

CHAMBER HOSTS FIRMUS ENERGY BREAKFAST

Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry hosted a business breakfast in the Adair Arms on Tuesday 19th June.



Chamber President William McKean welcomed a large number of businesses to the breakfast. He said "It is great to see so many businesses here today representing a wide range of commerce and industry. Rising costs are a matter of concern for all businesses, no more so than energy costs and therefore I am very



interested to hear what firmus energy can do for businesses in the Borough." Neil Holland, Sales and Marketing Manager from firmus energy said he was delighted to be in Ballymena this morning. He then gave a very informative presentation covering the following areas: details about where firmus energy currently were able to offer supplies in the Borough and their plans for the future, the grants available to anyone who was switching supply to firmus, pricing structure and comparison with other energy suppliers and finally examples of the efficiency and cleanliness of gas compared with other energy supplies.

At the conclusion of his presentation he answered a number of questions from the businesses present.

CONGRATULATIONS TO NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE (NRC)

NRC officially came into being on 1st August 2007. NRC is one of six new "super colleges" created through the re-structuring of the further education sector and formed through the merger of Causeway, East Antrim and North East Institutes.

NRC's main campuses are at Antrim, Ballymena, Ballymoney, Coleraine, Felden, Larne, Magherafelt and Newtownabbey. To celebrate their new identity an official launch was held on 27th September, not as a single event but with eight simultaneous events throughout the area. This inclusive approach was intended to demonstrate that staff, students and local partners at each campus all have an important role to play in making NRC a successful college and the great value that is placed on the maintenance of local identity.

Alison Moore, Vice President and Audrey Wales represented the Chamber at the launch event held in Ballymena. After an excellent lunch there were a series of short speeches. It was obvious from these speeches the high esteem in which the NRC is held by other educational bodies and local industry.

NRC offers 700 full-time and part-time courses and employs more than 1200 academic and administrative staff. Alison Moore in her address said that the Chamber valued its links with the NRC and hoped that these links would be developed and strengthened in the years ahead.

She concluded by wishing the NRC every success.



FORTHCOMING EVENTS

October 25: Ballymena Borough Business Excellence Awards Gala evening

October 30: Retail crime prevention seminar

December: Christmas Window Dressing Competition

December 11: Christmas social/networking evening

2008

January 9: Business lunch with high profile speaker

January 24: Business breakfast hosted by A4E

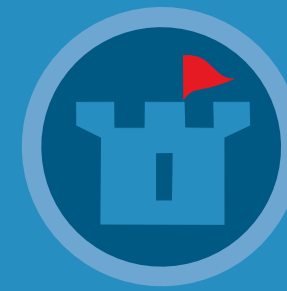
February 26: Business breakfast hosted by 7FM

As the planning for these events proceeds full details can be found on the Chamber website:

www.ballymenachamber.co.uk

If you have any comments about the Newsletter, or have an article or news you would like included in the next Newsletter, please contact Chris Wales at office@ballymenachamber.co.uk or by phone 07876 758797.

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Ballymena

Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Newsletter

Issue 4: October 2007

FOREWORD BY VICE PRESIDENT ALISON MOORE



Welcome to the latest edition of our Newsletter. As you will see this has been another very busy period for the Chamber. We have been greatly encouraged by the support from you, the members, both old and new.

A lot of time has been spent recently improving the website. Our thanks go to Michelin for their ongoing assistance. Please take the opportunity to visit the website, www.ballymenachamber.co.uk. If you have any suggestions or ideas for future events or seminars please contact any member of the Management Committee.



I hope to see many of you at the Awards Gala Evening on Thursday 25th October and best wishes to all entrants.

Alison Moore
Vice President

CHAMBER WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS



Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry have in the last few weeks welcomed several new businesses as members.

At an informal meeting in July, Chamber President William McKean presented Membership Certificates to the new members. He welcomed them to membership of the Chamber and said that he hoped that they would find their membership to be profitable and rewarding.



Amongst those present were James Perry, (Gloonan Gallery, Ahoghill), Aileen Mark and Paul Crean (First Choice Selection Services), Matthew Cordner and Ian McKeown (Absolute Technologies), Linda Allaway and Russell Johnston (Grafton Recruitment) and Ann McAllister (Viyella).

Alison Moore, Chamber Vice President held another meeting to welcome more new members in October. She presented membership certificates to David McIlveen and Gareth Dallas (Ulster Property Sales Ballymena), Nikki Smith (A4E) and Orla Hatt and Rhona Sittlington (Samuel Cumming and Son Solicitors)

Any business which is interested in Chamber Membership, or simply to find out more about Chamber, please contact Chris Wales at office@ballymenachamber.co.uk or phone 07876 758797, or visit the Chamber website www.ballymenachamber.co.uk

BUSINESS AWARDS – OFFICIAL LAUNCH

The 2007 Ballymena Borough Business Excellence Awards were officially launched at a reception in Montgomery's on Wednesday 1st August.



The awards which are now in their fifth year are organised by Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Chamber President William McKean welcomed a large number of sponsors and businesses to the launch. He said "We are delighted to see so many present for the

launch of the awards. The awards have become a bigger event each year and we have no doubt that the 2007 awards will be the biggest and best yet. I would like to thank firmus energy for agreeing to be our major sponsor. My thanks also go to those who are sponsoring the individual awards and to Ballymena Borough Council for their continued support".

He continued "The awards help to highlight the commitment of individuals and businesses in the Borough. There are 19 awards this year so there is a category relevant to all businesses. Look at the brochure and see what award is most relevant to your business and make sure you enter".

Neil Holland, Sales and Marketing Manager for firmus energy said "firmus energy is very happy to be the major sponsor for the 2007 business awards. firmus is the new provider of natural gas in Northern Ireland. We already supply many of the major

businesses in Ballymena and are currently expanding our network to include some of the housing estates in the town. firmus were involved as a sponsor last year, we were very impressed and had no hesitation in agreeing to be the major sponsor this year. We look forward to working with the Chamber over the coming months".

Mayor Maurice Mills said that Council were delighted to support the awards again this year. He said "We have supported the awards since their inception and Ballymena Borough Council recognise how important an event they have become. They help showcase everything that is best about the Borough. The Council and the Chamber have worked together over many years to promote and improve the Borough, and I look forward to continuing and strengthening this relationship".

To ensure the integrity of the awards the judging will once again be carried out by Spotcheck, the mystery shopping company.

GALA EVENING – TICKETS NOW ON SALE

The Gala evening where all the winners will be announced is being held on Thursday 25th. October in Tullyglass House Hotel commencing at 7.00pm. The evening starts with a pre dinner drinks reception followed by a five course meal. The presentation of the awards is of course the highlight of the evening and the compere this year is Colin Barkley. Following the awards presentation there is dancing to House M8s, one of the top bands in Ireland today.

The awards are organised by Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and this year the major sponsor is firmus energy.

Tickets are now on sale, with a good number of tables already confirmed. Anyone who has been present in previous years has enjoyed a brilliant evening. It is an excellent opportunity to entertain clients, to thank staff and most importantly a great chance to promote Ballymena. Tickets are

now on sale at £450 for a table of ten, or £45 for single tickets.



Alison Moore, Chamber Vice President, visited 7FM who are a sponsor and media partner. 7FM have produced an advert to promote the gala evening and Alison was there to approve it.

Alison said "The Chamber is very grateful to 7FM for their help in producing this advert, and it sounds great".

Alison also visited Viyella (Cameron's, Ballymena) to receive details of their sponsorship. Viyella for the second year will be presenting a prize to the best dressed lady at the Gala evening.



If you would like to book tickets, or if you have any queries, please contact Chris Wales at office@ballymenachamber.co.uk or 07876 758797.

WISH YOU WERE HERE!

WHERE? AHOGHILL! YES, you heard it here first – Ahoghill is THE place to come to.....to find out more read on.....



I don't know if you have been in Ahoghill recently. If you have you won't have failed to notice the transformation in the village. All of the various organisations have come together under the umbrella of AHOGHILL TOGETHER' to try to introduce various

environmental improvements. The results have been 'blooming' marvellous!

The local traders have played a key role in this transformation with both financial and 'physical' support. The Council has also made a significant contribution to the overall effort. Apart from short-term changes there has also been massive capital investment – a new Primary school, a new Community Centre and a new Business Centre. The first two opened in September this year and work has commenced on the Business Centre, which will provide one new retail unit and several workspace units suitable for a variety of businesses.

There is, however, a real need for regeneration in the centre of the village – around the Diamond area. In short, Ahoghill needs more shops! So if you were thinking about opening a home bakery, a

drapery shop, a florist, etc we would suggest that you look favourably on Ahoghill.

We have been operating Gloonan Gallery in the village for almost three years and there is no doubt about the potential which Ahoghill has as a commercial and business centre. There has been a significant increase in private sector housing development during that time. The village now has almost 2000 households and they need somewhere to shop!

So, fellow Chamber members, why not take a closer look at Ahoghill as a potential location for a new business opportunity and you too maywish you were here!

Patricia and James Perry
Gloonan Gallery, Ahoghill.

CHAMBER BBQ – "A REAL SIZZLER"



Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry held a BBQ on Saturday 30th June to mark the visit of a party from Morehead, Kentucky. Morehead is a Sister City of Ballymena and the group of 25 visitors spent 3 days in Ballymena.

The BBQ was held in the Michelin Athletic Club and Chamber was delighted with the huge crowd that was present.

Chamber President, William McKean welcomed everyone. There were short speeches from Ballymena Mayor, Maurice Mills and Morehead Mayor, Brad Collins. The Donnelly School of Irish Dancing commenced the entertainment for the evening with a series of dances which all present really appreciated. The music for the evening was provided by the Counties Antrim and Derry Fiddlers, who were also a huge success.

The BBQ which was prepared and cooked by the staff in the Michelin Athletic Club and judging by the number of empty plates was really enjoyed by everyone. Blaney Wines provided the wines which were served with the meal and Dundermotte Organic Ice Creams provided the ice cream and sorbets.

After the meal Chamber President William McKean presented Brad Collins with gifts from the Chamber. The guests from Morehead reciprocated and gave gifts to many of those present.

Although primarily a social event many useful business contacts were made on the evening. Dr. Damian Flanagan (O3 Dental Studio) was given a standing ovation when he announced that his company were providing a bursary worth £1000 to fund a student from the Borough to study at Morehead State University. Morehead Mayor replied that he was delighted with this very generous offer and he would encourage Morehead State University to match fund.

Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry would like to thank the following who assisted on the evening:

The Donnelly School of Irish Dancing
The Counties Antrim and Derry Fiddlers Association
All the staff at the Michelin Athletic Club
Blaney Wines
Dundermotte Organic Ice Cream

REPORT ON SISTER CITIES CONFERENCE 2007

The 51st Sister Cities Conference was held in Fort Lauderdale, July 2007. The first duty the board of directors had was to decide where the 2009 conference was going to be and after much debate Northern Ireland won over Canada. I think the fact that there was about 20 people from N. I. attending the conference helped the decision plus all the hard work put in at previous conferences by ALL delegates from our province. The visit made to N.I. last October by the board for one of their meetings and their trip to Ballymena also influenced their decision. Alan Chambers from North Down has to be congratulated for his work on the board and ensuring the 06 visit took place. This surely shows the importance of going out and selling our town and province.

This decision meant of course the conference started on a real high for the N.I. contingent and meant we had to meet as many delegates as possible. I certainly felt that that goal had been achieved. It seemed that everyone I met knew me by my first name. If all those who said they were coming do so we are in for a huge conference. What an opportunity to sell our province, and especially the Borough of Ballymena, and I hope we all grasp the opportunity with both hands. On a low note P.J. McAvoy took ill and had to go to hospital but P.J. thanks for the exciting ride I had in the Fire rescue truck with lights flashing and horns blaring racing through the streets beside two hunky paramedics.

On a high note Deirdre Nelson was voted on to the international board.



I attended several workshops but the one I enjoyed most and thought was most relevant to us was - Regionalism; Culture, Tourism & Economic Development. This showed how a community was working together to improve, how business people, hoteliers, local government, colleges and any other stake holders came together to make their region work. It is important if you attract tourists to your area you think about that you have for leisure and evening economy seven days per week remember investors are attracted to the areas that people show an interest in visiting, not the other way around. It is vital that the community comes together and everyone gets involved.

A very strong message to forget the consultants do it yourselves, share the responsibilities and at the end reap the benefits.



No handouts were available but I managed to get a DVD which I will gladly share.

I also met with greater Miami Chamber of Commerce and Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce at their exhibition stands and spent some time with them. My thanks to Robin Cherry and Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry for the opportunity they gave me to attend the conference.

Audrey Wales