

NIIRTA news

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The magazine for the Northern Ireland Independent Retail Trade Association



Party Leaders Set Retail Priorities for Assembly Election



Retail a vital part of Northern Ireland economy

Employment and Learning Minister Danny Kennedy has stressed the importance of skills in the retail sector to improve performance and drive the economy forward.

The Minister was attending the first Skillsmart Retail Northern Ireland parliamentary reception, Growing investment in Northern Ireland retail skills, on Tuesday, March 15 at Stormont, which saw retailers from across Northern Ireland meet with MLAs to discuss the retail sector.

Speaking at the reception, the Minister said: "A well-skilled workforce is one of the key drivers needed to deliver a flexible and streamlined economy. We are undoubtedly in a time of economic challenge, but what we do now in terms of our investment in skills will help determine how well placed Northern Ireland will be to benefit from the recovery when it comes.

"My Department has a variety of training programmes and initiatives. Employers and employees in the retail sector can avail of these as can individuals interested in a career in retail. These can assist in improving the skills base of current employees as well as getting people into work in the sector."

Retail is the largest private sector employer in Northern Ireland. Employing 73,500 people in 6,420 retail businesses, 37% of those businesses do not provide any form of training. Sector Skills Councils such as Skillsmart Retail are working with the Department for Employment and Learning to help retailers deliver competitive advantage through their people. By ensuring that sector qualifications are endorsed by the industry, employers are placed at the heart of the skills system.

The gathering of industry leaders and politicians at Stormont demonstrates the significance of retail for the Northern Irish economy and the growing importance of skills within the industry. Retailers need to have access to the right training and skills to ensure the continued growth and health of the sector and the economy at large.



The event was hosted by MLA for Strangford, Simon Hamilton and Skillsmart Retail Chief Executive Anne Seaman.

Anne Seaman, Chief Executive of Skillsmart Retail said: "We were delighted to have the support of the Northern Ireland Independent Retail Trade Association (NIIRTA) to bring retailers and MLAs together to help drive the skills agenda forward in Northern Ireland and improve access to training for such a vital industry. I look forward to coming back to Belfast and Northern Ireland soon for the forthcoming launch of our network of retail skills shops as part of the National Skills Academy for Retail."

NIIRTA Chief Executive, Glyn Roberts said: "We will continue to promote the diverse range of career opportunities within retail and encourage people to see it as a career of choice rather than a career of last resort. The independent retail sector in particular offers entrepreneurs the opportunity to start their own business and perhaps even become the next Philip Green!"

Skillsmart Retail

Skillsmart Retail is the Sector Skills Council for Retail. Part-funded by Government and led by retailers, it aims to be the recognised authority on retailers' skills needs and priorities. Its mission is to drive a step change in skills levels in retail by:

- Making a compelling case for the formal recognition of retail skills
- Uniting retailers to simplify and improve access to the skills system
- Improving the quality of new recruits into the retail sector
- Raising the skills levels of the existing workforce in retail operations

www.skillsmartretail.com

Jobs Plan Manifesto Launched

For the first time ever a new coalition of eight of Northern Ireland's leading business organisations have jointly produced a manifesto ahead of the Assembly Elections and the new Programme for Government.



The Jobs Plan is a joint document of the CBI, NI Chamber of Commerce, Institute of Directors, Centre for Competitiveness, Momentum, Northern Ireland Food & Drink Association, Northern Ireland Independent Retail Trade Association and the Construction Employers Federation and was launched at the Pump House at the NI Science Park to an invited audience of leading members of the business community, MLAs, Ministers and young entrepreneurs.

The top actions in the Jobs Plan include:

- Decisive political leadership to create stability and confidence.
- Create a more competitive tax base to help support an ambitious export-led economic recovery, while reducing barriers to growth and job creation.
- Deliver a sustained investment strategy through the increased use of alternative sources of finance.
- Ensure skills provision is re-aligned to meets the future needs of the economy.

- Reform and re-engineer how public services are delivered to enhance productivity and outcomes.

The Eight Business Groups said: "The Jobs Plan is the first ever joint policy document by eight of Northern Ireland's leading business organisations, allowing the business community to speak with one voice on the big economic challenges we all face. Together we represent every sector of our economy, covering small and large businesses in every part of Northern Ireland"

"It sets out an economic framework and includes a comprehensive agenda for real change in the local economy, one in which the private sector will again take the lead in providing jobs and investment. We believe the right policy framework and investment could lead to the creation of 94,000 jobs by 2020"

Terence Brannigan, Chairman of CBI Northern Ireland said: "Northern Ireland faces stark challenges and choices. The decade of strong domestic demand fuelled by cheap credit and

growing public expenditure is over and we need to recast our goals and policies. Faced with this scenario we must now focus our attention on building confidence to encourage investment and trade."

John Armstrong, Managing Director of the Construction Employers Federation said: "Maximising investment in infrastructure is essential to providing an attractive environment both for our people to live and work in and for those who wish to invest in Northern Ireland. Capital investment is therefore of fundamental importance in stimulating and supporting economic development, in improving the competitiveness of the business environment and reducing regional imbalances."

Bob Barbour, Chief Executive of the Centre for Competitiveness said: "In the longer term a lower and competitive rate of corporation tax for business will help rebalance the N.I. economy. However consideration of other fiscal incentives in the short term is necessary to accelerate Northern Ireland's ability to secure investment, and create a more entrepreneurial driven business environment. This will enable an inward investment strategy focused on 'profit centres' rather than cost centres."

Francis Martin, President of Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce said: "With domestic demand constrained most growth in the economy will come from increasing our market share in external markets – which will in turn stimulate local demand. This will require an export-led growth strategy – harnessing the ambitions of local

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Party Leaders Set Retail Priorities for Assembly Election



Alliance is committed to rebalancing the economy to create a stronger and more vibrant private sector. This includes the small business sector which is the cornerstone of our local economy.

A stronger economy will maximise employment and spending power – benefiting all businesses. As well as attracting inward investment, it is vital that we support and grow our indigenous businesses. Our young people and existing workforce must have the skills that businesses need.

Alliance will work to protect and enhance our town centres. While the nature of retailing has transformed over the last three decades, the balance has not been right. We support a revised Planning Policy Statement 5 that encourages town

centre development and protects its social fabric.

We are working for an active urban regeneration policy and innovative master-planning process. This will include making our villages, town and cities safe shared spaces. Transport and parking issues should be key considerations. We oppose new charges for on street parking in provincial towns. All the various Departments with responsibilities in this regard need to better collaborate in producing shared and effective outcomes.

It is important to facilitate new office and leisure development, sparking economic activity that spills into existing or new retail developments. We must attract and sustain the interest of both locals and tourists, create a family friendly evening

economy, introduce flexible opening and licensing hours, ensure ease of movement and attract people into centres to live. We support the introduction of Business Improvement Districts.

Alliance favours keeping rate rises at acceptable levels in and around inflation, and an extension to small business rates relief. Our drive to increase investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency measures will help to reduce energy costs for business. We will continue to work to improve access to finance for small business and to reduce needless bureaucracy.

David Ford, Leader of the Alliance Party
www.allianceparty.org

In these difficult economic times, small businesses have suffered with many struggling to get by. In government, the DUP has been to the forefront of efforts to promote the expansion of the small business sector and help our businesses weather the economic downturn.

Small businesses make up the overwhelming majority of business concerns in Northern Ireland. The DUP wants to help this crucial sector expand. The extension of the Small Business Rates Relief Scheme, effectively doubling the level of rates relief available, announced in the recent budget represents delivery on our pro-business priorities. The extension of the scheme will be financed by a levy on out-of-town shopping centres. We have provided £8million in

assistance to 16,000 small businesses throughout Northern Ireland.

I understand the difficulties faced by our small business sector: this scheme is designed to bring some much-needed assistance. Money is better spent on shop fronts, than paying rates bills.

There is a wider societal benefit to the expansion of the scheme. Once small businesses in towns and villages start closing it often commences a spiral of decline which destroys town centres and has a damaging impact beyond shopping precincts. It is in all of our interests that small retailers, whether it is the greengrocer, the bakery, the butcher or the post office, continues to function. Independent retailers are the lifeblood of many towns: we must keep them

functioning. I am pleased that we have taken this action to keep our towns and village centres alive as well as providing a fillip to the small retail sector.

The DUP has used government to deliver the cap on manufacturing rates at 30% - helping 4,000 businesses and protecting thousands of jobs. We have frozen non domestic Regional Rates over the last three years in real terms. We want to use government to do even more to help small businesses in the next Assembly term. It is in all our interests that the small business sector, like the rest of Northern Ireland, keeps moving forward.

Rt. Hon. Peter Robinson
Leader of the Democratic Unionist Party
www.dup.org.uk

The Green Party believes that in these difficult times what we need is Economy for People and Planet. We will ensure that all policies are benchmarked on whether they are good for the economy, good for people and good for the environment.

As part of this commitment the Green Party will seek to rejuvenate our town centres and support independent traders. We recognise that small businesses are the backbone of our economy and that town centres are vital to maintain a sense of community, as well as providing genuine choice. Having shops on our doorstep also makes us less reliant on the car which will become increasingly important with oil

prices continuing to rise. No one should have to get in their car to get a pint of milk.

The Green Party sees it as imperative that we publish Public Planning Statement 5 (PPS5) which would restrict out of town retail development. These developments often destroy nearby town centres, putting local retailers out of business and wiping out the unique identity of our towns.

We support proposals to allow Northern Ireland to set its own corporation tax rates. However we oppose reducing the higher rate of corporation tax to that of the Republic of Ireland as this would simply reward those large multinationals that put independent traders' livelihoods at risk and take profits out of our local

economy. Instead we would look at reducing the Small Profits Rate to help small businesses and grow a sustainable economy from the ground up.

The Green Party will continue to champion the Green New Deal which has the potential to bring the Northern Ireland economy out of recession. Through investment in energy efficiency measures, public transport and the green tech sector we can create a low carbon economy which rising oil prices have made a necessity.

Stephen Agnew, Leader of the Green Party
www.greenpartyini.org

I share the sense of despair voiced by workers and small indigenous businesses that are suffering the effects of the economic recession that we find ourselves in.

I believe that there are lessons to be learned from this experience. Therefore, it is time for a radical rethink of how we plan for the future.

If we are to compete for sustainable direct inward investment as well as build our indigenous manufacturing sector then we must equip ourselves with the skill and expertise in the higher knowledge based disciplines. We must invest in our future by encouraging our youth to

focus on achieving qualification in areas such as research and development, intelligent design and medical research that will attract jobs to the high end of the economic spectrum which in turn will have the effect of creating other levels of employment that will be less susceptible to competition from low wage economies.

While welcoming and encouraging direct inward investment, in the new Assembly Sinn Féin will continue to endeavour to protect frontline services and existing jobs, but we will also put a focus on growing the local economy by investing in the future through support for the

small to medium business (SME) sector. SME's account for up to 90% of jobs created here and must be recognised as the backbone of our economy. Therefore it is essential that we encourage and support indigenous business not only to expand locally but also to compete in the export market.

We welcome and support proposals for an additional rates levy on out of town developments and initiatives to reinvigorate and redevelop our city and town centres.

Gerry Adams TD, President of Sinn Féin
www.sinnfein.ie

The SDLP is entering into these forthcoming Assembly and local government elections with an over-riding aim of uniting people and building prosperity.

In the next four years we want to build a North that is attractive to business. Creating jobs and growing our economy is top of our priorities.

We want to rebalance the economy to grow the private sector, build strong jobs-rich business sectors and improve north-south economic co-operation.

The SDLP's prosperity plan will help rebalance the economy through measures such as lower corporation tax and increase job

creation in areas such as tourism, construction and the green economy.

We will provide financial assistance to small business. We have proposed a targeted Recession Recovery Fund, micro-finance loans and multi-million pound triage loan package to ensure businesses that were viable before the downturn will remain viable in the years ahead.

The SDLP has also suggested a fundamental reform of the planning system which we believe is too slow in processing applications.

In government, town centre renewal has been a key part of the SDLP strategy.

Through the Department for Social

Development both Alex Attwood and myself have invested millions of pounds into public realm schemes.

Town centre regeneration is essential in order to sustain and increase local employment.

Improvements to streetscapes, roads and promenades all contribute to increasing the footfall of businesses in many main streets.

Reinvigoration of town centres as part of a larger economic strategy is central to the SDLP goal of building prosperity across Northern Ireland.

Margaret Ritchie MLP, Leader of the SDLP
www.sdlp.ie

The inability of the outgoing Executive and Assembly to progress a new PPS5 beyond the draft stage in which they inherited it, is a token of Stormont's dysfunctional failure and of its neglect of town centres and the retail trade. Ad hoc ministerial approvals outside the confines of a settled policy framework, such as that recently in favour of an out of town superstore in Banbridge, have done nothing for the hard pressed retail sector of town centres. Likewise dither and discord on issues like the John Lewis application have visited uncertainty and unease upon the sector.

The radical decline in the physical fabric and shopping infrastructure of many of our town

centres does not speak of good and caring government, needed most at times of deep recession. Punitive rates are driving many out of business. Now, Conor Murphy wants to hit town centre trade further by imposing the tyranny of parking charges in several provincial towns. While, on a whipped DUP/Sinn Féin the folly of a plastic bag tax is to be imposed, adding disproportionate cost to small business.

Big business seems the primary concern of government. Hence the headlong rush to try and reduce Corporation Tax, with no regard to the negative impact on our block grant, so vital to maintaining our public services and aiding the high street spending power of many public

sector employees.

As for the dead hand of regulation on small business, I see no diminution over the past 4 years of Stormont rule.

All of the above issues must be addressed in the next Assembly, if the next four years are not to be tougher than the last. On the back of past disappointments those in small business must be rightly fed up with sound-bite election promises, so, the pledge of TUV is not to promise miracles but a steady pro-business voice, unrestrained by attachment to the parties or system of government.

Jim Allister QC, TUV Leader
www.tuv.org.uk

The Ulster Unionist Party regard growing Northern Ireland's economy as a key priority for the next Assembly.

Small shops and enterprises are the lifeblood of the local economy, providing not only wealth and job creation but also making an invaluable contribution to local communities. It will be these same small businesses that are best placed to get Northern Ireland back to economic prosperity.

The Ulster Unionist Party seeks to reduce the burden of regulation on small businesses. In addition, increased pressure must also be placed on the local banking institutions so that they once again allow local businesses to borrow the money that they so desperately need in order to invest

and expand.

The Ulster Unionist Party were the first to raise the issue of lowering Corporation Tax as a means to boosting the local economy and competing on a more level playing field with the Republic of Ireland. We will now seek to turn Northern Ireland into an enterprise zone with a long-term strategy to rebalance the economy and boost the private sector.

Furthermore, the previous Assembly was marked by its inability to create a planning system fit for the 21st century. Even with the recent passing of the Planning Bill there is little to suggest that either Sinn Féin or the DUP regard an effective and efficient planning service as a

key driver in encouraging economic growth. The Ulster Unionist Party will be making the immediate publication of PPS 5 to support Town Centres and smaller retailers a key manifesto priority in the forthcoming Assembly election.

We are committed to ensuring that the next Executive genuinely places repairing our economy at its core. We are going into this election with the specific objectives of addressing the short-sighted revenue generating proposals for town carparking fees, the inflexible planning system, and the overall neglect of our town centres.

Tom Elliot, leader of the UUP
www.uup.org

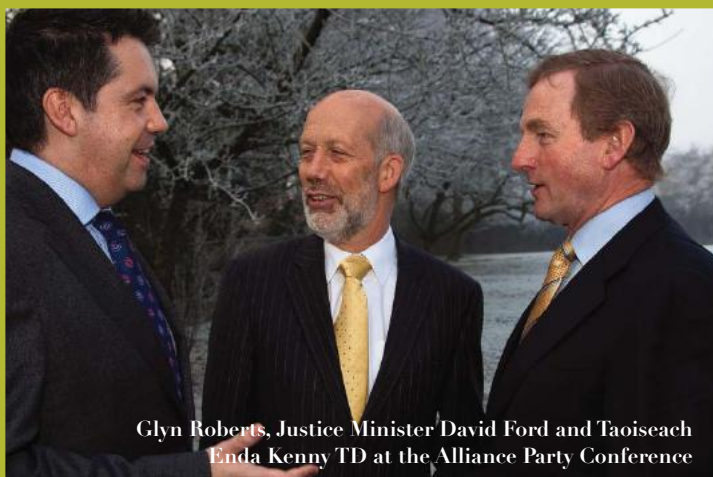
NIIRTA Lobbying for its members...



Kesh Small Business Owners meet with Enterprise Minister Arlene Foster, NIIRTA and FSB



Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness MP with members of Banbridge Chamber and NIIRTA



Glyn Roberts, Justice Minister David Ford and Taoiseach Enda Kenny TD at the Alliance Party Conference



Social Development Minister Alex Attwood MLA and Conall McDevitt MLA on a recent visit to Lisburn Road to meet local traders



Tom Elliott MLA, Leader of the Ulster Unionist Party with Glyn Roberts and members of Larne Traders Forum on a recent visit to the town



Environment Minister Edwin Poots, Glyn Roberts and Enterprise Minister Arlene Foster at a Business Breakfast in Coleraine

Online campaign fuels support for public transport - Translink launches 'car free, carefree' commitment



Translink, Northern Ireland's public transport provider is spearheading a campaign to encourage the public to go online and sign up to taking the bus or train. Against the backdrop of record breaking fuel prices, Translink has launched the 'Car free, Carefree' campaign in partnership with a number of groups in the business, tourism and retail sector to highlight the financial, economic and societal benefits of public transport.

Ciarán Rogan, Marketing Executive, Translink, explains: "We're asking people to sign up at www.translink.co.uk/carfreecarefree to take the bus or train at least once a month. For some, that might be a completely new experience or it might be committing to use public transport more than they currently do or, for others, a demonstration of what they already do!

"Our aim is to encourage more people to make that small change to their travel habits and see firsthand the benefits of taking the bus or train. As well as saving money and time, there are health and lifestyle benefits of avoiding driving, traffic and parking - you can help reduce congestion and your own carbon footprint.

"We focus on offering services that are value for money, attractive and sustainable and, through this campaign we hope to encourage as many people as possible to try them out. Having seen unprecedented hikes in fuel prices over recent weeks, we think there is no better time to start using public transport more often.

"We have a range of attractive, value for money ticket options to beat the rising costs of fuel so we want the message to reach far and wide, from families in towns and villages to city commuters, students and leisure travellers - so we're working in partnership with various people to show what public transport delivers."

Representatives from the local retail and business sector joined Translink at the launch of the recent campaign: "Public transport is an essential and vital part of business,

tourism and simply every day travel on this island and should be invested in and enhanced for years to come," commented Noel Brady, Managing Director, Consult Nb1 Ltd. "For instance, for companies like mine, with clients both north and south of the border, the Enterprise service is an invaluable business conduit, allowing me to work on the train and network with the large number of business people who use it. I arrange to hold meetings during and at either end of my journey and it is an extremely efficient use of my time."

Also speaking at the launch, Glyn Roberts, Chief Executive, Northern Ireland Independent Retail Trade Association (NIIRTA) said: "Public transport is 100% vital to local independent retailers and a key component in aiding the regeneration of towns and cities. People need to realise that supporting our local public transport system is vital in order to keep it in place. We will be encouraging our retailer members in communities across Northern Ireland to sign up to the online commitment and spread the word to their local customers."

From an urban perspective, Andrew Irvine, City Centre Manager, Belfast City Centre Management underlined the importance of encouraging city users to shift to public transport: "This campaign will further our aim of improving accessibility through reducing traffic congestion and illegal traffic incursions into the city centre restricted zones." "Our organisation seeks to promote increased footfall and trade in Belfast city centre and as some 40% of city centre users do not have access to a car, public transport is essential in helping achieve our organisational objectives."

Further information about this campaign and the range of special deals and ticket options visit www.translink.co.uk/carfreecarefree - where you can also sign up to be part of Translink's online car free, carefree commitment.



BLUEPRINT FOR FUTURE OF BELFAST

Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce has published a blueprint for the future of the city.

The Belfast Manifesto sets out the aspirations of the business community on how to improve the economy of the capital city. The Manifesto is the brainchild of the Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce, which supports the city's business community.

Speaking at the launch of the Manifesto in the Long Gallery at Stormont, the President of the Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce, Norman Maynes, said the Manifesto was the first of its kind dedicated to the capital city.

"With over 28% of all jobs in Northern Ireland, a primary catchment population of 1.8 million and attracting over seven million high spending visitors each year, Belfast is clearly the economic engine for Northern Ireland. There is no doubt that the Belfast business community has a crucial role to play in consolidating the city's position as a leading UK destination for retail, trade, leisure and tourism.

"A vitally important partnership for the Chamber is that with our elected representatives in the NI Assembly, its government departments and Belfast City Council. Belfast businesses pay 67% of the Belfast rates bill but they have no opportunity to vote in Council or Assembly elections.

"That considered, this Manifesto aims to help influence party policy by setting out our views for the forthcoming Programme of Government.

"Foremost, we outline steps that could be taken by the Assembly to deliver an efficient public administration by adopting a more joined up approach to Government. These include an overarching Belfast

Strategy, located within the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister – and the creation of an All Party Working Group on town centres within the NI Assembly.

"We point to necessary improvements in planning policy – such as the need for the land use planning hierarchy to be rationalised into one Government department – and the overdue adoption of the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan and PPS5.

"We call for legislation that insists on consultation between Government and city centre businesses before striking a rate. "Furthermore, we call for non domestic rates to be based at least in part, on business turnover and not solely location and use.

"BCTC would welcome a reduction in Corporation Tax to the level of 12.5% but only on the caveat that any associated reduction in the Northern Ireland Block Grant is phased in. The challenge and opportunity to the private sector to replace the unbalanced and unsustainable reliance on the public sector is to be welcomed.

"Crucial to success is the need for Belfast to be a clean, attractive city and whilst the 'Streets Ahead' project has vastly improved the quality and appearance of the city centre, steps must be taken to ensure these high standards are maintained. We call for the resources given to cleansing operations to be doubled – and propose a 7am start for the first round of city centre cleansing operations.

"In creating a city that is attractive to all, it must be accessible by all – and our Manifesto highlights specific areas in public transport and car parking that must be addressed.

"The Chamber calls on the Department for Regional Development to prioritise investment which will assist in enhancing Metro bus services through the creation of additional quality bus corridors, bus priority measures within the city centre and more strategic Park and Ride sites.

"In addition, car parking tariffs should be structured to encourage short term parking and ultimately encourage all day parkers to switch to public transport.

"Chamber has also been working very closely with Belfast City Council, Northern Ireland Tourist Board, Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau and Translink for several months to develop and implement a new innovative Belfast Visitor Pass.

"We believe that we are only the second city in the UK to introduce such a pass behind London and plan to launch this new initiative in the coming months.

"This new Pass is a great example of what can be achieved by working in partnership for the greater good of Belfast while also offering benefits for retailers, places of leisure and entertainment, attractions and public transport.

"We hope it will help contribute to growing the number of tourists and visitors to our city and help to further grow the local economy and social regeneration of Belfast.

"I hope this marks the beginning of a long term, mutually beneficial relationship between Local Government and the Belfast City Centre business community – as we work together to ensure Belfast remains a vibrant, safe, attractive and successful city for all."

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NIIRTA Delighted with Out of Town Rates Levy in Budget

The Northern Ireland Independent Retail Trade Association has given a strong welcome to the new proposals outlined in Finance Minister's Budget speech in the Assembly for an extension of the Small Business Rate Relief Scheme, cross subsidised by a rates levy on out of town superstores.

This was a central policy objective for NIIRTA and was outlined in its manifesto Programme for Prosperity last year.

Glyn Roberts NIIRTA Chief Executive said: "We are delighted that the Finance Minister has listened to our concerns and adopted a key policy priority of NIIRTA's."

"Out of town retail stores enjoy a significant competitive advantage over town centre retailers with free car parking and improved transport infrastructure. In addition they are paying comparatively less rates than town centre retailers"

"Let us not forget that the UK multiple supermarkets have been largely unaffected by the recession and continue to make billions in profit every year."

"This policy is an important step toward a level playing field between out of town and town centre retailers and will encourage retailers to locate their stores in town centres if they want to avoid paying more rates."

"Fair rates has been a key concern for our members for some time and this scheme has potential to give real help to both recession hit small retailers and encourage more investment in our town and city centres."

"We also need to see the DOE publish Draft Policy Statement 5 to further protect our town centres from unsustainable out of town retail development."



Cont. from p.3

companies to increase exports to over £8.2bn by 2020 (currently £5.6bn) and doubling our tourism revenues to £1bn by 2020."

Joanne Stuart IoD Chairman said: "While stimulating growth in indigenous companies is important, attracting high value Foreign Direct Investment will help us achieve key objectives such as building scale, improving our exporting capacity, exploiting the research capabilities of our universities and improving our competitiveness. Foreign investment must be a key economic priority for the Executive. Our efforts must be sufficiently resourced and supported with a mix of financial and other incentives."

Ian Graham, Chief Executive of Momentum said: "We must ensure that education/training provision is aligned with the needs of an export-led, technology-driven economy. This will require focused investment in leadership and management skills, marketing and sales skills, and in vocational/technical and innovation skills"

Michael Bell Executive Director of Northern Ireland Food & Drink Association said: "The economy is the No 1 priority – without such a commitment, addressing disadvantage and improving our environment will not be achieved. The Agri-food sector alone could deliver a 40% growth in the food and drinks industry to £4.5bn could generate up to 7,500 direct jobs and another £600m of new external sales a year (with another 7,500 jobs within the overall supply chain."

Glyn Roberts, NIIRTA Chief Executive said: "Radically better performance within the planning system to improve certainty and speed up decision making is needed. This should include publication of Planning Policy Statement 5 to support town centres and a new PPS 24 to give greater emphasis to economic considerations in planning determinations, combined with the development of 'planning zones'.

Copies of the Jobs Plan can be downloaded at www.niirta.com

Supplying local businesses since 1985

Equipashop.com is a local, family owned and run company based at our showroom premises on Prince Regent Road, Belfast. The company started as a small retail supplies business and we have now grown into a large retail supplies and shop fittings superstore. Equipashop can now deliver all over the world, however it is our local businesses where our company began. For this reason we have become members of the Northern Ireland Independent Retail & Trade Association to work closer with you and give you the resources you need to function and grow as a business.



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We work closely with our suppliers to ensure we get the best prices from them when we purchase our stock. This allows us to keep our prices as low as possible, passing the savings onto you.

We also monitor retail trends closely to ensure the products we stock are keeping up with the demands of our customers, the industry and your stores customers' expectations. In turn we can bring the products in before the demand pushes up prices, again allowing us to pass the savings onto you.

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NIIRTA Expresses Concern Over 30 Town Car Park Charges

The Northern Ireland Independent Retail Trade Association has expressed concern at DRD proposals to introduce car parking charges for 30 towns in Northern Ireland.

Glyn Roberts NIIRTA Chief Executive said: "We have major concerns that these proposals will result in more shoppers being forced to go to out of town stores which offer free car parking. At a time when we should be encouraging more shoppers to our struggling town centres this is the wrong charge"

"Many of these towns already offer a one or two hour



free parking before a fine is levied-what is wrong with that system? The DRD claims that their proposals will mean a greater turnover of vehicles in town centres which is simply wrong-it will deter people from going to town centres."

UK Budget-‘Positive for Small Business’

The Northern Ireland Independent Retail Trade Association has welcomed Chancellor George Osborne’s Budget as being largely ‘positive for small businesses’, particularly on its pledges to reduce red tape and regulation.

NIIRTA Chief Executive Glyn Roberts said: "The Chancellor had very room to manoeuvre given that state of public finances, but this budget is largely positive for small businesses and I hope it will give them encouragement to expand and employ more staff."

On reducing Red Tape: "Since the majority of businesses in Northern Ireland employ less than 10 people, it is to be welcomed that no new regulations will be imposed on them for three years. Time and time again our members have told us that they are drowning under the huge burden of red tape and employment law-so we hope that this will give them valuable breathing space."

"We also need the Northern Ireland Executive to follow through with a similar commitment and we hope that this will form part of the new



Programme for Government after the Assembly Elections."

On Fuel Duty: "While we had hoped they could go further on reducing fuel duty given the negative impact on both consumers and our members, the Chancellor has taken measures which will give some small help to alleviate the problem"

"The removal of the Fuel Escalator is a sensible step as is the dropping of the 4p rise but we would have preferred a reduction on VAT on fuel."

On Tax: "This is an area which the Chancellor could have been bolder. Instead of tinkering with a very small increase in personal tax allowance, Mr Osborne would have been better reducing VAT for hard working families"

"A 2% reduction in Corporation Tax is welcome, but we would hope that Northern Ireland will get a much bigger reduction in the years to come."

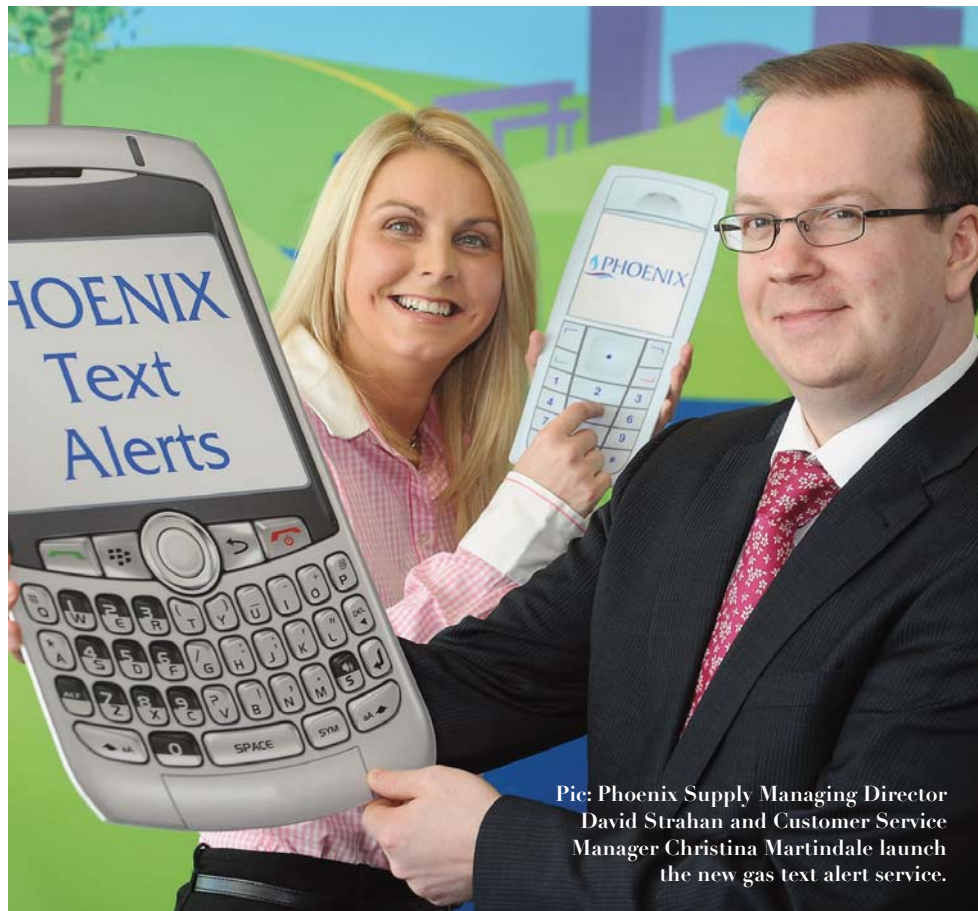
Overall Assessment on Budget: "NIIRTA hopes that this Budget will stimulate growth in the Economy, particularly for our small business sector in Northern Ireland. The devil is always in the detail in UK Budgets and we will scrutinise it further."

Text Alerts For Gas Customers

Phoenix Supply has launched a daily wholesale gas price text alert service for its business customers. Wholesale gas costs change every day and the alerts will give customers a daily update on the latest pricing developments in global energy markets.

David Strahan, Managing Director of Phoenix Supply, said: "Our highly experienced gas purchasing team are in place to support and advise industrial and commercial customers to ensure they are fully updated on what are often very fast moving energy markets. This new free text alert initiative adds to our already award-winning customer service offering".

Phoenix Supply is the largest natural gas supplier in Northern Ireland, with around 135,000 customers.



Pic: Phoenix Supply Managing Director David Strahan and Customer Service Manager Christina Martindale launch the new gas text alert service.

HR/Employment Law and Health & Safety Compliance website and helpline

NIIRTA launched an exciting new HR / Employment Law and Health & Safety Compliance website and helpline service in partnership with The Xact Group.

Complying with Employment and Health & Safety legislation is becoming an increasing burden on retailers.

The costs of employing 'consultants' to help you with the onerous task of complying have also increased dramatically over the past few years with some members encountering problems and disappointments with the final product and service delivery.

To counter this Xact have designed a web based portal for dealing with all

aspects of Best Practice and Compliance in all the areas of HR Management, Employment Law and Health & Safety.

The site which will be branded NIITRA is specifically designed for retailers operating in Northern Ireland and is structured around 3 main areas.

- Human Resources
- Health & Safety Alerts
- A - Z

The cost to members on an annual renewable basis (no long term contract!!) are:
HR - £180 per annum
H&S - £180 per annum
Combined - £300 per annum

Remember the information is specific to the Northern Ireland retail sector with specifically designed contracts/ employee handbooks on the HR side and specifically designed Risk Assessments and guides on the H&S side.

We recommend that you view the demonstration site on:
<http://niirta.xactadvice.co.uk>

EMAIL: demo@niirta.co.uk
PASSWORD: demo123

To look at what is on offer or contact the XACTADVICE team on:
0845 665 3006 or
enquiries@xactgroup.co.uk



Northern Ireland shop workers facing an increase in Workplace Violence.

In the last few months, we have seen an unfortunate rise in shop workers suffering abuse, threats and violence in the workplace.

Just before Christmas a shop worker in the North West lost her unborn baby when she was beaten up by a customer. Last month, two men armed with a sledgehammer robbed a filing station in Cookstown and already this month there have been two incidents in North Belfast. One in which staff in an Oldpark Road business were threatened by an armed robber and another where a man entered a pharmacy on the Cliftonville Road brandishing a knife. Hollywood based company Quell have been working with several organisations throughout Northern Ireland who are keen to take action and ensure that the workforce are protected, through effective and preventative action.

Specialists in Workplace Violence and Risk Management Quell provide workplace violence policies, in house training and a series of open workshops which focus on conflict management, lone working and dealing with aggression in the workplace.

'Coping with an aggressive individual can be an

extremely stressful experience,' says Quell Director Will Holland 'We aim to provide retailers with practical tools and techniques which will help them to deal with a potentially dangerous situation. Investing in polices and training is not a wasted expense these days, but an essential step to protect everyone from workplace violence.'

Quell's one day 'Dealing Effectively with Difficult or Aggressive People' workshop which takes place on 5 April and 21 June will be of particular interest to NIIRTA members. It is scenario based and will equip retailers with the skills needed to act professionally, understand and identify the key signs of potentially dangerous situations and defuse them effectively, thereby reducing the risk of the incident becoming uncontrollable and violent.

For further information on Workplace Violence and Risk Management or to book a place on the workshop please contact Quell on 028 90 425424 or visit us at www.quelltraining.com

NIE Energy helps local retailers save on refrigeration

NIE Energy has launched a new scheme for NIIRTA members, providing support towards a retail refrigeration package including doors and LED lighting, which will help retailers save on their energy costs and more importantly their energy bills.

With refrigeration typically accounting for 75% of the total energy bill in local convenience stores, it is a key area for retailers to focus investment in energy efficiency. The addition of transparent doors and efficient lighting will reduce energy use in chilled cabinets by as much as 40%. Not only will you be reducing your energy costs but the reduction in electricity use will lead to a reduction in carbon emissions.



A grant of up to 20% (maximum £4,000) is available and retailers can also take advantage of the Carbon Trust Interest Free Loan, to help make the switch to more energy saving measures easier.

For more information or to apply simply visit www.nieenergy.co.uk. The scheme is funded by the Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme and available on a first come, first served basis.

Open For Business –Fareshare Ireland

By Alison Upton

FareShare Island of Ireland is open for business. We rescue surplus good food that would otherwise go to landfill and redistribute it to voluntary and community organisations combating poverty. FareShare addresses two urgent issues that face the Island of Ireland – food poverty and food waste.

FareShare IOI offers an ethical alternative for good food destined for landfill. Through our quality assured systems, FareShare IOI offers a unique opportunity for local food companies to support organisations working with disadvantaged people and ensure that, 'no good food should be wasted'.

The current economic climate is having unprecedented negative impact in the voluntary and

community sector. FareShare IOI sources quality, fit for purpose produce from the food and drink industry and the net saving for charities can be diverted to key front line services.

The Welcome Organisation provides a drop-in centre for Belfast's homeless. Director Sandra Moore says, 'Food is a significant cost to us. The organisation has to raise funds of £55,000 per annum to provide these services. Food from FareShare IOI will help us divert scarce resources to the delivery of other support services such as health and well being, harm reduction and education programmes'.

At our Belfast depot, staffed mostly by volunteers, we also provide training and education in the essential life skills of safe food

preparation and healthy eating plus employability skills of warehousing and distribution.

FareShare IOI is currently funded by DOE, Food Standards Agency NI, SafeFood and Garfield Weston. The Belfast Depot was opened with significant support in kind from The Red Sky Group, Montgomery Refrigeration and media company Adbugs.

Now is a great time for retailers to explore opportunities to work with us.

For more information on the development of the Belfast Pilot and the network throughout Ireland contact:

Alison Upton –
alison.upton@fareshare-ioi.eu

Responsible Energy Management

Belfast based Global Trust Certification has launched the new Responsible Energy Management (REM) certification programme to deliver green credentials and cost savings for SME organisations in Northern Ireland.



David Browne, Technical Director of Global Trust Energy commented, "We are pleased to have developed a programme that will cost effectively increase the competitiveness of SMEs in Northern Ireland who are particularly exposed to rising energy prices. When certified, organisations benefit from the use of the REM Green Certification Mark, increased energy efficiency and lower operating costs by embedding best practice energy management processes."

"REM was developed as a response to a lack of relevant energy management standards for SME organisations," commented Business Development Manager, Phil Vernon. "While SME organisations display a strong desire to capitalise on the benefits of energy management many do not have the time, money or expertise to do so."

REM provides a credible, effective and affordable platform for organisations to benefit from certification by transforming energy management from an ad hoc activity into an effective organisational strategy in a simple and robust manner.

The REM programme guides organisations towards a better understanding of how they are using their energy and toward identifying opportunities for improvement. Combining these aspects with commitment and communication across the organisation leads to sustained energy savings over time.

"REM is a natural first step" commented David Browne, "not only are energy prices rising but customers are increasingly seeking confirmation that their supply chain has taken steps towards sustainable practices. For businesses

energy is the most tangible aspect of the sustainability agenda in that energy savings equal cost savings, so our view is why not start there?"

"Northern Ireland companies have made great strides in moving towards energy efficiency, however have not been able to capitalise on the marketing value of the green credentials they possess as they have no credible way of communicating this to stakeholders. Through independent certification to the REM standard these organisations are now able to demonstrate that credibility."

Global Trust is a solutions driven organisation that has been developing sustainability solutions for over 12 years and currently operates in 23 countries worldwide.

Peter Marshall, Global Trust CEO commented that, "success comes from the ability to deliver value for money. For SME organisations in Northern Ireland, REM's dual benefits of green credentials and sustained cost reductions ensures real value for money and will be of particular interest to retail and trade organisations."

Global Trust already has a list of interested parties across the retail, manufacturing, construction and public sector in NI and will be announcing a strategic training partner and strategic facilitation partner for the REM programme in the coming weeks.

To Go Green with the REM certification programme, contact Global Trust at: Tel: +44 2890511202, Email: info@gtcert.com, Web: www.gtcert.com



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Friends of the Earth & Retailers Express Concern Over Plastic Bag Levy Vote in Assembly

Declan Allison from Friends of the Earth said: "Friends of the Earth support measures to reduce plastic bag use, but the proposed levy seems to be poorly thought through. It's unclear if it is intended to discourage plastic bag use or if it is a revenue raiser. It has to do one or the other – it can't do both."

"The Department of the Environment has had £4m per year deducted from its budget to fund the Green New Deal, and it's proposed the levy will raise enough money to replace it. It appears, therefore, that the levy is intended to be a revenue raiser. Using the levy in this way will send a confusing message to the public. Some of the work programmes that will be cut because the DOE is losing £4m per year are on fly tipping and the repatriation of illegally dumped waste. So, essentially, the public is being asked to buy plastic bags, thereby generating waste, in order to tackle waste. It's a perverse and muddled message."

Glyn Roberts, NIIRTA Chief Executive said: "This legislation did not need to be rushed through by Accelerated Passage as much more consultation needs to be done with retailers, environmental groups and other stakeholders. The Assembly Environment Committee supports that position and we are calling upon MLAs today to do likewise."

"We have real concerns that this legislation, far from protecting the environment will actually cause it greater harm as proven in the Republic where more consumers are buying black plastic bin liners (which take 1000 year to biodegrade on landfill) because single use bag usage has dropped."

"It will also put retailers in the position as unofficial tax collectors adding to their operating costs and an already growing red tape burden."

"A new strategy should be developed by the DOE, working with retailers, environmental groups and packaging companies, which builds upon the voluntary approach of educating customers and avoiding more plastic bags going to landfill."

Jane Bevis, Public Affairs Director at the British Retail



Consortium, said: "Protecting the environment isn't simple. If a measure to restrict plastic bag use is rushed through there's a danger it will end up doing more harm than good."

"An Environment Agency report published in England in the last few days showed thin plastic carriers have the smallest carbon footprint of any bag. Paper bags need to be reused three times and cotton bags more than 130 times before their impact on the environment is less."

"Latest figures from WRAP, the waste reduction body, found Northern Ireland had the second lowest usage of thin carrier bags of all the home nations, an average of just over eight per person per month."

"Rushing through legislation without understanding all the complexities could result in damaging unintended consequences, and undo some of the progress made so far. It risks increasing costs for consumers and businesses during an already difficult financial period."

In the Republic figures for Black Plastic Sales were:

Tesco – 77% increase in pedal bin liner sales

SuperQuinn – 84% increase in nappy disposable bag sales

SuperValue/Centra – 75% increase in swing bin liner sales

Evidence to Scottish Parliament, Environment and Rural Development Committee Hearings 2005

The use of plastic bags in Ireland (including substitute bin liners) analysed through HM Customs figures shows the amount of plastic bags imported into Ireland has actually gone up after their bag tax from 29,846 tonnes in 2001 to 31,649 tonnes in 2006

HM Customs statistics (analysed by Mike Kidwell Associates/PAFA 2007)

Has your business gone social?

It's hard to escape it nowadays. Everywhere you go you hear about social media. It has been responsible for revolutions, Oscar wins and even a bid to free our very own Jim McDonald after his brush with the law.

So what is social media? In short, social media is the catch all name for websites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn. Social media sites allow people to interact and network with other individuals on the site.

Facebook has over 650 million users with half of these logging in at least once a day. Facebook allows users to post pictures, status updates and links to their Facebook "Friends".

Twitter is much more targeted and focused when compared to Facebook allowing users to "tweet" short messages to their "followers".

Many businesses have already come to recognise the incredible potential of social media. It is cheap, easy to maintain and a great way to communicate with your customers. Once it is set up - there are no ongoing costs.

For your social media campaign to be successful you need to develop relationships with your customers. Once you get your customers to connect with your business – messages you publish on Facebook will appear on your customers' news feed, visible each time they login.

A retailer, for example, could send out a message to all their customers offering a discount or promotion on a day when trade is slower. There is no wait time – the message immediately appears on the customer's computer or mobile phone.

Belfast based Succeed Marketing (www.succeedmkg.com) recently partnered with the NIIRTA to be their official social media partners. Succeed Marketing specialises in developing



and managing social media campaigns for businesses and represent clients from all around the world.

Mark Snowden of Succeed Marketing explains how social media can help businesses.

"There has been a massive shift in the way we communicate with each other. People are spending more and more of their time on social media sites. Its crucial businesses accept this fact and position themselves where their customers are spending so much time.

We offer a one stop social media shop – strategy, development, advertising, management and training. Whether it's Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn or YouTube, we will help you monetise. Succeed Marketing are currently offering a FREE Twitter Business account to NIIRTA members who sign up before June.

For details of how we can help you - contact info@succeedmkg.com or call 0800 680 0624."





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Finance Minister to help Smarten Up City Centre Shops

Sammy Wilson has announced his intention to change the law so that empty shop fronts can be used for non-commercial purposes without incurring full rates.



The aim is to prevent businesses being penalised for making alternative use of empty premises, something which can prevent empty shops contributing to a run-down feel in town centres. The issue will be consulted upon at the same time as the recently announced proposals for extending the Small Business Rate Relief scheme, by charging a levy on the largest shops.

The Minister said: "During this economic downturn our town centres are suffering from shop closures. I want to encourage the use of empty shop fronts for community, artistic and other non commercial purposes. "At the moment almost any use of an empty shop will trigger full commercial rates and I think we need to change this position while so many shops are lying empty. Empty shops are not good for business, they can soon lead to decline and it is important that the traders who are managing to stay in business through these difficult times are allowed to work with landlords and owners to improve the appearance of shopping areas without being landed with extra rates. "I have listened to what retail businesses are telling me and the problems they are facing with the continuing downturn.

While we still have to raise the same money through business rates to pay for essential services, I want to make sure we do this in a fairer way. This is all part of a rebalancing strategy for business rates."

It is expected that the issue will go out to consultation early in the summer and the views of national and local traders, shoppers and local business people will be canvassed before any decisions are made.

NIIRTA Chief Executive Glyn Roberts said: "This is a welcome initiative which will improve the image of our town centres if they have a number of empty shop fronts which are unattractive to shoppers and tourists. Empty and shuttered shops are a real blight in local our town centres."

"NIIRTA reiterates its support for the big store rates levy which would create a level playing field in relation to rates and throw a lifeline to securing jobs with struggling small traders by extending the Small Business Rate Relief scheme."

"As the Assembly finishes its term, rates reform is an issue on which the Executive has clearly delivered for both manufacturers and small businesses."



Attwood and McGimpsey set minimum price of alcohol for consultation

Social Development Minister Alex Attwood and Health Minister Michael McGimpsey have launched the consultation on a minimum price for alcohol.

The two Ministers are advocating that the minimum price for a unit of alcohol, be it in off licences, pubs or registered clubs, should be between 40p and 70p. The exact minimum price will then be determined following the outcome of consultation.

Given there are approximately 11 units of alcohol in a six pack of beer, that would mean the minimum price of a six pack would be £4.40 if the 40p per unit was adopted and £7.70 if the 70p figure was adopted. For Chardonnay wine, with ten units of alcohol, the minimum price could not be below £4 at the very least.

Scotland consulted on a 45p per unit minimum price but was unsuccessful in bringing it forward as legislation.

Minimum pricing is part of a government drive to reduce irresponsible drinking, reduce binge drinking, reduce anti social behaviour and in turn reduce a significant drain on the Health Service.

It is estimated that alcohol abuse costs society as much as £900million a year.

Alex Attwood said: "I want to make it clear that we are in no way penalising responsible drinkers. I am though concerned about the level of alcohol misuse in Northern Ireland and in particular how heavily discounted alcohol prices contributes to the problem. I believe there is a strong weight of evidence for introducing minimum pricing as a further tool for tackling the harm of alcohol misuse in our

society.

"This initiative, together with proposals and new laws on irresponsible alcohol promotions, will be important steps forward in the dealing with the use and misuse of alcohol."

Health Minister Michael McGimpsey said: "Alcohol misuse costs the Health and Social Care Sector almost £250million a year.

"In real terms, alcohol is 62% more affordable now than it was 30 years ago and research indicates that a minimum unit price of 40p and a ban on promotions could decrease consumption by 5.4%. This would mean savings of £13.5million to the health and Social Care Sector every year.

"We need to take significant action now and today's consultation marks an important step in changing our unhealthy relationship with alcohol. It will not come overnight, but by working in partnership and being proactive, we will make a difference."

Detailed research from Sheffield University highlights that a real impact on reducing alcohol consumption would start to kick in whenever a minimum price is set at 40p.

A 16 week consultation on the draft proposals will commence on Monday 7 March and can be accessed through the DSD (<http://www.dsdni.gov.uk>) and DHSSPS (<http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk>) websites. Hard copies of the consultation document will also be available on request.

UFU launches an Agriculture Manifesto for the 2011 NI Assembly Elections

The Ulster Farmers' Union has officially launched an Agriculture Manifesto for the 2011 NI Assembly Elections. The Manifesto outlines the key agricultural issues that the UFU believes candidates need to be committed to addressing if they are to secure farmers votes in the upcoming election.



UFU President John Thompson along with Deputy President Harry Sinclair launch the UFU's Agriculture Manifesto for the 2011 NI Assembly Elections.

UFU President John Thompson said; "Agriculture is a very important industry in Northern Ireland. Not only is it one of the foundations of rural life but it is a bedrock of our national economy. The agri-food industry in Northern Ireland has been one of the few industries that has continued to trade strongly during the recession. Annually, the industry turns over £3.2 billion, with an additional £1.5 billion generated in exports.

Currently, there are over 90,000 jobs being sustained and there is the potential to develop the industry further. It has been estimated that with proper support and investment the Northern Ireland agri-food industry could grow its sales by 40% over the next 10 years and create up to 15,000 new jobs over that period. Given the current economic climate and with encouraging figures like this it is clear that investing in the agri-food industry not only

benefits those working in agriculture but benefits society and the wider economy as a whole. For these reasons, it is vital that we have strong support for the agricultural industry from our politicians.

"The Manifesto highlights the key agricultural issues concerning farmers. The reform of Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) post 2013 is a hot topic currently being discussed at regional, national and EU political levels. Farmers want to see a CAP that supports vibrant rural communities based around a food production industry that is economically viable and allows for the sustainable management of natural resources. To do this, the UFU is urging Northern Ireland's politicians to recognise the importance of the CAP to rural life and to ensure that they push the EU to at least maintain the CAP budget at its existing level. There are a number of other key elements to the CAP, which is why we have produced this document to help politicians better understand this important policy and to ensure they have a good grasp on farmers needs in relation to the CAP."

Other key issues outlined in the Manifesto include: Land Eligibility, Future of Less Favoured Area (LFA) support, DARD Budget 2011-2014, Groceries Code Adjudicator, Animal/Plant Health, Better Regulation, and Climate Change.

John Thompson added; "We will be sending a copy of the Manifesto to all the election candidates and we are working to arrange meetings with all the main political party leaders"

A copy of the Manifesto is available via the UFU website www.ufuni.org.

NIIRTA

Benefits of Membership

Do you have a News Story? Contact NIIRTA with the details and we'll cover it if we can!

What is NIIRTA?

It's not just a lobbying body – it's a trade association with an excellent range of services and benefits available to members.

What can NIIRTA do for you?

NIIRTA can provide retailers with advice on a whole range of issues – from rates reductions and car parking to crime prevention and legislation information.

Here's a list of what's on offer from NIIRTA...

NIIRTA News – a regular update on issues affecting you!

Public Affairs – NIIRTA is the voice at Government level on all issues affecting your business

NIIRTA Advice Helpline 028 9022 0004 –

Available 9.00-5.00 – Monday to Friday – for specific advice on employment and other issues.

HCMA – a sickness and injury scheme similar to BUPA – contact NIIRTA for details or telephone 01423 866985 (and quote NIIRTA).

Willis Insurance –

Property insurance at competitive rates – Contact NIIRTA or Ian McClure at Willis Insurance – 028 9089 5068 and mobile 07961 453303

XACT – Health & Safety/Food Management System available at competitive rates – 'No Obligation' audit facility available to NIIRTA members. Contact Xact on 0845 665 3006.

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Launch of Consultation Paper on Rebalancing the Northern Ireland Economy

The Treasury has launched a three month consultation on ideas to rebalance the Northern Ireland economy.



The consultation paper considers options for raising employment, improving productivity and promoting growth, including possible mechanisms for devolving corporation tax rate varying powers to Northern Ireland. Owen Paterson MP, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland said: "The launch of this consultation demonstrates that this Government is willing to consider a wide range of options for rebalancing the economy. The paper was an election pledge and a key commitment for Northern Ireland in the Coalition Programme for Government. It includes a comprehensive and balanced discussion on the potential for the setting of the rate of corporation tax in Northern Ireland to be devolved to the Northern Ireland Executive. I would encourage people and businesses throughout Northern Ireland to contribute their views to the Treasury during the consultation period."

As set out in the Coalition Programme for Government, and at the June 2010 Budget, the UK Government and the Northern Ireland Executive have a common objective to 'rebalance the Northern Ireland economy', to increase the size of the private sector and drive faster economic growth.

This consultation paper sets out options that could be taken to support rebalancing of the Northern Ireland economy, including the issues involved in devolving the power to vary the corporation tax rate for profits in Northern Ireland.

The consultation paper does not make recommendations. The aim of this stage of consultation is to gain a fuller understanding of the benefits and costs that a separate rate would involve for Northern Ireland and for the rest of the UK.

This consultation paper also notes a number of reviews

and strategies relating to non tax options including action being taken by the UK Government using UK wide powers and action by the Northern Ireland Executive using devolved policy powers to drive economic growth in Northern Ireland. The paper invites views on the most effective approach to rebalancing the Northern Ireland economy.

The Government welcomes responses from any interested organisations or individuals. When responding please state whether you are responding as an individual or representing the views of an organisation. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please make it clear who the organisation represents, and where applicable, how the views of members were assembled.

Contact details: niconsultation@hmtreasury.gsi.gov.uk

On rebalancing the Northern Ireland economy, responses should be sent to:

Mark Parkinson
Room 1/31
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London SW1A 2HQ

On devolving corporation tax to Northern Ireland, responses should be sent to:

Richard Williams
Room 2/N2
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London SW1A 2HQ