

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



The AGM of the Chamber was held on 21st March. The President highlighted the successful year the Chamber had enjoyed, having run a number of very successful meetings which helped raise the profile of Chamber leading to a large increase in membership. Members of the Management Committee gave reports on the projects and working groups in which they had been involved during the year.

The Rev. Robert Coulter chaired the meeting for the election of Officers. He congratulated the Chamber on what had been a very busy year, and the following Officers were elected:

President: William McKean **Vice President:** Alison Moore **Hon. Treasurer:** Raymond Ruck

Thomas McKillen, Vincent O'Connell, William Alexander, Roy Bonar, Audrey Wales, Johnny Black, David McKinney, Robin Cherry and Phil Brunt were elected to the Management Committee.

Mervyn Rankin, who retired as Town Clerk and Chief Executive of Ballymena Borough Council was awarded Life Membership of the Chamber.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

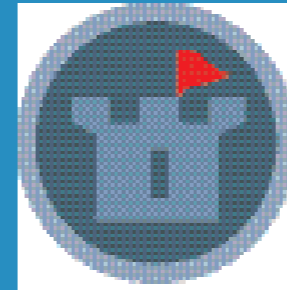
- June 19:** Business Breakfast Meeting with Firmus Energy
- June 30:** BBQ Evening to entertain visitors from Morehead, Kentucky
- August 1:** Launch of Ballymena Borough Business Excellence Awards
- October 25:** Ballymena Borough Business Excellence Awards Gala evening
- December:** Christmas Window Dressing Competition
- December 11:** Christmas social/networking evening

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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Newsletter

Issue 3: June 2007

PRESIDENT'S FOREWORD



In this issue of your newsletter you will again see examples of the various activities in which the Chamber is involved. We plan to continue to examine issues of interest to the business community in the Borough and we would welcome your feedback on the content of this publication and any suggestions for future activities. We are also very pleased to be able to highlight some of the many successes enjoyed by our local businesses

over the last number of months. We have started work on the 2007 Business Awards and we will be in contact with you in this regard in the near future. Please give every consideration to competing this year and feel free to encourage your fellow entrepreneurs out there to enter also.

William McKean
President

LITHUANIAN DELEGATION HOSTED BY CHAMBER



On Friday 2nd February a delegation of 30 Lithuanians visited Ballymena. Part of the visit was hosted by Chamber.

Lithuania became members of the EEC on 2nd January and the visit to Ballymena was part of a fact finding mission to Northern Ireland. The delegation included the Lithuanian Ambassador, Zygardus Usackas, the Mayor of Silute, Arvydas Jakas and Honorary Consul of the Lithuanian Government in Northern Ireland, Bill Sinnerton.

Ballymena Business Centre was the venue for the meeting. Despite the language difficulties a very successful meeting took place. Presentations were given by David McKinney (J H McKinney & Sons), David McCaughey (Wrightbus), Raymond Ruck (Michelin) and Melanie Christie Boyle (Ballymena Business Centre).

The Ambassador replied that the delegation had enjoyed their visit to

Ballymena and were impressed with everything they had seen, and that they were very keen to forge further links with Ballymena. He also extended an invitation to Chamber to attend a trade mission in Belfast on April 24th.



The ambassador then presented a gift to the Chamber, and William McKean reciprocated with gifts to the Ambassador and the Mayor.

CHAMBER MEMBERS MEET SIR REG EMPEY

In February Sir Reg Empey visited Ballymena Business Centre and a number of Chamber members were invited to meet him.

Melanie Christie-Boyle welcomed Sir Reg to the Centre and gave a brief presentation. Marion Heron and Michael Cunningham, who run two businesses located at the Business Centre also gave presentations and pointed out some of the difficulties they had encountered in running small businesses.



Sir Reg thanked everyone for their presentations and congratulated the Business Centre on its success.



SMOKING BAN SEMINAR

On 30th April legislation banning smoking in public places became law.

To help businesses in the Borough prepare for this ban, the Chamber ran a seminar in February. The Chamber engaged AIR

Consulting Ltd., who are experts in this field and who have delivered seminars on this topic all over the UK. Maeve Carey, from Ballymena Borough Council also took part in the seminar.

After the presentations there was a question and answer session, and a good turnout agreed that it had been very worthwhile and informative.

CHINESE LIONS VISIT BALLYMENA

The famous Chinese Lions visited Ballymena in March to celebrate the end of the Chinese New Year. The Chinese Lion dance has been performed for thousands of years to bring good fortune and protection from negative influences. The lions were brought to Ballymena in a joint venture between Chamber and Ballymena Community Forum's Ethnic

Minorities Project. William McKean said that the Chinese community had played an important role in the economic life of Ballymena for two generations, particularly in the social arena and the evening economy. Eileen Chan-Hu said that she was delighted with the support and partnership with the Chamber and that the first Chinese Lion Dance in the

town centre is one of the many minority ethnic festivals that can be shared and celebrated with all communities. Douglas Shek (New Manley) and Stanley Sung (Go Sun) donated lucky sweets which were given out to by-passers and shoppers.

eBAY TRAINING SEMINAR

The Chamber, in conjunction with the North East Institute and Ballymena Business Centre organised the first ever eBay business training course to be held in Ballymena.



It was a huge success and the available places were gone in a few days. A second series of seminars is being planned for the near future. Michael Hughes, the trainer on the course is the accredited eBay trainer in Ireland.

William McKean said "This is an excellent business opportunity for businesses in the Borough to set out their stall and sell their wares on the worldwide web. The Chamber is delighted to be able to bring this type of training to Ballymena".

Clare O'Neill (North East Institute) said "Northern Ireland firms are missing out on significant online domestic sales and export opportunities. We are delighted to

be involved with the Chamber of Commerce in such a popular venture".



CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF NI CHAMBER VISITS BALLYMENA

Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry hosted a business breakfast on Thursday 19th April with Frank Hewitt, the Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and Industry as the guest speaker.

After an excellent breakfast, William McKean, President of Ballymena Chamber welcomed a large turnout of Chamber members and guests and invited Frank Hewitt to address the meeting.

Frank gave a very informative talk on the work of the Northern Ireland Chamber, explaining their role especially in matters which affect the NI economy.



The NI Chamber strongly believes that the success of any country can only be built on economic growth and stability. He also explained about the links with the British Chamber of Commerce, the regional Chambers and the relationships they enjoy

with other organisations such as the CBI and the FSB.

After his talk Frank answered a number of interesting questions which were put by some of those present.



AUDREY WALES MBE

Audrey Wales, a past president and Life Member of Chamber was awarded an MBE in the New Year's Honours List for services to business and the community in Ballymena.

Audrey visited Buckingham Palace in March to receive her award. She said "It was a truly memorable day. The Palace is beautiful and it was an honour to meet the Queen. It was a day I will never forget".

CONGRATULATIONS TO

- Ballymena Retailers Against Crime (BRAC) on winning a prestigious award for their work in promoting community safety in Ballymena town centre.
- Ciga Healthcare on winning the Top Small Company award at the Best of British Industry Awards sponsored by the Sunday Times.
- David Agnew, a senior manager with Henderson Retail on winning a prestigious Oxford scholarship.
- Broughshane on winning the Best Large Village category in the Ulster in Bloom awards. Best wishes to Broughshane in the "Champion of Champions" competition.
- The Thatch Inn, Broughshane on winning the County Antrim Pub of the Year at a recent awards ceremony.
- Ballymena Credit Union who recently celebrated their 40th. Anniversary.

- First Choice Selection Services Ltd. on their recent move to new premises in Broadway Avenue, Ballymena.



- North East Institute who were recognised for their training provision at the Belfast Telegraph Northern Ireland Business Awards.

- Colin Neill, Ballymena Council's Economic and Tourism Development Manager on being appointed Chairman of the Association of Town Centre Management.
- Wright Group on being a category winner at the 2007 Carbon Trust/Daily Telegraph Innovation awards and also on securing a major contract to supply buses to Bus Eireann.
- Linda Allaway MREC on her appointment as branch manager of the Ballymena Branch of Grafton Recruitment.

