



# Northern Ireland Assembly and Business Trust

To advance and encourage business understanding of the Assembly and the Assembly Member's understanding of business.

## President's Message



It gives me great delight to welcome the full restoration of the Northern Ireland Assembly and Business Trust in October 2007.

Following its successful launch in 2002 I am aware of the commitment of the members in developing and strengthening the links between business and the legislature.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish the Chair of the Board of Trustees, Sean Nescon, the members of the Board and all those MLAs and members of the business community, every success in preparing a new programme of exchanges, seminars, visits and placements.

It is very important that we continue the dialogue between businesses and parliamentarians. At the recent Annual Dinner for the Trust I was overwhelmed by the enthusiasm of business people and parliamentarians sharing experiences and views on skills, training and employment to help take Northern Ireland forward.

May I take this opportunity to say that the enthusiasm of all involved is uplifting and long may it continue.

**Mr William Hay MLA**  
NIABT President

## The Trust

The Northern Ireland Assembly and Business Trust (NIABT) was established in 2002 as an independent and self-financing educational charity which organises programmes for Assembly Members and Business representatives to include exchanges, seminars, visits and placements.

The NIABT has the support and involvement of all the main political parties in the Assembly and representatives from the business community.

The NIABT has been modelled on kindred schemes in other parliamentary bodies and it op-

erates in line with the principles of the International Association of Business and Parliament. Programmes are non-partisan, non-lobbying, mutually educational and informative.

To find out further information on the other schemes and the International Association of Business and Parliament see the adjoining website addresses:

**Industry and Parliament Trust Westminster**

(IPT)

[www.ipt.org.uk](http://www.ipt.org.uk)

**Scottish Parliament and Business Exchange**

(SPABE)

[www.spbc.org.uk](http://www.spbc.org.uk)

**The Industry and National Assembly for Wales Association**

(INAWA)

[www.inawa.co.uk](http://www.inawa.co.uk)

**International Association of Business and Parliament**

(IABP)

[www.iabp.org](http://www.iabp.org)

## Chairman



The recent Speaker's dinner hailing the full restoration of the

NIABT was a very successful night in keeping old relationships in place and establishing many promising new bonds. It has signalled to me that what was started in 2002 is now beginning to move forward at full

speed and the new relationships we have to look forward to will only benefit the Trust. All early signs of the Trust's rekindling have made me confident that the continued dialogue between politicians and members of the business community is essential for Northern Ireland's prolonged economic progression. This was the main mo-

tivator in the original establishment of the Trust. On behalf of the Trustees I would like to thank the many members keen to participate in this year's busy programme for bringing their sector closer to government. Many thanks also to parliamentarians and all those involved in making arrangements.

**Sean Nescon MLA**



The Business Sector listening with interest to Minister Foster describe her work as Minister in a Department.

*"I embraced the role of President to this organisation as I strongly support Politicians building a better understanding of the issues businesses face and the business sector building a better understanding of the work of the Northern Ireland Assembly."*  
*(Speaker to the Northern Ireland Assembly)*



Leslie Cree MLA introducing the Guest Speakers—L-R: Arlene Foster, Minister for the Environment; David McClarty MLA, Paul Maskey MLA.

## Board of Trustees



L-R: Sean Nesome MLA, Chairman; Alec McRuchie Bombardier Aerospace; Dawn Purvis MLA; Leslie Cree MLA; Dr. Tasha Campbell Moy Park Ltd.



L-R: Robin Newton MLA; Patricia McKeown NI-ICTU; Declan O'Leary MLA, Paul Maskey MLA.



L-R: Katherine McDonald, Strategem; William Wright, Wrightbus Ltd., Tom Carson BT Ireland, Lord Ballydoonagh, Nuthack Group

## The Work of A Parliamentarian

This seminar was one of a series of three in which MLAs of the Northern Ireland Assembly illustrated the work of the Parliamentarian.

Arlene Foster, Minister for the Environment gave an overview of her role as Minister within a busy department.

David McClarty MLA was given the task of il-

lustrating what it was like to manage procedural services in the Chamber.

Paul Maskey MLA and member of the Board of Trustees reflected with the audience his experience as a member of a Committee.

Allan Maginness MLA described the work of the Plenary Session and his role as a Member of the Legislative Assembly.

Naomi Long MLA engaged with members of the Business Sector on running a constituency office in East Belfast.

## Speaker's Dinner

Ms. William Hay MLA the Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly hosted the annual Assembly and Business Trust Dinner in February 2008.

The dinner was attended by over 60 businesses ranging from large corporations to small entrepreneurial organisations and at each table was a number of MLAs. Between

courses each of the MLAs moved seats in order to engage with the diverse range of sectors attending the event.

The Guest Speaker was Sir Reg Empey, Minister for Employment and Learning, who laid out the government's commitment to training, skills and employment detailed in the Programme for Gov-

ernment.

Some of the issues raised at the different tables by both the business sector and the Parliamentarians during the dinner can be seen on the back of this publication.



Sir Reg Empey MLA,  
Minister for Employment  
and Learning.

## Roles, Responsibilities, Policy and Legislation

This first series of seminars in 2007 to be held by the NIABT was open to both Members and interested non-members from the business sector.

The first seminar considered the roles and responsibilities of the Northern Ireland Assembly and included presentations by the

Commission Office, the Speaker's Office and the Clerk Assistant's Directorate. Participants were given a tour of Parliament Buildings including visits to the two chambers.

The second seminar, Policy and Legislation was aimed at helping the business sector un-

derstand the process of tracing the development of a relevant Public Bill: inspiration, formulation, informal/formal consultations, drafting etc and tracing the progress of a Bill from introduction, to first stage, to enactment. Thanks to the NIA Bills Office for their time and expertise.



Sean Neeson MLA  
Chairman, NIABT.

## Other Events

The Assembly and Business Trust has held the following events:

- Showcasing greener transportation
- Dealing with nuisance calls

- Safety issues for constituency staff
- Working as a large food retailer

The Trust is constantly seeking education programmes from the business sector which

can include:

- Shadowing
- Visits

If you have any ideas please contact:

[niabt@niassembly.gov.uk](mailto:niabt@niassembly.gov.uk)



Parliamentarians and the  
business sector discuss  
skills, training and em-  
ployment.

The Northern Ireland  
Assembly



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*To educate and  
inform  
Parliamentarians  
and Business  
Communities*

## New Membership

Recruitment of new  
members to the  
Northern Ireland As-  
sembly and Business  
Trust is now under-  
way.

Application forms, de-  
tails of the member-  
ship fees and the 2008  
programme can be  
obtained from:

[niahr@niassembly.gov.uk](mailto:niahr@niassembly.gov.uk)

Or contact:

Kate McCullough  
028 90 418365

## Skills, Training and Employment - Issues Raised at Speaker's Dinner

### Main Issues on Skills

- Literacy and numeracy.
- High numbers of people neither in employment, education or training – social issues can be left behind.
- Dependence on migrant workers.
- Push from schools into L/E and H/E instead of into jobs and apprenticeships.

### Gaps in Programme for Government (PfG)

- Low Awareness of PfG.
- Need for professional careers advice for GCSE pupils.
- Expansion of conversion courses to match graduates to employers.
- Abolish fees for STEM subjects.
- Address the Protestant Diaspora.
- More flexible apprenticeships allowing for a mix of college and work placements.
- Expansion of adult apprenticeships.
- Address the GB/NI wage differential.
- In relation to RPA, a realistic strategy for re-training and re-skilling.

### Programme for Government:

- Good focus on the economy but not very realistic.
- Too much focus on FDI.
- Need to look to our own workforce and the economically inactive.
- High value jobs are not within reach of economically inactive.
- Benefits trap preventing many from working – need to look at other examples of attracting people into work i.e. don't cut benefits look at incentives e.g. phased benefit loss up to first pay rise.

### What does the business sector expect of the Assembly?

*To build relationships with business in order to fulfil aspirations in programme for the government.*

### Key issues facing business in future?

- Increased productivity.
- Wage differentials.
- Training costs.