



Ballymena

Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Newsletter

Issue: 10 April 2009

President's Foreword

Welcome to the latest edition of the Newsletter keeping you up to date with everything that is happening in Chamber. It has been another very busy few months. As many of you are aware, David Hutchinson, an NRC lecturer had been seconded to Chamber for 12 weeks at the start of this year. David's brief was basically to find out what the members thought about a range of issues concerning Chamber and to report back to Chamber with his findings and recommendations for the future.

Chamber has now received David's report and the Management Committee will be studying these recommendations over the coming weeks. We would like to thank David for all his hard work and also the Northern Regional College.

We have run several events, launched a new website, welcomed new members, launched our member 2 member benefit scheme and been to Stormont to lobby for the implementation of proposals contained in the Bain Report. I hope you enjoy the Newsletter and you can always keep up to date with what is happening in Chamber on the website www.ballymenachamber.co.uk

Alison Moore
President

MEMBER 2 MEMBER Benefit Scheme

Chamber is delighted to announce the launch of a member 2 member benefit scheme.

All members of Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry are eligible to participate in the member 2 member benefit scheme.

The scheme is operated by the members for the benefit of the members.

The objectives of the scheme are to:

- Increase the profile of members' businesses by offering discounts to other members
- Lower the overheads in members' businesses by taking advantage of the discounts and deals negotiated on your behalf

Chamber is very grateful to the following three businesses for their assistance in helping to launch this scheme: Galgorm Resort and Spa, AXA Insurance Direct and Riada Recruitment. Full details of these offers can be found on the Chamber website www.ballymenachamber.co.uk

Chamber meets new Council Chief Executive

Ms. Anne Donaghy, the new Town Clerk and Chief Executive was a guest at the March Management Committee meeting. Anne took up her new post in January.

In what was an excellent and very productive meeting Anne outlined her hopes and aspirations for the coming weeks and months.



Chamber meets new Council Chief Executive cont/..d

The Management Committee raised a number of issues which were of concern to them. It became quickly apparent that in a very short time Anne has realised many of the important issues and concerns relevant to Ballymena today, and is working on putting programmes in place to address these issues.

It was agreed that Chamber and Council need to work together on many of these issues and that further meetings will be held on a regular basis.



Chamber launch new website

Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry recently launched their new website.

Alison Moore, Chamber President said that she was delighted with the new look website.

“Every business and organisation needs a good website to keep customers and members informed of what is happening. This new website looks great, contains a lot of information about the Chamber and is very easy to navigate around. I would like to thank Bustedmedia

for designing this new website for the Chamber. My thanks also go to the Michelin IT department and in particular Mairead Black who does an excellent job in keeping the site up to date”.

David Brown from Bustedmedia said “We are relatively new members of Chamber and it was a pleasure for us to design this website. Our aims when designing it were twofold – all visitors to the site will be easily able to navigate around it and find what they want quickly and that it uses the latest technology and is simple to maintain and update”.

Visit the new website at www.ballymenachamber.co.uk

Chamber welcomes new members

Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry held an informal meeting in the Adair Arms Hotel last week to welcome new Chamber members.

Alison Moore Chamber President gave them some details about the Chamber operates and presented them with their Chamber membership certificates.



The new members who attended were the McLarnon Hotel Group, AXA Direct, Moore Concrete Products Ltd., Donnelly and Taggart (Ballymena) Ltd. and Broughshane and District Community Association.

The Chamber had a very successful year in 2008, increasing membership by over 20%. If you would to join or find out more about Chamber, please visit our website www.ballymenachamber.co.uk or give Chris Wales a call on 07876 758797.

Breaking out of Ballymena

The Wright Group in conjunction with Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry have established a brand new initiative to help SME's in the Ballymena business community. The scheme recognises that SME's are often under-resourced or inexperienced in export sales and marketing and the Wright Group plan to offer successful applicants their expertise to coach and mentor business planning to help produce a more prosperous "balance of payments" for Ballymena.



The scheme was launched at a very well attended breakfast in the Adair Arms Hotel in March. Alison Moore, Chamber President welcomed everyone and Mark Nodder, Group Managing Director of the Wright Group gave an excellent presentation about the Wright Group and explained the new initiative. He said "Experienced practitioners from the Wright Group will set aside agreed periods of time to assist SME's over a twelve month period. Advice will be available on topics such as business planning for exports, how to conduct market research and evaluate opportunities, how to deal with commonly encountered problems, creating a winning sales team and effective marketing and promotional materials".

Mayor Maurice Mills closed the breakfast and thanked both the Chamber and the Wright Group for establishing this initiative which he felt would be of tremendous benefit to SME's in the Borough.

XMAS SOCIAL/NETWORKING EVENT

The Chamber held its annual Xmas social/networking event in Montgomerys on 9th December. A large number of Chamber members and guests were present.

This is always an informal evening and Alison Moore, Chamber President welcomed everyone. She then went on to present the trophies for the Xmas window dressing competition. The three prize winners were:

Benetton, Ballymoney Street
Bannvale Credit Union, Portglenone
Pine and Pottery, Broughshane.

Congratulations to the three winners!

A presentation was also made to the NI Hospice. A raffle was held at the 2008 Business awards and the magnificent total of £3750 was raised. Chamber would like to thank the following businesses who donated prizes for the raffle: Galgorm Resort and Spa, Seven FM, Michelin Tyre PLC, NI Hospice, firmus energy and Tullyglass House Hotel. After the presentations Montgomerys provided an excellent supper – Chamber would like to thank Steven, Richard and Timothy for their hospitality.



Chamber lobby at Stormont

A delegation from Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry visited Stormont in March to press for the implementation of proposals contained in the Bain Report. Alison Moore (Chamber President), Raymond Ruck (Vice President) and Audrey Wales met Olive Maybin, the lead official in the Department of Finance and Personnel. Olive Maybin reports directly to Minister Nigel Dodds. The meeting was facilitated by Ian Paisley Jnr. MLA.

After the meeting Alison Moore said "Chamber regard the Bain Report as very important to the economy of Ballymena. Sir George Bain was commissioned to examine the location of public sector jobs in Northern Ireland. The major conclusion of his report is that where new public sector jobs are being created they should not all automatically be located in Belfast. He identified six towns across Northern Ireland where some of these jobs should be located and Ballymena is one of the towns identified. We were here today and put forward very strong arguments in support of Ballymena".

Alison continued "I would like to thank Ian Paisley Jnr. for his assistance in helping Chamber secure this meeting today. This was a very constructive meeting and I believe that Olive Maybin accepted many of our arguments. I was very surprised to learn that Ballymena Chamber of Commerce and Industry were the first group to visit Stormont to lobby in support of the Bain Report. The Chamber will continue to lobby for the Borough of Ballymena at every opportunity".

Chamber of Commerce/BNI Breakfast

Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Business Network International (BNI) jointly hosted a business breakfast recently.

This was the first time the two organisations had run a joint event and with almost fifty people present proved a great success. The topic for the morning was about the challenges facing local businesses in this time of economic uncertainty and how to best meet these challenges.



Alison Moore, Chamber President welcomed everyone and introduced the first of the two speakers. Ann McGregor, Chief Executive of the NI Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that some sectors of the NI economy were facing tough times but that it was not all doom and gloom.

She said "The housing and construction industries are having a difficult time but many sectors of the economy are doing well. NI is better placed than many other areas of the United Kingdom and businesses are still performing well. However there is no room for complacency and all businesses need to remain focused. When there is an economic upturn these businesses will be leaner and fitter and in a great position to move forward. The Chamber of Commerce are working closely with all businesses in NI and several trade missions are planned in the coming months". She concluded by saying that it was vital that we do not talk ourselves deeper into a recession.

The second speaker was Glyn Roberts, Chief Executive of the NI Independent Retail Trade Association. Glyn highlighted some of the problems facing small businesses today – numeracy and literacy amongst staff, the fact that NI is the only region in the UK not to enjoy the benefits of a small business rates relief scheme and increasing fuel and energy costs. He highlighted out of town developments as probably the greatest single threat to town centres in NI.

He said "In England many villages and small towns have been decimated by out of town development to the extent that 42% now do not have a shop of any kind. We must not let this happen in NI. We are not anti multiple but anti out of town. Ballymena Town Centre Partnership has shown a great lead by bringing all the parties together. This is the only way forward – everyone has a stake in keeping Ballymena a vibrant and successful town centre".

Susan Clark from BNI closed the breakfast and thanked everyone for attending.