

# NIIRTAnews

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10th Anniversary and 2010 General Election Special

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*NIIRTA Chairman Paddy Doody, Sammy Wilson MP MLA, Finance Minister  
and David Strahan MD Phoenix Supply*



Main political parties set out their policy priorities for small retailers

## NIIRTA celebrates 10 years!



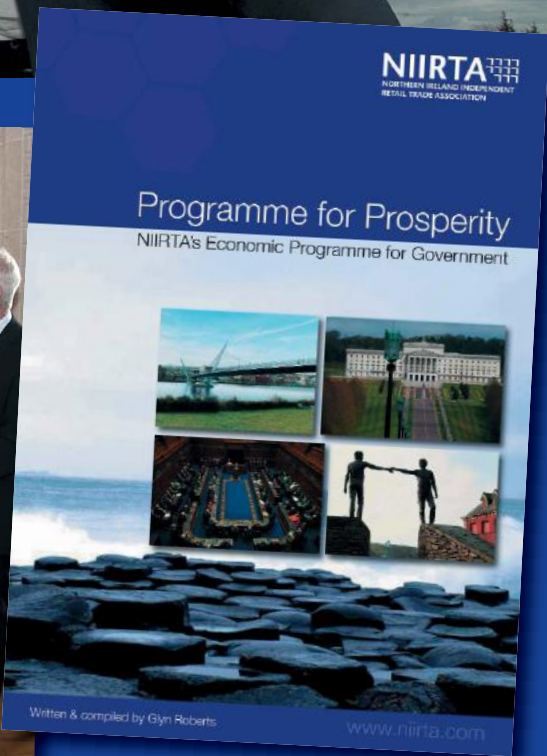
# NIIRTA launches Economic Programme For Government on 10th birthday at Stormont



Sammy Wilson MP with NIIRTA CEO Glyn Roberts launching NIIRTA's Programme for Prosperity at Stormont



Sammy Wilson addressing the packed to capacity NIIRTA Anniversary Reception at the Long Gallery at Stormont which was sponsored by Phoenix and Matrix Consulting



NIIRTA Programme for Prosperity available at [www.nigag.org](http://www.nigag.org)



Harry Morrison, Sammy Wilson MP, Ken McWhinney, Bryan Gray and Paddy Duddy

The Northern Ireland Independent Retail Trade Association, which recently marked its tenth anniversary, has called for a radical overhaul of the Executive, including cutting the number of departments to seven. The group also called for the setting up of a department with responsibility for planning, town centre regeneration and transport, and the introduction of a substantial additional rates surcharge for out of town shopping centres.

The proposals come in a detailed policy document, 'Programme for Prosperity - NIIRTA's Economic Programme for Government' which was launched to coincide with NIIRTA's tenth anniversary and contains over 70 recommendations for all 12 government departments, including Policing and Justice.

This is the first time any local business organisation has produced comprehensive policy priorities for all 12 departments and was launched at Parliament Buildings at a standing room only event hosted by Finance Minister Sammy Wilson MP MLA.

The organisation, which represents 1200 members who have an annual turnover of £3 billion and employ over 30,000 staff, also called for the publication of draft Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 5, and action to reduce energy costs and increase renewable energy options for retailers.

NIIRTA Chairman Paddy Doody said at the event: "NIIRTA is celebrating a very successful ten years where we have shown leadership to the independent retail sector and stood up for small retailers in the face of some tough times."

"I would also like to thank Phoenix Supply and Matrix Consulting for their support for today's event"

"I want in particular to pay tribute to key individuals such as Harry Morrison, Ken McWhinney and Bryan Gray for their contribution in making NIIRTA the success story it is today."

Turning to the Programme for Prosperity document NIIRTA Chief Executive and author of the report Glyn Roberts said that the launch of the policy document which has proposals for each of the Northern Ireland government departments is recognition that the system of government here is too cumbersome and complex to really tackle the issues facing Northern Ireland today.

"Over the past ten years NIIRTA has given leadership to our local independent retail sector and called for a level playing field in relation to retail planning policy

and for the need to protect and enhance our town centres"

"We recognise that having devolution has been good for Northern Ireland and good for our economy. However it could be even better"

"Now is the time to review and redesign the apparatus of government so that it is more nimble and more able to react quickly to the requirements which our society faces in rapidly changing times"

"As a leading business lobbying organisation looking out for the needs of local retailers, we can see very clearly how political will and urgent need are often thwarted by the complex and unwieldy nature of our governmental system. For example, we have three departments with responsibility for planning, (DSD, DRD, DOE), and six with some degree of responsibility for the economy (DETI, DFP, DEL, OFMDFM, DARD, and DRD). This situation is untenable and needs to change for the good of every citizen in Northern Ireland."

"The document, which outlines nearly 70 policy suggestions for each of the government departments, also has a range of ideas for the soon to be created Justice Department. Our Policing and

Justice policy priorities will enable the new Minister to hit the ground running in relation to tackling business crime"

"As out of town supermarkets enjoy a significant competitive advantage over town centre based retailers, DFP should levy a substantial additional rates surcharge on those stores. These additional rates should be ring fenced for funding Town Centre Regeneration projects. Local retailers also want to see the immediate publication of Draft PPS 5 to support and protect our town centres, and the introduction of a cap on Class 1 out of town Retail Stores to 10,000 sq ft on a similar basis to planning policy in the Republic of Ireland"

"Among our recommendations in relation to Education, and in common with other business led organisations, NIIRTA wants to see an increased focus on ensuring that young people leave school with, at the very least, the basics in literacy and numeracy and the skills, attitudes and work ethic to make a positive contribution as employees in Northern Ireland's independent retail sector. NIIRTA also want to make the independent retail sector a more attractive career option for young people, whether it be as part-time workers, full-



Billy Armstrong MLA, Sandra Overend, Ulster Unionist Party and NIIRTA CEO Glyn Roberts





NIIRTA members and guests at the 10th Anniversary reception in Stormont



Edwin Poots MLA, Minister for the Environment, Glyn Roberts and Cllr Paul Givan, Lisburn City Council



Des Stephens Matrix Planning, Mark Durkan MP MLA and Glyn Roberts at the reception

time employees or, indeed, as the retailers and employers of the future. NIIRTA also want to see GCSE Retail offered more widely in local schools"

"The development of the independent retail sector has had little or no focus from DETI, with Invest Northern Ireland having little or no role in regards to the retail sector. Therefore we would recommend that the Enterprise Minister sets up an immediate Retail Policy Review which could set short, medium and long term objectives for growing the sector and addressing the barriers to the growth of the sector"

Glyn Roberts added, "Invest Northern Ireland should examine ways to include retail on its list of core activities and how it could do more to help our indigenous retail sector. DETI should also set up an ad-hoc Independent Retail Policy Forum which could advise on all aspects of policy across departments and appoint a senior official responsible for Retail Policy within DETI.

"Though improving, there is still a need for greater competition in the NI energy market, and there should be more transparency into how energy costs are arrived at, to allow better understanding and allow the ability to challenge. NIIRTA also urges DETI to take a lead in implementing the Green New Deal and for the OFMDFM to take the lead in lobbying the Treasury on the recommendations of the Economic Reform Group on Corporation Tax"

Minister for Finance & Personnel Sammy Wilson MP MLA said: "The importance of the wholesale and retail sector in Northern Ireland cannot be underestimated, as it contributes almost 13% of Northern Ireland's output and almost 15% of all local employee jobs.

"The independent retail sector brings real variety and richness to the local shopping experience. That is its real value to the local economy."

After acknowledging some of the difficulties facing the industry as a result of the global economic downturn, Mr Wilson said: "The local economy appears to be emerging from the recession and although there is no doubt that we face an extremely challenging future – not least in terms of managing a highly constrained public expenditure position – I am cautiously optimistic about our economic prospects."

The Minister also noted the positive implications of implementing of the recently published Barnett Review Report: He concluded: "The Independent Review of Economic Policy provides a road map to guide our economic policy. The proposals outlined in this report, such as widening the remit of Invest NI to embrace more local businesses, will undoubtedly assist companies such as those within this sector."

The Northern Ireland Independent Retail Trade Association has expressed concern over some local councils striking unacceptably high non-domestic rates which are impacting on its members...



Paul Stewart

Among the highest hikes include Magherafelt with 8.37%, Belfast, 7.81% and Limavady at 7.58%.

Richard Acheson, NIIRTA member in Limavady said: "My business has seen hikes in the last year in energy and insurance costs and on top of this Limavady Council hikes my rates bill by 7.58%, on top of a 5% increase the previous year."

"For many small businesses in Limavady this will be one hike too many and could force a number of businesses to close their doors."

Paul Stewart, NIIRTA President and long time local retailer in Magherafelt said: "A staggering 8.37% increase in my rates is simply just too much given that we are still trying to recover from the recession. Magherafelt Council need to explain why they are imposing the highest increase of any council in Northern Ireland?"

"In these difficult times, local councils should be doing more to help relieve the burden faced by small businesses, rather

# NIIRTA Expresses Concern Over District Council Rate Hikes



Limavady Traders Richard Acheson, Gregory McGlinchey, Aubrey Woods and NIIRTA CEO Glyn Roberts highlighting the high business rates in Limavady

than seeking to increase it."

"While the majority of local councils have struck reasonable increases in non-domestic rates, a number have clearly not done so."

"Councils which have struck very high rates need to understand that they are in effect taxing jobs in their areas. Local small businesses and retailers are not only substantial contributors in terms of rates but the backbone of their local economy in providing employment and investment."

"I understand that a number of the councils in question did not consult local businesses before agreeing to these hikes; I would hope that in future they endeavour to do so."

Environment Minister, Edwin Poots MLA said: "The district rates are struck by 15 February each year by individual district councils, to meet the costs of local services, including leisure and recreational services; economic development; and environmental services.

"One of the features of local government in NI is the fact that most of

its income comes from locally set taxes. This preserves local accountability and the independence of our councils.

"The Northern Ireland Executive is responsible for deciding on the level of the regional rate, which accounts for just over half a typical rates bill. The freeze for the last two years, and this coming year, represents an effective cut in the regional rate contribution made by domestic ratepayers when inflation is taken into account. For business ratepayers the regional rate contribution is held broadly in line with inflation at 2.7%. This financial restraint by the Executive recognises the importance for households and businesses to minimise any financial pressure they are facing, particularly during this challenging period for our economy.

"I commend those councils that have kept increases to a minimum. The disparity between the lowest and highest rates in Northern Ireland by Councils would indicate that a number of them should be seeking to deliver high quality services more efficiently."



# NIIRTA invited the six leading political parties in Northern Ireland who are contesting the 2010 Westminster General Election to set out their policy agenda for the economy and small businesses:



David Vance

Small business is the backbone of any prosperous economy. As well as providing vital employment right across Northern Ireland, local business also has the virtue of keeping the profits of enterprise circulating within the Province and so a prosperous Northern Ireland must have it at the very heart of future plans.

TUV understands that growing the wealth-creating sector here in Northern Ireland is a crucial aim if we are to move away from an unhealthy reliance on the Public sector. The role of Government must be to encourage, to assist and to legislate in ways that help small business.

In recessionary times, it is vital that Government recognises the strain this puts on local communities. People fear for their jobs and multinational companies may well determine that it is advantageous for them to relocate their operation outside of Northern Ireland. But local business, be it retail or manufacturing, is locked into the community and that makes it a priority for appropriate levels of support.

Bureaucracy is the curse of small business and yet over the duration of the last Parliament there has been a proliferation of red tape. This costs money and time to administer and is a hindrance to the local business person. TUV believes that much of what has been imposed is unhelpful and the new Parliament must recognise economic recovery can be led by small business unfettered by pointless administration.

Education that provides a wide range of abilities and skills, a tax policy that rewards success rather than punishes it, and an energy vision that empowers local business to compete are all essential elements for the future.

Bustling local town centres are another desirable objective. Those retailers who have served the local community for decades, even as terrorists caused havoc in our towns, have a crucial role to play in providing a rich diversity of shopping experiences in our towns and Government must carefully review out of town developments to ensure that these do not negatively impact. TUV places great value on the town centre experience and will work to ensure that we protect the assets we have.

TUV advocates rigorous application of the rule of law and appreciates that retail profits can easily be eroded by crimes such as shoplifting. We understand the importance of ensuring effective policing on our high streets and those who break the law must be sent the clear message that crime does not pay.

TUV fully supports local business and will work to ensure that its' needs are a priority in the new Parliament.



Martina Anderson MLA

Town Centre Regeneration policy and related planning controls should compliment each other to favour the facilitation of town centre or edge-of-centre developments. That should also apply to the important practical issues, such as pedestrianisation and parking facilities. The nature and effectiveness of engagement with local communities and other key stakeholders must be considered when developing and taking forward regeneration initiatives.

Encouraging the inclusion of residential uses as part of a mixed use strategy for city centres would also assist regeneration and would create a safer environment by recreating a living atmosphere to the areas. I believe that incentive programmes should be introduced to encourage landlords to refurbish above shop living accommodation to attract tenants back into city centres. I have also asked the Minister to look at the issue of rates relief for city centre empty premises.

This would allow breathing space to prepare vacant premises for alternative use such as rental accommodation. I am aware that the ongoing rates charges are causing severe financial hardship for business owners who are already in difficulty. Tourism, theatre and visitor amenities and accommodation should all be developed and used as a driver for regeneration.

Small and Medium businesses (SMEs) should be given more support as part of the review of Invest NI. The Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment has announced plans to implement the recommendations of a report highly critical of Invest NI. Sinn Féin has consistently questioned the performance of Invest NI and this report has confirmed much of our criticism particularly the failure to deliver for SMEs. Supporting local business is key to developing the economy. As part of restructuring Invest NI we will be seeking to have new programmes and practices put in place to ensure adequate support is available to indigenous businesses, SMEs and the social economy sector.

In my opinion, it is the locally owned and home grown businesses that are the best employers and the bedrock of our economy. This contribution needs to be recognised by funding organisations such as Invest NI. That is why along with my colleague and fellow MLA for Foyle, Raymond McCartney, we have tabled a motion in the Assembly calling for greater support for and proper recognition of indigenous business. I hope that all the other parties in the Assembly will support the call.



Trevor Ringland

Conservatives and Unionists recognise that small businesses form an integral part of the United Kingdom's economy and are the back-bone of Northern Ireland's local economy. Small businesses and retail outlets are crucial to the viability of our local towns and communities; they play a vital role in our society as well as our economy.

As we slowly emerge from recession small businesses and retailers still face a very uncertain future. Conservatives and Unionists candidates are the only candidates who can genuinely deliver results for local businesses in Northern Ireland at this election. When we form the next Government we will work to deliver on tax, on red tape and on public sector reform that will assist small businesses. 13 years of a Labour Government has left businesses and our economy weighed down by the national debt, credit crunch and bureaucracy – we can not go on like this.

Our first priority will be to work flat out to try and avoid Labour's plan to raise employer and employee National Insurance by 1% in 2011. This tax on jobs will hit small businesses hard, we must reform public services to get better value for money, not cripple our economy by taxing jobs.

In Northern Ireland we are committed to rebalancing our economy so that it becomes private sector led instead of public sector led. In light of the unaffordable level of national debt and the impact this is having on our overall economic recovery, the need to rebalance our local economy will become even more critical. Conservatives and Unionists will look at specific measures to turn Northern Ireland into an economic 'Enterprise Zone'. Such a move would be a boost to the entire economy in Northern Ireland. We are also committed to cutting small companies' Corporation Tax rate across the United Kingdom.

We want the United Kingdom to become one of the most competitive economies in which to do business. The Labour Government has wrapped business in red tape and bureaucracy which in the current economic climate is choking recovery. Conservatives and Unionists are committed to cutting the regulatory burden on small businesses. We will also get rid of the red tape that makes it too hard to even start a business. Any new business started in the first two years of a Conservative Government will pay no Employer National Insurance on the first ten employees it hires during its first year.

Conservatives and Unionists believe that town centres form the heart of local communities and we will continue to support the Ulster Unionist Party's push to have Planning Policy Statement 5 published immediately. Publishing PPS 5 would help protect and regenerate Northern Ireland's town centres and boost local retailers.



Dr Stephen Farry MLA

Alliance is committed to the development and maintenance of a healthy private sector in Northern Ireland. Small and medium sized enterprises are the backbone of our economy. However, we should not be complacent about this. Measures should be in place to encourage businesses to grow, where appropriate, and in particular to export. This should be a particular focus for our investment of public funds in business development.

There is a real danger that Northern Ireland will leave the current economic recession with the same underlying structural weaknesses that it entered it.

Alliance has supported keeping rises in rates, both regional and district, at acceptable levels in and around inflation. We have also supported measures such as the forthcoming Small Business Relief Scheme. These measures are vital in addressing the immediate cost pressures faced by business. However, by themselves, they are not sufficient to engender any step change in the local economy.

One obvious area for development is the green economy. Alliance continues to argue for a Green New Deal. The most cost-effective and labour intensive ways to address climate change is through energy efficiency measures, including retro-fitting, for homes and businesses. There are particular opportunities here for small businesses and contractors.

Alliance is also keen to protect and enhance our town centres. Our town centres are more than simply a locus for economic transactions but provide a critical social function too.

The nature of retailing in Northern Ireland has been transformed over the past three decades. The balance has not been right, and we do support a revised Planning Policy Statement 5 for retailing and town centres. However, it is not realistic to seek to simply turn back the clock. Rather we must encourage our town centres to reinvent themselves.

This is where an active urban regeneration policy comes in. This includes facilitating new office and leisure development, sparking new forms of economic activity that will spill over into existing or new retail developments. It also means ensuring that the infrastructure in city and town centres can facilitate the easy movement in and out of shoppers and workers.

Powers within regional government to advance urban regeneration are too diffuse and slow in operation. Strategic and operational planning policy, roads and transport policy, and more general urban regeneration responsibilities should all be under one roof.

Dr Stephen Farry MLA is the Finance Spokesperson of the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland and Assembly Member for Northern Down



Ian Paisley Jnr MLA

It is not the job of government to create jobs – that is the job of hard-working businesses. Our job is to help create jobs by making Northern Ireland the most business-friendly part of the United Kingdom. The task of the DUP at Westminster and at a local level is to create the environment in which the economy can grow and additional jobs can be created. We are using devolution and the powers divested in this place from Westminster to that end. At the Westminster election, we will be seeking a renewed mandate to fight for Northern Ireland's interests at a national level.

Measures designed to help our economy grow have been to the forefront of the DUP agenda in government.

DUP actions have included:

- Froze business rates – helping our businesses struggling with the global economic downturn.
- Froze Manufacturing rates
- Capped industrial rates
- Froze non-domestic Regional Rates
- Introduced the Small Business Rate Relief Scheme
- Committed record levels of investment to Northern Ireland's infrastructure – helping the building sector in the short-to medium terms whilst increasing our infrastructure to attract more business from overseas in the future.

Local government at Stormont, responsive to local needs and standing up for Northern Ireland's interests, is better for business than unaccountable direct rule manned by people who have a minimal stake in seeing this place succeed. By the same logic, Northern Ireland's business interests cannot be secured at Westminster by lone mavericks, abstentionists or those who offer themselves up as voting fodder for another party.

Already we have seen the massive difference that local people with their hands on the levers of power can make. Over the last 18 months business successes have included:

- £1/2 billion investment in Shorts - largest inward investment ever
- New York Stock Exchange bringing 400 new jobs to Belfast
- GEM - 900 new jobs
- £60m investment in Seagate - largest ever investment in Research & Development in N. Ireland
- £200m contract for Thales

Political stability and continuing progress is essential to the expansion of our business sector. It is a simple fact that no sane person would want to invest in a country that is unstable or tearing itself apart. Stable devolution creates the basis for political stability and economic prosperity. The recent Hillsborough Castle Agreement further cemented stability. Be in no doubt, investors were looking closely at the situation in Northern Ireland.

Those who want to drag Northern Ireland back to political instability would hang a big "closed" sign over our Province. "Closed for investment", "closed for jobs", "closed for tourism". I am determined that they will not succeed in denying our children and young people a future. This Westminster election will afford us the opportunity to ensure that Northern Ireland keeps moving forward and is not dragged back.

The business sector will be crucial to our efforts in the period ahead. We will continue to do all that we can at Local government, Assembly, Westminster and European level to help you in your endeavours and I hope that by working together we can all move Northern Ireland forward to prosperity.



Dr Alasdair McDonnell MP MLA

One of the greatest weaknesses in our political system is its failure to produce representatives who are knowledgeable about – or interested in – economic affairs. Throughout the long search for peace, we in the SDLP were very clear that, in addition to being an end in its own right, peace was the absolutely indispensable first step on the road to prosperity. Two years ago when world events tipped us into recession, our devolved institutions were hamstrung by political divisions between parties which did not recognise the challenge, never mind meet it.

With a sharper economic focus, we know what has to be done and we know we have to do it ourselves. We must protect the jobs we have and generate new ones. In a world recession, we must trust and back the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) which are the backbone of our economy.

A year ago we produced our "New Priorities in Difficult Times" blueprint which reflected many of the needs expressed by SMEs. With more than a third of businesses requesting either direct financial assistance or increased access to borrowing facilities, we proposed a targeted Recession Recovery Fund to assist small businesses over two years. We called for Invest NI to re-jig operations to provide greater support for SMEs across all sectors of the Northern Ireland economy, administering a £40 million package of 'triage' loans for businesses currently struggling to secure finance.

Additionally, the SDLP proposed a £10million scheme of micro-finance loans of up to £5000 offered at the current rate of inflation and available to small local companies. Finally, the SDLP proposed a fund of £10million be set aside to assist the social economy sector in Northern Ireland which would also ensure that social and ethical objectives in enterprise are catered for in this time of downturn.

The basic thrust of our document was on bringing forward public-sector construction projects to kick-start the economy. In addition to social housing, education and health, there is a great deal that could be done in the area of urban regeneration. Social Development Minister Margaret Ritchie has made it very clear that urban regeneration projects must be tied to improvement of the local economy. An improved urban environment would of course be positive for the retailing sector, but even more positive would be a steady footfall of people back in employment.

If we sustain and strengthen the local economy the Retail Sector will prosper. If we drive forward attractive urban regeneration schemes, local independent retailers will enjoy much of the benefit.



# New Derry City Traders Group Formed



Martin McCrossan Chair of the City Centre Traders Forum and Glyn Roberts CEO NIIRTA outside Austin's in Derry, Northern Ireland oldest independent

Martin McCrossan Chair of the City Centre Traders Forum said: "This new group is made up of grassroots small independent traders who care passionately about the future of our city centre. In recent weeks seven small traders have went out of business and we need to see a new strategy to support and enhance our city centre."

"Issues like rates, car parking, planning and public realm work all need to be urgently addressed and our new

Forum will be hitting the ground running in lobbying for action on behalf of our members."

"Our city may face a lot of challenges, but with growing tourism and the potential of the City of Culture bid we also have many opportunities."

"Very shortly we hope to visit Stormont and meet all six of the Foyle MLAs to put forward our concerns."

Glyn Roberts, NIIRTA Chief Executive said: "We fully support the establishment

of this new group and their policy agenda for the future development of Derry/Londonderry City Centre. NIIRTA will be playing a very hands on role in this group in the coming months."

"A top priority for this new group is to protect and enhance existing retailers in the city centre and to work with all relevant agencies on a strategy to attract new retailers to the City Centre rather than unsustainable out of town locations."

A new traders group the City Centre Traders Forum has been established in Derry to address the major challenges facing Derry and its City Centre. The City Centre Traders Forum will be fully supported by the Northern Ireland Independent Retail Trade Association.

## City Centre Initiative Background and Focus

CCI was established in April 2000 as a partnership between the private and public sectors. Within its Action Plan, CCI identifies that its key objective is to maintain the city as clean, safe and friendly and in order to meet this objective CCI recognises that it works with a range of partners and stakeholders, such as Derry City Council, Department for Social Development, PSNI and the private sector.

City Centre Initiative (CCI) is the dedicated town centre management organisation for the City of Derry-Londonderry and was established to develop, manage and initiate a number of projects designed to promote the commercial vitality and viability of the city centre. CCI's Board is currently made up of representatives from the public and private sector. Core funders for CCI are Derry City Council, (DCC), Department for Social Development, (DSD), and the Police Service Northern Ireland, (PSNI).

City Centre Initiative believe in a partnership approach for the effective management of its core area. Our City has a rich cultural heritage and with a strong vision for the future, Derry-Londonderry must ensure that our city centre is well-placed to meet the demands of its residents, business community and visitors and can respond to the challenges of being Northern Ireland's 'second city'. A strong city centre management organisation that can engage all members of the city centre community therefore presents real opportunities for Derry-Londonderry.

- City Centre Manager, Jim Roddy said "Through the current challenging recessionary times we must keep a focus on every opportunity that arises to ensure that all our partners, through cooperation, can achieve their maximum potential in a safe, vibrant environment."
- CCI currently participates in or operates 15 projects or programmes:
- City Rangers
  - CCTV scheme
  - Business Awards
  - Floral competition
  - Christmas windows
  - Banners
  - Pubs and Clubs Group
  - Fly-posting initiative
  - Traders Association
  - Business Audit
  - Football count
  - Collaboration with Youth Justice Agency in a scheme targeted at young people caught shop-lifting
  - Pubwatch
  - Interface Liaison
  - Parades Mediation



# University of Ulster: A Retail Skills Agenda

It is a well worn cliché that retailing is dynamic and fast changing and this has never been more apt than in the case of the Northern Ireland market in recent times...

These changes in the marketplace present tough challenges for retailers and have consequences for employment and skills development. At the University of Ulster, business and education sectors are working closely together to cultivate an entrepreneurial culture within our students and equip graduates with the skills to work in the retail sector. The Department of Business, Retail and Financial Services at the Coleraine campus has been at the forefront of teaching and research in retail related issues over many years and continues to work closely with local business to exchange ideas and knowledge to help meet the need for a highly skilled retail workforce. We work with local business in a number of ways:

**Business Advisory Group**  
We operate a Business Advisory Group, consisting of University staff members and local employers from both the public and private sector. This forum enables industry and academia to reap mutual benefits from collaborative activities in a number of areas. Representatives from the retail industry are members of our Business Advisory Group.

**Management Development**  
The Department of Business, Retail and Financial Services is working in partnership with the local business community to transfer knowledge and expertise to the Northern Ireland retail sector. We are involved in Knowledge Transfer Partnerships with the local retail sector and we provide undergraduate and postgraduate courses in

business and management that are accessible to retail managers on a part-time basis.

**Business Sponsorship of Student Awards**  
The Department works closely with a number of prominent employers and public bodies to provide sponsorship for top student awards. Our retail student awards have been sponsored for several years by Skillsmart Retail (NI). Current sponsors also include First Trust Bank, Invista UK, Northern Health Board, Radisson Roe Park and Irwin Donaghey Stockman. The benefits to these organizations, through becoming partners with the University, range from positive PR opportunities, access to high achieving students, and the opportunity to contribute to course development.

**Research and Consultancy**  
There are a number of experts with academic and industry experience in the area of retailing involved in business consultancy, research and broadcasting on retail issues. Staff are currently undertaking research activities (both academic and consultative) in a variety of retail related areas, such as internationalization, branding, rural SMEs, grocery and fashion firms, and family organizations. One of the key retail projects is a three year study targeted at retailers in rural areas with the overall aim to improve service quality by supporting the survival, development and growth of rural shops in Northern Ireland.

This study is funded by the EU Northern Periphery programme, and staff at the University of Ulster are working with five European partners in Iceland, Finland, Faroe Islands, Scotland and Ireland.

Our engagement with the retail and wider industry sectors also extends to the hosting of seminars and workshops with invited speakers on a monthly basis. These events provide excellent networking opportunities for both industry and academia. Forthcoming events later this year will include:

- 6th May 2010 'Importance of Impact for Management Research: Academic and Practitioner Perspective' (contact Dr Karise Hutchinson: kc.hutchinson@ulster.ac.uk)

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## Meeting the Retail Skills Challenge

Skillsmart Retail is a not-for-profit organisation, part-funded by government with a mission to drive up skills levels in retail.



Established in 2002 as a Government-licensed Sector Skills Council for Retail, it has a board and Patrons list made up of some of the biggest names in retail and has a remit to work across all four nations of the UK.

In Northern Ireland, where the booming retail industry is boosting the nation's employment and economic wellbeing, its work is particularly vital.

Noel Ferguson, National Manager for Northern Ireland at Skillsmart Retail said: "Retail is a significant private sector employer in Northern Ireland with 9,805 establishments: 79% of these employ less than ten people, and so the number of independent retailers is significant."

"Despite its dominance, the sector faces the serious challenge of developing an appropriately skilled workforce and promoting the diverse range of career options within the sector. We are therefore keen to work with NIIRTA and all retailers to face these challenges head-on."

Since it was founded Skillsmart Retail has been working with retailers, trade associations, specialist retail providers, universities, schools and colleges to address the challenges that the sector faces. It focuses on

four key objectives, which work together to provide industry-led solutions to these challenges.

The first strand of its work is making compelling case for the formal recognition of retail skills. Research shows that that formal qualifications result in a highly skilled, motivated workforce, and Skillsmart Retail works with retailers to help them recognise and act on this fact.

Secondly, it attempts to improve the quality of new recruits into the retail sector. By helping retailers to provide the kinds of careers that young people want, Skillsmart Retail believes that they will choose and excel in the sector – resulting in more talent and a better skills base.

Thirdly, it works to raise the skills levels of the existing workforce in retail operations. Employers regularly



# Policing the ATM threat

By Chief Superintendent Alan McCrum

The spate of thefts and attempted thefts of ATM machines over the past year has been a challenge for policing but it's been a nightmare for some retailers...



I fully accept the concerns expressed by independent traders about their exposure to this type of crime which leaves them picking up the pieces, literally and financially.

I also understand some criticism that police could have been quicker off the mark in drawing up a strategic response to this crime trend.

When police determined that these

thefts and attempted thefts were having an impact on community confidence, we set up a Gold Command (which I lead and on which NIIRTA is represented) which gave us an increased ability to deal with this crime trend in terms of investigative, preventative and reassurance measures.

I am certain that every single investigation into these incidents has been conducted to the highest possible standards and that nothing was lost by any perceived delay in establishing our strategic response.

It is always dangerous to set too much store by statistics but I believe the figures do indicate an encouraging downward trend. Since 1 March last year there have been 13 thefts of ATMs and nine attempted thefts. But there have been just two incidents this year – our preventative measures are working. Our investigative

approach is also bearing fruit.

Of the three organised crime gangs believed to be involved in ATM thefts, two in counties Antrim and Tyrone have been disrupted by police arresting key personalities and bringing charges for other serious crime.

Right across Northern Ireland police have implemented a series of proactive, preventative measures to reduce opportunities for further ATM thefts.

We are working with colleagues in An Garda Síochána, the banks, insurance companies, the construction industry and plant machinery representatives to ensure there is a co-ordinated and collective response to this series of crimes which affect everyone in our communities.

We are not complacent but we are making progress and will continue our efforts on a number of fronts.

## Reduce your risks

By Inspector David Connery, PSNI Crime Prevention

The most effective way to deal with crime is to prevent it happening in the first place.



That sounds like a bit of a truism but it's a fact.

Independent retailers can do much to help reduce their risks of being attacked by organised crime gangs thinking about stealing their ATMs:

Retailers who are responsible for filling their ATMs, mainly the stand alone versions inside stores, should 'decash' at night and store the money in a timelock safe. They should leave the ATM open and have a large sign prominently displayed telling anyone who's interested that the machine is empty. Retailers can then refill the machine in the morning

when the premises are due to open and outside the high risk timeslot of the early hours of the morning.

Install a CCTV system. If you already have one, make sure the cameras are pointing in the right direction and that the material being recorded is of sufficient quality to be of use in identifying suspects.

Almost all of these thefts and attempted thefts have involved stolen plant machinery. Police are working with the construction industry and others to ensure that everyone fulfils their responsibilities in relation to securing, immobilising, marking and tracking these pieces of equipment.

Please be assured that we are in regular contact with the banks and the insurance industry about their contribution to reducing the risks, for everyone's benefit.

Ordinary members of the public can also play their part – call police immediately if you see or hear anything suspicious in relation to ATM thefts. The sooner you tell us, the better our

chances of protecting you and apprehending criminals.

Finally, if you want to talk to an officer about reducing your risks of becoming a victim of crime, please contact your local police who will be happy to assist.



Security Minister Paul Goggins MP meets with the NIIRTA delegation

## Goggins meets with Retail Trade Association to discuss ATM attacks

Security Minister and chair of the Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF) Paul Goggins MP met with Glyn Roberts, Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Independent Retailers Trade Association (NIIRTA) and retailers who have been directly affected by ATM robberies.

Mr Goggins said: "The recent attacks on ATM machines across Northern Ireland are an attack on the whole community. These are not victimless crimes; neither are they simply crimes against financial institutions. Local businesses have been affected and as a result whole communities are being left

without vital amenities.

"It is important that we work with the local communities to stop those responsible from being able to carry out further attacks and to gather the information necessary to bring the perpetrators before the courts."

Glyn Roberts Chief Executive of the Northern Independent Retail Trade Association said: "This was a very useful meeting and it was important that Minister Goggins heard first hand from the victims of these robberies.

"These robberies are costing our economy millions and are an attack on

the whole community who rely on these local stores and their ATM machines.

"At the meeting we outlined our concerns at the response of the Insurance and Banking sectors to this problem.

"We are fully supportive of the work of the PSNI, who are clearly committed to tackling this problem and hope that we soon see arrests and hopefully convictions of those behind these attacks."

A reward of £25,000 has been offered for anyone who can help catch the criminals responsible for these thefts.



Glyn Roberts and Paul Goggins MP



Glyn Roberts at meeting with Shadow Home Secretary Chris Grayling MP on a recent visit to Belfast where he was briefed on the robberies



## Secure Your Profits – With Successful Security!



Successful Security was formed in 1996 and has since become Ireland's leading and successful retail fraud investigation company, with operations ongoing in both Northern and Southern Ireland.

We are currently providing our services to all of the symbol groups in Northern and Southern Ireland i.e. Spar, Mace, Day-Today, Your Store, Supervalu, Centra and Costcutter, and a number of hotels and public houses. We are also being asked to provide services for the major petrol retail companies i.e. Maxol Oil, Shell, Conoco, BP, and Texaco. through their independent dealers.

In the past 3 months we have investigated and detected losses through staff theft in excess of £220,000 in six retail businesses, and have arranged for the recovery of a considerable amount of this figure. We

have also brought five of the above cases to an amicable conclusion between the retailer and the employee. The other case has been reported to the police for further investigation and prosecution.

### What do we do

We offer to the retailer several packages from a seven day health check of their business to a full investigation which includes consultations, supply, installation and commissioning of equipment to monitor the points of sale within their business. We would also use the retailers existing equipment if it was found to be compatible with our monitoring systems. We record all of the actions of members of staff at the points of sale or when handling cash.

These recordings are then removed by Successful Security for monitoring by their experienced monitoring team who analyse and record any discrepancies seen, after which a full report is compiled. The proprietor of the business is then contacted and requested to review the report and any incidents highlighted therein. At this stage, if theft is detected, advice is

given to the proprietor as to the ways in which the matter can be dealt with, being always mindful of employment law when dealing with staff.

Part of our service would include the interviewing of staff caught on video for dishonesty offences. To conclude the investigation we would advise the retailer on the implementation of cash handling and till procedures into their business to enhance existing procedures, which should then allow the business to trade profitably bearing in mind that 85% of loss within a retail business can be attributed to staff theft.

### Ongoing Monitoring

We also offer retailers the ongoing monitoring service package, where we would periodically view recordings taken from their business, complete the monitoring and analysis and then furnish them with a report on its findings.

For further information or a free security audit of your business call: Successful Security Ltd: (028) 9269 8090 Visit our website: [www.successfulsecurity.com](http://www.successfulsecurity.com)

## Taking Control of Your Energy Costs

At a time when the requirement for local retailers to reduce energy costs has never been greater, Integral Energy Solutions has developed an Energy Management Program specifically tailored to meet the needs of multi-site organisations. It has been proven that between 5% and 20% energy savings can be achieved through ongoing monitoring and targeting, with little or no capital outlay.

While the need for good practice Energy Management is now commonly recognised, employing a full time Energy Manager is often not a viable option for many local businesses. However, outsourcing this requirement to Integral Energy Solutions, an independent energy consultancy, will ensure energy consumption and costs are optimised at a fraction of the cost.

### Annual Energy Report

The first step in implementing any effective Energy Management Plan is to establish a base from where to measure improvements. An IES annual report will provide that base along with establishing achievable targets for reduction in the coming year and an assessment of the value for money you are currently receiving from your Utility Providers. Also included are the following elements:

- An individual site Energy Performance League Table.
- Best practice benchmarking comparisons.
- Identification of sites which require immediate attention.
- Total Energy Consumption Analysis 2007/08 – 2008/09.
- Individual fuel consumption & cost analysis (Electricity, Oil, Gas, LPG).
- Water consumption analysis.

- Utility tariff analysis.
- Guidance on how best to comply with new legislation i.e. CRC (Carbon Reduction Commitment) April 2010.
- Recommendations for areas to target in order to lower future energy consumption & costs.

### Independent Site Energy Audit

A recent study showed that average savings of 21% on each energy bill were identified during a Energy Audit. In sites where a detailed Energy Audit has not taken place within the past 5 years this figure can rise above 60%.

- Identifying main energy consumers and comparing these to best practice guides in a performance league table.
- Establishing potential for energy savings.
- Identifying practical, low cost measures for achieving instant savings.
- Presenting a business case for implementing recommendations, including a financial payback plan.
- Advice on possible grants and finance options available.
- Establishing any additional benefits e.g. environmental, comfort etc.
- Advice on project implementation with minimal disruption to occupants.

### Integral Energy Solutions

Telephone: (028) 9335 9830

Mobile: 078 5074 0960

Email: [info@integralenergysolutions.co.uk](mailto:info@integralenergysolutions.co.uk)

Website: [www.integralenergysolutions.co.uk](http://www.integralenergysolutions.co.uk)

## Walk to work and put a Spring in your step!

On Monday 26 April, Business in the Community is supporting Walk to Work Week (26 – 30 April) in partnership with Connswater Shopping Centre, encouraging businesses to support their employees in putting their best foot forward.

Get off the bus a few stops earlier, park a little further away or join in a fun and healthy lunchtime walk during 'Walk to Work Week' that runs from 26-30 April.

If you're a retailer, shopper, an office worker or involved in any other kind of business, why not put on your trainers and join in?

You can organise your own walk at an area near you or you can join in a walk at Connswater Shopping Centre. You won't be alone as many people are coming together for the lunchtime to stroll along the Connswater Community Greenway. The walk will start and finish at Connswater Shopping Centre and starts at 12:30 pm.

Tanya Kennedy, Workplace Director at Business in the Community commented: "Walking helps in so many ways. As well as increased heart and lung fitness, walking can help reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke and improve management of conditions such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, joint and muscular pain or stiffness, and diabetes.

"It helps to strengthen bones, improve balance along with increasing muscle strength and endurance. All this and it helps reduce body fat too.

At Business in the Community we will be recording and reporting the impact of



L-R: Wendy Langham, Connswater Community Greenway; Gerry Monaghan, Centre Manager at Connswater Shopping Centre; Tanya Kennedy, Workplace Director, Business in the Community (with Connswater Greenway Mascot and Poppin mascot for the centre)

this event, so please let us know numbers of people who walk and the distance covered so we can help motivate more people to get walking."

Gerry Monaghan, Centre Manager at Connswater Shopping Centre adds: "The Connswater Community Greenway is a 9 kilometer linear park through East Belfast, following the course of the Connswater, Knock and Loop Rivers.

"It is a vibrant, attractive, safe and accessible parkland for leisure, recreation and community events and activities.

"The Connswater Community Greenway is designed to improve the living environment, reinstating a valuable amenity for local people and provides opportunities for improving health and well being.

"With Connswater Shopping Centre

at the heart of this environmental development we hope people will use the centre at the start and stop point for their walks during Walk to Work week."

If this walk is not suitable for you, you can arrange your own walk at an area near you. For help contact [c.armstrong@countysiderecreation.com](mailto:c.armstrong@countysiderecreation.com) and he will develop a walk for you.

So get on board, dawn those dusty trainers and get walking!

To register for the Connswater walk, contact [melanie.doherty@bitcni.org.uk](mailto:melanie.doherty@bitcni.org.uk) or call (028) 9046 0606, providing the names of all participants.

To register your own walk, contact [melanie.doherty@bitcni.org.uk](mailto:melanie.doherty@bitcni.org.uk) or call (028) 9046 0606, providing the number of participants and the distance covered.

## Lo and Consumer Council promote Chinese Shoppers initiative

The Consumer Council and Anna Lo, MLA are encouraging the Chinese community to become savvy consumers. The Consumer Council distributed over 1,000 Chinese 'shoppers' rights cards' and 1,000 'complaints cards' at the Chinese New Year celebrations in St. George's market. The Consumer Council represents and handles the complaints of energy, water and transport consumers. People who have a complaint and who haven't been able to resolve it with the supplier should contact the Consumer Council on 0800 121 6022 or e-mail: [complaints@consumercouncil.org.uk](mailto:complaints@consumercouncil.org.uk).

L-R: Nora Quigley, Senior Consumer Affairs Officers (Social Needs), the Consumer Council, Anna Lo MLA and Loretta O'Hara, Head of Consumer Support, the Consumer Council.





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

**BUPA Healthcare** – available to all members and staff – Tel: 0800 328 3654

**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

**Willis Insurance Brokers** – Contact NIIRTA or David Dempster at Willis Insurance – 028 9032 9042 or email: david@willisinsurance.co.uk

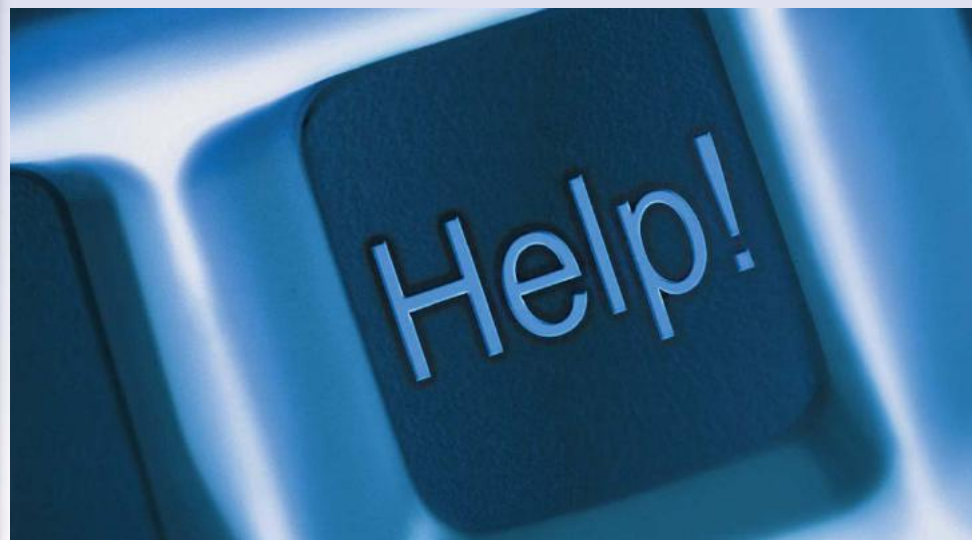
**Vehicle Leasing** – Fleet Financial are offering members vehicle leasing with 18 per cent discount – contact Fleet Financial or NIIRTA

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

Follow us on  
Facebook and Twitter



## Xactadvice: Advice you can feel safe with - all at the touch of a button



**Dealing with Health and Safety, Human Resources and Employment Law issues is very complex and time consuming. Many businesses seek external service providers for help in fulfilling their legislative obligations while others attempt to get to grips with the legal requirements from their own resources. To help ease the burden and solve the problem in the key areas of Health & Safety and Employment Law Compliance NIIRTA is introducing help for our members in the form of XACTADVICE**

NIIRTA has recognised a need to develop and bring good clear helpful advice to our members and we have been working with The Xact Group to supply a comprehensive web site that contains all the necessary information and downloads with clear and concise guidance notes. Also included in this service is an advice line available from 9am till 5pm Monday to Friday.

However, many businesses will still require the provision of an external provider. For example, regarding Health & Safety, some businesses do not have a 'competent person' in their employment as required by law. Any NIIRTA member can upgrade from the web site service to a full external provider service at any time so that the Xact Group would then act as the 'external competent person' for Health and Safety. This service follows the guidelines laid down by HSE for external providers and provides assistance in the completion of all the required risk assessments, advice (in writing) on any control measures arising from risk assessments, provision of an action plan, regular contact (including further on site visits) with the member during the contract and

provision of a 24 hour help-line.

For members who require help and assistance in dealing with their Employment Law problems, members can upgrade to the 'External Human Resources Department' service. This includes the provision of contracts tailored to your retail business, assistance on any HR or Employment Law issue such as disciplinary, grievance and redundancy. All advice is backed up in writing, if required, and there is a 24 hour helpline 365 days a year.

All of the services will be available to members at extremely competitive prices far below other providers in the market place who often sell non retail specific information and templates at exorbitant prices, sometimes running into thousands of pounds with members tied into long term contracts.

The web-site is now ready to go to pilot stage and several NIIRTA members will be trialling it and will be assessing the ease of use, available download data and the relevance of the content in relation to the retail trade. During the pilot our members will be given the opportunity to advise on the content, thereby helping to ensure that the web-site will indeed contain all the required documentation to allow members the opportunity to keep in touch and compliant with all current and future Health & Safety and Employment legislation.

We will keep you updated with progress on this exciting new membership benefit. If you would like any further information please contact Lisa Posnett at NIIRTA on (028) 9022 0004 or Stuart Fotheringham at Xact on: 01698 844402.

## Environment Minister Edwin Poots MLA has launched the Department of the Environment's new waste prevention website, marking the first step in its Rethink Waste campaign



The Rethink Waste campaign [www.rethinkwasteni.org](http://www.rethinkwasteni.org) aims to raise awareness, encourage best practice and achieve behavioural change among households, and the business, community and education sectors. The campaign seeks to effect a cultural shift towards better waste prevention and resource management and improved environmental quality in Northern Ireland.

It also aims to raise awareness of the simple steps that people can take to help reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill and improve our environment for future generations.

Commenting at the launch at Bryson Recycling Edwin Poots MLA said: "Rethinkwasteni.org seeks to communicate the message that waste affects aspects of everyday life in households, businesses, schools and communities right across Northern Ireland.

"We are asking individuals and organisations to rethink their attitudes to waste and to become more aware of simple steps that they can take to reduce, reuse, recycle and recover waste in order to send less of it to landfill.

"Everyone has a part to play if Northern Ireland is to comply with EU targets and avoid infractions."

The website contains carefully tailored information for each target group, and aims to engage the public through user-friendly, interactive features. It will also act as an effective portal and signpost to partner organisations, with a focus on sharing best practice across different sectors.

The EU Landfill Directive sets increasingly demanding targets for the diversion of biodegradable municipal waste from landfill between now and 2020: 75% of 1995 levels by 2010; 50% of 1995 levels by 2013; 35% of 1995 levels by 2020.



UFU message to political parties as election period begins

The Ulster Farmers’ Union has delivered a simple message to politicians as electioneering gets under way ahead of the general election on 6 May.

The UFU says it will be presenting two key issues to candidates: firstly to commit to safeguarding the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) budget in the next CAP Reform and secondly ensuring the UK Supermarket Ombudsman is successfully established.

UFU President Graham Furey said; “Our priorities reflect the core need to improve farm incomes. We will be asking our political candidates to focus on the two key areas where farmers incomes are generated. Firstly we want our political candidates to give a commitment that if they are elected to Westminster, they will do all they can to ensure the Supermarket Ombudsman is put in place as quickly as possible. Supermarkets enjoy too much power in the food supply chain and this must be addressed. The establishment of the Ombudsman should be a turning point for farmers who want to produce high quality local fresh food for consumers, but who have been under relentless pressure from the large



supermarkets to cut farm gate prices. Despite signalling that an Ombudsman will be created, the Government has not yet turned this into a reality and we want our MPs to press for this to happen when the new Parliament convenes”.

Turning to the CAP, Graham Furey said MPs returning to Westminster should also focus on securing the CAP budget. He said; “The debate about the

next Reform of the CAP has begun and we need our MPs to be strident in advocating the benefits which the CAP delivers in securing safe high quality food products, securing jobs in our rural economy and enhancing our environment. These are the public goods which farmers provide and without CAP support this would not be possible. The first important step in the Reform debate will be to secure the CAP budget for the period 2013 to 2020, and specifically to ensure Northern Ireland’s allocation of CAP funding is protected. Any reduction in the CAP budget will almost inevitably mean a reduction in farm incomes. We will be urging our MPs to fight to secure the CAP budget and ensure that this support to Northern Ireland is maintained and not reduced in any way”.

Graham Furey said; “We will be contacting all candidates to outline our priorities and we look forward to building a close working relationship with our new Northern Ireland MPs post the election”.



Glyn Roberts, NIIRTA CEO chats to US Economic Envoy Declan Kelly with Peter McKitterick US Consulate and Assembly Speaker William Hay MLA at the Assembly and Business Trust annual dinner

New Regulations on Recycling Batteries: Information for Retailers

People in the UK currently use over 600 million batteries annually – an average of 21 per household – with a staggering 97% ending as landfill! The new EU Batteries Directive aims to significantly increase UK collection and recycling of used portable batteries from the current rate of 3% to 25% by 2012, rising to at least 45% in 2016.

From 1 Feb 2010, new legislation (Waste Batteries and Accumulators Regulations 2009) means that if you sell over 32kg of portable batteries per year in an individual store, over the internet or via mail order, you will need to take back used batteries from the public free of charge.

You will be required to:

- Provide your customers with information about your take-back facility
- Accept all types of portable battery – not just those you sell

- Provide the take-back facility free of charge to the public (i.e. not require them to purchase goods from you in order to return used portable batteries)

You do not have to take back portable batteries if:

- The batteries you sell are only in equipment containing batteries and you do not also sell batteries separately
- You sell less than 32kg of portable batteries annually

Portable batteries include AA/AAA cells, button cells, mobile phone and laptop batteries. Products that use portable batteries include: Hearing aids, watches, portable cameras, toys and electric toothbrushes/razors.

How many batteries is 32kg a year?

The table at the foot of the article gives the weights of some of the most

common portable batteries and DEFRA have produced a “Suppliers Batteries Calculator” which you may find useful in checking if you are required to provide take-back facilities.

Under the new legislation the key focus is on producer responsibility for battery collection and recycling, with producers required to join a Battery Compliance Scheme (BCS). In this way, the main burden will not be felt by consumers (or retailers), as the BCS will arrange (without charge) for the collection and recycling of waste portable batteries on the producers’ behalf.

Individual businesses will be responsible for providing all containers and in-store publicity materials.

Further information on all of the above can be found by following the links to “waste” and “batteries” on the DOE website: [www.doeni.gov.uk](http://www.doeni.gov.uk).

Type	Weight per Battery (g)	Weight of pack of 4 (g)	How many packs of 4 = 32kg
AA	23	92	348
AAA	12	48	666
C	66	264	120
D	148	592	54



Finding ways to promote the Northern Ireland economy was top of the agenda at Parliament Buildings as the Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly welcomed Sir Reg Empey, Minister for Employment and Learning and Declan Kelly, the US Economic Envoy to Northern Ireland for the annual Northern Ireland Assembly and Business Trust (NIABT) President’s dinner.

Northern Ireland Assembly Business Trust puts economy centre stage

NIABT Board Member and NIIRTA Chief Executive Glyn Roberts said: “The Assembly and Business Trust plays an important part in connecting people involved in business life with people involved in political life in Northern Ireland. It enables MLAs to gain a better understanding of the issues affecting business success, and provides a forum where Assembly Members can initiate programmes that can help improve the economic climate in Northern Ireland.

NIABT President and Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, William Hay, MLA said “I am particularly pleased to welcome the US Economic Envoy and the Minister for Employment and Learning to this event. The NIABT members and I have particularly warm relationships with

the Economic Envoy; we are confident that these relationships will bring real, sustained benefits for the Northern Ireland economy and society as a whole.”

NIABT Background

The NIABT was established in 2002. An independent and self-financing educational charity, its focus is to foster development and promote Northern Ireland. The Trust brings together Assembly Members and the business sector to further its aims.

The Trust’s work is underpinned by a programme of seminars, visits and fellowship placements that brings together MLAs and business representatives. Programmes are non-partisan, non-lobbying, educational and

informative. The NIABT is modelled on similar schemes in other legislatures, for example Westminster’s Industry & Parliament Trust.

The activity of the NIABT has increased significantly over the past 6 months. The Trust is pursuing new innovative ways in which to engage with local businesses, such as the post AGM Panel Debate in December 2009; the European Educational Programme in February 2010; visits to major NIABT companies during 2010 and an increase in the number of Assembly Awareness Programmes. Business membership continues to increase and the numbers of business members has increased from 24 to 37 over the past 12 months. For further details visit: [www.niabt.org.uk](http://www.niabt.org.uk)



## NIIRTA welcomes ASDA rejection in Lisburn and expresses concern at Better Deals closure in Strabane



Jonathan Craig MLA, Cllr Paul Givan, Jeffrey Donaldson MP, Glyn Roberts and Cllr William Leatham at the proposed site of the superstore in Lisburn

The Northern Ireland Independent Retail Trade Association has described as 'good news for Lisburn City Centre' the decision by Environment Minister Edwin Poots to refuse planning permission for the proposed multiple superstore on the Magheralave Road off the North Feeder Road in Lisburn.

It is understood that the proposed store was to have been an ASDA. If this is correct it will have been the first time they have had a store application rejected in Northern Ireland.

NIIRTA has also expressed concern that a leading independent retailer, Better Deals in Strabane is to close as a result of unfair competition from the town's ASDA store.

NIIRTA Chief Executive Glyn Roberts said: "Minister Poots has made the right decision to reject this proposed superstore as it was a clear threat to the vitality of Lisburn City Centre. It would also have resulted in a net loss of jobs

within existing retailers in the city centre who would have been unable to compete with such an unsustainable out of town store."

"The place for such a superstore is in Lisburn Town Centre where it could have added to the overall retail offer of the city rather locating so far out of town"

"With the recent excellent result in Banbridge, this decision is another step forward in the campaign to protect and enhance our town centres."

Lisburn City Councillor Paul Givan said: "From the outset I have opposed this application which would have created a Food Superstore, larger than the existing Tesco store in Lisburn, in what will be a residential housing area. This site is completely inappropriate and the application was made without any community consultation and any approach by the applicant being made towards Lisburn Council."

Commenting on the closure of Strabane independent retailer Better

Deals, Glyn Roberts said: "This is a very sad day for the owner, staff, local economy and the community as a whole in Strabane that such a well known independent retailer is to close their doors with the loss of 110 jobs."

"I fear that the closure of Better Deals will also have a serious impact with their local suppliers which will be a further blow to the local economy."

"The owner of the store refers to the location of the ASDA store in the town as a major reason for the closure of his business, which drew customers away from the town centre."

"There are over a dozen other out of town multiple applications right across Northern Ireland which pose a threat to numerous town centres and businesses like Better Deals who are unable to compete on such an unfair basis. We need urgent action by DOE Planning Service to reject these applications and prevent any further retail devastation of our town centres."

Local energy provider, firmus energy, is lobbying government on behalf of large businesses to highlight the potential costs if the existing Climate Change Levy (CCL) exemption for natural gas in Northern Ireland ends in March 2011.

The company, which in 2005 won licences to bring natural gas to ten new towns across Northern Ireland including Londonderry, Ballymena, Antrim, Craigavon and Newry, has written to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) to express their fears over the damage this could cause both financially and environmentally to the industrial sector in Northern Ireland.

In 2001 DETI successfully lobbied both the UK Government (HMRC) and Brussels to support the newly emerging gas industry in Northern Ireland, by ensuring an exemption to the charging of CCL on natural gas for large business customers in the province. This exemption was further extended in March 2006 and has been instrumental in saving local businesses almost £30

million over the period.

firmus energy were recently informed by DETI that HMRC are not minded to grant a further extension to the CCL exemption for business gas users in Northern Ireland. To that effect, it is proposed that the exemption will expire on 31st March 2011, after which all gas purchases by business users will be subject to Climate Change Levy (currently 0.164p / kWh). This will mean an additional cost to business users in the 10 towns of c£1.6m per annum.

firmus energy has begun to lobby for a further extension to the Climate Change Levy exemption, particularly for the 10 towns in their licence area, which would benefit business users.

Mark Prentice, General Manager of firmus energy commented, "We have

written to DETI to express our fears over the impact of this decision on the industrial sector in Northern Ireland. The imposition of CCL at this time will not only impact on the development of the fledgling natural gas industry in the new gas towns outside of Belfast but will impose an unnecessary additional tax burden on local businesses at a time when every penny counts. In addition, the introduction of the CCL on natural gas in Northern Ireland could have the effect of discouraging firms from the use of natural gas and would therefore, perversely, lead to increased emissions of CO2. We are encouraging our business customers to raise this issue with their local representatives to help DETI lobby HMRC for a further extension to the CCL exemption for Northern Ireland businesses."

## Energy costs to increase for large businesses if Climate Change Levy Exemption removed



Willis and Company (Insurance Brokers) Limited is one of Northern Ireland's leading independent insurance brokers. Founded just over thirty years ago by Robert Willis, it has built strong partnerships with its clients, some of whom have been with him since the beginning. Highly respected within the insurance sector and acknowledged as having one of the highest ratios of qualified staff, the company has recently been quietly positioning itself for growth by bucking the trend and investing in people rather than simply battenning down the hatches, cutting costs and hoping to ride out the current difficult trading conditions.

As a completely independent and local provider of both General Insurance

and Financial, Willis & Company offers one of the few remaining one stop shops for Northern Ireland firms who still want a traditional insurance broker relationship based on trust and understanding but who also expect genuine value for money, all the time. It is this empathy, developed over three decades, that has enabled Willis & Company to win and retain like-minded companies as clients and continues to be one of its core values.

The ability to move quickly as circumstances change and opportunities present themselves has long been acknowledged as a strength for independent businesses. Willis and Company has already established a pedigree to be proud of and the

challenge as always is to preserve what is best and do everything else better.

The message from Chairman Robert Willis is a simple one. "The entire industry is based on utmost good faith for its dealings and an implied service excellence for its reputation. Somewhere along the line the story has become too complicated for its own good. We intend to simplify the message again and trust local businesses to see the difference!"

For further information or to have a review of your existing insurance cover please contact David Dempster on 02890 329042.

Email: [davidd@willisinsurance.co.uk](mailto:davidd@willisinsurance.co.uk)  
Website: [www.willisinsurance.co.uk](http://www.willisinsurance.co.uk)



# NIIRTA GALLERY

*lobbying for its members*

NIIRTA lobbying for its members  
at the local party conferences



*Sinn Fein Ard Fheis in Dublin  
Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness MP MLA  
and Glyn Roberts*



*Sinn Fein Ard Fheis in Dublin  
Glyn Roberts briefing Sinn Fein President  
Gerry Adams MP*



*SDLP Conference in Newcastle  
where NIIRTA and the Northern Ireland Chamber  
hosted a reception to highlight the key challenges  
facing the local economy*

*Taoiseach Brian Cowan TD attended the NIIRTA  
Reception at the SDLP Conference*

*Alliance Party Conference in Antrim  
where NIIRTA and the NI Chamber of Commerce  
hosted a reception for party delegates*

*Alliance Party Leader David Ford MLA and Glyn  
Roberts at the Alliance Party Conference*



*SDLP Conference in Newcastle  
Glyn Roberts congratulating the newly elected  
SDLP Leader Margaret Ritchie MLA who is also  
the Minister for Social Development*

