

Insight



Ballymena

Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry



2010 BUSINESS AWARDS LAUNCHED

The 2010 Ballymena Borough Business Excellence Awards, which are organised by Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry, have been officially launched at a reception held in the Adair Arms Hotel. A large number of Chamber members, sponsors and guests were present.

Chamber president Raymond Ruck welcomed everyone. He said "In today's challenging economic climate it is very important that we take time to recognise and reward excellence within local businesses. It is clear that despite the current economic environment many businesses are thriving and offer a strong benchmark for other businesses to aspire to. We in the local business community now have the opportunity to

applaud these benchmarks at one of the most prestigious business events in Northern Ireland.

I would like to thank all our sponsors and advertisers for their support. Without their support it would be impossible to run the awards. I would like to offer special thanks to Ulster Bank for agreeing to be principal sponsor. Chamber has had an excellent relationship

with Ulster Bank for many years and we are proud to have them as principal sponsor for the 2010 awards".

Raymond then introduced Terry Robb, head of Ulster Bank's Ballymena Business Centre. Terry said "I have only been in this post for 2 months and I would like to thank the Chamber for the warm welcome they have given me and especially for the opportunity for Ulster Bank

to be the major sponsor of this year's Ballymena Business Awards. This was an invitation we were delighted to accept as we have been associated as a sponsor of the awards since their beginning 8 years ago and we look forward to our year as major sponsor.

Ulster Bank first opened a Branch in Ballymena in 1838 and we are very proud of our strong local connections to

(continued overleaf)

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WELCOME TO THE OCTOBER ISSUE OF THE CHAMBER NEWSLETTER.



It has been a very busy few months, the highlight being the launch of the 2010 Ballymena Borough Business Excellence Awards. The number of entries for the awards this year has been excellent, another record breaking year.

The winners of the 2010 Awards will be announced at the Gala Evening to be held in Tullyglass House Hotel on Thursday 28th. October. I promise you an excellent evening, so please get your tickets booked now.

Chamber has a lot planned for the coming months - you can always keep up to date on the Chamber website www.ballymenachamber.co.uk

I hope you enjoy the Newsletter.

Raymond Ruck
President

2010 BUSINESS AWARDS LAUNCHED



Effective policies can give companies the confidence to invest, be innovative and profitable.

the Ballymena Borough. We are proud of the part we have played, the part we are playing and the part we will continue to play in the future in partnership with local businesses to help them grow and develop.

Undoubtedly we are in challenging times, but events like the Ballymena Business Awards highlight that this Borough's strong work ethic is as strong as ever. We can be sure that there are still many businesses who will not just survive the current economic challenges but that will grow and enhance their reputations through the dedication, entrepreneurship and commitment of their owners and staff.

Finally can I say again on behalf of Ulster Bank and all my team in Ballymena Business Centre that we are delighted to be the major sponsor of this year's Ballymena Business Awards. We look forward to a fantastic event on Thursday 28th October and we wish the Chamber of Commerce team best wishes and good luck with their preparations in the months ahead".

Mayor Maurice Mills said that he was delighted to attend the launch and that the Ballymena Business awards were something he always looked forward to.

Maurice said "The traders and businesses play a vital role in keeping the Borough buoyant. We have survived previous recessions, and whilst this is the worst I have ever experienced, we will steer our way through this one too. There is a need for effective national intervention, and local Government also has an important role to play in policy areas such as transport, planning and regeneration. Effective policies can give companies the confidence to invest, be innovative and profitable.

The business awards are very worthwhile in that they bring businesses together, giving them the opportunity to network and get ideas flowing. Raymond said that these awards are amongst the best in Northern Ireland. He was being modest – they are the best".

BALLYMENA ENTERPRISE FORUM OFFICIALLY LAUNCHED

Ballymena Business Centre has officially launched a new Ballymena Enterprise Forum aimed at connecting enterprising communities from throughout the Ballymena Borough Council area.



The forum was officially launched by the Mayor of Ballymena Cllr. Maurice Mills; Mr Bill Scott Director of Regional Economic Development Invest NI and Ald. PJ McAvoyn Chairman Ballymena Business Centre.

In attendance were representatives from Ballymena Borough Council, Ballymena Business Centre, Northern Regional College, Ballymena Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Invest Northern Ireland, Michelin Development, Women on the Move Network, Ballymena Business Centre and the communities of Dunclug, Harryville, Ballee, Ahoghill, Cullybackey and Ballykeel.

Ballymena Enterprise Forum aims to join up enterprising communities, to share good practice in promoting enterprise, to reach out to local entrepreneurs and to

inform key stakeholders on local enterprise needs. Over the forthcoming weeks Ballymena Enterprise Forum will be reaching out to enterprising communities and organisations throughout Ballymena promoting the following benefits of membership:

- Promotion of your community and organisation at joint events and through Forum website links
- Know what is happening in your local area and how you and your customers can avail of sources of support
- Signpost and refer customers to each other, reducing confusion in the market place and increase their enterprise experience

- Attend forum events to share knowledge and information
- Be part of the UK Enterprising Places Network and extend your enterprise network beyond Ballymena and Northern Ireland

Ballymena Enterprise Forum will be sponsored by Ballymena Business Centre with membership being provided free of charge.

Any enterprising community or organisation that would like further information on Ballymena Enterprise Forum should contact Melanie or Stephen on 028 25 658616 or email melanie@ballymenabusiness.co.uk or stephen@ballymenabusiness.co.uk

BANK OF ENGLAND INFLATION BRIEFING

Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Bank of England hosted a lunch in Tullyglass House Hotel in May.



Alison Moore, Chamber Past President welcomed 60 prominent businessmen and women to the lunch and introduced Frances Hill, the Bank of England Agent for Northern Ireland.

The Bank of England's latest Inflation Report was published on 12th.May 2010.

The Report sets out the detailed economic analysis on current economic conditions and prospects for inflation on which the Bank's Monetary Policy Committee bases its interest rates decisions.

Any report which is full of figures, graphs, charts etc. can be difficult to read and

understand, but in a very interesting talk, Frances explained many of the findings in the report which helps the Bank reach its policy decisions.

At the conclusion of her talk, Frances answered questions from the audience.

CAMBRIDGE HOUSE TAKES ON THE WORLD!



Team SIANIDE are an F1 in Schools team formed as a collaboration effort from two schools on the Island of Ireland, one from the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

The team was formed with a view of competing at the F1 in Schools World Finals to be held in Singapore. F1 in Schools is a competition, open to all secondary schools, to design and manufacture compressed air-powered racing cars. Student teams compete against each other in a National Championship to determine the best-engineered and fastest car. Those successful at the National Finals stage are invited to the World Finals.

Team Sianide welcomed representatives from the Ballymena Chamber of Commerce who joined them in Cambridge House this morning to show their support for the team's venture.

Paidraig Duffy and Brian Turley, students from O'Fiaich College, were in Ballymena to work with their Cambridge House team mates, Paul McCaughern, Steven McMahon and Jonathan Bristow, taking advantage of the opportunity to enhance their relations with local business people. Roy Bonar from Alexander Bonar Ltd along with Chris and Audrey Wales and Alison Moore has offered excellent support on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce.

Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry would like to wish Cambridge House every success in the finals in Singapore. Chris Wales, Chamber Business Development Manager said "This young team from Cambridge House did exceptionally well in becoming UK Champions 2010 and therefore qualifying for the world final.

In the Ballymena Borough Business awards there is an Innovation award that recognises the efforts of businesses that overcome challenges presented when developing new products and services and competing internationally.

This is the challenge faced by this team and I have no doubt that the experience gained in this competition will serve them well in the years to come. I look forward to meeting them when they return from Singapore, hopefully with the World trophy"

ONUS LAUNCHES WORKPLACE CHARTER TO IMPROVE SUPPORT FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS



Employers across Northern Ireland are being urged to show their support for victims of domestic violence by signing up to a major new programme launched on Tuesday 8th June at the University of Ulster's Jordanstown campus.

Developed by ONUS, a social economy business that profit sheds to Women's Aid ABCLN, the Workplace Charter on Domestic Violence provides businesses with essential advice and practical training to help and support staff suffering from domestic violence. It also enables employers to have their commitments to improving duty-of-care honoured with Gold, Silver or Bronze Charter Awards.

ONUS is a specialist training and consultancy service committed to working with employers to put necessary measures in place to ensure support for employees who are victims of abuse. The programme has already enabled a number of launch organisations to develop an effective workplace policy for dealing with the domestic violence issue.

Speaking at the launch, Colette Stewart, Business Manager from ONUS, said: "Domestic abuse in Northern Ireland remains a serious issue with one-in-four women and one-in-nine men likely to experience domestic violence at some point in their lives. For employers this presents a challenge as many organisations wrongly believe this is a not a workplace concern. We know that developing a policy can appear daunting, but it doesn't have to be. We developed this Charter to help firms support their staff with simple steps like giving employees practical and confidential information about seeking help or exploring flexible working hours".

For further information on how to tackle this workplace issue, please visit www.itisaworkplaceissue.co.uk or contact 028 2563 2136.

FIRMUS ENERGY HITS TOP TEN LIST OF BEST SMALL WORKPLACES IN THE UK

Great Place to Work® Institute UK has added firmus energy, which supplies natural gas to homes and businesses across Ballymena, to its annual "Best Small Workplaces" list.



The official results places firmus energy at No. 10 in the list of Best Small Places to work in the UK.

The Best Workplaces Programme is the largest study of workplace excellence, with more than 1.8 million employees involved across 40 countries. The methodology for the U.K. Best Workplaces rankings is based on a rigorous evaluation from an employee "Trust Index" survey, and a "Culture Audit" management survey. Employees are asked to evaluate their company's performance

based on five key areas: credibility, respect, fairness, pride and camaraderie.

The award itself is more than just a prestigious ranking. It is recognition of the many benefits and opportunities firmus energy offers to staff, extending far beyond the remuneration package.

Mark Prentice, general manager for firmus energy, commented: "This prestigious accolade is further testament to our corporate values of clarity, empathy and

integrity and our commitment to putting them at the heart of everything we do. At firmus energy, we strive to provide high-calibre professional developmental opportunities, quality of life, job security and competitive pay and benefits for our employees.

This award is a huge vote of confidence from our employees as their views account for two-thirds of the final score, making them the ultimate judge of our overall ranking.

PATTON GROUP WINS RIGHT PLACE TO WORK PRIZE AT MAJOR BELFAST AWARDS

The Patton Group were among the high-profile organisations which scooped gongs at the Irish News Workplace & Employment Awards in Belfast.



The Ballymena-based company picked up top prize in The Right Place to Work category.

A capacity crowd packed into the Ramada Hotel for the gala black-tie dinner, at which Department of Employment & Learning Minister Sir Reg Empey congratulated all the winners for their success in placing a firm emphasis on individuals and their positive contribution to the Northern Ireland workplace.

Patton Group Human Resources' Manager, Shauna DuPreez, said the company was delighted to have won The Right Place to Work category in recognition of its work in Corporate Social Responsibility and in support of the environment.

"It's fair to say that CSR has been part of our corporate DNA for many, many years now," said Shauna. "It is simply part of who we are and how we do things here in Pattons.

Our stewardship of the environment is also something that is given a very strong focus and which everyone in the organisation from senior executives to site workers sees as vital.

Winning this award is testament not only to the unique culture within Pattons but also the hard work and dedication of every one of our staff. We are all very, very proud to have won this award in the face of extremely stiff competition."

MCKEEVER GROUP INVESTS £1.5MILLION IN HISTORIC HOTEL



An ambitious £1.5 million refurbishment project has been unveiled at one of County Antrim's best-known hotels by its new owners.

The Adair Arms Hotel in Ballymena was bought by the McKeever Hotel group – owners of Corr's Corner Hotel and the Dunsilly Hotel – in late January. The company got to work straight away and phase one of the re-development – renovation of the 200 seat function room – has just been completed.

Over 120 guests attended the launch in June of the new conference and banqueting suites. Guests included Mayor Maurice Mills and Chamber President Raymond Ruck.

Now designs for 44 bedrooms have been finalised and plans for a new entrance, reception, lift, staircase and grill bar have been submitted for planning approval.

"This hotel was built in 1846 by Sir Robert Adair and it was designed by architect Charles Lanyon – who also built the impressive Lanyon Building at Queen's University," explained Managing Director Eugene McKeever. "Because the façade of the hotel is listed, we are very conscious that we are retaining the original charm of the building while adding all the modern conveniences inside," he added.

Each of the bedrooms is unique and will be designed to emphasise the character of the original building

Both the menu and the design of the bar and grill area will have similarities to the McKeever groups other successful hotels. "Both Corr's and Dunsilly incorporate lots of stonework, cosy booths, sumptuous carpeting and beautiful lighting. We've already changed the menu to a less formal offering that is served all day long," Mr McKeever added.

The Adair Arms employs 40 people and is the only hotel in the town centre of Ballymena.

"The Adair Arms fits perfectly into our portfolio of hotels and it gives us the chance to bring a great food and excellent conference facilities to the heart of this county Antrim town," he added.

Chamber President Raymond Ruck said "Chamber is delighted with this major investment in the Adair Arms Hotel. Tourism will be a growth area in the years ahead and this investment will help not only the Adair Arms but also Ballymena to tap this lucrative market. I wish the McKeever Hotel Group every success with this venture".

CHAMBER WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS



Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry held an informal meeting in September at Leighinmohr House Hotel to welcome new members.

Raymond Ruck, Chamber President and several of the Chamber management committee were present to meet the new members and to tell them about Chamber and what it can do for their business. Raymond said "I am very pleased to welcome you all here today. New members are vital for any organisation. I hope you enjoy your time as Chamber members and that you find your membership to be both beneficial and enjoyable".

He then presented membership certificates to:

- Harry Clarke and Co.
- Elbowroom Media
- Leighinmohr House Hotel
- Ballyprint.com
- Big Box Self Store
- Rutledge

Any business which is interested in Chamber membership can contact Chamber at office@ballymenachamber.co.uk or phone Chris Wales on 07876 758797



NEW MEMBERS

BALLYPRINT.COM



Your one stop shop for all your printing needs from business stationery and leaflets through to outdoor signage and vinyl labels. Ballyprint.com "Much more than an ordinary printer"

RUTLEDGE RECRUITMENT & TRAINING



Rutledge Recruitment & Training is the largest private vocational training company in Northern Ireland and has been delivering quality work based learning programmes since 1989. We are highly experienced in providing on and off the job vocational training and have been successfully involved in meeting the career aspirations of over 2000 individuals.

The Training for Success programme (TFS) is for school leavers aged 16-18 years old and is designed to provide skills, confidence and knowledge within a unique supported learning environment. We offer a wide range of programmes leading to qualifications in a number of occupational areas.

APPRENTICESHIP NI is a government funded initiative which enables adults of any age and in employment of 21 hours or more to access an apprenticeship in their chosen occupational field. The department of employment and learning pay the full costs of directed training and employers receive incentive bonuses of up to £1000 upon completion of programme. If you want to help your business grow, harness fresh talent and skills in your workforce and for your staff to gain internationally recognized qualifications then we want to hear from you!

HARRY CLARKE & CO



Harry Clarke & Company is one of County Antrim's leading Estate Agents. Established in Ballymena since 1989, we are located in town centre premises, dealing with a wide range of property and property related matters, including sales and lettings of residential, commercial and agricultural property.

Harry Clarke & Company comprises of Harry Clarke and Scott Edmondson, both professionally qualified Surveyors, who run Harry Clarke and Company on the ethos of traditional values with contemporary thinking.

ELBOWROOM MEDIA



Elbowroom media is your local media solutions company. We specialise in promoting businesses, organisations and brands through online and print publications. We also provide marketing and advertising solutions and are constantly developing alternative forms of advertising for local businesses.

Our advertising channels include our monthly community newspaper the 'Ballymena Doorstep Advertiser' and a Province-wide network of digital advertising screens.

For more elbowroom in the market place, give us a call on 2500 2005

BIG BOX SELF STORE



Big Box Self Store is the largest secure self storage facility in County Antrim, centrally located beside the M2 Motorway in Ballymena. We provide flexible low cost storage for a large number of household and business customers from throughout the UK and Ireland.

Our multi sized dry secure stores are ideal for furniture, documents, surplus stock, catering equipment, canoes, pianos, ski gear or whatever your storage needs. For a limited period we are offering the first 4 weeks storage FREE with no lease to sign, unlimited access to your own private store during opening hours and no minimum storage agreement; Big Box Self Store has the space you need for as long as you want. Go to www.bigboxselfstore.com or telephone 028 25650200.

LEIGHINMOHR HOUSE HOTEL



Situated at the bottom of Leighinmohr Avenue, within walking distance of Ballymena town centre and the bus and railway stations, the Leighinmohr House Hotel has a well deserved reputation for the quality of its hospitality.

The newly introduced Grill menu is available in both the restaurant and bar and is complemented by daily specials using the finest local produce. With 21 bedrooms and a range of event spaces, the Leighinmohr House Hotel is an ideal venue for any occasion from small meeting to a wedding reception for 300 guests.

We look forward to welcoming you.

LAUNCH OF THE PENNYBRIDGE BUSINESS WATCH AREA



The Action Committee of the Pennybridge Traders, Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry, local PSNI and the District Policing Partnership (DPP) launched Pennybridge Business Watch Area on Monday 16th August 2010, the first of its kind in Northern Ireland.

Pennybridge Business Watch Area will mean that traders will work together to monitor any suspicious activity taking place on the estate, they will share information with one another, report their concerns to an Action Committee member, who will in turn pass that information to the local police. The Police will email crime prevention warnings to other traders on the estate and target their resources to address concerns. The Pennybridge Business Watch Area has been set up in response to criminal activity in the recent past, which has impacted on business confidence and in some occasions the viability of the business enterprise. There is also the concern that in times of economic uncertainty criminals will continue to target

viable businesses.

Ballymena PSNI has funded the production of the first batch of the Business Watch signs, and they will be prominently displayed on a number of business premises throughout the estate. Any traders who wish to display a sign should contact a member of the Action Committee or the Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Mrs Audrey Wales MBE, member of the Chamber of Commerce & Industry and the DPP said "It is important that businesses in Pennybridge realise that they could be the target of criminals. And it is a well-known fact that before a crime takes place

professional criminals will 'case the joint', visit the business on some pretext or other. Business Watch will make owners and staff of businesses in Pennybridge, more security conscious, more aware of people that call at the business for no good reason and suspicious vehicles on the estate. Business watch will mean that businesses will now share that information with one another, a member of the Action Committee and the local PSNI. In short we all have to work together to prevent crime and Business Watch signs will send out a clear message to any would-be criminal that you are being watched! Further crime prevention measures will be pursued in the following months".

Mayor Maurice Mills said that he was delighted to be present at the launch. "This is the first scheme of its kind in Northern Ireland – another precedent for Ballymena. The message is quite clear. The traders have had enough, criminals are not welcome and we are all determined that the rule of the law will apply in Pennybridge. I thank the PSNI for making this a priority. This demonstrates that we all care about our businesses in Ballymena".

PSNI Chief Inspector Ryan Henderson said "The PSNI is happy to support this scheme. It is a great example of the community working together to make this a safer area to do business. I am confident that Business Watch will make a difference".

CHAMBER WELCOMES NEW ULSTER BANK APPOINTMENT



Chris Wales, Business Development Manager at Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Alison Moore, Chamber Past President, welcomed the appointment of Terry Robb as the new Head of Ulster Bank's Ballymena Business Centre.

Chris said "Ballymena is a busy town with a notable list of businesses and entrepreneurs which are innovative and ambitious. Ulster Bank has played a vital role in supporting local businesses to date, and we are delighted that Terry takes up this position now, at a time when businesses need financial support more than ever. I look forward to working with Terry and the Ulster Bank to further support the SME community in the wider Ballymena area".

RETAIL CRIME SEMINAR

As we fast approach the most important time of the year for the retail industry, it is time to consider that it is not just the retail sector that is at its busiest, but the retail thief is also working flat-out. Ballymena, like all other areas, has been experiencing increased levels of retail theft and this problem is especially prevalent over the Nov to Jan period.

The current retail criminal falls into two main categories the first of which is the amateur who will take whatever opportunity arises to steal goods. They will use times that are busy or when staff are distracted to commit thefts and will lift anything available.

The second category is the professionals who are ever more sophisticated in their operations. They will normally carry out scans of your premises noting CCTV installations, black spots, staffing levels, security detector equipment (will check if functioning) and if radio link is installed. The professionals, having done their homework, will then use a variety of

methods to carry out the thefts. In order to make sure that you have the most up to date information on this, it has been decided to arrange another retail theft seminar, similar to last year, on Tuesday 26th Oct at 5.45pm in Montgomery's, Ballymoney St.

The seminar is being organised by Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Ballymena District Policing Partnership, Ballymena Retailers Against Crime and the PSNI. The Ballymena Town Dev Co is supporting this initiative.

The Police Town Beat Team will be delivering leaflets with all the details later this month.

BRAC

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