



L-R: Thomas McKillen (Chamber Vice President), Carol Wilson (Senior Branch Manager Northern Bank Ballymena), Mayor Hubert Nicholl, Kevin Kingston (Managing Director Business & Corporate, Northern Bank), Angela McGowan (Chief Economist Northern Bank) and Graham Lapsley (Head of Northern Bank Ballymena Business Centre)

NORTHERN BANK BUSINESS BREAKFAST

Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Northern Bank jointly hosted a business breakfast in the Adair Arms Hotel on Wednesday 29th February.

Councillor Hubert Nicholl, Mayor of Ballymena welcomed everyone and said "The Banks have a vital role to play in ensuring that our Borough remains vibrant and successful. All banks have had a fair bit of criticism recently for not supporting businesses, especially small local businesses. These small businesses play a crucial role in the economy of the

Borough and it is essential that the banks recognise this and support progressive and viable businesses".

Graham Lapsley, Head of Northern Bank's Ballymena Business Centre said that Northern Bank first opened its doors in 1835 to support the people and businesses in Ballymena.

Graham continued "Much has changed in that time but I have to say that the past four years have seen unprecedented change in the way we do business and, as you know only too well, the way you do business. Over the past few years we have remained in partnership with many businesses in this area and we have assisted those who have developed their business models to deal with the challenges that trading conditions have brought. I am delighted that Northern Bank remains committed to this area. In fact I'm delighted to announce that Ballymena has been confirmed as one of Northern's four key business banking areas outside of Belfast.

Present today we have local business people who have the ability to sustain whatever is thrown at them. We have strong third generation businesses whose families have seen off many challenges since they were established. We have businesses which are clearly 'Best in Class' in their sector. The ability of the Ballymena Businessperson must not be underestimated.

Mr Mayor – I'm delighted that Council is again supporting businesses in this area through their ongoing sponsorship of the Ballymena Business Awards later this year. Please convey our thanks for this support. Northern Bank will again be an Award Sponsor in 2012 in this the tenth year of this event. This is an excellent business event and I urge you all to enter an award category or at the very least support the event through your attendance at the gala evening to once again showcase everything that is good about business in this area".

Angela McGowan, Chief Economist at Northern Bank said:

"I have every confidence in Ballymena's ability to pursue strong economic growth now and in the years ahead.

The fact that this region has an unemployment rate which is lower than the Northern Ireland average is indicative of the local entrepreneurial spirit and the healthy industrial structure that prevails. Employment in Ballymena's manufacturing sector amounts to roughly 20 percent of the local workforce, a level which compares very favourably to the Northern Ireland average of 10 per cent. The region also demonstrates huge potential for taking its tourist offering to the next level and capturing all the tourist opportunities on the horizon that will stem from events such as the City of Culture 2013, the Irish Open Golf Championship and the World Police and Fire Games.



Angela McGowan, Chief Economist, Northern Bank

"By building on its strengths in terms of manufacturing, retail and great hospitality while simultaneously pursuing their public-private partnerships approach to economic growth and development, Ballymena will undoubtedly be a town to live in, invest in or just visit in the years ahead".

CLARK CLINIC FUNDRAISER

On Thursday 1st December Stephen and Alison Moore organised a "Food and Fashion" event in Corr's Corner Hotel to raise funds for the Clark Clinic. The Clark Clinic is in the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children and provides inpatient care for babies and children with cardiac conditions throughout Northern Ireland.

Many Chamber members are aware that Stephen and Alison had a baby son in March. Sadly Samuel James only lived for 10 days. Alison said "Whilst Samuel was at home for the majority of this time Stephen and I received much support and help from the Clark Clinic. This was much appreciated at a very difficult time and we organised this event to show that appreciation".

The following Chamber members all supported the evening:

- Ronan McCann from Black Advertising who designed and printed the tickets and posters at no charge
- McKeever Hotel Group did not charge for the function room and gave excellent advice in the planning stages
- Jenny Bristow – not only did she give her time free of charge, she provided all the groceries for her demonstration at no cost
- Perryfest Balloons from Ahoghill provided beautiful balloons for the stage. The balloons did not go to waste after the event – they were taken to the Clark Clinic

Alison thanked all the Chamber members who helped organise and took part during the evening. She said "This evening would have been impossible without their help and support. I would also like to thank Wendy Austin for compering the evening, Paula Kane whose organisational skills were invaluable and John McIlwaine for taking the photographs during the evening. These people also gave their time at no charge.

Finally I would like to thank two Ballyclare companies who organised the fashion show – clothes were by Joli and the shoes by Bonita".

The evening was a great success and the superb total of £5000 was raised for the Clark Clinic.



L-R: Jenny Bristow, Wendy Austin, Alison Moore and Lorraine McConnell



Raymond Ruck
President

WELCOME TO THE LATEST EDITION OF THE CHAMBER NEWSLETTER

It has been another very busy few months for the Chamber Management Committee. We ran a number of successful events and welcomed several new members. The Irish Open being held at Royal Portrush Golf Club, The World Police and Fire Games coming to Belfast in 2013, the opening of the Titanic Centre and the new Giant Causeway visitor centre are all events which will help promote tourism in Northern Ireland. Chamber is working closely with Ballymena Borough Council and Ballymena Town Centre Development Ltd to promote and attract visitors to the Borough. I would also like to thank Ballymena Borough Council who has agreed to be the Principal Sponsor of the 2012 Business awards.

My term as President is now coming to an end. It has been a great personal honour to have served as President of this Chamber and I thank the Management Committee and all the Chamber members for their support over the past two years. I wish the Chamber and the incoming President every success in the coming year.

GROWING YOUR BUSINESS IN A RECESSION

To mark the launch of Impact North East, a series of events and workshops were organised across the Region in the last week of September.

The events covered many of the current key issues in business such as exporting and business development. Impact North East has been developed by a range of public and private sector bodies who are working collectively to provide advice, expertise and support to the local business community.

Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Ulster Bank, Invest Northern Ireland and Ballymena Borough Council jointly hosted a business breakfast in the Braid on the Thursday morning, the topic for the breakfast being "Growing your business in a recession". There was an excellent turnout of local businesses, with over 70 people in attendance.

The keynote speaker was Philip Bain from Shredbank. Philip and a partner started Shredbank in 2007, just weeks after the collapse of Northern Rock. Shredbank provides a document shredding service and is now a recognised leader in this area. Shredbank have won the NI Chamber of Commerce Most Promising New Business Award and Philip was also named as Entrepreneur of the Year.

In his address he explained why Shredbank had grown in a recession.

These were some of his main points:

- be completely focussed on the customer
- be flexible and responsive
- focus on one thing and do it well
- identify your strengths and weaknesses and act to improve and correct
- sales growth is not always paramount. There is no point winning huge new orders if they are not profitable or cause you to lose direction
- all staff must have the correct attitude



L-R Back row: Terry Robb (Ulster Bank), Robin Cherry (Deputy Mayor), Ian Paisley MP and Gren Armstrong (Invest NI)

Front row: Philip Bain (Shredbank), Anne Donaghy (Town Clerk and Chief Executive) and Raymond Ruck (Chamber President)

Ian Paisley MP summed up. He said "Ballymena is fortunate to have the large businesses like Moy Park, Wrightbus, Michelin and JTI but there are also a huge number of small successful businesses in the Borough. Impact North East is a great initiative and I applaud it and the bodies behind it. I appeal to the businesses here today to stay focussed and to plan for success".

The Princes Trust is a youth charity that helps change young lives. Philip Bain waived his normal speaking fee and instead asked that a donation be made to the Princes Trust. At the conclusion of the meeting Chamber President handed over a cheque for £300 to the Princes Trust. The audience were also asked to make a donation and a further £70 was raised.

BALLYMENA BOROUGH COUNCIL TO BE PRINCIPAL SPONSOR FOR 2012 BUSINESS AWARDS



L-R: Raymond Ruck (Chamber President), Alison Moore (Chamber Of Commerce), Mayor Hubert Nicholl, Anne Donaghy (Town Clerk and Chief Executive Ballymena Borough Council) and Chris Wales (Chamber Business Development Manager)

Ballymena Borough Council has signed up to be the principal sponsor for the 2012 Ballymena Borough Business Excellence Awards. The awards are organised annually by Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Announcing the sponsorship deal, Raymond Ruck, Chamber President said:

"I am delighted to announce that Ballymena Borough Council have agreed to be the principal sponsor for the 2012 Business Awards. The Council have always supported this celebration of business achievement and it's especially poignant that they will be the principal sponsor in 2012 as it marks a huge milestone with this being the tenth anniversary of the event.

We've seen growth in interest, attendance and applications for the awards every year since we started, with last year 400 people attending the Gala evening. It's always great to see the mix of businesses at the awards, representing sectors from retail to manufacturing to services. And it allows Ballymena to showcase the best businesses and practices to outside bodies perhaps looking to locate new businesses.

I'm glad to say that Chamber has always had an excellent working relationship with Ballymena Borough Council over many years and I thank them for their continued support, not only of the awards but Chamber in general. I look forward to this business focused approach continuing into the future".

Mayor of Ballymena, Councillor Hubert Nicholl said 'As principal sponsor Ballymena Borough Council recognise the importance of commerce and the strength it brings to the local economy. Council have always had a partnership approach with its business sector, be it retail, manufacturing or services. Ballymena's reputation is well know as a place to shop, a place to invest, a place where there is a forward looking and skilled workforce, along with a 'can do' attitude to business and an excellent entrepreneurial spirit.

These awards bring

- *Recognition to those who excel in their field*
- *Create healthy but friendly competition*
- *Increase standards within the business sector and*
- *Promote Ballymena as a place of business excellence*

I would encourage all businesses to apply to the various categories within the programme.'

The Mayor added 'We recognise the economic climate at present. I know Council have drawn down considerable external funding to the Borough over the past 24 months and already have been successful in a number of funding applications for the next 12 – 24 months in tourism, urban regeneration and the social economy. These projects will bring additional business opportunities to the area. It is this pro active approach that makes our Borough a business success.'

Alison Moore, who heads up the organizing committee for the awards, added

"Planning is already well under way for this year's awards. Once again Chamber will be employing Insight Mystery Shopping to carry out the judging and the Tullyglass House Hotel, an excellent facility we are fortunate to have in Ballymena, will again be hosting the gala evening. The date for this year's award ceremony is Thursday 11th October – which may seem a long way off but it will soon come round so put this date in your diary now. I am confident that this will be another brilliant evening".

POWER NI BREAKFAST



Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry recently hosted a breakfast in conjunction with Power NI and Market LED, the topic being "How to save money on your energy bill".

A large number of local businesses and guests were in attendance.

Left: Audrey Wales MBE (Chamber), Alan Egner (Power NI), Thomas McKillen, Chris Wales and Alison Moore (all Chamber) and Eddie Mulgrew (Market LED)

Alison Moore from Chamber welcomed everyone. She said "This is the latest in our very successful series of business breakfasts. I would like to thank Power NI and Market LED for being here today. Energy prices are a major overhead for all businesses and any information on how to reduce costs is very welcome".

Alan Egner, Power NI's Business Sales and Marketing Manager commented: "This breakfast offers Power NI a great opportunity to meet and interact with businesses in the area. We supply electricity to around 30,000 local small businesses and as energy prices have risen recently and with winter looming, we are keen to offer Ballymena Chamber of Commerce members free expert advice on how to cut costs and save money."

Power NI were joined by Eddie Mulgrew from leading local lighting supplier Market LED, who added:

"In the global lighting industry – and in the LED market in particular – Market LED can help businesses significantly reduce energy costs and to improve their carbon footprint, and we were delighted to have had the opportunity to present alongside Power NI at the business breakfast."

Power NI offers small and medium sized businesses the opportunity to gain grant assistance for the installation of energy saving LED lighting. LEDs use much less energy than traditional lighting and you can now get an LED replacement for almost any kind of lamp. Many local businesses have already benefitted with new projects underway and there is still funding available for 2011/2012.

To find out more about how Power NI can help your business, visit their website www.powerni.co.uk

CHRISTMAS SOCIAL AND NETWORKING EVENT

Chamber held its annual Christmas Social and Networking event on 13th December. There was an excellent turnout of Chamber members and guests.



Chamber President Raymond Ruck presents a cheque for £3560 to Samina Bonar and Jim McGookin of the NI Hospice Ballymena Support Group

Chamber President Raymond Ruck welcomed everyone and then presented the trophies to the winners of the Christmas Window dressing competition. The three winners for 2011 were:

- Cameron Retail Furnishings, Broughshane Street
- Leaf Designs, Galgorm
- Sallys Floral Studio, William Street

The standard this year was exceptionally high and a "Highly Commended" certificate was awarded to Designer Home Interiors from Broughshane, Congratulations to all the winners.

Raymond then presented a cheque for £3560 to the NI Hospice, the Chamber's charity for 2011/12. This was the proceeds from the raffle which was held at the gala evening of the 2011 Ballymena Borough Business Excellence Awards. Chamber would like to thank everyone

who donated prizes for the raffle – Michelin Tyre PLC, firmus energy, NI Hospice, Tullyglass House Hotel, Barrs Butchers & Deli, Galgorm Resort and Spa, Alexander Bonar and Co Ltd and Millside Restaurant (Gracehill).



Nigel and Lynda Ferguson from Leaf Designs receive their trophy from Chamber President Raymond Ruck



Helen Cameron and Eleanor McKay receive their trophy from Raymond Ruck



Raymond Ruck presenting the trophy to Emma Field (left) and Wendy McKay of Sallys Floral Studio



Emma McNeill from Designer Home Interiors receiving a highly commended certificate from Raymond Ruck

CHAMBER WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS



Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry held an informal meeting in March to welcome several new members.

Back row L-R: George Kernohan (Braid Electrical), Anne Bowen (Ardclinis Outdoor Adventure), Roy Moore (Tower Signs), Scott Edmondson (ConsultED), Stanley Sung (Go Sun) and Neil Coleman (Power NI)

Seated L-R: Claire McVeigh (Mortgage IQ), Raymond Ruck (Chamber President) and Jacqueline Kennedy (Jacqueline Kennedy Hairdressing)
Photo Courtesy of John McIlwaine

Raymond Ruck, Chamber President said:

"I am delighted to see so many new members present here this morning. New members are vital for any organisation and Chamber is no exception. I have been on the Chamber Management Committee for several years and President for the past two years and during that time I have received great support from Chamber and equally important, tremendous friendship. I would say to the new members – Chamber welcomes you and will work and lobby on your behalf, but to get the maximum benefit out of Chamber, you must get involved. I look forward to getting to know you better in the coming months and years".

The new members present were:

- Ardclinis Outdoor Adventure
- Black Advertising
- Braid Electrical Services Ltd
- ConsultED (NI) Ltd
- Go Sun Restaurant
- Jacqueline Kennedy Hairdressing
- Mortgage IQ and Propertyhop
- Power NI
- Tower Signs

If your business would like to join Chamber, or if you would simply like to find out more about Chamber, please contact Chris Wales at office@ballymenachamber.co.uk or by telephone on 07876758797

Ardclinis



Roy Bonar with Anne Bowen from Ardclinis Outdoor Adventure

Ardclinis Outdoor Adventure was the first private outdoor provider in Northern Ireland and continues to go from strength to strength.

During this time the Business has developed many team building and multi-activity programmes for the corporate market as well as fun activity days for children.

The business provides training in leadership skills, fostering team spirit and personal development. This is done through outdoor activity programmes, which include activities such as coasteering, hill walking, orienteering, geocaching, rock climbing, raft building, kayaking, open canoeing and power boat training. We also offer outdoor laser tag, treasure hunts, archery and initiative challenges. We have a mobile climbing wall that can be located in any reasonable environment in the EU. To complement the outdoor activities, we buy in music and art and craft providers.

We run many outdoor activities in the Glens of Antrim and on the Causeway Coast, but are also very busy running our mobile events throughout Northern Ireland. Ardclinis Outdoor Adventure staff are professionally trained to the National Governing Body standards and have a wealth of understanding of the links between action, enjoyment and relaxation.

We present our services to organisations, large and small, public and private, training companies, universities, schools and colleges, sports clubs, youth clubs, church groups, Young Farmers, voluntary groups, Scouts and Guides, Boys' Brigade, Groups of friends, families and individual groups.

Safety is our priority and our slogan is "Challenge by Choice" so that each person fulfils their own level of achievement.

Go Sun



Chamber President Raymond Ruck with Stanley Sung from the Go Sun

The Go Sun, Ballymena is County Antrim's oldest and finest Chinese Restaurant (est 1966) located at Bridge Street, only a couple minutes walk down from the town's main attraction "The Braid" Arts Centre, making it the ideal spot for a 'Dinner and Show' night out.

The restaurant underwent a major refurbishment recently. It has been transformed into a stylish modern oriental setting and provides a classy yet comfortable approach to Chinese and European dining. The restaurant is spacious and wheel chair friendly with an extensively stocked bar offering a wide and varied selection of drinks and a fabulous cocktail menu.

Head chef, Stephen, and sous chef, Heung, have worked together to create a few new exciting dishes for the menu. The tantalising range of starters includes Lok Bah Gou (Chinese turnip in XO sauce), Filo King Prawns with sweet chilli sauce and King Prawn Cakes with a homemade clear, mild chilli dipping sauce.

Mouth watering main courses of mature Fillet steak with tea tree mushrooms, Heung's Sea bass cooked in wine sauce and for the spicy food lovers, fillet steak chilli trio are a few of our house specialties. There is also recently introduced delicious selection of homemade desserts from old favourites like Jam Sponge with custard to the traditional Chinese Deep Fried Ice Cream with golden syrup.

Power NI



L-R Audrey Wales, Raymond Ruck, Neil Coleman from Power NI and Alison Moore

With a local heritage spanning over 80 years, Power NI (formerly NIE Energy) knows the ins and outs of doing business here. After a decade of competition, it remains the largest electricity supplier to the local SME sector powering over 30,000 small businesses. It's also seeing more and more customers return, with over 500 switching back in the last year alone.

Power NI's Business Sales and Marketing Manager Alan Egner explains how they are helping local businesses through these tough times:

"We know the local commercial sector is under real pressure with companies seeking to save money and make their businesses as efficient as possible. Our recently launched cash-back contracts have proved a big hit with small business customers. These give savings on top of the usual tariff and direct debit discounts and coupled with our

recently reduced tariff rates, have helped us tempt quite a few customers back from other suppliers. We're also back in the game in the large business sector, bringing greater choice for customers offering a full range of products and services including discounted fixed and variable contracts, green energy options plus energy efficiency grants".

In conclusion Alan states: *"With our unrivalled history and heritage as an energy supplier in this part of the world, Power NI's customers know they are in safe hands. We look forward to welcoming more customers back to the fold and continuing to provide businesses here with great value for money and the highest standards of customer service."*

For more details on saving energy and money in your business, contact Power NI at 08457 455 455 or visit www.powerni.co.uk/business

ConsultED



Chamber President with Scott Edmondson from ConsultED

ConsultED Surveyors are a new style of Estate Agency and Surveying practice within County Antrim. ConsultED Surveyors are owned by Scott Edmondson, who has many years' experience and is well established in the local property market.

Scott as, ConsultED Surveyors, wishes to instill an important principle into his business which has all but disappeared within today's Estate Agencies; it's a simple ethos of treating clients as you would expect to be treated; with respect, integrity and with professionalism.

ConsultED Surveyors are RICS qualified and operate under the RICS code of practice, which gives clients extra reassurance of the standard of their service.

ConsultED Surveyors provide a multitude of property related services, from Sales and Lettings, EPC's and Valuations etc. For further details and or a free verbal valuation of your property please contact Scott on 07878 555 730 or scott@consultedni.co.uk

Mortgage IQ



L-R Rodney Kernohan, Claire McVeigh from Mortgage IQ and Audrey Wales

Mortgage IQ, bringing a better deal to the people in Ballymena! Owner Mrs Claire McVeigh and her Team brought Mortgage IQ to Wellington Street in Ballymena at the end of 2007. The aim is to offer local people a better deal, more choice and an experienced service to suit their needs.

Claire McVeigh explains how Mortgage IQ offers independent mortgage advice free of charge. She continues *"having experience working for three major high street banks I understand the need to provide a service to suit each individual customers requirements.*

Every household requires a mortgage and adequate insurance cover and I felt the need to inform people

of different options and choices that are available to them. Mortgage IQ is a company that can offer it all". We are local people offering a personal service to each and every client. We also have our Sister company PropertyHop to help with all your estate agency needs!

Mortgage IQ offers all types of mortgages from First Time Buyers, Remortgages, Co-ownership, Commercial and Buy to Let and more!

The company is fully FSA compliant and data protection is a must. *"People can be assured of a confidential service"*

Black Advertising



Ronan McCann (left) from Black Advertising with Chris Wales

Black Advertising is a full service agency that specialises in advertising, branding, design, exhibitions and websites.

Creative Director Ronan McCann explains: *"We work with many businesses and organisations of varying scales within the Borough and further afield to create strong visual communication for their products and/or services."*

He continued: *"Design excellence is coupled with technical expertise, and in addition to that we offer clients a pleasant and positive general working experience*

through our warm and obliging approach to everything we do.

Of note amongst our most recent work is the development of the new Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry website, which has given us the opportunity to strike up a rapport with various Chamber members. We have already seen great benefits of Chamber membership through referrals, the impact of positive word-of-mouth recommendations, and the overall opportunities to feel a part of the business community within the Borough."

Braid Electrical Services Ltd



L-R Carol Wilson, George Kernohan from Braid Electrical Services Ltd and Alison Moore

This company, formerly known as Nicholl Bros (Electrical) was established in Ballymena in 1926. The current Managing director George Kernohan has over 40 years experience to the electrical industry and this company.

The company operates from its premises at Braid River Business Park, Railway Street Ballymena and specialise in industrial and commercial wiring, lighting and power installations, fire alarm systems, data and testing and commissioning and is favoured with clients such as JTI, Michelin PLC, Wrightbus, Education and Library Boards and Departments of Environment and Health. A stable workforce of 34 Direct Employees, with Site Supervisors and Electricians employed by the

Company for many years and are responsible for their training and development.

Braid electrical operates a Quality Management System which meets the requirements of ISO 9001: 2008, it also accepts its responsibility to the Health and Safety of its employees and others and is certified with Safe T Cert (which is third party accredited to the Buildsafe scheme). The company takes its Environmental responsibilities seriously and complies with all Environmental Systems. The company also is a member of Constructionline (Public and Private sector procurement requirements) and NICEIC and ECA approved contractor schemes.

Jacqueline Kennedy Hairdressing



L-R Roy Bonar, Jacqueline Kennedy from Jacqueline Kennedy Hairdressing and Rodney Kernohan

At a very young age I dreamt of becoming a hairdresser, and in 1982 I qualified at the then Ballymena Technical Collage and continue adding to my list of qualifications.

In 2004 I saw a gap in the market for a good quality mans hairdressing and grooming salon for the modern man of today and so in December 2006 we opened our salon in Galgorm. We are a modern Barber shop, not only do we offer the latest hair trends but we also create our own styles.

However we keep in touch with traditional treatments such as hot towel shaves, and grooming treatments which have been proven popular with our regular clients.

Everyone is welcome in our warm, friendly, and highly professional salon. We are popular for babies and infants, we cater for the metro man, and our very important senior clients too.

Hairdressing is my gift and passion and this reflects in our loyal growing client base.

Tower Signs



L-R Carol Wilson, Roy Moore of Tower Signs and Alison Moore

Tower Signs: Design – Manufacture – Installation – Repair

Tower Signs are located in Railway Goods Yard, Ballymena, Co Antrim where we have been based since 1999. The business was started in 1995 by the current owner. Despite having more than thirty years' experience in the sign industry, we are constantly looking for innovations in signage and have attended the US Sign Expo on a number of occasions to seek out new suppliers and products.

We have a comprehensive range of equipment for sign making including vinyl cutters, digital printer, engravers, CNC router.

We pride ourselves in being small enough to care and large enough to cope with any job, from a single door plaque to a commercial sign over 30 metres long and fitted 30 metres from the ground.

To see what we can do for you, please visit our website www.towersigns.com