

Magazine of the Londonderry Chamber of Commerce

CONNECTED

ISSUE 22

COMPLIMENTARY COPY

**SSE IRELAND:
AS WE LOOK
TO THE FUTURE,
CLIMATE ACTION
MUST BE A TOP
PRIORITY**



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By William McColgan,
Director, McColgans



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MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



Welcome to the 22nd edition of **CONNECTED**, the Londonderry Chamber of Commerce magazine.

Since our last edition, we have witnessed great strides in the progress and delivery of positive change in the North West from the Northern Ireland Executive. Since Stormont's return earlier this year, change is clearly afoot in the North West. We welcome the steps that have been taken to ensure that the North West is finally able to reach its full potential, and we particularly look forward to witnessing the fruits our Executive's commitment to regional balance will bear.

Since the return of the Executive, Chamber has been on the front foot, with active, constructive engagement with our Executive Ministers and wider government. We were honoured to host Economy Minister Conor Murphy MLA, Finance Minister Caoimhe Archibald MLA, Parliamentary Undersecretary State of for Northern Ireland Fleur Anderson MP and recently had the privilege of hosting First Minister Michelle O'Neill MLA at our President's Annual Dinner.

Speaking at the 66th gathering for our President's Annual Dinner, taking place on an unforgettable night at the Everglades Hotel, the First Minister reaffirmed the Executive's commitment to the North West and the achievement of regional balance, heralding the beginning of a new economic chapter for the North West.

It is a truly optimistic time for our region, but delivery is now required to make these plans and ambitions a reality. Your support and your membership is the key to our influence, and with this collective voice we will continue to argue the case for a North West that receives the right and proper levels of investment that are long overdue, and usher in this new economic chapter.

We are confident that this new economic phase will significantly benefit our first-class businesses and entrepreneurs, which are the beating heart of our local economy and the lifeblood of our communities. We are excited to lead local businesses into a North West that is even more thriving, innovative, and ready to lead in Northern Ireland and beyond.

Growth and transformation are coming for Derry and the North West. In years to come, when the university expansion, the redevelopment of the Walled City and Strand Road, and the City Deal are delivered upon, we will look back on the present as a time of great change. As our region continues to evolve, we look forward to playing a key role in this transformative journey, ensuring its long-term success and the continued growth of our local economy.

I hope you enjoy this year's final edition of **CONNECTED**, and as we approach 2025, I'd like to wish each and every one of our members and your families the very best of health and happiness for the New Year.

Anna Doherty
CEO

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome to all our members and thank you to everyone who has contributed to this edition of CONNECTED.

Our second edition this year comes amidst a positive and progressive time for the North West, which has seen the Executive's priority of achieving regional balance begin to take shape. In the time between this issue of CONNECTED and our last, we have seen hugely significant investment for our region through the signing of the Derry and Strabane City Region City Deal, long-awaited and warmly-welcomed announcements around the A5 and ambitious plans set out for our future, from the planned expansion of Ulster University's Magee campus, to what has been envisioned for Derry and the North West as part of the All-Island Strategic Rail Review, and also most recently, confirmation that our neighbouring City Deals will also go ahead.

This progress will not only enhance local infrastructure and economic opportunities but also reflects the resilience, innovation, and spirit of collaboration that define the North West. As the region continues to thrive, we at the Chamber remain committed to supporting further development, ensuring that everyone benefits from the positive changes underway.

For far too long the North West has been neglected by the political system. However, since the Executive's return earlier this year, it can clearly be seen that our region is at the front of the

minds of our political representatives. We particularly welcome the commitment that our Economy Minister Conor Murphy has shown to ensuring regional balance is achieved in the North West, and we thank him for his consistent and continued engagement with the Chamber.

It has not been an easy time for our members and businesses in recent years; pandemics, lockdowns, and an economic climate as rocky as the Sperrins with sky-high inflation and interest rates, to name just a few. However, the future is bright – we are a city brimming with potential, just waiting to be unlocked. Together, we look forward to a brighter, more prosperous future for the North West and its people.

With every business and entrepreneur that takes the decision to join our growing and diverse Chamber, we strengthen our influence and impact on the political landscape here, lobbying on the issues that are front and centre in the minds of our members and that are of crucial importance to the North West. As I prepare to hand over my presidential duties, I would like to take this opportunity to thank every member who has made the decision to join us in creating a strong voice for the North West,



a voice that champions local business and interests and pushes for positive change.

I'd finally like to wish all of our members continued success as we approach the New Year and enjoy reading about this latest edition of CONNECTED.

Greg McCann
President of the Londonderry Chamber of Commerce

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THE BENEFITS OF CHAMBER MEMBERSHIP FOR JOHNSTON FINANCIAL

Initially I joined the Chamber to help grow my client and referral network. Being a small business in a service sector such as Commercial Finance it is important to be aware of what is going on around you, to build trust with potential new clients, and develop a referral network with fellow professionals who may well champion your services once they have understanding and experience of them.



Being a member alone is not enough. You need to be prepared to “turn up” at Networking Events and Workshops. I find the Workshops very educational, and they are very useful in helping maintain a focus in key areas. For a small business this is often a very efficient and cost-effective way to maintain or develop skill sets. You can meet lots of people at the Networking Sessions in a relatively short period of time so it is important to follow up relevant contacts with chats over coffee and just exploring where a particular relationship can go,

For anybody considering joining the Chamber my advice would be just do it, be prepared to put the time in, and enjoy it. Having a chat over a coffee and buns isn't really that hard and you could be surprised at what you learn!



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THE BENEFITS OF CHAMBER MEMBERSHIP FOR MILLENNIUM FORUM & BARCLAYS

The Millennium Forum has proudly been a member of the Londonderry Chamber of

Commerce for over 20 years. Being part of this organisation is invaluable to us, as it provides the ideal platform for connecting with businesses not only in our local community but also. As an Arts Organisation and a not for profit charity it is imperative that we establish good relationships with the business community.

Personally, I have found the Chamber and the networking events an amazing benefit. The connections I have made, and the enjoyment of the networking events has been a highly contributing factor to the success that I have achieved whilst working in the Millennium Forum.



With Barclays being relatively unknown in N.Ireland, compared to mainland UK, after taking over the Woolwich branch network in 2007, joining the chamber has been a great opportunity to network with the local community.



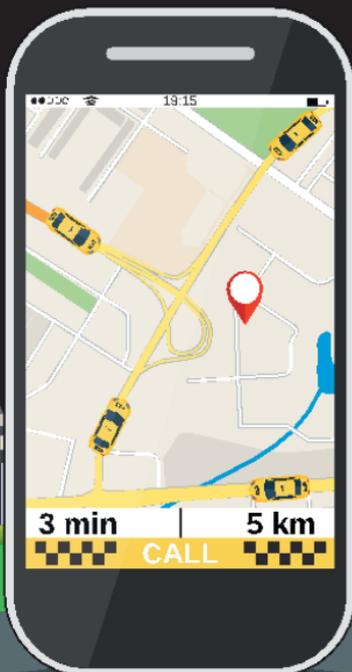
Having never had a high street presence in Derry/Londonderry it has opened up conversations with different businesses, universities, schools, community groups and charities that were potentially unaware of the support a bank like ourselves can offer, even for non-customers.

Without the engagement from the chamber, it would have been harder to make some of these introductions and we look forward to furthering establishing these, and other connections in the future, with the help of the chamber and its activities.

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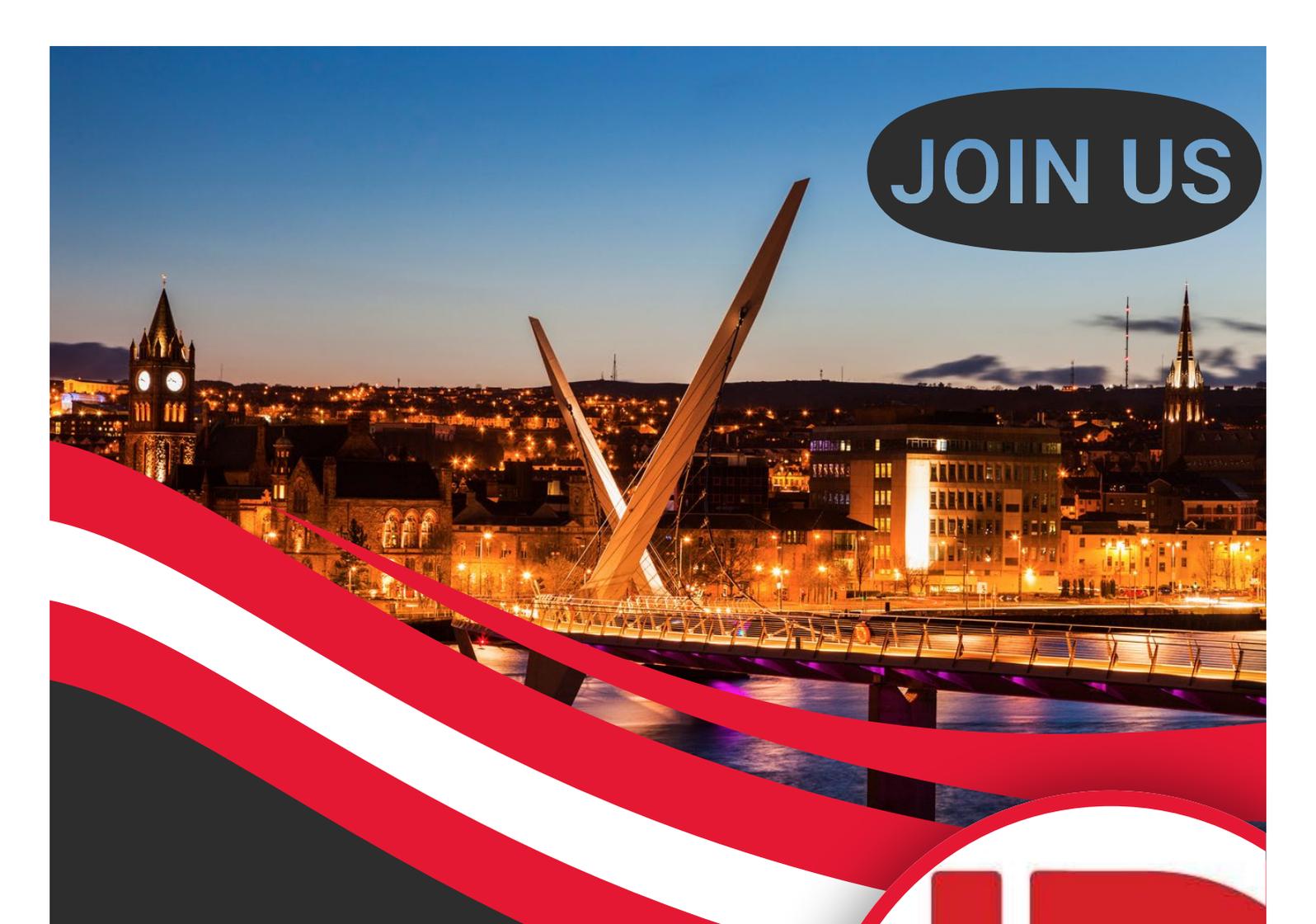
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THE CITY OF LONDON COMMITTEE'S VISION FOR A THRIVING COUNTRY

From SMEs to Sustainability, the Committee's initiatives drive growth, innovation, and security in the heart of London and beyond

The City of London Committee has made championing businesses in the Square Mile its main goal setting an example for the past year and a half.

Established in early 2023 by Alderman Prem Goyal OBE, Chairman of the City of London Committee, it has been focusing its efforts on mainly six areas: net zero, fintech, police and cybersecurity, planning, transport, and international trade. These policy areas have been promoted through briefings held at the Guildhall, roundtables where stimulating discussions brought forth new viewpoints and decisions, and networking events that have woven new relationships among industry leaders and key players, laying the groundwork for progress and innovation.

One of the highlights of the Committee's work was the latest briefing which saw the



City of London Police Commissioner Pete O'Doherty, Detective Inspector Charlie Morrison, and Chief Superintendent Sanjay Andersen discussing AI-driven cybersecurity threats, women's safety, and solutions developed by the City of London Police, such as the Cyber Griffin program to train businesses in cybercrime prevention and a strategy to rebuild trust in the police and create safe spaces in the city for all women. Significant emphasis has also been placed by the City of London Committee on reaching Net Zero, with two events over the past 12 months both featuring Sir Alok Sharma as the keynote speaker, as well as on championing planning and transport in the City of London for a greener and more connected future.

To support growth in the Square Mile means supporting SMEs and the City of London Committee is now proudly collaborating with the City of London Corporation on their first ever SME strategy, launched earlier this year. This

strategy aims to enhance the Square Mile's appeal as a leading location for business growth, emphasising inclusivity and collaboration with various support networks. Key initiatives include improving access to finance, data, space, expertise, and networking opportunities for SMEs. Establishing a strong mentoring network is essential for fostering SME development and achieving the goal of a Destination City.

Promoting SMEs in the City to drive national growth cannot be achieved in isolation. Collaboration is foundational to the LCCI business group, which is why forging strong relationships with Chambers all over the United Kingdom is of paramount importance. Building on ongoing work with the Edinburgh Chamber, which focuses on mutual support in the financial services and creative industries, new contacts are being made every day, with Londonderry being one of the latest.

A DAY IN THE LIFE

NAME

Julie Pollock

AGE

The young age of 48...I know that might surprise a few!!

HOMETOWN

I am originally from Eglinton Village back when it was a small rural village and everyone knew each other and moved to the country on the outskirts of the city when I got married. I am a country girl through and through

ORGANISATION

Consult HR

JOB TITLE

Founder

DESCRIBE WHAT YOUR JOB INVOLVES

We help managers and business owners **with their staffing problems**, we take the stress away, provide instant solutions and stop them making expensive mistakes before they happen to protect them and their business.

DESCRIBE IN DETAIL A DAY IN YOUR WORK

Each day is very different, that's why I love what I do. One minute we could be talking a client through a difficult employee situation and guiding them on how to handle it, providing them with all the supporting documentation they need to complete those steps. Next we could be preparing questions for a disciplinary hearing, arranging a medical referral for an employee, writing job descriptions, meeting a client to prepare contracts and company policies, conducting a bullying and harassment investigation, writing up a grievance report, conducting a HR audit or helping a client with a redundancy, these are just a few examples.

WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT?

Starting up Consult HR with 4 young children, the youngest was just 1 year old!!

Thinking back...as any mother will know [there is no point in me trying to paint a pretty picture]...it was complete chaos, juggling dinner times, home works, washing along with working the clock around to create a reputable HR Service through the delivery of



exceeding clients expectations.

We have just entered our 18th year and I am so proud of the business that we have built which has mainly grown through client referrals, which is a testament in itself.

I owe a special thanks to those who have recommended our services to other businesses

WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU HAVE EVER BEEN GIVEN IN WORK?

I have 2:-
My Grandfather had many wise sayings but one that I often reflect on is **'build a fire big enough to heat you, but not big enough to burn you'**.

I remember talking to Lorraine McGuinness (a girl I met at a networking event many years ago and we instantly clicked). We were talking about decision making, the fear of taking action and how it holds you back...Lorraine's wise words were, **'What's the worst that can happen? If you can handle that then go for it'** So everytime I am second guessing a decision, this comes to mind and has been so helpful in rationalising and

stopping the over thinking that we all have in business.

If you are ever looking for a fish tank, give Lorraine a call at Fintastic, she is a amazing.

WHAT IS THE MOST SATISFYING/FULFILLING ASPECTS OF YOUR JOB?

Many business owners find managing staff challenging at times and creates a lot of stress and sleepless nights for them. Job satisfaction for me is listening to their problems and providing a solution of how to manage that issue with a plan on how that can be handled and resolved. That straight away puts the clients at ease and alleviates the stress. That's a win for me.

WHAT QUALITIES/SKILLS ARE MOST IMPORTANT FOR YOUR ROLE?

Excellent Customer Service
A good Listener
Reassurance
Excellent Problem Solving Skills
A Genuine interest in continuous learning
A genuine interest in the client and their business

OPEN LETTER TO THE LONDONDERRY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Dear Members of the Londonderry Chamber of Commerce,

As the founder of ARC Fitness, a nonprofit organization committed to addiction recovery, I'm reaching out to emphasize the importance of our mission, which has become essential now more than ever. Addiction is a devastating issue - it brings chaos, pain, and destruction to individuals and families alike. In Northern Ireland alone, one person dies every day from problematic substance use. These are not just numbers; they are partners, spouses, children, and friends. But these tragedies are preventable, and recovery is absolutely possible.

At ARC Fitness, we provide hope, support, and community for those struggling with addiction in the northwest. We are strong advocates for harnessing the collective experiences of individuals impacted by addiction to help others who are still suffering. We focus on hope, on the possibility of recovery, and on what happens when people receive the right support at the right time. Through a health-focused model that combines physical activity, therapy, education, and community, ARC exists to restore hope and rebuild lives.

What began as a simple signposting service on Facebook five years ago has since transformed into a reputable, highly regarded organization. Recovery is an action that starts with one step forward, and although that step can be daunting, it leads to progress. At ARC, we celebrate each step as a win. I understand addiction intimately. As a young man, I turned to drugs and alcohol to find solace amidst anxiety, fear, and bullying. I lost 15 years to addiction. Sadly, my story is not unique, nor was my struggle a matter of choice. Amidst the darkness, however, I encountered people who saw my potential - people who saw me as a person, not a problem. ARC Fitness is built on that experience, and we believe deeply in the work we do.

To continue delivering our services free of charge to those in need, we rely on the support of our community. While we've historically depended on external funding, we've expanded our partnerships with local businesses, providing employee support programs, workshops, and wellbeing initiatives. Now, we aim to do even more, and we need your help to make this vision a reality.

To local businesses and organizations: Let's build stronger relationships within the Chamber. We want to work with you to support the people in our communities and workplaces, helping them lead happier, healthier lives. Let's connect and collaborate. To Ministers, MLAs, and other government officials: The ongoing lack of consistent funding is threatening organizations like ARC Fitness, which form the backbone of our communities. Stand with us. Support us. Raise our voices and advocate for funding that allows us to continue serving those in need.

To all who have supported us over the years and at recent events, like the President's Dinner - your generosity is invaluable. It translates directly into lives changed, relationships rebuilt, and hope restored. And who doesn't need more hope in today's world?

To the Londonderry Chamber of Commerce - Greg, Anna, and the entire team - thank you for believing in our work and choosing to support us.

With heartfelt gratitude,



Gary Rutherford
Founder, ARC Fitness



CUSTOMERS AND CARBON ACCOUNTING AT ITS CORE

Businesses today have a significant impact on the environment and so it is vital that they are taking the right steps to help reduce their carbon emissions and meet their sustainability goals. RiverRidge, Northern Ireland's leading waste and resource management company has committed to helping its customers address the environmental cost of waste and resource management, whilst the company itself implements more sustainable ways of working.

Brett Ross, CEO of RiverRidge outlines why RiverRidge is the ideal waste management partner for local businesses seeking to improve their carbon accounting:

"Here at RiverRidge, we offer our customers more than just a waste collection service. We want to help them meet their sustainability goals and see the impact of, and better understand, the carbon impact of their own operations.

"Businesses across all sectors create carbon emissions, either directly or indirectly, via their operations. In layman's terms, the combination of these carbon emissions is referred to as the 'Carbon Footprint', which is classified into three categories – scope 1, emissions from onsite boilers etc.; scope 2, emissions from electricity and/or heat; and scope 3, which is emissions from waste management and commuting etc.

"With waste management practices regarded as Scope 3, it is not mandatory for companies to report the carbon impact of this activity, however it is encouraged. RiverRidge offers our customers enhanced carbon reporting,



Waste and resource management company, RiverRidge recently embarked on an extensive procurement campaign to replace some its older trailer fleet with modern trailers, which contributes towards the company's goal of reducing its carbon footprint by 50% by 2030.

which details statistics including the carbon cost of their waste disposal. Having visibility of this information encourages companies to rethink their waste behaviour, in turn driving their business to be more sustainable.

"We are a customer-focussed business and have invested heavily to ensure we have a state-of-the-art fleet and a full wrap around service in operation to meet the needs of our customers. We recently embarked on an extensive procurement campaign to replace some of our older trailer fleet with modern trailers, that reduce environmental impact and aligns with the company's strategy to operate a fleet of under six years old, which helps towards our goal of reducing our carbon footprint by 50% by 2030.

"As part of this procurement campaign, we took receipt of two Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) glass waste collection vehicles, which has allowed us to expand our glass waste collection service.

"The expansion of this service will offer our customers a more extensive service offering; from general, food and oil, and dry mixed recycling waste

collections, they can utilise the one company for all, with the confidence that their waste is being treated in the most environmentally friendly way. The hospitality and retail food sectors particularly require a reliable and dependable collection service, and we pride ourselves on our ability to deliver that across all sectors."

RiverRidge's new expanded service will see all glass waste collected from customers across the region managed in house by RiverRidge, which operates the UK and Ireland's first waste washing facility and will eliminate the need for sub-contractors, therefore reducing the carbon footprint of the company's collection services. This is something of particular importance to the company, which, in its 2024 ESG report, also committed to reducing the carbon cost of its collection services by 90% by 2040 through the upgrade of its fleet, increased route density and the transition to alternative fuels.

RiverRidge continues to make great strides in ensuring it is reducing its own carbon emissions through its operations, and it is committed to guiding its customers on their own carbon reduction and sustainability journeys, all whilst continuing to deliver excellent value and service.

For more information on RiverRidge, visit: riverridge.co.uk

Elevating client service: Moore Northern Ireland joins Moore Kingston Smith

Moore Kingston Smith, a leading multi-disciplinary advisory, tax and audit firm, has expanded into the region by bringing Moore Northern Ireland into the fold in August.

Moore Northern Ireland has offices in Derry~Londonderry, Belfast and Coleraine and has long served the local business community. With seven partners and 100 people providing accountancy and advisory services to individuals, entrepreneurs, large organisations and complex international businesses, they support their clients' success, helping them to thrive and reach their goals.

This move follows Moore Kingston Smith's acquisition of Moore Ireland in July 2023. Recognising the business links between the financial centres of London, Belfast and Dublin, and with growing cross-border trade, the firms form a tripartite to best serve clients operating across that geographical triangle and beyond.

As a growing centre for the financial and professional services sectors, an increasing number of international organisations are expanding into Northern Ireland. Having a presence across all three areas, and teams qualified to advise in the UK and Ireland provides clients with a truly integrated approach.

John Bradley, a Partner at Moore Northern Ireland's Derry~Londonderry office, expressed his excitement about the development: "Our longstanding support of owner-managed businesses is strengthened by joining forces with Moore Kingston Smith, and it is a real positive for our Derry~Londonderry presence.

Having collaborated historically, cementing the partnership is a logical step in ensuring we remain well positioned as leaders in advising our clients, particularly given the direction we are seeing the market taking, and the evolving environment businesses face."

Both Moore Kingston Smith and Moore Northern Ireland are longstanding members of Moore UK, a leading network of accountants and business advisers, and the wider Moore Global network. Blending local, national and international expertise, they collaborate to offer a value-added service with access to experts across the world, providing a distinct advantage for businesses expanding overseas.

The firms have enjoyed a close working relationship over the years and are aligned in their vision and goals, as well as sharing common cultures and values.

Matt Meadows, Managing Partner of Moore Kingston Smith is equally enthusiastic about this milestone: "As longstanding members of the network, we've enjoyed an excellent relationship with Moore Northern Ireland having worked with them closely over the years. This partnership brings us closer and enhances our ability to bring further opportunities to our clients. Together, we will combine our strengths, forge stronger business links and adopt best practices across our firms to their benefit."

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Moore.co.uk/ni



John Bradley
Partner
Moore NI



Matt Meadows
Managing Partner
Moore Kingston Smith

AS WE LOOK TO THE FUTURE, CLIMATE ACTION MUST BE A TOP PRIORITY

Mark Ennis, Chairman of SSE Ireland, reflects on the company's footprint in Northern Ireland while exploring how the Executive can better address the urgency of the climate crisis and realise the region's renewable energy potential.



As a leading developer and operator of wind power in Northern Ireland, SSE has a deep-rooted commitment to the North West. With a strong presence here, we proudly operate three onshore wind farms at Tievenameenta, Bessy Bell, and Slieve Kirk, which is NI's largest wind farm.

2024 is a milestone year for SSE. It marks 10 years of the SSE Renewables Scholarship Fund, which has been providing financial support to the tune of £1.5 million so far to third-level students living in counties Derry/Londonderry, Tyrone, Fermanagh, and Donegal.

Ensuring communities near our wind farms see meaningful social and economic benefits is a core value to SSE. Alongside our Scholarship Fund, we also deliver local community funds for the benefit of those living closest to our wind farms, and over the past 12 months, these funds have invested over £450,000 in local



communities benefiting a total of 99 community groups.

It is powerful to reflect on how impactful our community funds are, especially as we celebrate the legacy of the SSE Renewables Scholarship Fund. We are proud to have helped young people across Northern Ireland to progress into key employment sectors from science, engineering and medicine.

As we reflect on this important moment, we also look to the future.

As a leading investor in homegrown energy, SSE is eager to support the work of the Stormont Executive and help Northern Ireland meet its renewable energy targets. As we approach the end of this calendar

year, bringing us to the halfway point of this decade, it's a useful juncture to reflect on not only what we've achieved so far, but how we can deliver into the future. The 2030 climate targets, enshrined in law, are our North Star, and we believe these can be delivered, benefitting our local economies and our environment. But we do not have a minute to lose. The Stormont Assembly declared a climate emergency in 2020, and we need to harness that sense of urgency if we're to achieve our goals.

Northern Ireland used to be a leader in this space. We reached our 40% renewable electricity target by 2020, but progress has since stagnated. Renewable investment has stalled due to weak market support, flawed planning processes, and an outdated grid. Consequently, the legally binding target of achieving 80% renewable electricity by 2030 is now at risk. With only 270 weeks left until 2030 it is imperative that we put the frameworks in place to accelerate investment in the renewable energy we need.

The draft Programme for Government made a strong start with its priorities of People, Planet, and Prosperity. The nods to climate action and decarbonisation throughout were welcome,



Mark Ennis - Chairman SSE Ireland

but it is our view that it must go further by setting out the required actions needed to tackle the climate crisis and realise Northern Ireland's renewable energy potential.

We can get back on track, but only if the Programme for Government ensures there's a whole-of-government approach to securing the requisite investment in onshore renewables in the near-term, while laying the groundwork for delivery of offshore wind off Northern Ireland's coast in the decade to come.

That's why SSE has called for a standalone

'Climate Action' priority to be included in the final Programme for Government. This should commit to the urgent publication of overdue Climate Budgets, as well Northern Ireland's Climate Action Plan.

Prioritising Climate Action requires us to improve the planning system here. We lag far behind our neighbours when it comes to processing renewable planning applications. Without substantial planning reforms and investment in adequate resourcing, as we've seen in neighbouring jurisdictions such as Scotland, Northern Ireland will struggle to meet its legal obligations under the Climate Act.

Climate change should be a central consideration in all planning decisions.

With the right policy signals, private investment will bolster homegrown energy, improving Northern Ireland's economy and providing greater price stability to electricity customers. There's no time to waste. Let's act now to ensure that the legacy we leave for future generations is one of sustainability, prosperity, and a cleaner, greener Northern Ireland.



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AI TO THE FORE IN FINTRU'S NORTH WEST FUTURE

CONNECTED recently sat down with Kathryn Harkin, the new Head of AI for FinTrU, to discuss her new role, FinTrU's plans for AI, and the importance of the company's presence in the North West.

A native of Derry, Kathryn Harkin was an early adapter to the world of AI. Having worked in software and systems engineering before moving onto project and programme management, FinTrU's new Head of AI began to get to grips with the emergent technology in 2017.

"When I moved into AI, businesses were just beginning to explore its potential in a limited way," she says. "I ended up building a team from the ground up with my previous employer, who was a large tech employer based in Derry. We found that there was some good local talent to bring in, but we were also able to build on the talent that was already sitting within the company. That experience of building from the ground up and seeing the problems AI could help solve was very informative."

As someone at the forefront of new technologies in the North West, Harkin kept a keen eye on the developments at FinTrU, the leading provider of technology-enabled client lifecycle solutions, who opened their North West office in Derry in October 2018 and have gone from strength to strength since.

"FinTrU always had a great reputation of being an employer that people wanted to work for," Harkin says, explaining why she was attracted to the company, where she was appointed in summer 2024. "They had grown at a rapid pace and were looking to further improve their offerings by building out their AI capabilities. This sounded like an exciting challenge that would suit my skillset."



FinTrU has expansive experience across client lifecycle management, with specialities in aspects such as know your customer (KYC), risk, compliance, and legal, which is "second to none", Harkin says, stating the company is "world class in their understanding of these processes".

The application of AI to FinTrU's existing offerings is now Harkin's remit, and she sees great potential for how this can improve efficiencies and free staff to focus on higher value tasks. "AI has the ability to handle vast datasets; our datasets are often unstructured, they are not laid out in tables, and it can be difficult to pull out information or insights," she says. "That is where the technology can help identify patterns, to bring out the insights you are looking for, enabling you to make decisions from there."

"These models also learn over time, meaning you can expose them to some input datasets so they can improve and

get to acceptable accuracy levels across different use cases."

As it expands its offering, FinTrU, already an important player in the economy of the North West, has expanded its presence within the region. Following the 2018 opening of the Derry office, a Letterkenny office was opened in 2022, and the announcement of 300 new jobs for the region in 2023 saw the company's North West presence double in size.

"There is a tremendous local skills pipeline in the North West, with UU and ATU and plenty of technology companies who have all done their part in growing that talent pool," Harkin says. "People in the region have been involved in cutting edge technologies and have fantastic learning agility. There is so much great talent in this area, and it's exciting to know that there is a workforce here that is now equipped to come in and apply their skills and expertise across different sectors."



Darragh McCarthy, FinTrU; First Minister Michelle O'Neill MLA; Mayor Lillian Seenoi-Barr; Greg McCann, Derry Chamber President; and Parliamentary Undersecretary of State Fleur Anderson MP

PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL DINNER

The 66th President's Annual Dinner, sponsored by FinTrU, took place on 4 October at the Everglades Hotel, Derry. The night was a massive success, with highlights from this year's dinner including a keynote speech from First Minister Michelle O'Neill MLA and hosting a range of key dignitaries including Parliamentary Undersecretary of State for Northern Ireland Fleur Anderson MP.

In his speech to attendees, Chamber President Greg McCann said that a new

Derry City and a new North West is within touching distance, and called for the delivery of the numerous investment plans coming down the tracks for the North West. He said: "The theme of my year of presidency has been place. Through plans such as the university expansion, the All-Island Strategic Rail Review, Invest NI's Sub-Regional Economic Plan, and the City Deal, we can really see what kind of place the Derry of the future will be. But the future is only achieved by the endeavour of the present

and at Chamber believe that the time for action is now.

"It is incumbent on all parties to ensure that our region reaches its true potential. The time of plans is nearing its end; it is time to dig in, figuratively and literally. Once these plans come into effect, I believe that we will truly begin to see the potential of this place."

In an optimistic keynote speech that gave chamber members hope and



Darragh McCarthy, FinTru; First Minister Michelle O'Neill MLA; Greg McCann, Derry Chamber President; and Anna Doherty, Derry Chamber CEO



Comedian Diona Doherty



Andrew Fleming, Derry Chamber Vice President



Greg McCann, Michelle O'Neill MLA, Lillian Seeno-Barr and Fleur Anderson MP



Greg McCann and First Minister Michelle O'Neill MLA

excitement for the future, the First Minister reaffirmed the Executive's commitment to the North West and achieving regional balance, and spoke of the beginning of a new economic chapter for the North West. The First Minister said: "Derry Chamber represents over 350 businesses and has been their voice, their champion since 1885. I want to thank you and everyone you represent for the positive contribution you are making to our economy and to the lives of workers and families here.

"I want to acknowledge the success you have had in your endeavours to date. As an Executive, we also want to offer you our support for

the future as you seek to develop relationships locally, nationally and internationally."

The Chamber welcome this support from the Executive and we look forward to working closely with our Ministers and elected representatives over this coming key period of transformation in the North West, as we strive to unlock our full potential.

Chamber is grateful for the continued support of FinTru, our Corporate Partner and Dinner Sponsor, with attendees also hearing from FinTru CEO Darragh McCarthy on the night. He said: "FinTru are delighted to support

Derry Chamber of Commerce. Its membership is the heartbeat of the economy of the North West and we have seen first-hand the benefits that membership can have. We are proud to be part of a huge network of businesses in the region that open their offices every day to provide a service to the people of the North West and to people further afield. We thank the Chamber and its members for their partnership and wish them continued success."

FinTru is a technology-enabled solutions company that partner with their clients to offer a perfect combination of operational services and technology solutions. FinTru have a wealth of experience in KYC, Credit Risk, Compliance and Legal developed by working with some of the biggest Banks in Capital Markets and Wealth Management since 2013.



Codetta with Musical Director Dónal Doherty



Darragh McCarthy, CEO FinTrU



Gary Ruthford, Founder ARC Fitness



Greg McCann, James Fleming and host Sarah Travers



The Chamber Team Emile Rainey, Elisha Kealey, Natalie McCloskey and Anna Doherty

The Derry Chamber would like to extend heartfelt thanks to the sponsors and entertainers who made our recent event an unforgettable success. Your unwavering support is not only deeply appreciated but also essential to our continued growth and success as a community-focused organisation.

We are particularly grateful to our **Main Event Sponsor, FinTrU**, whose generous contribution set the stage for an exceptional evening. A special thanks goes to **SmartPay NI**, our Entertainment Sponsor, for ensuring the night was filled with joy and vibrance, and to **Invest NI**, our Programme Sponsor, for their steadfast backing.

Additionally, we want to recognise the **President's chosen charity, ARC**, whose vital work inspires us all. The evening was brought to life by the incredible talents of **Dionna Doherty** and **Codetta**, who provided outstanding entertainment that kept spirits high and energy flowing.

It is through the collaboration and support of sponsors, performers, and attendees that we can continue to serve our community. Thank you for being an integral part of what makes the Derry Chamber thrive.



Greg McCann, Helen McDonnell and Sarah Travers



FinTrU branded wafers for dessert

CHAMBER LIFE



Lord Lieutenant Ian Crowe MBE

The 2024 Chamber Calendar was busy with numerous political developments and rich with a diverse array of events, with the return of the political institutions and major announcements for the North West complemented by a busy schedule of networking events, workshops/seminars, political engagements, and much more.



Networking in Nature

Since our last edition, the summer began with a refreshing take on networking through the Networking in Nature event, hosted by the Woodland Trust and sponsored by Benchmark. Attendees enjoyed connecting with like-minded professionals while appreciating the natural environment, blending professional interactions with outdoor rejuvenation.



Squaring up to a Circular Economy

June saw sustainability take centre stage with Squaring Up to a Circular Economy, hosted by Business in the Community NI, where participants discussed innovative practices that benefit both the environment and economy. The month closed with the King's Award Information Session at the Ebrington Hotel, offering insights into the prestigious business accolades and how companies could aspire to attain them.



Chloe Palser, Gavin Killeen MBE, Greg McCann, Mayor Lillian Seenoi-Barr, Ian Crowe MBE and Nichola Bruno at the King's Award event



Derry Chamber officials with Minister for Finance Caoimhe Archibald MLA

In August, members had the opportunity to take part in a Business Briefing with the Minister for Finance Caoimhe Archibald MLA at the City Hotel. The event offered an engaging platform for discussions on the Minister's policies and their implications, with members availing of a Q&A session with the Minister.

September was bustling with dynamic engagements, starting with the Windsor Framework Webinar led by Easy Customs, which provided clarity on new regulatory frameworks. Networking was at its peak at the Connect and Succeed Networking Event, sponsored by Go Succeed in the Ebrington Hotel Cocktail Bar. The event facilitated professional networking for members within a more informal and vibrant atmosphere. September was rounded off with the successful CBPES Employers Incentives Lunch at the Waterfoot Hotel.



Emile Rainey, Carolann Doherty and Anna Doherty at Connect and Succeed Networking Event



Participants networking at Connect and Succeed in the Ebrington Hotel



Participants networking at Connect and Succeed in the Ebrington Hotel



Participants networking at Connect and Succeed in the Ebrington Hotel



Speakers at the CBPES Employers Incentives Lunch



Navigating Cyber Threats with LoughTec



Tom Down and attendees at the Motivation by Inclination Workshop



Energy Conference Panelists

October brought with it the 66th President's Annual Dinner in an unforgettable night at the Everglades Hotel. Sponsored by FinTrU, the dinner featured a keynote address from First Minister Michelle O'Neill MLA and brought together key dignitaries, leaders and Chamber members in a night celebrating our regional successes. Mid-month brought a focus on wellness with Creating a Mentally Healthy Workplace hosted by Aware NI, underscoring the importance of mental health initiatives in business. This was followed by the Recruitment Support for Employers Webinar facilitated by the Department for Communities,



Ian Luney, Foyle Port at the Energy Conference

which provided essential strategies for talent acquisition. As October neared an end, the Magee Taskforce Briefing from Ulster University took



Energy Conference Host Jamie Delargy

place, providing members with detailed insight into the crucial expansion of their Magee campus. The month concluded with the Navigating Cyber Threats with Confidence event presented by LoughTec at The Playhouse, empowering attendees with insights on cybersecurity.



Gerard Carlin, SONI; Peter Russell, Utility Regulator; and Aodhán McAleer, ESB at the Energy Conference



Toni Forrester, Letter Kenny Chamber; Greg McCann, Derry Chamber; Mark Ennis, SSE Ireland; Jamie Delargy, Host; and Claire McDonough, Letterkenny Chamber at the Energy Conference

November seen sustainability discussions continue with the flagship North West Future of Energy Conference. Sponsored by SSE Renewables and taking place at the

Ebrington Hotel, the conference brought together energy suppliers, technology providers, industry buyers, investors, and policymakers to share knowledge and showcase energy

innovation. By mid-month, members gained inspiration from the Motivation by Inclination Workshop led by Tom Brown of Training Concepts. Finally, November's events wrapped up with the Media Interview Skills Training Workshop by Ciaran Lockhart, equipping participants with essential media communication skills.

From the President's Annual Dinner and sustainability conferences to mental health workshops and navigating cyber threats, these events not only served as key networking opportunities, but also in fostering professional development and equipping members with the knowledge and skills vital for future growth.

SONI LEADERSHIP TEAM POWERS BRIGHT FUTURE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND'S GRID OPERATOR

SONI (System Operator for Northern Ireland) has unveiled a new leadership structure with four key director appointments designed specifically to further support the delivery of Northern Ireland's renewable energy ambitions.

The announcement follows the appointment of SONI's new independent Board in October 2023, marking another significant step in the organisation's evolution as Northern Ireland's Transmission System Operator.

The transformation of the senior team comes at a crucial moment in Northern Ireland's journey to decarbonisation. With the Climate Change Act mandating 80% renewable electricity by 2030 and wider net zero ambitions by 2050, the grid operator has embarked on a new phase of its mission to enable Northern Ireland to avail of the huge societal, environmental and economic opportunities offered by the energy transition.

"As critical enabling infrastructure, the Northern Ireland high voltage electricity grid needs to be transformed in an unprecedented way, both in a physical and operational context," **explained SONI Chief Executive Alan Campbell.**

"These appointments mark a further significant transformation milestone on our mission to be a leading Transmission System Operator working for everyone in Northern Ireland. Each new Director brings a wealth of experience and expertise to further build our capacity and capability to support the delivery of Northern Ireland's renewable energy ambitions.

"This leadership transformation positions SONI to capitalise on Northern Ireland's significant natural advantages in the renewable energy sector. With world-class

renewable resources and a proven track record in grid management innovation, the team will be instrumental in attracting investment and creating high-quality jobs in the growing green economy."

The new structure establishes four distinct directorates: Operations; Networks and Innovation; Strategy and Regulation; and Finance; with each precisely aligned with the key challenges of the energy transition. This targeted approach will be crucial for supporting the delivery of Northern Ireland's clean energy goals, whilst simultaneously ensuring security of supply and affordability for consumers.

Emma Morris, Director of Operations, will spearhead one of the most ambitious operational transformations in global energy systems.

"Northern Ireland is already capable of running on up to 75% renewable electricity at any given time – among the highest levels globally," she said.

"We're now working towards operating the system with up to 95% non-synchronous generation by 2030, truly pushing the boundaries of what's possible in power system engineering."

This operational transformation includes developing new system services and trialling innovative



approaches to maintain grid stability with increasingly variable renewable generation.

The appointments of **Gerard Carlin** as Director of Networks and Innovation and **Kevin O'Neill** as Director of Strategy and Regulation will be instrumental in delivering the £600 million investment in grid upgrades planned over the next decade. This includes 36 major projects, with 16 specifically designed to support renewables integration – critical infrastructure that will form the backbone of Northern Ireland's decarbonised energy system. Their roles will be crucial in implementing a more strategic, plan-led approach to grid development, moving away from



the current reactive model that has led to inefficiencies and delays.

Frank O'Connor's appointment as Director of Finance completes a leadership team structured to tackle the complex financial planning needed to support this unprecedented transformation whilst protecting consumer interests. His role will be vital in ensuring that investments in grid infrastructure deliver value for money and that the financial mechanisms supporting renewable integration are both effective and efficient.

The timing of these appointments is particularly significant. With connection

electricity demand by 2030, driven by the electrification of heat and transport, with forecasts suggesting demand could more than double by 2050.

The new leadership team will be crucial in addressing current inefficiencies that are costing consumers dearly, with the North South Interconnector delays alone resulting in £20 million annual losses due to market inefficiencies. The strengthened management structure will help accelerate such critical projects whilst ensuring community interests are protected through

applications increasing fourfold in 2023 alone, the new directorate structure will enable SONI to shift from its current reactive approach to a more strategic, plan-led model of grid development. This transformation is essential to handle the projected 28% increase in

enhanced engagement and benefit schemes.

The appointments also strengthen SONI's ability to coordinate with other sectors crucial to the net zero transition. This includes alignment with developments in hydrogen production, transport electrification and heat decarbonisation – all essential components of a comprehensive approach to reaching climate targets.

As Northern Ireland advances towards its net zero obligations, SONI's reinforced leadership structure provides the expertise, vision, and capability needed to deliver this monumental transformation. The success of this new team will be crucial not just for meeting climate targets, but for establishing Northern Ireland as a global leader in renewable energy integration and securing a sustainable, affordable energy future for all its citizens.



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**SEAN
QUINN**
Head of Sales



Email - seanquinn@highlandradio.com |

Sean joined Highland as Head of Sales in Aug 2019, with over 25 years of sales and management experience. In that period Sean has worked in Media, Financial Services, and Software sectors and has developed fantastic working relationships with clients across the UK and Ireland.

**JOHN
BRESLIN**
Advertising
Sales



Email - johnbreslin@highlandradio.com |

As well as working as the presenter of the Highland Radio's Breakfast Show since 1993, John has also been an integral member of the Sales team, writing classified ads and community notices for businesses across the Northwest for over 20 years.

**MICHELLE
MCKINNEY**
Advertising
Sales



Email - advertising@highlandradio.com |

Michelle has been a member of the Sales Team at Highland for the past 17 years and thoroughly enjoys the variety of roles within the department with every day presenting a new but rewarding challenge.

**CORINNE
TEMPLE**
Digital Media
Sales



Email - corinnetemple@highlandradio.com

Corinne brings over 12 year's experience in the world of Digital Marketing to the team. She understands the needs of businesses from a marketing and commercial perspective and looks forward to giving businesses the best opportunity to consistently deliver the right message at the right time!

**JOE
DUFFY**
Advertising
Sales



Email - joeduffy@highlandradio.com |

Joe has been with the Sales team at Highland for the past 9 Years and has a wealth of knowledge and experience in running bespoke advertising campaigns. With a passion for customer satisfaction, Joe places great emphasis on forming great relationships with customers to develop the best advertisements.

**AINE
SWEENEY**
Digital Media
Co-Ordinator



Email - ainesweeney@highlandradio.com

Aine's role involves producing video and social media content for Highland Radio and other businesses around the county. She believes that there is real opportunity for businesses to use cross platform campaigns and that Highland Radio is without doubt the best place to help advise and deliver on the best way to promote your business.



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ALCHEMY AND NTT DATA PARTNER UP TO HELP INSURANCE COMPANIES

Alchemy Technology Services and NTT DATA UK&I, a global leader in digital business and IT services, announced a strategic partnership. This collaboration aims to transform P&C insurance platforms and services, supporting insurers grappling with legacy systems and complex cloud migrations.

Alchemy, a Guidewire PartnerConnect Consulting, provides resources and expertise to support the modernisation and growth of the technology platforms. NTT DATA brings its global reach, extensive knowledge, and comprehensive services, including end-to-end data modernisation, cloud integration, and application management, to the partnership.

This unique offering meets a critical market need, enabling seamless transitions from on-premises to cloud-

based systems, particularly for organisations using outdated policy administration, billing, and claims management systems facing end-of-life. The partnership will help firms future-proof their operations against market changes and evolving regulatory requirements, catering to both the specialty and general insurance sectors.

“Partnering with NTT DATA provides us with an incredible opportunity to enhance our service offerings and expand our reach,” said John Harkin, CEO at Alchemy. “Cloud solutions continue to be a key driver of innovation in the insurance industry, and this partnership enables us to leverage our expertise fully. This collaboration acknowledges our strengthened capabilities and positions

us to support our clients more effectively as they transition to cloud-based systems.”

“Our partnership with Alchemy allows us to offer an unmatched end-to-end solution,” said Richard White, Head of Specialty Insurance at NTT DATA UK&I. “We’re providing a reliable alternative to current market offerings, ensuring smooth implementations and migrations that have proved challenging for many insurers.”





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ALCHEMY ANNOUNCES EXCITING OFFICE MOVE SET FOR SPRING 2025



Alchemy Technology Services, a leading software implementation and consultancy firm in the global insurance technology industry, has been announced as the first tenant of the new Ebrington Plaza building in Derry/Londonderry. This move represents a multi-million-pound investment in the North West by Alchemy, signaling its commitment to bolstering the local economy.

The new state-of-the-art, grade A office space in Ebrington Plaza will serve as Alchemy's permanent headquarters, supporting the company's long-term growth plans in the region. Founded in Derry/Londonderry in 2018, Alchemy now employs over 150 people locally, providing high-quality consultancy and software implementation services to the insurance sector globally.

John Harkin, Founder and CEO of Alchemy Technology Services, expressed his enthusiasm for this significant step: "We are thrilled to be the first tenant in Ebrington Plaza. This new, cutting-edge office space will enable us to continue our expansion and create an exceptional work environment for our employees. This move supports our mission to create a centre of excellence for transforming the global insurance industry by attracting and retaining top talent in the North West. It reinforces Alchemy's position as a leading player in the insurance industry and as an employer of choice in Northern Ireland."

Harkin continued, "Following the recent opening of our office in the iconic Lloyd's of London building, we're confident our new

headquarters will play a pivotal role in expanding our customer base. This investment is a testament to our growth and the hard work and dedication of our talented team over the past six years."

Jeremy Fitch, Executive Director of Business Growth Group at Invest Northern Ireland, also expressed his support: "Invest NI has proudly supported Alchemy since it first established a presence in Northern Ireland in 2018, helping the company grow and create high-quality jobs. Today's announcement reflects Alchemy's confidence in the North West's skilled talent pool. Companies like Alchemy play a vital role in strengthening our regional economy and reinforcing Northern Ireland's reputation as a prime destination for business and investment."

Paul Mulholland, Property Director at Heron Group, added: "We are delighted to welcome Alchemy, a thriving local technology business, to Ebrington Plaza. Alchemy's decision to choose Ebrington Plaza is a testament to the quality of the space on offer and the appeal of Ebrington as a business location. Alchemy has established itself as a leader in its field, and Heron Property is excited to deliver best-in-class office accommodation for their growing business."

Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council, Councillor Lilian Seenoi-Barr, also commented: "Best wishes to everyone at Alchemy for this exciting new chapter in their journey. This marks another significant milestone for a firm that has expanded greatly since its founding in 2018. Their decision to locate their headquarters in the heart of the city is a ringing endorsement of the North West as an attractive place to work, live, and do business."

Alchemy's move to Ebrington Plaza, set for spring 2025, represents a major chapter for the company as it continues to expand its services within Northern Ireland and to the broader global insurance industry.



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MAKING HISTORY AT CITY OF DERRY AIRPORT

Continued Growth as easyJet Launch NEW Year-Round Services, Ryanair Extend their Winter Schedule & International Passenger Numbers Triple

The last two years have brought a period of significant growth and development for the team at City of Derry Airport as they welcomed Loganair's three times daily London Heathrow service last summer, opening a convenient gateway to international destinations on a single-ticket fare, and this summer brought the news of easyJet taking off from the Northwest for the first time in history. This is in addition to the extension of Ryanair services to Birmingham and Manchester, the

continued success of Loganair's service to Glasgow, and sold out seasonal charters to Verona with Topflight for Schools, and Lourdes Pilgrimages with Joe Walsh Tours.

Managing Director at City of Derry Airport, Steve Frazer, discussed the expansion of operations and what this means for the local corporate market: "As the 'Gateway for the Northwest' for over 40 years, the key business connectivity across all our services supports the Northwest's thriving regional development plans. The arrival of easyJet, the UK's largest airline, brings an undeniable level of brand credibility for corporate travellers and marks a momentous step in our vision for the future. "easyJet's services to Edinburgh and Liverpool took to the skies in November and are operating on a Monday and Friday year-round, offering a convenient flight



schedule that is ideal for business travellers and students commuting and weekend leisure breaks, not to mention the added bonus of great value fares. Additional capacity is available on a Thursday across the holiday period from 12th December - 2nd January to ensure anyone travelling to see family and friends for Christmas and New Year can conveniently connect from their local Airport."

Ryanair expanded their services from the Northwest this year with the launch of a new Birmingham service, a route that has been in great demand across the Northwest for several years, as well as the extension of existing services to Manchester. Mr. Frazer referenced the continued success of Ryanair: "Ryanair celebrated a remarkable milestone of 5 million passengers through City of Derry Airport in October of this year, demonstrating the popularity of the low-cost airline across the region.

"We are particularly delighted to have the Ryanair Birmingham service now available on a Monday and Saturday throughout the Winter, in fitting with the needs of business travellers commuting at the start of the week and returning at the weekend, and also offering ideal flight times for a weekend break – and on a budget, with fares available from just £14.25 one way!"





Photograph by Michael McElroy



One year on from the launch of international single-ticket fares from City of Derry Airport, as part of the launch of Loganair's London Heathrow service, new passenger figures unveiled that the number travelling through the 'Gateway of the Northwest' to connect to international destinations tripled from Summer 2023 to Summer 2024. These figures indicate a new wave of global travellers using the Airport, with the top

“ WE ARE PARTICULARLY DELIGHTED TO HAVE THE RYANAIR BIRMINGHAM SERVICE NOW AVAILABLE ON A MONDAY AND SATURDAY THROUGHOUT THE WINTER, IN FITTING WITH THE NEEDS OF BUSINESS TRAVELLERS COMMUTING AT THE START OF THE WEEK AND RETURNING AT THE WEEKEND, AND ALSO OFFERING IDEAL FLIGHT TIMES FOR A WEEKEND BREAK – AND ON A BUDGET, WITH FARES AVAILABLE FROM JUST £14.25 ONE WAY!”

connecting destinations outlined as Dubai, Doha and Abu Dhabi, and the top connecting airlines shown as British Airways, Emirates and Etihad Airways.

Mr Frazer noted: “It’s wonderful to see travellers across the Northwest enjoying the benefits of flying local to an array of bucket-list destinations across Europe, the Middle East, North and South America, Africa, Asia and Australasia.

“Passengers can simply drop their baggage at City of Derry, breeze through London Heathrow, and collect at their final destination. There is also increased baggage allowance as the international airline’s permissions apply throughout the journey. Full information on all 119 international destinations and the corresponding airline carriers, is readily available on the Airport website.”

As to what 2025 will bring for City of Derry Airport following the success achieved over the last few years, it appears the sky truly is the limit. Mr.

Frazer stated: “Demand for access to the Northwest from international leisure, corporate markets, and university students, means that the Airport is in a position to bring considerable tourism opportunities and economic growth to the local area.

“Re-establishing air access between the Northwest and Dublin remains one of our key priorities, particularly for the corporate market, and providing hub connectivity for foreign direct investment. This service would also provide tourists visiting Ireland via Dublin to add the exploration of the beautiful Northwest to their itinerary.

“And of course, we will continue to work on the further expansion of our route network across the UK and Europe with existing partners, as well as the development of additional travel partnerships, that can best fulfil the travel requirements of the local region.”

ULSTER UNIVERSITY UNVEILS NEW “CONNECTED TO THE COMMUNITY” CAMPAIGN TO SHOWCASE HOW ITS DRIVING CHANGE, UPLIFTING COMMUNITIES AND ENRICHING CULTURE IN THE NORTH WEST.

At Ulster University, our mission is to be a driving force for positive change in the North West region. We are connected to the community, fostering a rich cultural landscape, and creating lasting impact.

Ulster University isn't just a place of learning; it's a vital part of the North West's heartbeat. We believe in the potential of this region and are deeply invested in its people. Through our widening access initiatives, we're bringing real benefits to local communities—from grassroots sports to international festivals, and everything in between.

People place and partnership is at the heart of what we do and we are working with partners to make a difference and have a lasting impact for individual and communities alike.

Philip Devlin, Secretary, O'Neills Foyle Cup

"Without the support of Ulster University we would not be able to cater for the 13,000 plus

young people competing in our tournament, with almost 1000 of them experiencing campus life for the 6 days of the event"

Martin Doherty, Project Co-ordinator, The Ryan McBride Foundation

"The support from Ulster University has allowed us to do cross border community camps across Derry & Donegal so we are able to impact more kids and families in the local area".

Garreth Harvey, Convenor, City of Derry Rugby club

"Having Ulster University partner with us has been tremendous, the kids are developing core skills which will stand them in good stead."

Greg Parke, Club Secretary, Tristar Football Club

"Thanks for Ulster University we host the Tristar NW Cross Community Tournament at their facilities, giving 1000+ kids across NI and Donegal the opportunity to compete against each other"



Aeidin McCarter, Head of Culture, Derry City & Strabane District Council

"Ulster University is partnering with Derry City & Strabane District Council to support a vibrant and cultural events programme for the city's flagship festivals, Jazz, Foyle Maritime & Halloween."

Eavan King, Head of Film, Nerve Centre

"Foyle Film Festival's partnership with Ulster University connects young people in our communities to great cinema, creative talent, and cutting-edge research in technologies. This partnership builds audiences for screen culture and strengthens the pathway for young people here to be part of a skilled workforce that meets the needs of a dynamic and rapidly evolving screen industry."

Darren Hargan Founder and Artistic Director, Le Foyer Des Artistes

"In the pulsing heart of one of Ireland's most ancient cities, we've created something truly special. With Ulster University as our partner, it's not just about music; it's a unique, independent centre of innovation and creativity. Here, talented students from the university's business and creative industries departments are given the opportunity to be part of a larger vision, gaining invaluable experience that will shape their careers."

At Ulster University, our campus is more than just a place of study—it's a hub for activities that benefit the North West community. We pride ourselves on the strong relationships we've built with local schools and organisations, and we're committed to making a difference.



THE POWER OF EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS: ESSENTIAL TIPS FOR BUSINESS OWNERS

Employment contracts are often overlooked, yet critical in today's world. At Consult HR, we look at these daily to help business owners make decisions.

Julie Pollock explains these documents form the foundation of employer-employee relationships, setting clear expectations and protections. Surprisingly, many business owners either lack formal contracts or use outdated versions, not fit for purpose. At Consult HR, they regularly witness the consequences of this oversight and have set out some essential tips you should know to maximize the benefits of employment contracts and avoid common mistakes.

1. WHY HAVE CONTRACTS?

An employment contract is far more than a list of job duties; it establishes clarity and legal protection. A thorough contract will cover essential areas like job responsibilities, salary, benefits, working hours, and policies on confidentiality and data protection and many more. This clarity prevents disputes, ensuring that both parties know what to expect from the outset.

Contracts also offer legal protection. From our experience, the reality is the contract becomes most important when a conflict arises and is put under the microscope.

The first question we ask clients seeking advice is, "Let's take a look at what your contract says" When this answer isn't clear, which is normally due to a poorly written contract, employers face unnecessary risks.

2. AVOIDING COMMON PITFALLS

We see recurring mistakes in employment contracts that leave businesses vulnerable:

Using Outdated Contracts:

Relying on an old template risks non-compliance and potential legal exposure.

Lack of Customization: Every business is unique. Whilst it is tempting to use documents from another company, we do not recommend it. Ensure to have a contract and policies drawn up that is bespoke to your business requirements.

Missing Key Clauses: Critical clauses, like probation periods, non-compete, deductions from pay and notice periods, are sometimes left out, creating complications if an employee underperforms or leaves to join a competitor.

3. IS IT LEGALLY BINDING?

Employees should receive a written statement of terms and conditions of employment within the first 8 weeks of commencing employment, failure to issue such a document can result in additional compensation awards of between 2 and 4 weeks pay. It may also be surprising to know, verbal agreements can be legally binding otherwise known as 'custom and practice'.

4. REGULAR REVIEWS ARE ESSENTIAL

Contracts should never be "set and forgotten." With the recent consultation of the 'Good Jobs' employers rights bill we are

CONSULT HR

likely to see some movement and changes in employment legislation in Northern Ireland, therefore keeping up to date with employment law and updating contractual documents going forward is important. To receive regular updates join our e-mail list by logging into the website on www.consulthr.co.uk and insert your details in the pop up box.

5. HOW DO YOU STORE THESE?

Once the employment contract has been signed by the employee you should store these in a safe and secure location where only authorised individuals have access.

You may want to consider using software to conveniently store all your employment documents in one safe place and move toward a 'paperless' system to save you time, and do your bit for the environment. At Consult HR our clients have access to software, below are a few of the functions:-

If you need help with your employment contracts or you are interested in the HR Software feel free to reach out to julie@consulthr.co.uk or call on **07858089006**

WHEN ONE CHILD'S LIFE WAS CHANGED FOREVER, HE CHOSE TO MAKE LIFE BETTER FOR THE WORLD'S MOST VULNERABLE CHILDREN.



Richard Moore's life is a story of true hope – of overcoming deep tragedy to deliver real change. As Richard was walking home from school, on 4th May 1972, a soldier fired a rubber bullet and blinded him for life. Despite this trauma, Richard never felt bitterness over what happened.

He established Children in Crossfire in 1996, with the goal of supporting children growing up in the crossfire of poverty and injustice. Today, we deliver education, healthcare, nutrition and safe, clean water to some of the world's most vulnerable children, in Tanzania and Ethiopia.

Richard forgave Charles, the soldier who shot him. In 2007, the two men met and, in the years since, have become firm friends. The Dalai Lama has described Richard as his hero.

We know from our engagement with businesses that staff respond very positively when they hear Richard tell his remarkable story. It tends to be a moving and motivating experience for everyone.

If you think your team would benefit from engaging with Richard please scan the QR code and fill in your details.

Alternatively, call Aishling on 028 7126 9898.



**Children
in Crossfire**

CELEBRATING COMMUNITY AND CULTURE: THE MILLENNIUM FORUM'S ROLE AS DERRY'S PREMIER THEATRE AND CONFERENCE HUB

Opened in 2001 within Derry's historic walls, the Millennium Forum has become the leading theatre and conference centre in the North West, attracting over 300,000 visitors annually. As a registered charity, the Forum hosts a varied programme, from ballet and West End musicals to acclaimed drama, all driven by a vision to offer affordable, high-quality entertainment that celebrates both local and national talent.

Recently recognised for its dedication to inclusivity, the Forum was shortlisted for the Business Eye Diversity and Inclusion Award and received top honours at the CCI Business Awards, including Brilliance in Business and Creative Marketer of the Year. These accolades underline its commitment to fostering a creative, accessible community.

Local businesses can benefit from

powerful branding and marketing opportunities by partnering with the Forum, supporting initiatives like the Interact Festival, Happy Stage, and Dementia-Friendly tea dances. These partnerships not only enhance corporate visibility but also strengthen community engagement and inclusion.

Businesses are invited to explore sponsorship opportunities at the Forum, from programme / screen advertising to corporate partnerships. The highly sought-after Corporate Boxes are currently sold out, but the theatre is actively seeking a Principal Partner, an exclusive sponsorship role ideal for a company dedicated to community impact. Additional opportunities include sponsoring youth and senior events or securing naming rights for recently refurbished spaces. Approaching its 25th anniversary in 2026, the Forum's milestone offers a unique

opportunity for businesses to align with a beloved local venue.

Cara McCartney, Development and Creative Engagement Manager, expressed gratitude to their new and long-standing corporate partners saying, "We are grateful to our eighteen corporate partners who see the value in partnering with us, especially during these challenging times."

This Christmas, the Richmond Centre-sponsored pantomime Aladdin (29th November to 31st December) it provides an ideal festive outing for teams and families, with VIP hospitality options available for a truly memorable experience.

For partnership enquiries, email partnerships@millenniumforum.co.uk or visit www.millenniumforum.co.uk.

SHOW SPONSOR THE RICHMOND CENTRE

MILLENNIUM FORUM PRODUCTIONS presents

Nominated for Best Panto 2021 UK Panto Awards

Aladdin

Make your wishes come true this Christmas!

Corporate Offer

For bookings of 100 seats and over

Pay only **£14.50** per pantomime ticket
 Receive a saving of up to **£11** per ticket
4 free pantomime tickets for the organiser!

T&C apply

Fri 29th Nov – Tues 31st Dec 2024

Box Office **71 264455** (option 1)
millenniumforum.co.uk

We are a registered charity - charity no. XR16635

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 Theatre & Conference Centre

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INTERNATIONAL SYNERGIES NI HELPS INNOVATE, CUT WASTE, AND LEAD IN SUSTAINABILITY



Businesses are seeking ways to innovate, reduce waste and improve efficiency while safeguarding their bottom line. At International Synergies NI, we help companies meet these challenges by matching resources across industries, cutting waste and supporting organisations in achieving their Scope 3 emissions targets.

As businesses increasingly place sustainability at the core of long-term growth, there are a few key strategies that can help businesses thrive in today's B2B landscape.

One of the most effective ways to foster innovation is through collaboration. Innovation does not happen in isolation. By partnering with other local businesses, companies can unlock new opportunities, share knowledge and drive efficiencies. At International Synergies NI, our free resource matching service connects businesses across Northern Ireland, helping them share resources, reduce waste and create cutting edge solutions. A strong foundation for growth can be developed by prioritising innovation in operations and through strong local networks. Partnering with organisations

like Invest NI, Catalyst and Innovate UK can also provide valuable funding, knowledge, and resources.

In addition to local collaborations, global partnerships play a crucial role in driving sustainable growth. Around the world, companies are pioneering sustainability practices, particularly in circular economy models and, Environmental, Social, Governance (ESG) strategies. By learning from these global leaders, businesses can adapt successful models to their own operations. Whether it's reducing waste, optimising resource use, or lowering emissions, international insights can help local companies stay competitive and in tune with regulations.

In today's rapidly changing business environment, resilience and adaptability are key. Companies that succeed in the long run are those that can pivot quickly and stay ahead of shifting trends and regulations. Being agile means regularly evaluating your operations and embracing new technologies and practices. For example, as legislation on Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions tightens, businesses that proactively address these regulations now will not only avoid penalties but also build a reputation as sustainability leaders.

Sustainability trends like ESG and the circular economy are reshaping entire industries. The circular economy

focuses on reusing, refurbishing and recycling resources to keep them in productive use for as long as possible. This offers businesses a unique opportunity to reduce waste while boosting profits. Companies adopting circular economy practices can cut costs, minimise environmental impact and even create new revenue streams by turning waste into valuable products. This approach is both environmentally and financially responsible. As global regulations on waste and emissions tighten, businesses that embrace these sustainable models will be better prepared to meet new rules and attract eco-conscious consumers.

Adopting circular economy practices also helps businesses track and reduce Scope 3 emissions, which cover emissions across their supply chains. By addressing these challenges early, companies can reduce costs, improve operational efficiency, and position themselves as sustainability leaders.

The key to success in today's B2B landscape is a blend of innovation, collaboration and sustainability. By teaming up with local and international partners, embracing circular economy models and staying agile, businesses can unlock new growth opportunities.

At International Synergies NI, we're here to help Northern Ireland businesses adopt these strategies, reduce waste, and stay ahead in the transition to a more sustainable economy. By acting now, companies can position themselves for long-term success—both financially and environmentally—creating a brighter, sustainable future.

TURLEY LEGAL: BUSINESS ADVICE - A CORPORATE SOLICITOR'S PERSPECTIVE

Starting and running a business in Derry can be a rewarding journey, but it comes with its challenges. As a corporate solicitor, I've worked with many local businesses, and I've seen how getting the right legal advice at the right time can make all the difference. Here are a few key areas where professional guidance is essential.



First and foremost, it's vital to structure your business correctly from the outset. Whether you decide to operate as a sole trader, a partnership, or a limited company, each option comes with its own legal and tax implications. For instance, a limited company can protect your personal assets from business debts, but it also brings

more regulatory obligations. Getting this decision right will save you headaches later, especially as your business grows. Another area that can't be overlooked is contracts. Many small businesses rely on informal agreements or 'handshake' deals, but this can lead to disputes. Properly drafted contracts, whether they are with employees,

suppliers, or clients, are essential for ensuring everyone understands their obligations. A well-written contract can help prevent disputes and provide legal protection if things go wrong.

Cash flow management is another crucial issue. Many businesses fail not because they aren't profitable, but because they

run out of cash. Make sure to have strong invoicing procedures, keep on top of credit control, and, if necessary, seek advice on managing debt or accessing financing options. Finally, compliance is something that no business can afford to ignore. From health and safety regulations to employment law and GDPR, staying on top of legal obligations in Northern Ireland is essential. Ignoring these can result in fines, legal disputes, or damage to your reputation.

If you ever feel unsure, remember that professional advice is always a smart investment. A little help early on can save you from bigger problems down the road.

SUPPORTING CROSS-BORDER EMPLOYMENT



initiative brings together government departments, trade unions, chambers of commerce, and employer bodies from both regions, including Department of Social Protection Ireland, Department for Communities NI, Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre, ICTU, Unite the Union, Letterkenny Chamber of Commerce, Dundalk Chamber, Confederation of British industry, and Irish Business and Employers Confederation.



on the free platforms www.jobapplyni.com and www.jobsireland.ie, enhancing visibility for vacancies.

To further facilitate connections, the partnership hosts in-person and virtual job fairs through www.crossborderjobfair.com and organises seminars on employer incentives and tax updates. For news, event details, and resources, employers and jobseekers are encouraged to visit www.cbpes.com

The Cross Border Partnership for Employment Services was created to support cross-border employment in the Ireland–Northern Ireland region, easing movement for jobseekers and access to labour for employers. This

For jobseekers, the partnership offers resources on employment opportunities, taxation, and social security across the border. Employers benefit from a broader talent pool, with guidance on cross-border recruitment issues. Job listings from both regions can be posted

This co-operative approach aims to simplify and strengthen cross-border employment opportunities.



React Social - founded by Debbie Deans and Orla Ward won the Social Value Partnership Award along with Hetheringtons Painting and Building Contractors at the coveted SENI Awards on 8 November. React Social connect contractors to communities to help deliver meaningful social impact - find out more on www.reactsocial.org

DOWN MEMORY LANE

MARTINA TIERNEY SEATING MATTERS

TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF?

I'm Martina Tierney, a globally recognised Occupational Therapist, author, and motivational speaker with over 30 years dedicated to transforming healthcare and reshaping the field of occupational therapy. I've recently released a brand-new publication called 'The Power of OT' sharing my love for the Occupational Therapy profession, and stories of how others from a range of diverse backgrounds have transformed patient lives worldwide.

WHERE IN THE NORTHWEST ARE YOU FROM?

I was born and raised in Draperstown, Northern Ireland. At 17, I met my late husband James Tierney, who was from Limavady, and we set up our life together on the Carnamuff Road, and welcomed four children: Jonathan, Ryan, Martin, and Louise.

EXPLAIN WHAT YOUR BUSINESS DOES?

At Seating Matters, our mission is to enhance patient quality of life through clinical excellence. The right therapeutic seating transforms patient care by reducing risks like pressure injuries, which greatly impact medical outcomes and well-being. We are deeply passionate about improving lives with innovative healthcare seating, and every team member is dedicated to this goal.

WHAT IS YOUR TITLE AND HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN POST

As the Founder and Clinical Director of Seating Matters, my 30+ years of experience working with patients led me to recognise the profound impact that unsafe seating can have on patient outcomes. This insight drove me to design chairs that not only meet the clinical and functional needs of patients but also ensure their comfort and safety, ultimately improving their quality of life.

WHAT WAS THE NORTHWEST LIKE OUTSIDE YOUR WINDOWS IN THAT ERA? HOW HAS IT CHANGED?

Business in the North West, particularly in Derry, has truly transformed since I first set up Seating Matters in 2008. Back then, we had fewer business networks, fewer opportunities to collaborate, and fewer resources for scaling up. There was a certain resilience

in the business community, but the infrastructure for growth—especially in a smaller market like ours—was limited.

Over the past 15 years, we've seen a significant expansion in the support available to local businesses. Organizations like Invest Northern Ireland and regional councils have stepped up their support, offering grants, training programs, and mentorships. These initiatives have helped countless businesses, including ours, to innovate and reach wider markets. Programs like the North West Regional College's Business Support Centre and initiatives led by Catalyst in Derry have created incredible support systems for entrepreneurs, providing the advice, resources, and connections that simply weren't available before.

HAS THE ETHOS OF YOUR BUSINESS CHANGED OVER THE YEARS?

The ethos of Seating Matters has remained true to its roots as a family-run business with the patient always at the heart of what we do. While our commitment to improving patient outcomes through innovative seating solutions has never changed, we have expanded significantly over the years and now operate on a global level, partnering with healthcare facilities worldwide to impact even more lives.

WHAT'S THE BEST PIECE OF ADVICE YOU HAVE BEEN GIVEN OVER THE YEARS?

One of the best pieces of advice I was given by Orla Ruggles, a pioneer in Occupational Therapy, "It's not enough to give a patient something to do with their hands. You must reach for the heart as well as the hands. It's the heart that really does the healing." I think this is applicable to all businesses in the way they treat their customers.

HAS THE WAY YOU DO BUSINESS IN THE NORTH WEST CHANGED MUCH OVER THE YEARS? WHAT CAN BUSINESSES LEARN FROM THE PAST TO BUILD A STRONG FUTURE.

Another major change has been in networking and connectivity. New business networks have formed, like the Derry Chamber of Commerce and collaborative groups like the Causeway Coast and Glens Business Network, which have fostered a stronger sense of unity among local entrepreneurs. These networks create invaluable opportunities to connect with other business owners, share insights, and collaborate. This sense of community and shared growth has strengthened the entire region, making it easier to work together toward common goals, whether they're related to economic growth, sustainability, or innovation. Opportunities to travel, both nationally and internationally, have also become much more accessible. Better transport links, digital advancements, and funding for trade missions have allowed us to expand our horizons and reach new markets around the world. Events like the Northern Ireland Trade Conference and various industry-specific expos mean local companies have the chance to showcase their products and services

on a global stage, leading to partnerships and sales that wouldn't have been possible years ago.



WORLD LEADERS IN ACCESSIBLE ELECTIONS

Pakflatt®

Pakflatt® is a world leading company of accessible election engineers and is based in Derry. With a mission to make elections accessible to all citizens, our team of inventors, designers and engineers listen to the diverse election requirements of democracies from across the globe.

McGONAGLE® READER

Selected for display
at the V&A museum

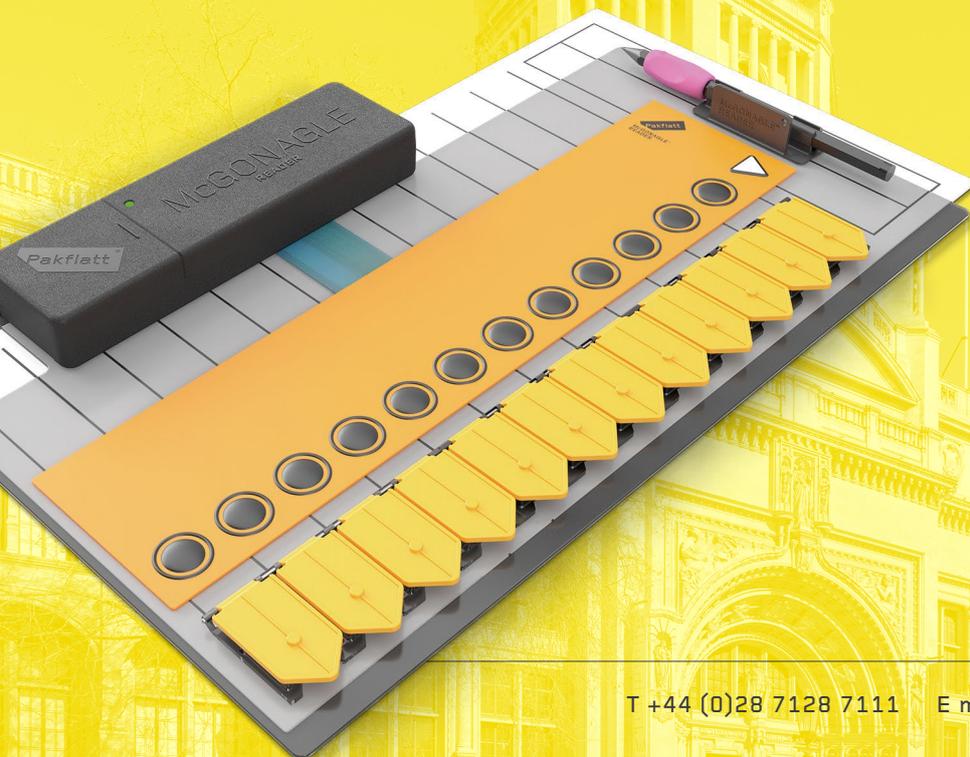
V&A

The famous Victoria and Albert Museum in London has selected Pakflatt's McGonagle®Reader for inclusion in its 2025 Design and Disability Exhibition, which will explore disability as an identity and a culture, and will be both a celebration and a call to action.

We are very proud that our innovative audio voting system, which is transforming how blind people vote independently, in secret and with confidence, has been recognised by such a prestigious organisation.

Furthermore, the V&A Museum has also selected the McGonagle®Reader as part of its Rapid Response Collecting activity - contemporary objects are acquired in response to major moments in recent history that touch the world of design and manufacturing. The V&A team feel that the McGonagle®Reader sits well in this collection following the recent general election and the ongoing struggle it represents for blind and partially sighted people.

The McGonagle®Reader also helps those with cognitive disabilities and those who cannot read English text to vote independently, in secret and with confidence. It also features a bluetooth facility to assist those with hearing aids.



PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

AD MCCLAY & CO SOLICITORS

1. Kirsty Holmes

Kirsty Holmes, recently returned from maternity leave, is an Associate Solicitor in the Property and Probate Team at AD McClay & Co Solicitors. With a First-Class Law degree from the University of Ulster and admission to the Northern Ireland Roll of Solicitors in 2017, Kirsty specializes in residential conveyancing, wills, and probate. She has strong connections with local estate agents and mortgage brokers, and extensive experience in property transactions, estate administration, and client advisory services.



AWAKEN HUB

2. Maria McKeever

Maria McKeever Named COO of AwakenHub & AwakenAngels Just one month in, Maria McKeever is already amplifying AwakenHub's mission to fuel women-led ventures across Ireland and Europe. With her strategic insight and vast experience, she's driving growth alongside our leadership team and expanding our transatlantic network. Join us in celebrating her impactful start!

MILLENNIUM FORUM

3. Chloe Mill

Chloe has been working professionally in technical theatre and arts administration for over 5 years. She was previously part of the producing team at The Playhouse Derry and was integral to the delivery of their acclaimed Peacebuilding Trilogy, and she is excited to have recently joined the team at the Millennium Forum as Technical Manager.

INTERNATIONAL SYNERGIES

4. Mark Elliott

Sustainable Business Practitioner Mark Elliott joins the business with a wealth of experience in agriculture, AgTech and start-ups. Mark is a graduate of Harper Adams University and Greenmount Agricultural College. Prior to joining the business, he spent three years at a start-up company, CropHound, developing soil and plant sensors enabling farmers and growers to achieve more sustainable and profitable farming practices.

5. Marie Nancarrow

Sustainable Business Practitioner Marie Nancarrow is the most recent recruit. Marie is a multi-award-winning sustainable designer and the founder of Titanic Denim, a brand focused on transforming denim and other textile waste into stylish, eco-conscious products. Her Rescued Denim Bag Collection showcases her innovative approach to repurposing materials with ISL NI playing a key role in sourcing the eco-friendly components.

6. Eilís Deeny

Administration & Digital Marketing Officer Eilís Deeny joins the team with a strong background in administration, customer relations, and a growing passion for supporting

businesses in their transition to a low-carbon, circular economy. She has first-hand experience in environmental issues, having spent time as an arborist in Leinster. Eilís has a dual role as she also manages activities for the team at the Birmingham Head Office.



MCCAMBRIDGE DUFFY

7. Michael Rutherford

McCambridge Duffy, a personal and business advisory firm operating across the UK and Ireland, is pleased to announce the promotion of Michael Rutherford to its Board. Michael, a highly experienced Chartered Accountant with a BSc (Hons) in Computer Science, brings over 20 years of expertise in business advisory, financial restructuring, and technology-driven process optimisation. Alongside his new role with McCambridge Duffy, Michael also serves as a Partner at Toast, a business advisory firm with a national footprint in the UK. His extensive knowledge and strategic insight will be invaluable in advancing innovation and growth for both firms and their clients.



MCCAY LEGAL

8. Kerri McGrory

Kerri is an Associate Solicitor in our Employment and Litigation Department and has assisted in a number of Employment Tribunal matters for both Claimants and Respondents including cases of Unfair Dismissal, Discrimination, Unlawful Deduction from Wages and Breach of Contract. Kerri also assists in dealing with workplace grievances. Kerri has also assisted in several litigation matters such as debt recovery matters and personal injury cases, including Road Traffic Accidents.

Contact McCay Legal for any queries on; Tel; 02871 371705

PLAYHOUSE

9. Aodhan Kehoe

I'm delighted to have joined the Playhouse as the new Digital Communications Officer. My name is Aodhan Kehoe, and I'm thrilled to bring my passion for digital media and performing arts to this vibrant community. I studied Hospitality Management at Northwest Regional College, which has provided a strong foundation for my professional journey. Previously, I worked as a freelance content creator for the Millennium Forum, crafting engaging content for pantomimes and other productions. Being part of The Playhouse team is a dream, I'm excited to collaborate with such creative talents. Outside of the office I enjoying performing and you can catch me this Christmas, at the Millennium Forum performing as Whishy Washy in 'Aladdin'. I look forward to connecting with our patrons, enhancing our digital presence, and contributing to the Playhouse's vibrant legacy. Here's to many exciting adventures ahead!

10. Megan Henderson

My name is Megan Henderson and I've been working in the live events industry for the past 2 years. I started my career by studying HNC/HND music production in NWRC. I worked as a freelancer for 18 months, for many different organisations and bands, and have recently taken on the role of Technical manager at The playhouse. I hope to use this opportunity to learn and better myself within my career, meet new people and bring ideas to life within the technical side of things.



TURLEY LEGAL

11. Kathryn O'Hagan

Kathryn is a Solicitor at Turley Legal with experience in corporate and commercial transactions, including company sales, acquisitions, and reorganisations. She drafts key corporate documents and advises on various commercial agreements across a wide range of sectors. Kathryn has also worked closely with start-up companies, guiding them through the early stages of their ventures and helping them establish a solid foundation.

12. Eileen McKendry-Gray

Eileen joined Turley Legal as a consultant in June 2024, after 10 years as group general counsel and several years at a UK Top 50 firm. Qualified in Northern Ireland and England and Wales, Eileen specialises in corporate, finance, M&A, intellectual property, and technology. She advises on IP strategy, software development, media, e-commerce, and related regulatory fields.

13. Michael Wilson

Michael, a Director at Turley Legal since February 2024, qualified in 2014 and has worked at leading commercial law firms in Belfast. He specialises in non-contentious commercial property, including acquisitions, disposals, landlord-tenant matters, residential development, and property finance. Michael has handled landmark transactions, such as acquiring shopping centres, retail parks, and high-value city centre properties.

14. Rachel Scroggie

Rachel, a solicitor in Turley Legal's estate planning department, assists with Wills, tax planning, asset protection, and long-term care planning. She also prepares Enduring Powers of Attorney and manages estate administration, including complex estates with international assets. Currently, Rachel is working towards becoming a Trust and Estate Practitioner, aiming for qualification by December 2025.



15. Amy McIlhagga

Amy is Legal Counsel at Turley Legal, having obtained a post-graduate barrister qualification at the Institute of Professional Legal Studies. Amy has specific skills across a wide range of civil litigation matters, across the highest court levels, ranging from shareholder disputes, breach of contract actions, trademark / copyright infringement and debt recovery proceedings.

16. Gemma Quigg

Gemma is a newly qualified solicitor at Turley Legal, she completed her training contract in September 2024. During her training contract she gained experience in corporate and commercial transactions, trademarks and commercial and residential property matters. She is now starting her career as a solicitor in the property department.



WELCOME TO THE CHAMBER

CONNECTED is highlighting some of the Chamber's newest members. Let us introduce you to the wider range of members that the Londonderry Chamber represents across the North West. Will your business be featured in the next edition?

#GrowingBusinessNW

CRICKET.JOBS



Interested in your business benefiting from all Chamber has to offer? For further information on membership contact natalie@londonderrychamber.co.uk



ARA Workplace & Employer Protect

Employer Protect provides a business with HR and employment law support and assistance for one fixed monthly fee. Employer Protect has 3 components:

- 1: Online HR Software to manage and maintain staff personnel files;**
- 2: Legal Advice & Assistance provided by our team of Employment Lawyers;**
- 3: Representation in any Employment Tribunal matter.**

As well as covering a business' legal fees, Employer Protect will also cover the cost of any awards/settlements against the business providing business owners with total peace of mind. Employer Protect is a cost-effective way of managing risk and ensuring your business is compliant and remains complaint across a number of jurisdictions.

Workplace assessments, individualised policies, and reports including comprehensive occupational audits that are essential for optimising operations and safeguarding the welfare of both employees and your organisation as a whole.

If you would like to know more about our ARA products & services or to generate a quote for your business, you can email us at: info@araworkplace.law or tel: **02871 878363**.

CRICKET.JOBS

Cricket Jobs

Founded in 2023, Cricket Jobs connects cricket professionals with ideal roles through a comprehensive job board and tailored recruitment services. From coaching to admin positions, we help teams find skilled candidates who share a passion for the sport. Trusted for quality and personalised service, we shape careers in cricket.



AwakenHub and AwakenAngels

AwakenHub and AwakenAngels are pioneering forces in supporting and empowering women entrepreneurs across the island of Ireland. Founded in 2020, AwakenHub provides a dynamic, inclusive community with over 3,000 subscribers, facilitating networking, mentorship, training, and resources tailored to women founders. Through key European partnerships, annual US Trade Mission and a private platform, AwakenClub, AwakenHub fosters growth and international collaboration for ambitious women entrepreneurs. Launched in 2023, AwakenAngels is Ireland's **first and only women-led** angel investment syndicate, democratising investment for Irish-connected women globally. With 100+ investors and allies, 68 new women angels, and investments in high-potential women-led businesses, AwakenAngels is transforming Ireland's investment landscape.

Together, AwakenHub and AwakenAngels are reshaping gender equity and economic growth, paving the way for future generations of women entrepreneurs. The Awaken Group champions collaborative, all-island support for women founders from startup through to scale.



Bauer Media Audio Northern Ireland is the Home of Cool FM, Downtown Radio, Downtown Country, and Greatest Hits Radio NI.

We are Northern Ireland's biggest commercial radio network - 831,000 people listen to our stations every week, which is around half the NI population. When it comes to social media, we are also Northern Ireland's most followed commercial audio brand.

So, to see what we can do for your business or organisation today contact Helen McDonnell at helen.mcdonnell@bauermedia.co.uk or **07734 872227**.



Barclays

Leon Stevenson is your Barclays Local Specialist based in the North Coast. His role as an ambassador for Barclays is to grow the brand by looking beyond traditional banking and actively contribute to the local community. As a local specialist, Leon can support in a number of ways.

He will work with local schools/ clubs to teach valuable employability and financial skills, help to protect customers against fraud and scams, and help support cost of living, by running educational events, along with any business or personal banking support.

To find out more about how Leon or Barclays can support, get in touch on LinkedIn.



Bidvest Noonan

Bidvest Noonan is a leading services group employing over 27,000 people across the UK and Ireland. We specialise in delivering high-quality cleaning, security, and other outsourced services to sectors such as Life Sciences, Healthcare, Education, Retail, and Government. As a market leader, we leverage advanced technologies and expertise to provide exceptional value and peace of mind. Committed to sustainability, we help clients achieve green goals while focusing on innovation to drive performance improvements. Our customer-focused approach ensures tailored solutions, whether individual services or bundled packages, to meet unique business needs. We prioritise quality, excellence, and building long-lasting client relationships.



HS Renewables

HS Renewables, based in Derry City, is a leading Northern Ireland specialist in renewable energy. They offer custom-designed solar PV systems for homes and businesses, maximising energy output and savings. With a skilled team and advanced technology, they provide eco-friendly, efficient, and high-quality solar energy solutions.



InnoGro

At InnoGro, we empower both emerging startups and established vendors in cybersecurity and SaaS to scale through our outsourced go-to-market, business development, and full-cycle sales services. From lead generation to deal closure, we act as an extension of your team, driving revenue growth and expanding market reach. InnoGro is here to accelerate your success and support scalable growth.



Marquee Electronics

Marquee Electronics is an award-winning electronics design and consultancy company based in Northern Ireland, specialising in new product development of consumer devices. We deliver hardware, software and mechanical solutions to clients across various sectors such as IoT, medical, automotive and industrial. Our client base ranges from start-up companies with a concept idea, right up to large established businesses requiring a redesign of an existing product.

If you have an idea for a new product or need some of our expert knowledge for an existing electronics design then feel free to reach out.



Metadeck

At Metadeck, we are driven by innovation and the desire to create digital solutions that push the boundaries of what's possible. Our team of expert developers, designers, and project managers collaborate closely with clients to bring their visions to life.

We believe in crafting digital experiences that not only meet current needs but also anticipate future challenges, keeping our clients ahead of the competition.



ESB

Since our establishment in 1927, we have been Ireland's foremost energy company. We are constantly driven to make a difference and want to use our unique experience and position to address societies' biggest challenges, including climate change. We are working to deliver a new energy future based on reliable, affordable, zero carbon electricity. We are building on the work we have done for over a century to transform lives and enable social and economic progress and change. We will continue to harness our capability and resources to bring light and energy to communities in Ireland and around the world. We are Driven to Make a Difference and to achieve net zero emissions for ESB by 2040.



Oakfire Adventures

Since 2006, Oakfire Adventures has been dedicated to creating the ultimate activity destination after exploring the globe to find the perfect experiences that complement our unique and diverse terrain in Faughan Valley.

Whether you're looking to soar through the treetops on a Zip Trek Experience, test your limits on our Tree Trek Aerial Adventures, take on a full aerial challenge, or engage in an exhilarating game of paintball, Oakfire Adventures offers something unforgettable for every thrill-seeker on our doorstep.



Offing Coffee

Offing Coffee started as a 1980s caravan coffee cart during the pandemic, founded by Stephanie. It became a beloved spot at Milltown Farm. In 2023, we moved to a riverside location along the River Foyle, blending quality coffee with a serene atmosphere. Join us for a unique coffee experience.



The Muff Liquor Company

Laura Bonner is the CEO and Founder of The Muff Liquor Company, a premium craft spirit brand rooted in Donegal. With a law degree and a successful career in global real estate, Laura returned home in 2017 to pursue a lifelong dream of establishing a distillery. Committed to family tradition and community development, Laura aims to attract tourism and create jobs in Muff village, the start of the "Wild Atlantic Way." Recognised with multiple awards, including International Entrepreneur of the Year, Laura is dedicated to fostering local pride and sustainable growth through craft spirits.

wafer

Wafer

Wafer Ltd was established in 1989. They manufacture ice cream cones and specialise in ice cream accessories for ice cream retailers and manufacturers. They are the largest distributors of waffle cones in the UK and Ireland. These waffle cones are strong and flavoursome, dipped in a quality chocolate coating with fun and exciting inclusions such as salted popcorn, Oreo crumbs, Blue Sherbet, and honeycomb pieces.



ProAptivity

ProAptivity is a CRM solutions company.

CRM helps organisations maximise their operational efficiency. Organisations use CRM solutions to improve their stakeholder engagement, drive sales, improve client experience and provide organisational insight.

Our team of accredited CRM specialists focus on providing advice to help specify, select, install, configure and support the right solution for your organisation. We have extensive experience working with organisation of all sizes throughout the UK and Ireland.

For more detail visit our website or get in touch with Niall McCaffrey on **0330 223 6362** or at **niall@proaptivity.com**



Turtle Tots

Turtle Tots Northern Ireland (West) is run by Cathy Smallwoods. Along with her team of fully qualified and highly skilled teachers, they offer award-winning swimming lessons for babies, toddlers, three- and four-year-olds from their lovely warm pool facilities in Campsie, Magherafelt, and Derry.

The Turtle Tots team have an in-depth understanding of early years communication and are attuned to your child's needs to ensure that every skill is taught at a pace that is right for them. Their supportive and child-led swimming lessons offer a wonderful bonding experience, packed with songs and games to ensure that you and your little one enjoy your time in the pool together and develop a life-long love of the water.

Check out the pool timetables and more information here:

<https://www.turtletots.com/uk/location/northern-ireland-the-west/>



Rentisphere

Rentisphere Ltd is revolutionising the way property managers handle their rental operations with its comprehensive online management portal.

Designed to streamline and simplify every aspect of property management, Rentisphere offers an all-in-one solution that allows users to oversee their rental properties from a single, convenient platform.

With features like an efficient Issue Tracker, an integrated Message Centre, and a robust Document Centre, managing tenants and property documentation has never been easier.



Woodfield Clinic

Dr Mary Slevin founded Woodfield Clinic Ltd in 2021 and specialises in health screening and comprehensive phlebotomy services. Mary has over 15 years of experience in academia and healthcare and specialises in nutritional research and phlebotomy. Woodfield Clinic offers a range of services including WellMan and WellWoman blood tests, hormone testing, fertility blood tests, as well as umbilical cord blood collection for stem cell storage.

Known for her friendly, professional and confidential approach, Mary helps clients take control of their health with expert advice and personalised care.

FIND INSURANCE NI: DECADES OF EXPERTISE TO SUIT YOUR BUSINESS AND PERSONAL INSURANCE NEEDS

With over five decades of experience, Find Insurance NI has built a reputation as a trusted brokerage dedicated to supporting Derry~Londonderry-based businesses.

Serving businesses across the region since 1972, this well-respected Derry~Londonderry brokerage offers an exceptional level of customer care and a wealth of experience to help local companies navigate a rapidly changing insurance landscape.

From small start-ups to established enterprises, Find Insurance NI offers a range of commercial insurance options—including Fleet, Liabilities, Property and more—tailored to each business's specific needs.

As part of the Prestige Insurance Holdings group, Find Insurance NI's team of 27 Derry~Londonderry-based professionals is

committed to providing hands-on support to local businesses.

The specialist commercial insurance team understands the specific challenges companies in the area face and works to deliver comprehensive coverage that protects their unique interests, backed by exceptional customer service.

Whether helping to safeguard against operational interruptions, providing comprehensive property coverage, protecting against cyber security breaches, or ensuring liability protection, Find Insurance NI tailors each insurance policy to meet the specific demands of today's dynamic business environment.

Recognising that every business is unique, they take the time to understand the individual needs of their clients, ensuring they can operate with the confidence and peace of mind necessary to focus on

growth and innovation.

Find Insurance NI also offers a comprehensive personal insurance offering, providing tailored solutions to protect what matters most to you. From home and contents insurance to car and Gap Insurance coverage, their policies are crafted to give you and your family peace of mind, knowing you're prepared for life's unexpected events.

Whether you are a new or existing customer, Find Insurance NI is dedicated to securing the best possible deal tailored specifically to your needs, ensuring you receive the right coverage at a competitive price.

For further information or advice please contact Find Insurance NI on **0800 012 6367**, email **info@findinsuranceni.co.uk** or visit **www.findinsuranceni.co.uk**.



Your Trusted Insurance Broker



Car



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Business

0800 012 6367
findinsuranceni.co.uk

42-44 Spencer Road, Derry-Londonderry

Find Insurance NI Ltd t/a Find Insurance is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

AIRCOACH: CONNECTING IRELAND WITH RELIABLE, SUSTAINABLE, AND COMFORTABLE TRAVEL SOLUTIONS

Aircoach provides reliable and comfortable journeys through their network of routes around Ireland, connecting major cities such as Cork, Belfast and Derry/Londonderry to Dublin Airport & City Centre. From their modern fleet to their commitment to passenger satisfaction, Aircoach offers reliability, affordability, and exceptional service every step of the way.

Aircoach is part of First Group plc which is one of the UK and Ireland's largest transportation companies with more than 13,000 employees. During the last year, 1.1 million people every day relied on First Group to get to work, school or college, to visit family and friends and much more. Within this framework, Aircoach independently employs over

300 staff, manages a fleet of 61 vehicles and serves over 2 million passengers yearly. It also provides car park and shuttle bus services including operating all car park shuttle bus services on contract to Dublin Airport Authority.

Aircoach is committed to environmental sustainability, and it is central to their future corporate strategy. They achieved ISO 14001 accreditation in 2022 and in 2023 became a founding member of Mobility Partnership Ireland (MPI). This alliance brings together key players in shared and sustainable mobility operations across Ireland. MPI's primary objectives include prioritising the needs of transport users,



fostering innovation, and enhancing climate action through collaborative policy development and implementation with relevant stakeholders.

All of Aircoach's high spec coaches are equipped with WIFI, charging sockets, air conditioning, adjustable seats, wheelchair accessibility and toilets on board the majority of our intercity services and all of their services connect to/from Dublin Airport where they stop right outside the terminal doors. They also service Belfast International Airport to/from Derry/L'Derry and Dublin, making them the only coach operator to connect Ireland's two largest airports.

Aircoach

705X

DERRY/L'DERRY TO BELFAST INTL. AIRPORT

and Dublin Airport & Dublin City

**24 Daily services to/from
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THE FINAL WORD

THE FINAL WORD WITH WILLIAM MCCOLGAN

The world we are operating in is changing at an ever accelerating pace, and this is no more starkly felt than in our technology. Consumer technology has an ever more central role in our daily lives, with more sophisticated features every year. Within the workplace, we will all have been prodded and sold on the massive potential of AI.

At McColgans we make a very traditional product, using methods which have been around for centuries, and yet we have tried to embrace advanced technologies over the last number of years. Being a relatively small company, and having a modest technology budget, we have had to seek out inexpensive and innovative ways to adopt technologies more targeted at big organisations with large technology teams and large budgets. As it happens there are great programs available to help smaller companies with this right on our doorstep here in Northern Ireland!

Despite our small size, we've successfully implemented a robust Internet of Things (IoT) system, monitoring the status and efficiency of our equipment, some of which we first commissioned over 40 years ago. This proved to us that cutting-edge technologies don't necessarily require new equipment.

We have a blockchain solution to share our lab results with our customers. This allows us to maintain an open book on our best in industry food safety standards, and to enhance our reputation with



customers. This was developed by local company Ubloquity, through the Digital Catapult organisation located in Belfast.

Through Digital Catapult we also collaborated with local firm CleverFoodie, who have implemented powerful IoT solutions for us. Their data has given deep insight into our continuous improvement program.

Through a collaboration with Cafre and AMIC we developed a digital model of our end to end production process. This model enables us to experiment with shift patterns and product mixes to optimize our daily production schedule.

Local AWS representatives have been very supportive of our efforts to build a data warehouse to tie all of these sources together, and have invested in getting us cloud enabled.

And with the Hartree Center at UU, we were able to build a predictive model which helps forecast what next period sales might be, having trained it on several years of historical data.

A barrier to approaching these kinds of technologies is the prospect of having to hire expensive technology talent. Our biggest win has been to find enough support through HLAs, Skill Up programs, and from Invest NI grants to grow our own!

We have several existing employees now on programs through UU, Queens, NWRC, NRC, SRC, and Cafre where they get cutting edge instruction and are coming back to us with skills and enthusiasm.

In my opinion, the key is not to be intimidated by these tools, and to have faith in our people, particularly those Gen Z folks who grew up as digital natives. Perhaps you have them in your organisation already, ready for the opportunity to shine? This is certainly what we have found.



CONNECTING BUSINESS NORTHWEST

ADVERTISING OPPORTUNITIES:

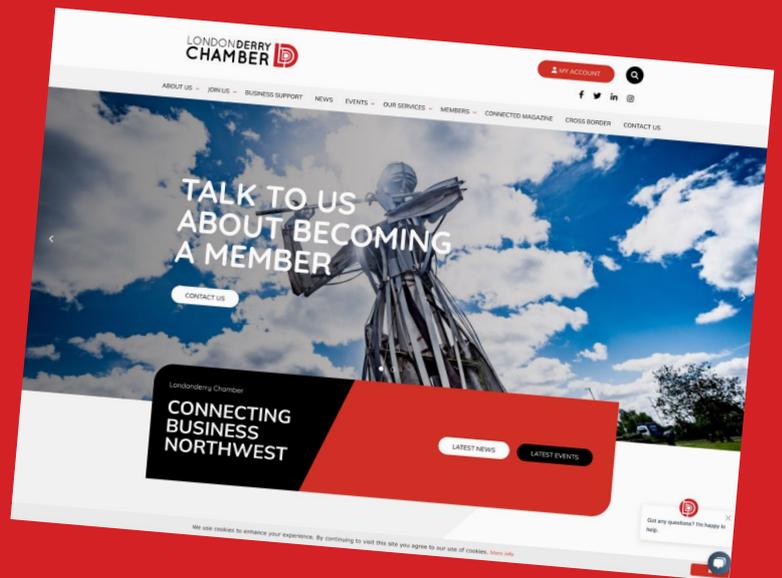
Website

3 months campaign **£300 + vat**

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Our new large (450 x 450 pixels) web adverts will appear throughout our website. Your advert will be displayed on the following pages: Homepage, About Us Overview, Events Overview, Join Overview, Opportunities Overview, Leadership Overview.



WHAT ELSE CAN WE OFFER YOU:

We offer members an opportunity to promote or run features in our Chamber publications, Website, CONNECTED magazine, Bespoke E-zines and our Annual Wall Planner. We offer very competitive advertising rates to feature in any of our publications.



SUPPORTING CROSS BORDER JOBSEEKERS EMPLOYERS & WORKERS

