stratagem
Wrightbus Ltd.

New Members

Axon Power & Control
Quarry Products
Association NI

Northern Ireland Assembly and Business Trust,

Room 401D, Parliament Buildings,
Ballymiscaw, Stormont, Belfast, BT4 3XX
email: niabt@niassembly.gov.uk
Tel: 02890 418365
Web: www.niabt.org.uk

Upcoming Events and Company Fellowships

Event and venue	When?	Aimed at...
SME Breakfast at Balmoral Show	12th May 2009	Balmoral Show exhibitors and Business Members
Federation of Small Businesses – SME European Engagement Seminar at Balmoral Show	14th May 2010	Businesses
SME Renewable Energy Workshop – Parliament Buildings	18th May 2010	MLAs and businesses
Simon Hamilton MLA fellowship with Firmus Energy	28 May 2010	MLA
Assembly Awareness Day	June (date tbc)	Business Members and MLA constituency staff
QPANI Education Event	June (date tbc)	Business Members and MLAs
Lisbon Treaty seminar	27th September 2010	Business Members and MLAs

Chairman's Thoughts



The last few months have been a busy time for the Northern Ireland Assembly and Business Trust with a series of events and fellowship programmes aimed at promoting the work of the Trust and encouraging shared learning between members, MLAs and the local business community.

I am delighted to report that there has been a notable increase in applications from local businesses keen to participate and become involved in our work. As Chairperson of the NIABT, I am

heartened that members of the business community are keen to work with and within the NIABT to strengthen and further develop economic opportunity across Northern Ireland

Several important issues have come to the fore in recent months—such as the need for a renewed focus on research and development and on staff training within local businesses. One of our key goals is to give businesses and parliamentarians a forum to exchange knowledge and information. This in turn has provided a framework where members and the business community work together to improve and progress the local business environment.

The NIABT has for some time been conscious of the need to raise and maintain awareness and to develop an effective working relationship with the European Parliament. To support this we have recently launched a European programme which I know has already proved invaluable to many of our business members. I hope that we can continue to develop this particular Programme and ensure continued positive and productive working relationships with local MEPs

The Trust is in the process of organising a series of interesting and varied events, visits and fellowship programmes for members. These include a seminar on the Lisbon Treaty and an Assembly Awareness Day. We are also working in conjunction with the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment to coordinate a Renewable Energy Workshop for SMEs which will take place on 18 May 2010.

It is undeniable that times are still difficult for local businesses as the recession continues, but it is also clear that there is the potential for a positive future, as Economic Envoy Declan Kelly was keen to point out in his address to local businesses at the President's Dinner.

I hope that that you will work with us to ensure that the NIABT continues to have a role in cultivating this positive future between local businesses and parliamentarians.