

NORTH WEST REGIONAL COLLEGE BUSINESS MAGAZINE | 2018/19 EDITION

Success



LET'S DO
BUSINESS



north west
regional college
Derry-Londonderry • Limavady • Strabane

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NORTH WEST REGIONAL COLLEGE: MORE THAN A PLACE TO LEARN

Patrick McKeown, Director of Finance & Economic Engagement outlines the importance of the NWRC economic engagement strategy.



PATRICK MCKEOWN

DIRECTOR OF FINANCE,
& ECONOMIC ENGAGEMENT
North West Regional College

I would like to warmly welcome you to our first edition of **Success** – an exciting new addition to our publications highlighting the significant work of our Business Support Centre.

North West Regional College (NWRC) has in recent years become an increasingly important player in supporting businesses to develop and diversify their employee skills, enhance existing products, and make a difference to their bottom line.

NWRC has for many years provided support to the local economy and in 2015 we embarked on a re-energised strategy to develop a highly skilled and motivated business support function, with clear targets and strategic aims that complemented the needs of businesses and indeed the Programme for Government. The function was re-positioned within the college standing as a self-financing revenue

centre but supporting and working with the curriculum to enhance the education experience of College stakeholders. Since the inception of the strategy significant investment has been made in our buildings that has created a modern professional office space and also a state of the art Foodovation centre. Further developments are planned later this year including the launching of a unique Product Design Centre at our Limavady Campus, followed by the opening of our Design and Innovation for Assisted Living (DIAL) Centre – a £1.5 million investment located in our Strand Road Campus.

However, whilst the capital development has been significant and is ongoing, the most profound investment has been in our people. In early 2015 we appointed Dr Fergal Tuffy as Technology Innovation Manager and shortly afterwards Mrs Nicola Curry was appointed as Business Development Manager. Both Nicola and Fergal have been key in the success of the Business Support Centre (BSC) which continues to grow. Their experience of the further and higher education sector, knowledge of business requirements and awareness of the income streams available has been vital in the BSC meeting all targets set and ensuring that the respect in which the centre is held with our key stakeholders continues to grow.

From modest beginnings the centre now employs 18 staff - providing high quality expertise. My colleagues in the BSC are motivated, providing a responsive, diligent and highly technical service to businesses – they have and continue to make a difference.

The nature of support is widespread and we tap into several funding streams. The FE division of our sponsoring department

the Department for the Economy under the leadership of Beverley Harrison has been very proactive and supportive providing funding via the Skills Focus fund, the InnovateUs fund and the Assured Skills fund. With the support of Beverley and her team the six FE Colleges have joined forces to launch 'Let's Do Business' – the latest business support campaign from FE in Northern Ireland.

In addition to direct DfE funding the centre has been very successful in maximising funding through Innovation Vouchers from Invest NI and Enterprise Ireland, Innovate UK's Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs), InterTrade Ireland Fusions and the Colleges NI Connected programme.

It is not only on the local stage where we are growing and making an impact. Internationally we have been awarded almost €1m of Erasmus+ funding that will allow our students to visit and experience practices in several European countries. We continue to work closely with our two councils. In conjunction with Derry City and Strabane District Council we have developed the region's first ever Welding Academy in our Greystone Campus in Limavady and have successfully delivered a number of industry led, Software Development/Testing conversion courses. We are currently talking to Causeway Coast and Glens Council with a view to developing a business support forum in the Roe Valley to include the College, Council, the local Chamber and the Enterprise Centre in Limavady.

We are playing our part in helping to build a flourishing regional economy. I encourage you and your colleagues to work with us to develop your business.



NWRC BUSINESS SUPPORT TEAM



BEVERLEY HARRISON, DIRECTOR OF FURTHER EDUCATION (DEPARTMENT FOR ECONOMY) JOINS FERGAL TUFFY, NWRC TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION MANAGER, AT THE LAUNCH OF NI FE COLLEGES 'LET'S DO BUSINESS' CAMPAIGN



BUSINESS SUPPORT CENTRE CLIENT, JAMES HUEY, OWNER OF 'THE WALLED CITY BREWERY'



DR FERGAL TUFFY AND TERESA DEENEY, NWRC, RECEIVE AWARD FROM ALAN MORROW, INTERTRADE IRELAND

BUSINESS SUPPORT CENTRE: BUILDING A REGIONAL ECONOMY

Hundreds of local businesses have already received a wide range of training support from North West Regional College. The College's Business Support Centre (BSC) Technology & Innovation Manager **Dr Fergal Tuffy**, details some of the success stories so far...

Breweries, bakeries, green energy firms, engineering companies, and stove makers are just a few of the 200 businesses that have seen an increase in profits thanks to North West Regional College's support, in refining their skills. Derry~Londonderry based business Primrose Café have doubled their workforce, Donegal-based Lynch Windows have grown their sales by over €2 million, and the award winning Walled City Brewery continues to grow and develop. These businesses took that all important first step in approaching the BSC to avail of the NWRC's expertise in developing their business services, products, and skills.

Since its inception in 2015, the BSC has been reaching out the hand of support to businesses helping them obtain skills and increase profitability. The ability to solve problems is a key factor in any business, and the BSC helps to achieve this by encouraging innovation and development, and creating a better educated and more highly skilled workforce, enabling companies to sustain and grow. The BSC assists companies to secure funding and then works in partnership with the business to deliver tailored solutions to meet their needs through the college's technical consultants and academic staff. Businesses can improve the development of their workforce, upskill, avail of bespoke tailored training, innovation, research and development support.

NWRC continually analyses the needs of the North West economy assessing the gaps from both skills and research and development perspectives to ensure that businesses have access to the latest knowledge and technology know-how.

One company to avail of such support were husband and wife team Melanie and Ciaran Breslin from Primrose Café. They say their collaboration with the Foodovation Centre at North West Regional College was key to their business's development. The business faced several challenges when they first opened including staff recruitment, staff training and food development. Assisted by the BSC and Foodovation Centre, the company received assistance in product development and staff received barista training. Primrose have now doubled their workforce from 40 to 80, and opened their new flagship premises at Strand Road.

Donegal-based Lynch Windows were assisted by the BSC under the Fusion Programme. Together Lynch Windows and NWRC identified a market opportunity to develop a new cutting-edge roof light product. NWRC assisted Lynch Windows with a successful application to InterTrade Ireland's Fusion programme, and as a result Fusion graduate Lauren Bradley, came on board to develop an innovative new roof light product with an extremely low energy efficient rating that Lynch's feel can be a market leading product. In the 18 months since the business began the project the company has more than doubled in employee numbers and increased its turnover by €2million.

Micon Distribution in Lisburn teamed up with the BSC for assistance with the research and development of an innovative new stove. NWRC initially leveraged the Department for the Economy & College's NI's Connected funding to successfully scope and apply for InnovateUK Knowledge

Transfer Partnership (KTP) project. KTPs enable businesses to access highly qualified graduates to spearhead new product development projects and with the support of academic institutions such as the NWRC. As a result of the project Micon have now established a research and development department and have a high-calibre graduate to undertake the project of designing a highly-efficient, multi-fuel stove to turn their innovative ideas into reality.

The Walled City Brewery based in Derry~Londonderry is continuing to grow and thrive thanks to input from BSC. NWRC utilised support from the Connected programme, the Department for the Economy's (DfE) InnovateUs and Skills Focus programmes and more recently the Invest NI Innovation Vouchers programme to deliver multiple solutions for the business. The Walled City Brewery's business is thriving. They have grown from 12 to 17 staff and have won a host of awards, such as the Northern Ireland Tourism Awards (NITA) Most Promising New Business in 2016 and selected as the *Hot Press Best Gastropub* of 2016.

CONTACT US

BUSINESS SUPPORT CENTRE

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Economy is our Business: **Our story so far**

Since being formed in 2015, the Business Support Centre at North West Regional College has supported the training, mentoring, product development and innovation requirements of more than **1,000** businesses.

Through the Department for the Economy (DfE), Skills Focus and InnovateUs programmes, North West Regional College is now widely regarded as a key driver of economic growth and development for the North West.



20 International
Projects



22
Cross-border
FUSION Projects
(Highest in Ireland)



30
Innovation Vouchers

— Annually —



582

Employees Up-Skilled
in the past year



£720k

Investment
in **Innovation**



2

Knowledge Transfer
Partnerships

£1.3million
worth of **training** provided



3

Assured **Skills**
Academies



Department for the
Economy
www.economy-ni.gov.uk



ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE



BRONAGH FIKRI, NWRC European & International Projects Officer, outlines how North West Regional College's International Links and Connections makes it much more than just a local College.

With innovation and entrepreneurship at the forefront of the NI Programme for Government and a number of strategic growth plans in the region, NWRC has aligned itself to become an outward and forward looking College with international links central to its strategy.

NWRC is currently offering European and International opportunities for its students and staff to undertake learning and employability exchanges aimed at improving teaching & skills levels, developing collaborative opportunities for quality research & innovation and helping to grow the regional economy.

NWRC is leading on and participating in 14 Erasmus+ projects with partners from over 20 different countries. The College was successful in securing over €1 million in Erasmus+ funding to expand our network throughout Europe, enabling the widening of the learning and accessibility to new experiences. We have become a partner on an Erasmus+ Key Action 2 Higher Education Capacity Building project, *'Creating Theory to Practice Centres for Innovation and Employment'*, while our Business Support Centre partners HE institutions from Kosovo, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Germany and Slovenia where we have developed a baseline study and will provide support to help partners develop their own BSCs.

We have an Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility project with Team Lease Skills University in Vadodara, Gujarat in India where staff exchanges help to improve teaching and learning by exploring best practice, identify trends in curriculum and relevance to students and industry

on a global scale. Our International Office is investigating bids and potential partnerships for collaboration on research and innovation funded projects, such as Interreg and Horizon2020 to enhance the College's expertise in specialisms such as Health & Social Care, Food, and Creative Industries.

NWRC has been approved by NCUK to deliver an International Foundation Year programme, in partnership with Foyle International, attracting international students to attend the College and on successful completion of the course providing guaranteed admission to any of the NCUK's approved universities.

We are also developing links with Community Colleges and other stakeholders in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania in the USA following our role in the recent North West Trade and Investment Mission. We will visit Beijing and Dalian in China under the Sister Cities initiative with Derry City & Strabane District Council and Donegal County Council where we hope to establish links with technical Colleges in the region.

i FIND OUT MORE...

For more information on our International activities, contact: bronagh.fikri@nwrc.ac.uk



We launched the North West's first ever Fabrication & Welding Academy, designed to tackle the prevalent shortage of skilled welders in Northern Ireland.



INVESTING IN THE NEXT GENERATION



NICOLA CURRY

Business Development Manager at NWRC's Business Support Centre, explains the College's pivotal role in delivering a skilled workforce to Northern Ireland through the delivery of bespoke pre-employment training programmes.

The heart of what we do is to create a skilled talent pool that can be accessed locally to meet the current recruitment challenges faced by local companies.

We have strategically positioned ourselves at the centre of local economic development to support local companies in pursuit of business growth. One of our most successful strategies has been the establishment of the Academy Model, guaranteeing a skilled workforce to potential investors interested in bringing jobs to Northern Ireland. To achieve this we have engaged with a number of stakeholder organisations to explore the core recruitment challenges currently faced locally. The BSC has developed a number of pre-employment academy models to support local businesses and new FDI activity.

The first academy with Wisconsin based firm Bemis resulted in 16 candidates enrolling on a six-week intensive pre-employment programme focused on reskilling local graduates to take up employment within the financial services sector. The programme delivered a diverse range of modules that focused on core competency development, accounting techniques and data visualisation. Following completion of the academy,

15 of the candidates received formal job offers from Bemis.

In December 2017, we launched the North West's first ever Fabrication and Welding Academy, designed to tackle the prevalent shortage of skilled welders in Northern Ireland. The first students of this Academy took part in a 12-week intensive Level 2 City and Guilds programme, which included a four-week placement with local employers. Participating companies included Fleming Agri, Global Equipment Spares, Mim-Ni, Fabplus Limited, Foyle Port and GB Engineering. Ten of the original 15 have now completed the course and have been offered full time positions within various companies across the North West.

The success of both these companies illustrates the commitment by our College, Derry and Strabane District Council, Department for the Economy and Invest NI to provide sustainable solutions to skills shortages. Further academies are now in the pipeline which will include pathways and progression routes, reskilling for graduates, and the promotion of careers in the sector that together would establish the North West as both a region of excellence for manufacturing and engineering, and a place where the curriculum required supporting that excellence is readily available.



Leading the way in innovation

At North West Regional College's Business Support Centre (BSC) we love to innovate, but more than that, we love to help local employers develop new products and services. But what exactly is innovation?

We believe that innovation is creating value from ideas, or in business terms, achieving sales. It's work that delivers additional selling points to customers in new markets, and does it in a way that improves the profitability equation for the business.

There are many different ways that NWRC works with businesses to develop new and improved products and services, from a few days upskilling or mentoring, to our technically specialist

staff via the Department for the Economy (DfE) funded InnovateUs programme, or technical consultancy via the Invest NI Innovation Vouchers programme, the graduate research and development (R&D) programmes such as Innovate UK's Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) Programme, and InterTrade Ireland's Fusion programme, are more longer term support programmes.

Companies often don't think that they are innovating, they think that innovation

is something that takes place within the R&D department of a multi-national company. However, companies have innovation in their DNA. They have to firstly identify a market opportunity, be it locally or further afield and then profile why their product is better, whether it has better functionality, or unique selling points that have advantages over competitors, or maybe it is just that they can produce and sell a product or service for less.



**NWRC COLLEGE PRINCIPAL, LEO MURPHY
PICTURED WITH NEVEN MAGUIRE AND BRIAN MCDERMOTT
AT THE LAUNCH OF OUR FOODOVATION CENTRE**

Cutting Edge

The Business Support Centre (BSC) is working at the cutting edge of industry with AE Global, who are an award winning manufacturer and constructor of Mechanical and Electrical (M&E) services, based in Maydown, and who specialise in the fabrication of bespoke piping systems for the pharmaceutical, oil and gas and allied chemical sectors. The College has partnered with AE Global on a 2.5 year £150K KTP project to develop a cutting edge business and process management platform, called DELATM, an intelligent IT database system that tracks and monitors complete work flow from design and manufacture through to installation and commissioning. This system will allow AE Global to expand and compete more effectively on a global scale, providing



innovative ‘real-time’ information communication.

A recent project supported Limavady based Coastal Core to develop a new first aid training product targeting training children. Coastal Core have extensive experience in lifeguard and first aid training, and firstly contacted the College regarding social media support and after a quick chat identified that they wanted to develop a new training product for children. The BSC supported Coastal Core to attain DfE InnovateUs and Invest NI Innovation Voucher funding and they now have a new training product that they are bringing to the market.

These are just some examples but the BSC works with over 120 business annually to help them develop new products and services in sectors such as Food and Hospitality, Engineering and Product Design and ICT and Creative and Digital Media and we as a College are investing in facilities to offer businesses, entrepreneurs, students and the College staff state-of-the-art facilities with which to develop their new ideas, with the technical support and knowledge of how to do this.

Foodovation

In November 2016 North West Regional College unveiled Foodovation, a state of the art research and development centre which offers a sanctuary to develop excellence in food innovation, science and technology. Foodovation is developed in partnership with the Department for the Economy and the Connected Programme. Foodovation offers a facility fully equipped with the most advanced facilities and latest technology, Foodovation contains development and production kitchens, kitchen studio

photography and videography, meeting rooms, a taste testing room and barista coffee training school.

Since opening the response from the general public, stakeholders and companies using the Foodovation Centre has been overwhelming. The College has delivered a centre that can assist the development of new products, embedding the skills and knowledge, and companies such as Carol’s Stock Market, Corndale Farm Chorizo, Primrose Café, the Walled City Brewery, Guapo Mexican food bar and Chocolate Manor are examples of companies that have already received invaluable support and have tasted success as a result. The Centre won the “*Growing for the Future*” award at the NI Year of Food and Drink awards as a measure of the work completed and the foresight of the College.

This is the first in a number of industry innovation centres that the College is developing and further developments include a £1.5 million investment in a Design and Innovation for Assisted Living (DIAL) Centre at our Strand Road Campus and a Product Design Centre, at our Greystone campus, Limavady. These are dedicated innovation and training facilities for the North West.

NWRC First Step r&D Innovation Centres

- Foodovation
- DIAL (Design Innovation for Assisted Living)
- Limavady Product Development Centre
- The VAR Centre (immersive lab) - proposed

HOW WE CAN SUPPORT YOUR BUSINESS



INNOVATION

- **InnovateUs**
DfE funded 1:1 upskilling for new product development
- **Invest NI Innovation Vouchers**
£5k worth of technical research and development support
- **Knowledge Transfer Partnerships**
InnovateUK & Invest NI funded programme for graduate R&D innovation project
- **InterTrade Ireland Fusion**
Cross-border graduate new product development & innovation projects

SKILLS FOCUS

- Bespoke training to build your business
- We work closely with your organisation to customise training to suit your needs
- Any size, any sector... our experience and expertise spans all types of organisations
- DfE can provide financial support of up to 75% of the cost of enhancing the skills of your workforce.



Department for the
Economy
www.economy-ni.gov.uk

ASSURED SKILLS

- Assistance with recruitment and selection (includes psychometric assessment if required)
- Pre-employment training programme designed by you
- You interview the trainees at the end of the programme
- DfE covers almost all of the costs

✉ **CONTACT US**
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let's do business



NORTHERN
Regional College **NI**

