

**Politics**

Networking and lobbying ensures the voice of enterprise is heard where it matters.

Page 03



**Regional Starts**

The Regional Start Initiative in focus. A force for good for local enterprise.

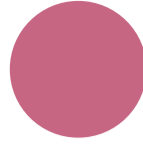
Page 06



**Finance**

Enterprise NI continues its support for business start ups through flexible loan schemes.

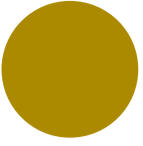
Page 11



**Property**

The provision of spaces to work and grow are central to our work.

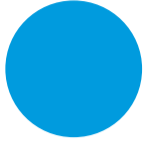
Page 15



**Platform**

Our Chief Executive reflects on a challenging and rewarding year for Enterprise NI.

Page 04



**Exploring Enterprise**

Helping would-be entrepreneurs make their business ideas become reality.

Page 08



**Business ReBoot**

Business Bootcamp fulfils a critical role in fast-tracking business knowhow.

Page 10



**Social Enterprises**

At the hub of local Social Enterprises, Enterprise NI and LEAs have a crucial role.

Page 16



# Enterprising NI







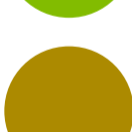

Enterprise Northern Ireland | Annual Review 2014

The Voice of Enterprise



**The Definitive Retrospective:**  
A year of innovation, enterprise and entrepreneurship.

# Contents

	<b>Politics</b>	03
	<b>Platform</b>	04
	<b>Regional Starts</b>	06
	<b>Exploring Enterprise</b>	08
	<b>Business ReBoot</b>	10
	<b>Finance</b>	11
	<b>Awards &amp; Networking</b>	12
	<b>Property</b>	15
	<b>Social Enterprises</b>	16
	<b>Technology</b>	18
	<b>Investing in Youth</b>	19

## Enterprise NI Board Members 2014/15

*Chair, John D'Arcy, The Open University*  
*Vice-Chair, Angela McGowan, Danske Bank*  
*Independent, Aidan Langan, Enterprise Equity*  
*North East, Melanie Christie-Boyle, Ballymena Business Centre*  
*North East, Francis Ashe, Acorn The Business Centre*  
*Western, John Treacy, Fermanagh Enterprise Ltd*  
*Western, Ciaran Higgins, (Resigned March 2014) Cookstown Enterprise Centre*  
*Southern, Conor Patterson, Newry & Mourne Enterprise Agency*  
*Southern, Janice Symington, Down Business Centre Ltd*  
*Eastern (O), Lynne Vance, North Down Development Organisation Ltd*  
*Eastern (O), Nichola Lockhart, Ards Business Centre Ltd*  
*Eastern (I), Seamus O'Prey, Ortus - West Belfast Enterprise Board*  
*Eastern (I), Jonathan McAlpin, East Belfast Enterprise*  
*North West, Charles Kennedy, Enterprise North West*  
*North West, Brian Murray, Workspace Ltd*

# Notes

John D'Arcy  
 Chair, Enterprise Northern Ireland

Change, challenge, risk and opportunity are at the core of any aspect of enterprise.

So it's no surprise that Enterprise Northern Ireland is working strategically, tactically and effectively on behalf of the enterprise sector across Northern Ireland to support economic and social development, growth and sustainability. The wider economic context for Northern Ireland, at this time of austerity, coupled with changes to local government, make the role, flexibility and excellent track record of the enterprise support sector even more important than ever.

People are at the heart of what we do and how we do it. I would like to thank our Board members - those elected from our membership and our independent members - who bring experience, expertise and challenge to our strategy, planning and delivery of Enterprise Northern Ireland's activities. I would also like to pay tribute to the staff of Enterprise Northern Ireland for their energy, dedication and excellence in helping our sector deliver for Northern Ireland - its entrepreneurs, communities and people.

### Our Funding Partners



John D'Arcy

# Politics

Headline Insights from our **Chair**



**L**obbying and developing relationships with political representatives, at Council, Assembly, Westminster and European level is fundamental to our commitment to represent the interests of our members and the thousands of small businesses who go through our enterprise programmes.

Two meetings of the All Party Group for SMEs took place in 2014. We invited a cross-section of the business community to meet and network with MLAs, ensuring that the issues they face are firmly on the political agenda.

The APG is chaired by Judith Cochrane MLA, with Enterprise NI providing secretarial support. The first event, in March, gave attendees the opportunity to direct their concerns around difficulties associated with starting and maintaining small businesses in Northern Ireland to guest speaker, Finance Minister Simon Hamilton.

Attendees also advocated the need for a strategic policy to encourage growth and an environment that supports and encourages entrepreneurs to start new and grow existing businesses.

Mr Hamilton said, "I am determined, playing my part as Finance Minister, to achieve the Executive's aim of growing a vibrant and dynamic economy".

Minister for Employment and Learning, Dr Stephen Farry was guest



Ministers Dr Stephen Farry, Arlene Foster and Simon Hamilton joined Judith Cochrane MLA and Gordon Gough at the launch of the 2014 programme of events for the All Party Group on SMEs. The event also highlighted the '1 more in 4' campaign to encourage SMEs to employ one more person over the next four years.

## Achieving the Executive's aim of growing a vibrant and dynamic economy.

Finance Minister, Simon Hamilton.

speaker at our second event. He highlighted the work of his department in growing and supporting the SME sector, including the issue of addressing the skills gap, apprenticeship schemes and greater flexibility on employment law. The meeting was held at Law Society House in Belfast.

Further meetings of the All Party Group will take place in 2015, to ensure that SMEs first hand experiences enable political representatives in delivering positive outcomes for our economy.

## Engagement

Dr. Caroline O'Kane, Information & Policy Officer, was invited to brief Shadow Secretary of State, Ivan Lewis MP on issues facing the enterprise support sector and youth entrepreneurship.

Gordon Gough was invited to meet with former Secretary of State, Owen Paterson MP, to discuss the current economic context in Northern Ireland for SMEs.

Gordon Gough and John D'Arcy met a number of newly appointed Chief Executives of the new Super Councils, to advise them of the LEA network's successes in delivering business start-up programmes and initiatives

The Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee invited Enterprise NI to identify the potential for the development of a retail incubation strategy. Following submission of a paper, Enterprise NI were invited to lead on taking this work forward, in partnership with other key business support organisations.

# European Entrepreneurial Region 2015

Northern Ireland was selected as European Entrepreneurial Region (EER) 2015 at an awards ceremony in Brussels. The award is given to Europe's most outstanding regional strategies that foster entrepreneurship and promote innovation among small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

The award follows a joint application by the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) and Invest Northern Ireland and was supported by Enterprise Northern Ireland. Welcoming the news, Enterprise Minister, Arlene Foster said: "This award is well deserved and recognises the hard work of all those involved in

making Northern Ireland one of the leading entrepreneurial regions in Europe."

She added: "While inward investment is essential for any country or region striving to make its mark in a competitive world, of equal importance is indigenous industry both in terms of the growth of existing firms and the need to encourage a greater number of people to start new, innovative and globally focused businesses."

The Minister praised the work of the local business community in supporting SMEs: "This fantastic achievement is another step towards creating a more vibrant culture of entrepreneurial spirit in Northern Ireland."



Enterprise NI Chief Executive, Gordon Gough with Andrea Rodriguez Perez, Member of the President's Cabinet, Committee of the Regions

Gordon Gough

# Platform

Headline Insights from our **Chief Executive**

**E**nterprise Northern Ireland (ENI) undertakes three core strands of work on behalf of its members, namely supporting, networking and delivery. As I reflect on the past year, I thought it might be timely to update members on where we are in relation to these three strands.

## SUPPORTING

Enterprise NI produces regular Policy Papers and Consultation responses on behalf of its members. These are available from the Members Section of our website. Our Information and Policy Officer, Dr Caroline O'Kane, has consulted widely with members on themes for policy papers to promote the self-employment and entrepreneurial agenda. With support from Ulster Bank, a significant policy paper is planned for 2015, focusing on key issues impacting on the small business and enterprise support sectors.

The All Party Group on SMEs (established by Enterprise NI in 2013) provides a voice at Stormont for the LEA network and small business sector. Two meetings of the APG were held in 2014, addressed by Simon Hamilton MLA, Minister for Finance and Personnel and Stephen Farry MLA, Minister for Employment and Learning. Future meetings are planned for 2015. I encourage members to attend these meetings and input into the policy agenda for SMEs in Northern Ireland.

Joint Purchasing is an area where Enterprise NI is able to make significant savings for its members. The current COBRA Business Advisers Toolkit is an example of this and Enterprise NI is exploring other areas to help members save money through joint purchasing, eg. recycling, insurance, telephony and Board Governance training. We do, however, appreciate the preference of some members to support "local" suppliers.

Local Government Reform is the single biggest strategic issue facing the LEA network since the amalgamation of LEDU, IRTU and IDB into Invest NI. Enterprise NI is responding to this through its strategic relationships with the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) and the LED Forum. We are preparing policy and positioning papers promoting

## Supporting

## Networking

## Delivery

## Core Strands

the work of the local enterprise network for the new councils. These will provide thought leadership in enterprise and entrepreneurship initiatives. Enterprise NI is delighted to have joined forces with NILGA to secure European Entrepreneurial Region status for Northern Ireland for 2015.

The 2014 Members Survey will be available to members before the end of the year, providing LEAs with up to date benchmarking information to assist with business planning activities.

We launched the new Enterprise NI GRANT finder service earlier this year to provide a bespoke service tailored to the requirements of every LEA.

## NETWORKING

As part of our advocacy service to members, we lobby government departments, and gather and disseminate information on issues affecting the LEA network. One example of this is our popular Business Brunch Brief series, which continued throughout the year. Our session "Spotlight on Vacant Rates" was particularly well attended by members.

We organised an information session for LEAs on the new Charities Registration, and invited the Charities Commission along to discuss the application process and the Public Benefit Requirement. Enterprise NI will continue to facilitate information sharing between members and act in an advocacy role and information disseminator during this process.

Meet the MEPs is an information event planned for 2015 on funding opportunities, timescales and application processes. It

The Enterprise NI website **www.enterpriseni.com** is an important portal supporting LEAs. The website receives over 100 enquiries each week which are then referred to Enterprise NI members.

The Enterprise NI MIS contains details of over 70,000 SMEs. This is valuable information in terms of spotting trends and assisting Enterprise NI members with marketing campaigns. The Enterprise NI Twitter account **@EnterpriseNI**, has over 4500 followers and is a proven marketing

followed feedback from the LEA Chairs' lunch hosted this summer by John D'Arcy in Belfast, that the EU should provide funding options directly for LEAs.

## DELIVERY

Since our formation in 2001 the value of contracts delivered by members on behalf of Enterprise NI is over £35m. This does not include the value of capital expenditure purchased by Enterprise NI on behalf of its members, for example, E-Commerce, E-Commerce II and Points of Presence signage.

As a membership organisation, Enterprise NI will continue to deliver a range of services to its members. The initiatives detailed here compare favourably with the range of services offered by other business support membership organisations. What sets us apart from other membership organisations is the number of business support contracts that we hold which are delivered by our members. These business support contracts complement the massive public investment in the LEA network over the past 20 years.

In conclusion, I would like to thank our stakeholders, in particular, DETI, DEL, Invest NI, SEUPB, Ulster Community Investment, Start Up Loans UK, local councils and the thousands of small businesses who have used our services over the past year. I would also like to thank the Chairman, John D'Arcy, and the Board of Enterprise NI for their commitment, support and strategic leadership and of course the Enterprise NI staff team at Limavady who work so hard to ensure that Enterprise NI fulfils its duties to members, stakeholders and small businesses across Northern Ireland.

tool for Enterprise NI and its members. **In Focus**, the Enterprise NI Quarterly e-zine, is a great way for LEAs to benchmark business support activity and to see what is going on throughout the network.

Our new **Business Buzz** e-zine for quality assured business advisers has just been launched and a new e-zine is planned for 2015 which will focus specially on enterprise and entrepreneurship policy areas and small business tips and advice.

## Starting Up

Since Regional Start Initiative began in 2012 we have dealt with over 15,000 enquiries from people looking to set up in business with more than 10,000 initial meetings with business advisers throughout the LEA network. 6,500 start-up business plans were produced surpassing our targets with Invest NI.

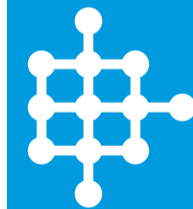
The current contract officially runs to March 2015 but may continue to October 2015 when the new councils assume responsibility for business start-up functions.

The Social Entrepreneurship programme has set up 89 new social enterprises and created over 220 new jobs since it started in 2012.

The Exploring Enterprise programme has helped 1700 people to attain the QCF Level 2 qualification in Understanding Business Enterprise with 79 going on into full time employment, 62 into part time employment and 286 into self-employment.

Since our appointment in 2013 as the Northern Ireland delivery partner for Start Up Loans UK, we have disbursed 143 loans across the region at a capital value of almost £700,000. In addition, the Northern Ireland Small Business Loan Fund has disbursed 104 loans at a value of £2.2m. These products position the LEA network as key sources of finance for small businesses.

The Tradelinks cross border trade programme concluded earlier in the year having assisted over 200 micro enterprises with 60% of businesses attending cross border networking events. Approximately 20 businesses were referred on to InterTrade Ireland, Invest NI and Enterprise Ireland support programmes.



## Tradelinks Bows Out

This year saw the end of the Tradelinks programme, which was developed to enhance all-Ireland and international trade by assisting and growing the micro-enterprise sector across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Louth, Monaghan, Cavan, Leitrim, Sligo and Donegal.

The programme ended in August 2014, and by that date, had helped over 200 small businesses to become more sustainable and competitive by developing cross border trade opportunities and network linkages.

## Connections



**enterpriseni.com**  
**@EnterpriseNI**

# Belfast Start Up Hits the High Notes

**E**nterprise Factor is a new Belfast-based start-up that uses music to help schools develop entrepreneurial talent in their students. The new programme became one of the first local recipients of finance from the Start Up Loans scheme which is designed to stimulate entrepreneurship across the UK

Enterprise Factor was founded by local businessman Chris Hughes. It devised

**I hope to be able to export the programme to schools across the UK. It empowers the kids, gives them a taste for business at an early age and the end result generates real excitement around the schools - as well as helping them to raise revenue.**

Chris Hughes, founder of Enterprise Factor

a six-week training programme offering students a chance to develop, market and run the operations for a concert in their school featuring a former contestant from the X-Factor or Britain's Got Talent.

Enterprise Factor ran the programme in ten schools before a planned roll out to 50 schools across Northern Ireland. The loan supported investment in marketing and promotional materials.

Finance for the deal was provided by Enterprise Northern Ireland, which has been appointed to administer at least £3million of funding in Northern Ireland on behalf of the Start Up Loans Scheme.

John D'Arcy, Enterprise NI Chair said: "This is an important addition to the funding spectrum in Northern Ireland. There is a direct and strong link between levels of new business start-ups and economic prosperity and this finance is an important part of driving growth in the Northern Ireland economy."



John D'Arcy, Chair of Enterprise NI, Chris Hughes of Enterprise Factor and Jordan O'Keefe, Britain's Got Talent finalist.

## Start-Ups Support to match your ambition

We know that the right support for your business will help bring opportunity within reach. We offer support, information and products to help you get off to the right start.

Find out what support is available at [ulsterbank.co.uk/startup](http://ulsterbank.co.uk/startup)

Help for what matters **Ulster Bank**  
Business Banking

Ulster Bank Limited. Registered in Northern Ireland. Registration Number R733. Registered office: 11-16 Donegall Square East, Belfast BT1 5UB. Authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority, and entered on the Financial Services Register (Registration Number 122315). Calls may be recorded.

# Regional Starts

The Regional Start Initiative is Northern Ireland's national business start-up programme.

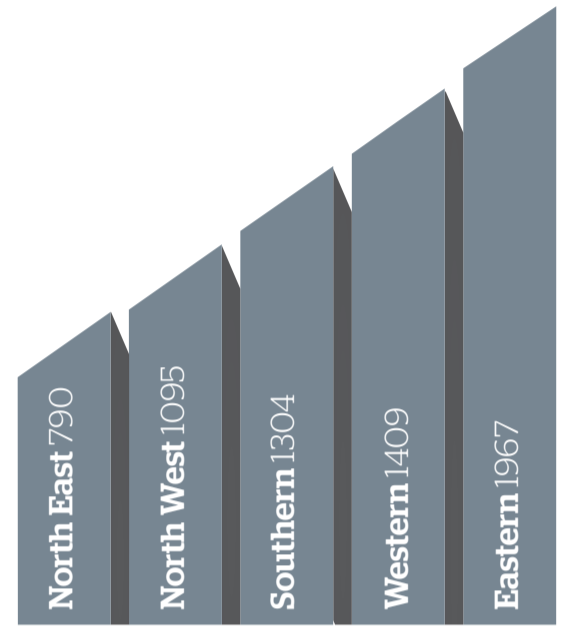
It has been delivered by Enterprise NI and the regional LEA network since it began in October 2012.

To date, Local Enterprise Agencies helped would-be business owners develop 6565 business plans, against a target of 6500 plans. This is a vital first step in setting up

a new business. Enterprise NI is working to ensure that the voice of the enterprise support sector is heard in debates, consultations and policy development processes when some economic development functions are transferred from Invest NI to the new 'Super Councils' as a result of the Reform of Public Administration.

**The regional breakdown is:**

- North West** 1095 business plans
- North East** 790 business plans
- Southern** 1304 business plans
- Eastern** 1967 business plans
- Western** 1409 business plans



Regional business plan breakdown

## Carrickfergus gives Business a Boost

**J**ohn O'Donnell of Carrickfergus Blooms was one of many beneficiaries of the Business Improvement Programme run by Carrickfergus Enterprise.

The programme, developed by Carrickfergus Enterprise, provides a range of support for established businesses including one-to-one mentoring, ICT support, informative seminars on topics such as LinkedIn and Essential Fire Safety culminating with an annual 'Celebration of Enterprise' event to showcase local business successes.

After completing a comprehensive business plan through the Regional Start Initiative, John opened the doors of his North Street florists in October 2012. He quickly built up a reputation for his floristry throughout the Carrickfergus and Greater Belfast area.

Through funding provided under the Business Improvement Programme John launched a new professional and upmarket website, [www.carrickblooms.co.uk](http://www.carrickblooms.co.uk) to cater for customers wishing to place orders 24/7.

John explains: 'The support from Carrickfergus Enterprise via the Council-funded Business Improvement Programme, gave my business a real boost. Today customers expect to be able to make an online purchase at any time of the day or night. This morning I came in to find three



orders ready and waiting to go out. Paypal gives added peace of mind for secure payments. I simply needed this vital support to grow and develop my business'.

Kelli Bagchus, Manager of Carrickfergus Enterprise says 'We are delighted to be able to continue to provide such

support to our local business community. Feedback from past participants has been extremely supportive and we will continue to provide such support and guidance where it is needed most'.

John's business has now expanded further with an opening of a second shop

in Larne, John Alan's Floral Design. He saw an opportunity when a florist had closed down in a prime retail location in the town. The ever-ambitious John is aiming for further expansion and hopes to open 3 to 4 further outlets in major retail locations across Northern Ireland.

# Stage Set For Business

For Philip Young, being made redundant was the catalyst for starting his own business. The prospect of unemployment, uncertainty in the jobs market and the economic downturn all contributed to Philip taking the decision to turn his long-standing dream of being his own boss into a reality.

Philip explained, "My ambition was always to be self-employed and through Invest NI's Regional Start Initiative, I got the opportunity to explore the idea. I focused on my passion of acting and now have created an independent actors agency".

The findings of market research conducted by Philip, and the support provided by Antrim Enterprise Agency, gave him the confidence to start up on his own.

A trained actor, Philip's Independent Agency

represents professional actors and voice artists, liaising with casting directors to identify their requirements for a film, TV or theatre production, sending actors to auditions, and handling contractual negotiations.

His biggest success to date was being the only agency to be successful in finding an actor for the Dracula Untold movie, recently shot in Northern Ireland. He has also been successful in finding actors for TV shows including Game of Thrones, Hollyoaks, Ripper Street and Line of Duty.

Philip says: "the Regional Start Initiative gave me the confidence to explore my business idea. It allowed me to tackle my fear with developing a business plan, managing accounts and all the legalities involved in starting up a business." With Northern Ireland becoming a prime location for upcoming films and big-budget TV productions, Philip's personal background and knowledge of the arts scene means he is cast in a perfect role for success.

## Pop Notch Idea

Draperstown may not traditionally be the first location that comes to mind when Popcorn is mentioned.

That's changed, since August 2013 when So Popcorn was established by Declan McBride.

So Popcorn manufactures a range of exciting popcorn products under the 'Pop Notch' brand. With support from Workspace Enterprises Ltd in Draperstown, Declan credits the Invest NI Regional Start Initiative with helping him to consolidate his idea, develop a business plan and expand his product range.

According to Declan, 'Starting a business during the economic downturn was daunting, but having developed a successful business when times are tough, I would encourage others to take the plunge and follow their dream.'

Declan initially started producing around 800 bags per month of gourmet popcorn products using 16 domestic electrical products. The initial So Popcorn range features a range of flavours including Irish Cream, Salty Caramel, Chewy Marshmallow and Vanilla Chocolate.

Rapidly increasing demand led Declan to access a loan from the Northern Ireland Small Business Loan Fund, to invest in research and development to expand the popcorn product range into savoury products. He is also exploring export opportunities across the UK and increasing output to meet growing domestic consumer demand. Declan now produces 2000 bags per week for distribution to high profile retailers including Spar, Nisa, Super Valu and the Odyssey Arena and cinema.

## Puppy Love for Fido Finesse

A keen pet owner, Sharon Montgomery used her lifelong personal experience of owning and caring for animals to start her own business. With the help of the Regional Start Initiative, Sharon established Fido Finesse, a professional dog grooming service based in Antrim Borough.

Sharon credits the Regional Start Initiative as being the key driving force in making her entrepreneurial journey possible: "The main motivation for signing up for it and going into business was the economic climate. It created the opportunity for me to retrain and exploit the growth within the animal care industry. When I was made redundant my main motivation was to take control of my own employment and to look at the challenge of being self-employed".

## Plant and Play Wildlife Garden

Zoologist Vikki Bustard is at the helm of the The Plant and Play Wildlife Garden in Bangor which opened during the year. The site comprises a unique working allotment and educational wildlife garden, which teaches children about seasonal fruit and vegetables.

The business also hosts horticultural and conservation workshop for adults and children's birthday parties, with an onsite retail shop selling plants, vegetables, gardening books and made-to-order, hand-carved garden furniture.

Vikki, who has prior work experience in horticulture, conservation and working with children, also has plans to undertake school visits, wildlife garden design and creation consultancy services. The garden comprises sensory and imaginative outdoor play areas, encouraging children to engage in increased physical activity through play and gardening.



Vikki developed a robust business plan with North Down Development Organisation as part of the Invest NI Regional Start Initiative, which in turn helped her secure funding from Enterprise Northern Ireland Start Up Loans to develop the gardens and indoor areas. Vikki explains: 'None of this would have been possible without the Regional Start Initiative. I wouldn't have had a clue where to start, what funding was available and how to check if the business would be viable'.

## Boxing Clever in Business

Randalstown fitness instructor and personal trainer, Malachy McCann, is one of those lucky people who can say they have both job satisfaction and their dream job.

Having gained 11 years' experience working as an instructor, Malachy decided the time was right to start up on his own gym, and he signed up for Invest Northern Ireland's Regional Start Initiative.

Malachy says that as a result, "in a short space of time, the business has gone from strength to strength, with more clients coming through the door which has led to the increase of equipment offering different services for all."

## Ted Talks Business for Jane

Jane Roberts new start up 'Jane's Teds - Made with Love' came from her skill in creating handmade teddy bears for all occasions. With the backing of her husband, she signed up for Regional Start and it gave her the opportunity to produce a business plan.

Jane explains: "That allowed me to focus my thoughts and ideas for the business by setting out and identifying the business objectives. I was able to identify the marketing opportunities for the business as well as identifying the business operations."

She added, "Our biggest reward for our hard work was achieving an interview with the National Museums of Northern Ireland, to discuss the possibility of selling the teddy bears within their establishments. In addition we have also secured a contract with the Titanic Quarter and I have now sold them 100 bears to sell in the shop."



# EE<sup>2</sup>P Winning Equation for Nana's Attic

**L**esley Evans from Cookstown celebrated the launch of her online vintage and pre-loved clothing business Nana's Attic, following her participation on the Exploring Enterprise 2 (EE<sup>2</sup>P) programme.

Nana's Attic, was launched after Lesley, who worked in retail for several years, became unemployed and found it difficult to find new work. Lesley had always wanted to run her own business, and with the help of Dana McKenna at the Cookstown Enterprise Centre and the EE<sup>2</sup>P programme, she has now made that dream a reality, securing UK and international sales.

Lesley said, "At Cookstown Enterprise Centre I was introduced to Dana McKenna, who became my business mentor. I already had a business idea, and just getting started and getting some sound advice gave me the confidence to get going.

"Dana helped me to pull all my ideas together. She showed me how to set out my business plan in a proper format. I really couldn't have done it without her support and advice - it was really, really helpful."

Dana explained: "The programme provides an insight into starting a business and gets candidates thinking about the possibilities within their grasp. We can then help them take the next steps to help them fulfil their ambitions."

**It is encouraging to see that by the end of the third year, 1,400 people have completed the Exploring Enterprise 2 Programme, with more going forward for the qualification in year 4.**

Gordon Gough, Chief Executive, Enterprise Northern Ireland



## Exploring Enterprise 2 Programme

The Exploring Enterprise 2 Programme is an Enterprise Northern Ireland initiative. It is offered free to people, aged 16+ years and not in employment, and to those working 16 hours or less a week.

Participants can include the long term unemployed, lone parents, stay at home mums, people with disabilities or with low or no qualifications, young people not in education, older workers and the recently retired. There are no qualifications required to gain entry to the programme and it is delivered at a pace specifically tailored to suit individual needs.

The programme entered its fourth and final year in April 2014, building upon impressive results and achievements.

At the end of March 2014, 1,400 participants had secured the Level 2 Understanding Business Enterprise qualification, against a target of 1,176, an achievement of 114%.

In October 2014, a further 336 participants submitted their portfolios and are currently awaiting the outcome of the moderation process, which will determine whether their Understanding Business

Enterprise qualification will be awarded. The aim of EE<sup>2</sup>P is to create a pool of new business talent within Northern Ireland's most deprived communities.

From there the LEA network helps candidates take the necessary steps to help them fulfil their business ownership ambitions.

EE<sup>2</sup>P is part-financed by the European Social Fund, the Department for Employment and Learning and Enterprise Northern Ireland.



# Enterprising Reflex



Exploring Enterprise 2 participant Beverley Ward of B'Serene Therapy with Leo Mullan, Business Advisor, Causeway Enterprise Agency

Beverley Ward from Coleraine set up her reflexology business B'Serene having completed EE<sup>2</sup>P through Causeway Enterprise Agency

Following a number of health issues, Beverley took the first steps back into the job market as a self-employed reflexologist after completing the Exploring Enterprise 2 Programme through Causeway Enterprise Agency.

Despite encountering many challenges, Beverley achieved nine GCSEs, a BTEC National Diploma in Caring Services and a degree in Psychology with Education.

Two years ago she took up her next challenge, a two-year course in Reflexology. Her tutors were concerned that her disability would stand in her way but she proved them wrong,

and completed the course. Beverley's mum then told her about EE<sup>2</sup>P and how it might help her to get a reflexology business up and running.

Inspired by the Programme, she said: "It gave me the insight into what is required to set up a business and really boosted my confidence. I've never allowed my disability to get the better of me and am determined to make

## Enterprising Programme Felt Different for Jane

Having set up her handmade felt crafts business, Namaste Nepal, earlier this year, Jane Prendy was struggling to get the most out of being self-employed. She explains:

"I called in to LEDCOM for information about joining a craft course and ultimately joined the EE<sup>2</sup>P. This gave me the opportunity to understand more about marketing, finances and business planning, and the chance to meet a great group of fellow entrepreneurs.

"Our tutor, Emma, was motivating and inspirational, and I loved every part of this very practical course."

the best out of life. But I could never have set up my own business without the support of Leo and the team at Causeway Enterprise and I'm more determined than ever to make a success of my business."

## Ards and Crafts Explore Enterprise

Newtownards curtain maker, Carol Buchanan, and interior designer, Siobhan McNeilly were among the first candidates from Ards Business Agency to benefit from the Exploring Enterprise 2 Programme.

Carol who had been out of work through chronic illness, and Siobhan who was made redundant from her previous job, both took their first steps into self-employment after completing the EE<sup>2</sup>P.

As a result Carol established an ever-growing soft furnishing business, called Lisbarnett Soft Furnishings, whilst Siobhan has set up her own flourishing interior design consultancy, Vonni Grace Interiors.

Carol Buchanan said, "I left school with no formal qualifications but worked my whole life. I also did a significant amount of voluntary work in the local community. I was hospitalised nine times in one year with a debilitating illness and I found it impossible to hold down a job.

"When I was in remission for approximately two years I wanted to get back into work as quickly as possible. I knew that my type of condition would require that I work from



home. This Programme provided me with the insight and confidence to get my own business started."

Siobhan McNeilly, who worked in the retail and property sectors before being made redundant had studied interior design

at South Eastern Regional College. She explains: "The programme was brilliant. It gave me a real insight by providing me with the knowledge and support to develop my own business plan.

"Melanie, our business mentor, was

amazing and really helped build my confidence and self-belief to turn my dream into a viable business idea. I have now been running my own interior design consultancy for just over six months on a part-time basis and the projects have been steadily coming in."

# Hola to the Spanish for Entrepreneur

**W**hile on maternity leave following the birth of her first child, languages and teaching graduate Lynn Ross saw an opportunity for a language school for children.

Her business idea brought together her language skills and qualifications to provide language classes for under 4s and their parents. The Result? Hola Muchachos

Lynn said, "Language classes were ideal as I was already teaching Spanish to my daughter. It felt like a natural step into the market at the end of my maternity leave. I started up just one class per week alongside my part time employment with the South Eastern Education and Library Board where I travelled around schools teaching Spanish to children from P1 - P7.

Lynn credits the Business Boot Camp programme with helping her get her inventively named business 'Hola Muchachos' up and running, providing her with a robust business plan and



future direction for the company as well as strengthening weaknesses in her management of the business.

She says, "I am now at a high growth stage of the business and am preparing to take a

leap into sub-contracting work out to tutors. I hope to be in all major towns in NI with my under 4s and after school clubs, and I am keeping the possibility of franchising open as an option in the future."

## Business Boot Camp

The Business Boot Camp Programme is run in partnership by Enterprise Northern Ireland, Full Circle and Advantage.

It is open to all budding or established 16-35 year old entrepreneurs based in the council areas of Belfast, Lisburn, Castlereagh, Newtownabbey, North Down, Carrickfergus and Donegal.

In the past 24 months, 83 young people have been through the 'Start' element of the Business Boot Camp Programme resulting in 61 starting their own business. In the same period, almost 83 businesses have participated in the 'Grow' element of the programme and set about developing business expansion plans for their businesses. The programme is now in its final year of delivery and it is expected that in total 263 (137 young entrepreneurs & 126 young business owners) will have participated on the programme when completed in March 2015.

It is funded under the European Regional Development Fund through the European INTERREG IVA Structural Funds Programme.

## A Lingerin Success

The Sioda Lingerie label is a collection of delicate silk French knickers, ruched knickers, shorts, camisoles, cami-knickers, chemises, negligees, robes and accessories. Each exquisite item is designed and handmade individually in Belfast.

With support from Ortus, this is one local company that is still flying the flag for homegrown Irish products in the declining garment sector which was formerly a staple of the local economy. Having come from an entrepreneurial family, Mary was keen to turn her engineering qualifications into something more creative.

Mary says, "My parents and both my maternal and paternal grandparents were self-employed. We were always



**"The Business Boot Camp Programme is incredible. But you'll only get out what you put in, so not only would I recommend joining the programme, I would say... Don't waste the fantastic opportunity!"**

Mary Murphy

encouraged to earn our own money and started making things to sell in the craft shop from 8 years old. Working

as an engineer suited me academically, but it dampened my creative needs. "The Boot Camp Programme gave

me a real tangible insight into how my business plan should be in order for it to be a plan for the future."

# Sense of Adventure Brings Expansion for Rostrevor Firm

**F**ounded in 1991, East Coast Adventure started out as a one-man operation hiring canoes on Warrenpoint beach.

Today the firm, headed up by Mark, Ian and Jennifer Cumming, employs 30 people and provides an outdoor education programme, leisure pursuits and corporate team building activities from five locations around Carlingford Lough.

East Coast Adventure received a boost to its business with a loan from the Northern Ireland Small Business Loan Fund, which enabled it to expand its infrastructure and create new jobs.

Over the last five years, the firm expanded to include a water-based activity centre, a mountain bike centre with the only uplift service in Northern Ireland, a golf driving

range and bunkhouse accommodation in the Knockbarragh Valley outside Rostrevor. In the summer it attracts up to 200 visitors per day. The latest investment allowed the firm to build six self-catering camping pods and create three additional jobs.

Mark Cumming, Managing Director, said: "The NI Small Business Loan Fund helped us expand our outdoor facilities. Camping has evolved over the last number of years with the emergence of glamping and these pod facilities, which bring a little bit of luxury to camping, have become very popular worldwide.

"The pods contain a table and seating area that can sleep up to four people, with one of the pods being converted into a toilet and shower facility. There is also an external camp kitchen and BBQ area for people to prepare meals. Recently we had a school



Gordon Gough and Cara Dallat of Enterprise Northern Ireland with entrepreneur and former investor on Dragon's Den James Caan, Chairman of the UK Government's Start Up Loan Scheme

from Russia spend several weeks here, utilising the pods and taking part in our developing language programme, 'Active Learning Ireland'. We have since pitched the language programme to seven additional Russian schools"

Operations Director, Ian Cumming, outlined plans for expansion and one-of-a-kind camping experiences: "We have plans to build a tepee, as well as creating a communal area for the camping pods with further job creation."



## InnovateHer A Positive Career Choice

InnovateHER is a tailored programme designed to encourage entrepreneurship as a career choice for women.

Dungannon Enterprise Centre was awarded £20,000 by Ulster Bank parent Royal Bank of Scotland for InnovateHer.

The Centre received the support from the RBS Inspiring Women in Enterprise fund, and will use the funding to bring women's networking and skills development together in one tailored innovative programme. Project highlights will include mentoring and the 'Inspire Me' masterclass, where participants will

have the opportunity to meet with experienced female entrepreneurs to hear their start-up stories.

With the gender gap in Northern Ireland entrepreneurship showing no signs of closing, Denise Murtagh, Business Development Manager with Dungannon Enterprise Centre, explained: "Women taking part will benefit by being able to create their own opportunities and learn the skills and knowledge to take advantage of them. The funding will pay for masterclasses and experiential learning experience through 'off-site' best practice visits to role-model entrepreneurs".

The participants from the Mid-Ulster region of Northern Ireland (Dungannon, Cookstown and Magherafelt Council areas) will directly benefit from the programme, whilst the use of social media to share the journey of the project with others will ensure that its reach is greatly enhanced.

Making the announcement were Colleen Harte, owner of Lucy Annabella Organics and an InnovateHer mentor; Denise Murtagh, Dungannon Enterprise Centre and co-founder of Dekala Jewellery; Shauna Burns of the Ulster Bank and Alanna Collins, Dungannon Enterprise Centre and Dekala Jewellery co-founder.

## Export Sales Slam Dunk

Basketball Direct, located in Londonderry, has received support from the Northern Ireland Small Business Loan Fund that they say will help finance working capital requirements and enable them to break into new export markets.

Launched in January 2013, Basketball Direct is an online store that sells basketball clothing, equipment and accessories across the world, currently shipping to 90 countries. Owner Niall McDermott identified a gap in the UK and Irish market to launch a locally-based business since similar online retailers are American-based. The key strategic advantage is quality products at tighter pricing and quicker delivery.

The investment from the NI Small Business Loan Fund will allow the company to complete a rebranding exercise, develop their website and increase stock levels in order to pursue new export opportunities. The business is also receiving e-business support from Invest NI. Mr McDermott said: "Our aim is to continually expand and diversify our range of products. We have plans to increase our warehouse storage space in the next couple of months which means we can increase our inventory of stock and hire more staff.

**We want to increase our export markets as basketball is a global sport. I approached the Fund to help finance the working capital requirements and to aid the development of our website that would enable us to break into new markets. The Fund was very supportive of the business and shared my vision for growth.**

**Niall McDermott**

# LEAs get Royal seal of approval

**T**he Queen's Award for Enterprise Promotion is the pinnacle of national recognition for companies and people promoting entrepreneurship and encouraging business enterprise.

Jayne Taggart, Chief Executive of Causeway Enterprise Agency received an individual Award in recognition of her remit as advocate for enterprise and entrepreneurship in the Causeway and Moyle area. Since joining the Agency in 1994, and along with her staff, Jayne has supported 1,085 business start-ups over the past 10 years, generating an economic contribution to the Causeway area of £65 million and 1,734 jobs.

Jayne said, "This award also recognises the hard work and dedication of my team and our Board and acknowledges our commitment to enterprise development, the local economy and reflects our passion for developing and supporting our local community."

The award was presented by Business Secretary, Vince Cable, with Jayne and the other recipients later attending an event at Buckingham Palace, hosted by the Queen.



Jayne Taggart, Chief Executive of Causeway Enterprise Agency attends a reception at Buckingham Palace in honour of being Northern Ireland's only personal recipient of the Queens Award for Enterprise in 2014.

## Workspace Do The Business For Queen's Award



**Pictured above** L-R Adele McIvor, The Workspace Group; William McKeown, Board member, The Workspace Group; Laurence O'Kane, Board member, The Workspace Group; Johnathan Payne, Corramore Construction and Sam McCloskey, Board member, The Workspace Group  
**Pictured opposite** L-R Georgina Grieve, Homeseal General Manager and Enda Daly, Property Manager, both from The Workspace Group

The Workspace Group, a social enterprise based in Draperstown, were one of only nine companies from across the United Kingdom to win the prestigious Queen's Award for Enterprise in the area of Sustainable Development.

The award marks the Workspace Group's success in promoting regeneration, and the achievements of its subsidiary companies, Homeseal, Elite Energy and Therm Tech, working in the area of energy efficiency.

Brian Murray, Chief Executive said, "Sustainable development has always been

a key part of our ethos, from our businesses that work in energy efficiency, to the community development work we promote and other businesses we assist through Workspace Enterprises.

"This award continues a great tradition of recognition by the Queen's Award in this area, as it is the fifth to be awarded to people and businesses in the Draperstown area."

Workspace also received the Northern Ireland Chamber Award for Sustainability. This award is in recognition of the significant contribution that the Workspace Group has made in demonstrating commercially successful sustainability and aiding regeneration. And to make it a hat trick, the Workspace Group was also announced as the latest Big Society Award winner by the Prime Minister, David Cameron.

The Group, which was set up in 1985 by the local community, now has a turnover exceeding £10m per annum, employs 148 members of staff, operates from nine locations in Northern Ireland, one in Donegal and also has operations in Wales and England.





# LEDCOM reaches the GOLD standard

**L**arne Enterprise Development Company Ltd (LEDCOM) – became the first LEA and the first social enterprise with under 25 employees in Northern Ireland, to achieve the prestigious Investors in People (IiP) Gold award. LEDCOM is one of Enterprise Northern Ireland's founding members.

Established in 1985 as the Local Enterprise Agency and business and enterprise centre for the Borough of Larne, LEDCOM is an award-winning social enterprise with an extensive track record in local economic development. Since then it has provided over 10,000 mentoring/information/advice/training sessions, helped over 900 new start up business which themselves support over 1500 jobs, and supported over 90 new social enterprises start ups which have created over 250 jobs.

LEDCOM Chief Executive Officer, Ken Nelson, said the award showed the company's deep commitment to achieving excellence in developing and supporting its staff and continually improving its quality of service as a business support organisation. Paying tribute to the LEDCOM staff he said:

"This Gold award is recognition of the past 29 years of supporting local businesses and individuals wanting to further their careers."

A celebratory event was held in the agency's Willowbank Rural Conference

Centre, with the special guest another great Northern Ireland success story, Michael McKillop. Michael is one of the most successful Paralympic athletes of all time, with 10 gold medals in major competition, five World titles, and three Paralympic wins to his name, including two world records.

Michael, who has a form of cerebral palsy and developed epilepsy at the age of 14, hasn't lost a Paralympic race since 2006. Michael, and his father Paddy – who just happens to be his coach and himself was awarded Northern Ireland Sports Coach of the Year – shared some of their secrets in achieving incredible gold medal success in sport, with application to any business or organisation.

**Life isn't simple. Business isn't simple. Getting a gold medal was a long journey. I had to build a team around me to achieve my goals. In business you have to work together to achieve your goals.**

Michael McKillop

## Ground-breaking Success Story

Big dreams start small and for one north coast couple, the journey from a two-man catering company to nationally accredited coffee shop chain has been nothing short of amazing.

With the support of Causeway Enterprise Agency, Darren and Karen Gardiner originally benefited from a modest loan to launch a catering company. Based at Loughanhill, the pair worked hard for the next three years, before deciding to invest in the Ground Espresso Bars brand.

Few could have predicted the explosion in local coffee culture, but the Gardiner's spotted a gap in the market which has paid dividends. "Our kitchens for Ground were originally based in the CEA premises," says Darren. "It was very useful to have premises available without having to sign up for long leases and it really got us going. We then outgrew those and got our own facilities. "We went to CEA again when we were expanding, with Ground going in to Waterstones and Next."

Fast-forward 12 years and the Gardiners have gone from a two-man team to employing around 120 people province-wide. Says Darren: "Karen did the Start Your Own Business course with Causeway Enterprise Agency and in our first year, our turnover was £63,000. This year, it's probably going to be £4m".

Ground has been voted in the top 50 coffee houses in the UK by the *Guardian* and, with numerous other awards besides, for Ground Espresso Bars, it's onwards and upwards.



## Innovation Award for Fermanagh Enterprise client

David Moorehead from Green Sword Environmental used 20 years of experience to develop a breakthrough microbial liquid that breaks down oil.

A client of Fermanagh Enterprise Ltd, Green Sword Environmental won the start-up category in the Innovation awards jointly sponsored by DARD and Teagasc in association with JFC Manufacturing and the Irish Farmers Journal.

The cleaning product is a blend of bacterial spores and bio-stimulating agents that

break down oil in the soil, on water and on hard surfaces. The business's major strengths are the innovative nature of the product and its range of applications. David has been working with Queen's University and the University of Ulster to carry out tests, and he is also working with Invest NI and Fermanagh Enterprise Ltd to attract investors.

With field trials planned in the Middle East, David sees big potential for cleaning decommissioned oil platforms in the North Sea.

# Inaugural Enterprise Awards

**T**he inaugural Northern Ireland Enterprise Awards were held in November 2013, with over 200 attendees gathering at the Holiday Inn, Belfast.

Organised and hosted by Enterprise Northern Ireland, they showcased best practice by the small business community and enterprise support providers across the region.

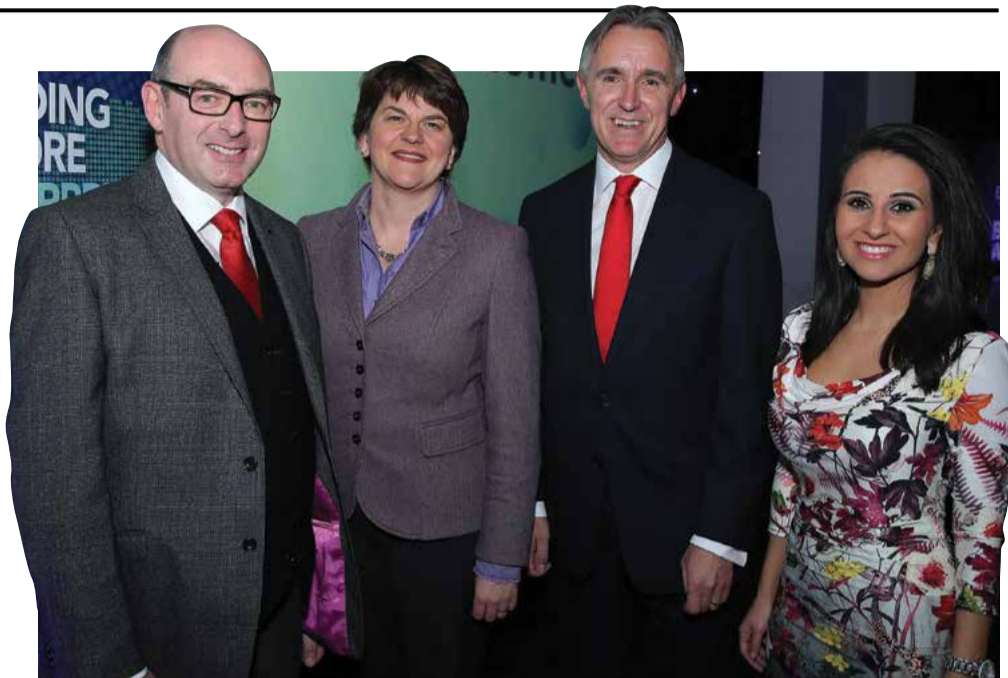
Keynote speaker was Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment, Arlene Foster, who said, "Entrepreneurs are the lifeblood of any economy and it is vital that every avenue is explored when it comes to encouraging entrepreneurial spirit".

**We've seen a fantastic response to these awards - not just in the quality of the entrants but in their enthusiasm. Helping new businesses to thrive through innovative marketing and product development is an important part of any economic recovery, so it's important that we give a proper platform to those who do it well.**

Gordon Gough, Chief Executive, Enterprise Northern Ireland

The Minister continued, "Enterprise Northern Ireland does great work in supporting and representing entrepreneurs right across Northern Ireland. These awards are an important opportunity to celebrate the diverse range of business talent and development opportunities that exist through the LEA network".

Melody Hossani, social entrepreneur and a former contestant on the BBC television show "The Apprentice" was the special guest at the Awards.



From left: John D'Arcy, Chairman of Enterprise Northern Ireland; Arlene Foster, Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment; Gordon Gough, Chief Executive of Enterprise Northern Ireland; Melody Hossani, social entrepreneur and former contestant on The Apprentice at the 2013 Northern Ireland Enterprise Awards.



From left: John D'Arcy, Melody Hossani and Helen McKenna from Clarity (far right) congratulate Brian O'Neill, Enterprise North West, on winning Social Economy Adviser of the year (2013) at the inaugural Northern Ireland Enterprise Awards.

## Events

### Business Connections Events

Enterprise NI hosted two Business Connections events giving Business Bootcamp participants the opportunity to come together to explore opportunities for cross border trade, make contacts and network.

In recognition of the cross border nature of the Bootcamp programme, the first event was held in Abbey Hotel, Donegal Town in February. Guest speakers included Grainne Kelly of Bubble Bum, John Conaghan of Carecall and Annette Houston of PaddySnax.



Attendees at Donegal Business Connections event.

A second event was held in the Hilton Hotel, Belfast in May 2014, with an array of guest speakers sharing their business experiences and providing tips for success.

These included Oscar Wooley from Suki Tea, Shauna McCarney-Blair from Heavenly Tasty Organics, and husband and wife team, Sean and Leona McAllister, from DiscoverEverAfter/PlotBox.



**Belfast Business Connections.** (L-R) Donal Leahy, Enterprise Northern Ireland, Shauna McCarney-Blair from Heavenly Tasty Organics; Pier Morrow, Belfast City Council; compere Claire McCollum; Leona McAllister and Sean McAllister from DiscoverEverAfter; and Gordon Gough, Chief Executive of Enterprise Northern Ireland.

### Business Brunch Brief Series

Enterprise NI launched a series of Business Brunch Brief meetings, providing LEA Chief Executives and senior staff with the opportunity to network and to learn more about policy areas affecting small business and enterprise support.

The opening event in November 2013 saw Enterprise NI partner with DETI's Innovation Policy Unit to hold a consultation event on the draft Northern Ireland Innovation Strategy for Northern Ireland that was launched this autumn.

The second Business Brunch Brief was held in April, and focused on compulsory registration with the Charity Commission. The Series continued in September 2014 on the theme of "Vacant Rating with a particular emphasis on exclusion categories." If there are any topics you feel would be suitable for future events let us know.

## Roll of Honour



## Enterprise Awards 2013

- Business Start Up of the Year* **Ciaran McMenamin Of LignumInteriors, Downpatrick**
- Best Business Growth Strategy by a Young Entrepreneur* **Joanne Casey of Glowmetrics, Belfast**
- Exporter of the Year* **Gary Tinsdale of Tinsdale Wood Design, Ballymena**
- Exploring Enterprise2 Programme Participant Achievement Award* **Steven Mackay, Portrush**
- Social Economy Advisor of the Year* **Brian O' Neill of Enterprise North West, Derry**
- Member website of the year* **ORTUS, The Business Development Agency**
- Best Social Media Campaign by a Local Enterprise Agency* **Omagh Enterprise Company**
- Regional Start Programme, Best LEA Delivery Agent* **Cookstown Enterprise Centre**
- Best Marketing campaign by a Local Enterprise Agency* **Causeway Enterprise Agency**
- Promoting Entrepreneurial Spirit* **LEDCOM**

# The Cube Shape of Business

**T**welve months ago Dungannon Enterprise Centre opened its doors to The Cube. Since then the innovative space has become a thriving base for local businesses.

The Cube was an imaginative way to convert 13 recycled steel cabins that previously carried cargo from China and were also on site at the 2012 London Olympic Games.

The steel containers were redesigned to construct a number of small start-up business units. Each of the multi-coloured cabins comes with heating, electricity and an attractive rental price of £50 per week, which includes rates and superfast broadband.

The aim of The Cube was to create a business community with the purpose of nurturing new talent and developing established businesses. Since its opening, The Cube has operated at full capacity with 8 new businesses growing out of the complex into larger premises.



After visiting The Cube, Arlene Foster, Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment, recommended that members of the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee should visit Dungannon Enterprise Centre and see firsthand the thriving business Cube in action.

**Such is the level of demand for units we are exploring the potential of building more workspace for this purpose.**

The concept was the brainchild of Brian MacAuley, Chief Executive of Dungannon Enterprise Centre, which is home to over 70 businesses employing over 280 people.

He said, "such is the level of demand for units we are exploring the potential

of building more workspace for this purpose. It really has matched a need for small start-up business space." The fact that so many tenants have already moved out to bigger premises after establishing themselves within the Cube is evidence of the growth strategy of Dungannon Enterprise Centre

## Banbridge District Enterprises Ltd celebrate silver anniversary

Banbridge District Enterprises Ltd celebrated their 25th anniversary with Enterprise Trade and Investment Minister Arlene Foster joining company directors and invited guests for a special event. Company Chairman, Dr Gordon Byrne, reflected on the early days, describing how, in June 1989, Banbridge District Council spearheaded a drive to establish an enterprise centre in the area.

A site at Scarva Road Industrial Estate was identified, with offices and workspace accommodation for new businesses built and officially opened in 1992. In 1998, Banbridge District Enterprises Ltd began to manage the business centre on behalf of the Council, completing an extension during 1994 to add an additional 10,000sq ft. of workspace.

In 2008, and working closely with Gilford Community Regeneration Company, the

company part funded the development of Dunbarton House, bringing much needed office accommodation to the town, and in 2011 Rathfriland Enterprise Centre was also officially opened by Minister Arlene Foster. Over the past 25 years, Banbridge District Enterprises Ltd have contributed enormously to the economic development of the district, consistently delivering quality advice and guidance to those starting and expanding their business, and managing 55,000 sq. ft. of workspace which is 100% occupied.

Speaking at the celebratory event and praising the contribution that the voluntary directors of the company have made, Minister Foster said: "This company has addressed a real need for quality workspace and is indeed a one stop shop for those starting and developing a business within the Banbridge District Council area".



## £1m Enterprise investment to regenerate Ballymena Town Centre

An exciting enterprise investment in Ballymena will see prime retail premises in the Church Street area of the town converted into an 8,000 sq ft business centre providing business advice, exhibition space, conference facilities and office accommodation.

The £1m scheme is the brainchild of Ballymena Business Centre, a social enterprise that has long contributed to local economic regeneration. The Centre will promote opportunities for private and social entrepreneurs to start and grow their business in Ballymena town centre.

Alderman PJ McAvoy, Chair of Ballymena Business Centre said, "Not only are we celebrating our 25th Anniversary but we are marking this special anniversary with a long term financial commitment to the

regeneration of Ballymena town centre. I have great confidence in our Town Centre and I believe our capital investment, programme of initiatives and partnership approach will help make our town centre accessible to everyone from the voluntary, community, education and business support sector and above all accessible for our local entrepreneurs".

Melanie Christie Boyle, Chief Executive of Ballymena Business Centre, described how this innovative and fresh approach to town centre regeneration would support thirty entrepreneurs from the creative sector to start their business in a retail incubation environment in a way that would not have been realised without the intervention of Ballymena Business Centre.



# Social Enterprise at the Hub of the Community

**Social Enterprise:** Businesses with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community, rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders and owners.

**S**timulating entrepreneurship and the development of the social economy remain important challenges for the NI Executive. Recognising the importance of a supportive environment for social enterprises to thrive in growing the economy, three of Enterprise Northern Ireland's LEA members found themselves at the forefront of the new Social Enterprise Hub initiative.

The project is part of a pilot scheme by the Department of Social Development and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to develop 11 Social Enterprise Hubs across Northern Ireland over a two-year period.

Each hub will service areas of multiple deprivation to help address unemployment and community eyesores by encouraging and helping new social entrepreneurs and social enterprises with an idea for a new product. They will offer free workshops, training, advice and mentoring support.

#### NORTHERN ZONE

Larne-based LEDCOM, a long established and successful social enterprise, was appointed to manage the Northern Zone

**The Ecos Centre is an excellent location for the Northern Zone Social Enterprise Hub and it will provide excellent support to the social economy across the ten Council areas. The reorganisation of local government in 2015 will bring with it enhanced responsibilities for community planning and economic development, and the Social Economy Hub is well-placed to help deliver economic regeneration.**

Cllr Audrey Wales MBE, Mayor of Ballymena

Social Enterprise Hub, launched by the then Minister for Social Development, Nelson McCausland MLA.

This Hub, based at Ballymena's Ecos Centre, will serve the ten current local council areas of Larne, Carrickfergus, Cookstown, Ballymena, Ballymoney, Antrim, Magherafelt, Coleraine, Moyle and Newtownabbey.

#### WESTERN ZONE

The Western Zone Social Enterprise Hub was one of two innovative business support programmes launched in Enniskillen by Enterprise, Trade and Investment Minister Arlene Foster. The Social Enterprise Hub, will be based at the Clinton Centre, Enniskillen, providing advice and support across the Western Social Investment Fund (SIF) zone of Fermanagh, Limavady, Omagh and Strabane District Council areas.

The Minister also launched the First Stop Shop, a business development initiative part-funded by Invest NI and ERDF under the Sustainable Competitiveness Programme to support business development in the Fermanagh District Council area.

Cllr Bert Johnston, Chairman of Fermanagh District Council, said: "I would encourage all local businesses and social enterprises to take advantage of the support and opportunities being provided."

Dr Nick O'Shiel, Social Enterprise Hub Programme Manager, said: "We know from our experience and research that the

appetite and interest for new types of social businesses is there and we look forward to uncovering and supporting these ambitious and innovative ideas."

#### WEST BELFAST HUB

Ortus the Business Development Agency were awarded a contract to manage and deliver the West Belfast Social Enterprise Hub.

The new West Belfast Social Enterprise Hub is located on 129 Springfield Road, with two further retail incubation units located on the busy Falls Road. The new Hub offers business advice, free hot desks, free meeting and training space and business information sessions, as well as business clinics and free mentoring support. Retail incubation units allow social enterprises to test trade for up to six months rent free with access to heavy on-street footfall.

The West Belfast Partnership Board have already started test trading with their new social enterprise business, a Craft Collective.

The West Belfast Social Enterprise Hub follows on from Ortus' success in delivering the Belfast city centre City Business Hub. City Business Hub, which was launched in November 2013, provides drop-in clients with comprehensive support services including business advice, referral services, free meeting and conference spaces, free information, seminars and hot-desks. As at August 2014, over 1650 people had used the services of the Hub.



**Left: Attendees at the launch of the Northern Zone Social Enterprise Hub:** (L-R:) Rodger McKnight, Acting Chief Executive of Ballymena Borough; Cllr Audrey Wales MBE, Mayor of Ballymena; Nelson McCausland MLA; Ken Nelson, Chief Executive, LEDCOM; Cllr Hubert Nicholl, Deputy Mayor of Ballymena





**Complementing existing support on offer from Invest NI, the First Stop Shop will provide advice and support to individuals and community and voluntary groups. In addition to this the Social Enterprise hub will assist those with social enterprise ideas.**

Arlene Foster, Minister for Enterprise Trade and Investment

**Pictured above at the launch of the Western Zone Social Enterprise Hub:** are: (L-R) Gerry McKibben, DSD; Eithne McNamee, Invest NI; Minister Arlene Foster; Dr Nick O'Shiel, Omagh Enterprise Company and Mary MacRory, Omagh Enterprise Company.

# Craigavon Going Green

**Craigavon Industrial Development Organisation (CIDO) took the next step in their pledge to Go Green by fitting a 20kw solar PV system on the roof of their head office, the i2 Innovation Centre in Portadown.**

The i2 Innovation Centre in Portadown was built in 2008 and designed to allow natural light to flow freely through it. The building also incorporated an air to water heat pump as a renewable energy source. The pump absorbs heat from the outside air and this heat can then be used in the under floor heating system and hot water.

Sustainable energy specialists, Amber Green, installed a 20kw system consisting of eighty solar panels. As CIDO are such a high electricity consumer they will have little to export back to the grid but there will be a significant saving on their bills and reduced co2 emissions.



CEO of Ormeau Business Park, Patricia McNeill; John Lennon of Novosco; Lord Mayor of Belfast Nichola Mallon and Neil McCallion, Rehab Studio

## Ormeau firms access amongst fastest internet speeds in the world

30 Belfast businesses, including a provider of interactive advertising to Google and Disney, benefit from access to some of the fastest internet connection speeds in the world through a new deal with Novosco. Speeds of up to one-gigabyte-per-second are available to Ormeau Business Park tenants including rehabstudio, O4 Research and Softsign as part of the Belfast City Council 'Superconnected Cities' scheme.

Novosco is the preferred supplier and Director, John Lennon explains: "By providing each business with vouchers of up to £3,000, the scheme is helping them to access some of the fastest internet connection speeds available for costs starting at about £10 per month. Belfast City Council provides vouchers to cover the cost of installation and firms then pay a modest rental fee.

According to Neil McCallion of rehabstudio, "With 75 employees across three international offices and clients like Disney, Google and Red Bull, a very fast, robust and reliable internet connection is essential to allow us to quickly and efficiently transfer our digital content between offices and to clients."

## LEGACY | WEALTH

WEALTH MANAGEMENT & TAX PLANNING SPECIALISTS



### Specialist Tailored Advice

*Because what is right for one client, is not necessarily right for another...*

Our advice is specifically tailored to meeting your needs and to helping you with:

- Investment & Wealth Management
- Tax Mitigation
- Retirement Planning
- Protection of Assets
- Corporate Employee Benefits

If you think we can help or you would just like to discuss our services, please contact us on **028 9045 4300** or email [info@legacywealth.co.uk](mailto:info@legacywealth.co.uk)

Legacy Wealth Ltd. Penthouse Suite, Quay Gate House, 15 Scrabo Street, Belfast BT5 4BD, Northern Ireland  
[www.legacywealth.co.uk](http://www.legacywealth.co.uk)

Legacy Wealth is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority

# Advance Pilot for Young Entrepreneurs

**The Advance Programme, a £300,000 pilot aimed at encouraging young people into employment in social enterprises, was created by LEDCOM in partnership with Enterprise Northern Ireland.**

Advance offers 24 weeks' paid employment and on-the-job training for young people. It created job opportunities for 40 young people across Northern Ireland, matching young people with social enterprises requiring staff.

The aim was to allow the young employee to demonstrate their capability with the goal that the social enterprise would then transform the short-term post into a permanent job.

Advance Manager, Audrey Murray explained: "Advance has been incredibly successful so far in sourcing the right person for the right job and there are a number of posts out there that are waiting to be filled. We've been really impressed with the young people who have applied for the scheme; they just want a chance to prove themselves."

Each of the young people will also complete Enterprise Northern Ireland's Exploring Enterprise 2 Programme, which gives them a recognised qualification in business studies. They will then receive mentoring support and attend interviews with the social enterprises.

Ms Murray added, "These are real jobs, not a placement and our goal is



that at least 50% of the recruits will be retained by the companies. It's up to each young person to make that

happen; they have 24 weeks to prove to employers that they have what it takes."

## NXT-GEN-BIZ

Fermanagh Enterprise Ltd was one of the first LEAs to be established in Northern Ireland, and this year they were awarded funding by the Royal Bank of Scotland to deliver NXT-GEN-BIZ. This is an exciting new initiative aimed at helping 24 young people in the Omagh and Fermanagh areas move into self-employment.

According to Siobhan Colton, Project Leader of NXT-GEN-BIZ, "The RBS Inspiring Youth Enterprise funding means this project can be delivered locally, in a rural area. It will give participants easy access to on-going expert advice without having to travel long distances. Since they'll be able to stay close to home, they'll benefit from family support as they develop their enterprises".

This is important, as family is acknowledged as being crucially important for individuals starting their own business by giving the entrepreneur access to additional sources of financial and emotional support.

NXT-GEN-BIZ is all about training and awareness with the goal of raising awareness of business and enterprise. Practical assistance with accessing business finance is offered, alongside workshops and mentoring support. It includes a Level 2 business qualification, driving lessons, business plan support, access to incubation workspace, development of social media and presentation skills, and the opportunity to network with other like-minded young people.

The young entrepreneurs will be required to write weekly blogs and to participate in outreach events, including a 'Dragon's Den' style presentation.

## Business support for Lisburn graduates



**Launching the Lisburn's Graduate Into Business Programme are :**

Aisling Owens, Lisburn Enterprise Organisation; Alderman Allan Ewart, Lisburn City Council; Hazel King, Lisburn City Council; Lynn Ross from Hola Muchachos with daughter Maisie; Mary Young, Invest NI.

Encouraging graduates to start their own business is a key priority. This was the driving focus behind Lisburn City Council's Graduate Into Business Programme delivered in partnership with Lisburn Enterprise Organisation.

The launch of a new phase of the programme saw tailored business support for local graduates who wish to start a business in Lisburn or who are already running a business. The scheme is part-financed by Invest NI and the European Regional Development Fund under the Sustainable Competitiveness Programme for Northern Ireland.

At the launch, Alderman Allan Ewart, Chair of Lisburn City Council's Economic Development Committee, said, "With increasing competition in the job market and a lack of graduate level jobs, many students are embracing entrepreneurship as a means of building their future career. Research suggests this generation of young adults are the most innovative, creative and diverse. Over a quarter of graduates plan to be running their own business by the age of 25, while a third say they'll be their own boss by the age of 30. This programme of business

support is an ideal opportunity for young adults in the Lisburn area to bring their entrepreneurial dreams to fruition." Lynn Ross owner of 'Hola Muchachos' - profiled elsewhere in this issue - is a past participant of the Graduate Into Business Programme and is encouraging others to take part. "Taking advantage of the support offered by the Lisburn Graduate into Business Programme I was able to avail of bespoke mentoring, market plan development and guidance in general business management to launch my new business, Hola Muchachos! I was also a finalist in the award-winning Fly or Die competition, which is part of the programme, pitching my idea for a prize fund of £1000."

Applicants must possess a HND or higher qualification, and reside or run a business within the Lisburn City Council area. Previous programmes led to the start-up of 54 new businesses in sectors ranging from fashion design to the manufacture of medical devices.

The next round of the programme has recently started, providing participants with an experienced mentor to guide them through the crucial business start-up phase.

## LEDCOM celebrates adult learners



More than 130 local people returned to adult education over the last year, thanks to a joint programme between Northern Regional College and LEDCOM.

This was the first year of a three-year programme which aims to increase adult enrolment in essential skills and further education courses, and to increase the numbers achieving recognised qualifications.

**Returning to education can seem daunting but we support people along this journey. Our team were hugely successful in reaching out to local people and encouraging them to take this first step,**

Patricia Brennan LEDCOM Project Manager

All courses are delivered in local community venues by qualified NRC tutors targeted in particular at learners who are currently unemployed and hold no more than one qualification at Level 2 or above.

It was delivered through the Learner Access and Engagement Programme, a Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) initiative.

# LEA Classifieds

**Acorn The Business Centre**  
Ballymoney  
T 028 2766 6133  
W [www.acornbusiness.co.uk](http://www.acornbusiness.co.uk)

**Antrim Enterprise Agency**  
Antrim  
T 028 9446 7774  
W [www.antrimenterprise.com](http://www.antrimenterprise.com)

**Ards Business Centre Ltd**  
Newtownards  
T 028 9181 9787  
W [www.ardsbusiness.com](http://www.ardsbusiness.com)

**Argyle Business Centre**  
Belfast  
T 028 9023 3777  
W [www.abcni.biz](http://www.abcni.biz)

**Armagh Business Centre Ltd**  
Armagh  
T 028 3752 5050  
W [www.abccarmagh.com](http://www.abccarmagh.com)

**Ballymena Business Centre Ltd**  
Ballymena  
T 028 2565 8616  
W [www.ballymenabusines.co.uk](http://www.ballymenabusines.co.uk)

**Banbridge District Enterprises Ltd**  
Banbridge  
T 028 4066 2260  
W: [www.bdelonline.com](http://www.bdelonline.com)

**Carrickfergus Enterprise Agency Ltd**  
Carrickfergus  
T 028 9336 9528  
W [www.ceal.co.uk](http://www.ceal.co.uk)

**Causeway Enterprise Agency**  
Coleraine  
T 028 7035 6318  
W [www.causeway-enterprise.co.uk](http://www.causeway-enterprise.co.uk)

**Cookstown Enterprise Centre Ltd**  
Cookstown  
T 028 8676 3660  
W [www.cookstownenterprise.com](http://www.cookstownenterprise.com)

**Craigavon Industrial Development Organisation (CIDO)**  
Craigavon  
T 028 3839 6520  
W [www.cidoo.co.uk](http://www.cidoo.co.uk)

**Down Business Centre Ltd**  
Downpatrick  
T 028 4461 6416  
W [www.downbc.co.uk](http://www.downbc.co.uk)

**Dungannon Enterprise Centre**  
Dungannon  
T 028 8772 3489  
W [www.dungannonenterprise.com](http://www.dungannonenterprise.com)

**East Belfast Enterprise**  
Belfast  
T 028 9094 2010  
W [www.eastbelfast.org](http://www.eastbelfast.org)

**Enterprise North West**  
Londonderry  
T 028 7135 2693  
W [www.north-westmarketing.com](http://www.north-westmarketing.com)

**Fermanagh Enterprise Ltd**  
Enniskillen  
T 028 6632 7348  
W [www.fermanaghenterprise.com](http://www.fermanaghenterprise.com)

**Inspire Business Centre**  
Dundonald  
T 028 9055 7557  
W [www.inspirebusinesscentre.co.uk](http://www.inspirebusinesscentre.co.uk)

**Larne Enterprise Development Co. Ltd (LEDCOM)**  
Larne  
T 028 2827 0742  
W [www.ledcom.org](http://www.ledcom.org)

**Lisburn Enterprise Organisation Ltd**  
Lisburn  
T 028 9266 1160  
W [www.lisburn-enterprise.co.uk](http://www.lisburn-enterprise.co.uk)

**Newry & Mourne Enterprise Agency**  
Newry  
T 028 3026 7011  
W [www.nmea.net](http://www.nmea.net)

**North City Business Centre Ltd**  
Belfast  
T 028 9074 7470  
W [www.north-city.co.uk](http://www.north-city.co.uk)

**North Down Development Org. Ltd**  
Bangor  
T 028 9127 1525  
W [www.nddo.co.uk](http://www.nddo.co.uk)

**Omagh Enterprise Company Ltd**  
Omagh  
T 028 8224 9494  
W [www.omaghenterprise.co.uk](http://www.omaghenterprise.co.uk)

**Ormeau Business Park**  
Belfast  
T 028 9033 9906  
W [www.ormeaubusinesspark.com](http://www.ormeaubusinesspark.com)

**Ortus - The Business Development Agency**  
Belfast  
T 028 9031 1002  
W [www.ortus.org](http://www.ortus.org)

**Roe Valley Enterprises Ltd**  
Limavady  
T 028 7776 2323  
W [www.roevalleyenterprises.com](http://www.roevalleyenterprises.com)

**Strabane Enterprise Agency**  
Strabane  
T 028 7138 2518  
W [www.seagency.co.uk](http://www.seagency.co.uk)

**Townsend Enterprise Park Ltd**  
Belfast  
T 028 9043 5778  
W [www.townsend.co.uk](http://www.townsend.co.uk)

**Workspace - The Enterprise Agency**  
Draperstown  
T 028 7962 8113  
W [www.workspace.org.uk](http://www.workspace.org.uk)

**Work West Enterprise Agency**  
Belfast  
T 028 9061 0826  
W [www.workwest.co.uk](http://www.workwest.co.uk)

## Enterprise NI Start Up Loan Fund

We deliver two Business Support Programmes to help SMEs access capital.

### ENTERPRISE NI START UP LOAN FUND

The Enterprise NI Start Up Loan Fund provides business loans to individuals starting a new business.

In the 12 months to September 2014, 146 loans were drawn down, at a value of £727,100.

### NI SMALL BUSINESS LOAN FUND

The Northern Ireland Small Business Loan Fund is part of Invest NI's Access to Finance Strategy. The fund provides unsecured loans to social enterprises and SMEs in the micro enterprise sector in the start up and growth phases.

The fund helps to bridge gaps where other funding options have been exhausted. Loans range from £1k - £50k.

Up to April 2014 £1 million in loans had been distributed from the initial £5 million fund. Enterprise NI works alongside Ulster Community Investment Trust (UCIT) as fund managers.

## Enterprise Northern Ireland Start Up Loans Recipients Shortlisted for Top UK Award

Two of the semi-finalists for the UK-wide 'Big Start Up Loans Competition' were from Northern Ireland. Both enterprises have received support through Enterprise NI initiatives.



Jonny Heywood, of Weight Loss Challenge Camp in Derry/Londonderry, received a loan from Enterprise NI Start Up Loans and managed to increase his customer base dramatically through effective advertising and marketing.



The winner of the Northern Ireland regional award was Vikki Bustard, who established Plant and Play Wildlife Garden in Bangor, Co Down in April 2014. Vikki was delighted at being shortlisted and at winning the award.

**'Our business plans got our business ideas off the ground.'**

To start a business, arrange a **FREE** meeting with a business adviser to develop your business plan.

Call **0800 027 0639**  
or visit [goforitni.com](http://goforitni.com)



**GO for it**