



Ballymena

Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Newsletter

Issue: 01-2006



Foreword by President William McKean

It gives me great pleasure to announce the launch of the Chamber's first ever Newsletter. The committee hope to produce at least four copies per year advising you of the activities of the Chamber and in particular celebrate the success of our local businesses. There are many great things happening in the business community in Ballymena and I think it is time that we started to celebrate these successes.

I hope you find this Newsletter to be of interest. I would welcome your views on its content and any suggestions for future Chamber events.

Annual General Meeting

The AGM of the Chamber was held on 12th. April. The outgoing President, Phil Brunt and members of the Management Committee gave their reports on the various projects and working groups in which they had been involved in the previous year. There can be no doubt that the Chamber had a very busy year with reports being given on areas such as Radio Link, Economic Development, Sister Cities, Town Centre Partnership and the Business Awards to name but a few.



The Rev. Robert Coulter chaired the meeting for the election of Office Bearers for the current year. The following Officers were elected:



- President : William McKean
- Vice President: Alison Moore
- Hon. Treasurer: Raymond Ruck
- Hon. Secretary: Stephen McCully

Thomas McKillen, Roy Bonar, Phil Brunt, Vincent O'Connell, Audrey Wales and William Alexander were elected to the Management Committee.

In recognition of many years of work for the Chamber, Phil Brunt proposed that Audrey Wales be awarded Life Membership of Chamber, a proposal which was unanimously passed.



Gibraltar Twinning Visit

The Borough of Ballymena and Gibraltar are now officially twinned. A delegation from Gibraltar visited Ballymena in the first week of May for the official ceremony and the Chamber had the honour of entertaining the delegation for a day.

William McKean and Alison Moore escorted the visitors to several businesses in the Borough. In the morning they visited Michelin Tyre Plc and David Patton and Sons (NI) Ltd.

This was followed by an excellent lunch in the Thatch Inn, Broughshane which was provided and hosted by owner Brian Montgomery. A visit to Ballymena Business Centre followed lunch and the day concluded with a walk round the centre of Ballymena.

The weather on the day was horrendous but the delegation had an enjoyable day. The Chamber would like to thank all businesses who participated on the day and to the Thatch for lunch.

Changes in Parking Regulations in the Town Centre

Over the next few months significant changes in relation to parking and enforcement will take place in Ballymena Town Centre. Many of the changes will not occur until September or October but one change is imminent.

Loading Bays: These bays will be introduced to all streets in Ballymena by mid/late July. There will be clear signage and marking of bays. The bays can only be used for loading and unloading. The regulations will be strictly enforced.

Information on further changes will be made available closer to implementation.

Launch of Chamber Website

Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry have launched their new website – www.ballymenachamber.co.uk

Chamber President William McKean said it was the Chamber's aim to improve the level and means of communication between Chamber and its members. "Our website goes a long way to achieving this objective". Another of the Chamber's objectives is to become a major source of information for the benefit of its members. The website when fully developed will do this. The site will link with the likes of the Council, Invest NI and Ballymena Business centre to name but a few organisations where new and emerging businesses can access up to date and relevant information. Mr. McKean added that the site will also provide a vehicle for members to promote their own businesses. The Chamber would like to thank The Fern Room for hosting the event.



Invest NI and NI Business Information have also launched a new business website. It gives a lot of information on starting and running a business. It is well worth a visit at www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk

The Big Six

Six Ballymena companies can be found in the Northern Ireland's Top 100 Companies list for 2005. The list which is compiled by the Belfast Telegraph is based on a number of features including employment, turnover and profitability.

Top of the list at number 11 is Maybin Support Services which earlier this year was bought by a local management team. O'Kane Poultry were listed at number 32 with Michelin Tyres at 33. Wrightbus came in at number 38, Gallaher were at number 48 and the Patton Group were at number 78, the first time they have featured in the Top 100.

Congratulations to all these firms, and the Chamber would like to wish them all continued success and growth in the future.

Ballymena Borough Business Excellence Awards 2006



Preparations are now well under way for the 2006 awards. Two major sponsors have been agreed.

Alison Moore, who leads the awards team said "We are indebted to Ballymena Borough Council and Michelin Tyre Plc. They have both agreed to be major sponsors for the 2006 awards. The Council have been a major sponsor since the awards started and this is the second successive year that Michelin have agreed to be a major sponsor. Without major sponsorship like this the awards just would not happen".

Alison continued "The awards have grown in strength from year to year. This is the fourth year of the awards and it will be bigger and better than ever. The launch of the awards will be on 2nd August in Montgomerys, Ballymoney Street, to which invitations are currently being prepared.

The awards evening will be held on 26th October in the Tullyglass House Hotel. The hotel have always provided us with a superb banquet and looked after us very well. Anyone who has been to an awards evening will testify to this".

Ms. Moore added "Wendy Austin has presented the awards ceremony from the first year. She has proved so popular that we would not think of replacing her – we cannot think of anyone better. There will be a superb banquet and the entertainment will be provided by Fiddler Adams (a huge hit last year) and then dancing to the James Peake Xperience, widely recognised as the best band in Ireland".

As always, the main event of the evening will be the presentation of the awards. If you think this is the boring part of the evening think again. The atmosphere is electric.

We will be posting and distributing awards brochures to businesses in the next few weeks. There are 18 awards this year so there is a category for everyone. We are confident that the awards this year will be bigger and better than ever.

Ballymena Civic Service



The annual Civic Service took place in St. Patrick's Church, Ballymena on 28th May. Local Councillors and pupils from several schools in the Borough participated in the service. The guest preacher was the Very Reverend Houston McKelvey, the Dean of St. Anne's Cathedral, Belfast. He certainly displayed excellent local knowledge of Ballymena and preached a sermon which was very relevant to the problems in Ballymena at this time.

Calendar of Events -

- 2nd August: Launch of Business Awards
- 10th August: Breakfast Meeting – Presentation by NIE on three easy ways to reduce costs
- September: Meeting re changes to parking regulations and enforcement (Date TBC)
- Sept/Oct: Joint meeting with BRAC (Radiolink) (Date TBC): "The Rights of the Retailer"
- 26th October: Business Awards Gala Evening

Any business which would like to join/find out more about Chamber, or if you have any comments or suggestions for the Newsletter, Chamber can be contacted at office@ballymenachamber.co.uk or call Chris Wales on 07876 758797.

Congratulations

- To Ballykeel Business Development Ltd. which has been named as the most enterprising place in Northern Ireland. The Centre was the regional winner of the Dept. of Trade and Industry's "Enterprising Britain 2006" competition. The Centre has been a real success story with units being 100% occupied, 90% of the tenants coming from Ballykeel and 38 new jobs created. To meet local demand, 16 further units are now planned. Good luck to the Centre in the national final which takes place in London in September.
- To Alderman James Alexander on his election as Mayor. We wish him a successful year in office.
- To Ballymena Retailers Against Crime (Radiolink Scheme) which now has a membership of 145. On a pro rata basis to the number of businesses this is the largest scheme in Northern Ireland. Largely due to the success of this scheme, Ballymena enjoyed a decrease of 24% in the figures for retail crime compared with an overall increase of 15% for the province.
- To Audrey Wales on being elected as Chair of the Community Safety Partnership. This will be Audrey's second term in the chair.
- To McKillens (Ballymena) Ltd. who won the "Footwear Retailer of the Year 2006" at a prestigious ceremony in London. There were over 300 entries from all over the United Kingdom, so the competition was extremely tough. A major part of Ballymena's success over the years has been its excellent independent shops, so Chamber are delighted to see McKillens do so well and wish them every success in the future. The Chamber would also like to congratulate McKillens on their 80th anniversary 1926 – 2006.
- To Michelin Development Ltd. on winning a major award at "The Business in The Community Awards". Michelin Development won the "Small Firms Support Award" at a reception held in the City Hall, Belfast in June. Set up to assist small businesses at start up/growth/expansion, Michelin Development has granted loans in excess of £200,000 in the area, creating around 70 jobs. They also provide support in terms of advice or expertise. A wide range of companies have been assisted, and Chamber applauds Michelin Development's work in the local community.

New Members



New members are the lifeblood of any organisation, so the Chamber is delighted to welcome the following companies who have become members of the Chamber in recent weeks:

- Mercer's Electrical Distributors Ltd.
- Seven FM
- Redflite Ltd
- Ashgrove Contract Furniture Ltd.
- Nik Naks
- J.H.McKinney and Sons

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