

# Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce



Preserving the environment and embracing sustainability are becoming key considerations for commerce and industry in Belfast and the wider Northern Ireland community.

Encouraged by the work of organisations such as the Carbon Trust, Northern Ireland now has a cluster of ambitious companies developing products and services in areas such as waste management, recycling and alternative energy sources including wind energy, solar power and biomass. Wave power was also pioneered at Queen's University, Belfast.

Queen's University remains at the forefront of environmental issues, for example through pioneering research at the Questor Centre, which was established in 1989 and remains Europe's only industry/university co-operative research centre (I/UCRC). The I/UCRC concept is a highly successful model developed by the National Science Foundation in the United States where more than 50 such centres have been operating successfully for over 20 years. Questor has been formally linked to the NSF Programme since its formation.

The Questor centre provides companies and organisations with world-class environmental research programmes to meet their specific needs. It has also developed a unique model for the transfer of environmental technology and knowledge to member organisations and for the commercial exploitation of research in general.

The centre is now an international multi-university setup with a network of member companies and organisations that decide both the direction of the research effort and the specific research projects that are funded. It includes major multinational corporations among its members.

Northern Ireland is also home to Thermomax, an award winning company that pioneered the development of the solar tube for collecting thermal energy and using it to heat water. Clients for its products include the Department for the Environment and the Pentagon in Washington and NASA in Florida. Increasingly companies are recognising and harnessing the business benefits of environmental practices and strategies. They are aware that addressing environmental issues can improve credibility and reputation with customers, regulators, the local community, employees, investors and suppliers.

Effective environmental practices are now being developed and implemented to cut costs, as businesses face financial pressures from higher energy, increasing waste disposal costs, more environmental taxes and reduce insurance premiums which are among the highest in the UK.

**Web.** [www.northernirelandchamber.com](http://www.northernirelandchamber.com)  
**Tel.** 028 9024 4113