

# Invest Northern Ireland



Invest Northern Ireland is the economic development agency for Northern Ireland. As part of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, its role is to grow the economy by helping new businesses to set up, existing businesses to innovate and to compete internationally, and by attracting new investment into Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland businesses need to differentiate themselves through investing in outstanding products and processes.

With its headquarters in Belfast, Invest NI supports businesses and entrepreneurs across Northern Ireland. Its eight regional offices offer a gateway to its extensive range of advisory programmes, services, resources and financial assistance, while its 14 overseas offices work to promote Northern Ireland as a premier investment location, and provide support to local companies trading overseas.

Support for business falls into three main areas:

- supporting innovation
- encouraging international trade and inward investment
- stimulating entrepreneurial activities.

## Supporting innovation

Encouraging innovation is a key priority for Invest NI because in order to remain competitive, Northern Ireland businesses need to differentiate themselves through investing in outstanding products and processes, or developing imaginative, pioneering services.

This is reflected in the wide-ranging package of business development solutions available to client businesses. These include helping businesses with product and process innovation, competitiveness and productivity improvement, and helping them to develop

Invest NI's headquarters in Belfast



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management skills, strategic development, technical capability and export skills.

There is also a range of programmes to support research activities, from the development of new products and services with clear marketability, to blue sky research of emerging technologies. In the area of research and development one of Northern Ireland's greatest strengths is the calibre of its universities. Invest NI actively encourages the transfer of knowledge from universities to industry and supports the commercialisation of university research. It also has close links with both the Queen's University of Belfast and the University of Ulster.

### Encouraging international trading and inward investment

Increases in Northern Ireland's wealth will depend on export growth. Exporting companies generally demonstrate higher levels of innovation, invest more in training and pay higher wages and salaries. Inward investment also plays a vital role in strengthening the Northern Ireland economy by introducing new skills, technologies and export markets and strengthening local supply chains.

#### International trading

Invest NI's Passport to Export suite of services and programmes helps businesses access world markets. It is organised into five different areas: workshops to build export skills and knowledge; market research; in-market support; market visits and graduate placement programmes.

Every year a calendar of trade missions is organised to overseas markets. These visits help both new and experienced exporters. Practical support includes briefings before the missions and mentoring in the market.

In the 2006-07 financial year alone, £290 million of new export orders were won as a result of companies taking part in Invest NI's trade activities. Invest NI-backed companies now account for nearly 90 per cent of Northern Ireland's exports.

#### Inward investment

Invest NI's inward investment efforts are concentrated on the innovation-based sectors of internationally traded services, particularly financial services, telecoms, information and communications, technology, software development, business process outsourcing and contact centre sectors.

Recent figures have shown that in the UK, Belfast is second only to London in its success in attracting foreign investment projects. Belfast's strong performance is matched by Northern Ireland's performance as a whole, with the region achieving top ranking for financial services software investment projects in the UK.

Invest NI does not influence investors in their choice of location. The decision to locate in a particular area is driven by commercial considerations. However, understandably investors prefer locations with large labour pools, excellent infrastructure and close proximity to universities or centres of excellence. This makes Belfast an attractive option for them. ►



Dr. Conor Hanley, co-founder and CEO of NovaUCD-firm BiancaMed

### BiancaMed

Invest NI recently supported Dublin based technology company, BiancaMed, to set up a research and development centre at the Queen's University, Institute of Electronics, Communications and Information Technology (ECIT).

BiancaMed's core product is a unique wireless sensor that can detect breathing and heart rate up to a distance of two metres. The company received assistance through Invest NI's Compete programme, which supports the commercialisation of research.

Speaking on behalf of BiancaMed, CEO, Dr Conor Hanley said: "BiancaMed decided to locate its R&D centre in Belfast because of the cluster of world class companies in telecommunications and health technology there, and the availability of high calibre researchers and engineers. The opportunity to work closely with world-renowned research teams in ECIT to develop the technology, and the support from Invest NI were also important factors in attracting the company to Belfast."

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Mark Edwards, Chief Executive, Mformation

## Mformation Technologies

In October 2007 US telecoms firm Mformation Technologies Inc made a multi-million pound investment in Belfast setting up a centre of technical excellence that will create up to 162 hi-tech jobs.

Mformation is a global leader in the provision of mobile device management software to many of the world's leading wireless network operators, including Vodafone, Telefonica, T-Mobile, Sprint Nextel and Telus.

Mark Edwards, CEO, Mformation comments: "Northern Ireland offers us an outstanding location option for our growing company, particularly because of the region's high quality skills, recognized excellence for academic and industry focused research, and a compatible business and legal environment supporting the protection of intellectual property."

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## Stimulating entrepreneurial activity

As well as providing practical support to entrepreneurs seeking to set up a business, Invest NI works to influence cultural attitudes towards entrepreneurship. It does this by working in partnership with a number of organisations to promote entrepreneurs as role models, embed a culture of enterprise in schools and colleges and develop initiatives to foster entrepreneurship among groups that are under-represented in business, such as women.

## Start a Business programme

Invest NI, in conjunction with enterprise partners and local councils, runs the Start a Business programme to support local entrepreneurs who want to set up a business. The programme has three components:

- **Business advisory service:** An expert business adviser works with each entrepreneur on a one-to-one confidential basis, helping them prepare for setting up their business and meeting them regularly once the business has started.
- **Into-business course:** This free course for entrepreneurs has eight modules focusing particularly on sales and marketing, financial management, legal and statutory issues, ICT and general business practices.
- **Financial planning service:** This service helps entrepreneurs to decide how much money they need to start their business and advises them on how to explore all potential sources of funding.

Invest NI supported the set-up of almost 3,000 new businesses across Northern Ireland in 2006-07 through the Start a Business programme, and the quality of its support has contributed to making Northern Ireland the best performing region in the UK in terms of business survival rates.

Over 300 of these new businesses were based in Belfast, bringing to over 1,500 the number of new locally focused businesses started in the city with Invest NI support over the last five years.

## Export focused businesses

Through Invest NI's network of regional offices we ensure that businesses across Northern Ireland have wide access to Invest NI's advice, assistance and support programmes. Further support is available directly from Invest NI for businesses that have the potential to export outside Northern Ireland from the outset.

We have teams of specialist advisers who support existing clients or new businesses working in niche, innovative high-tech markets, and that have the potential to trade globally. These advisers also provide advice and signposting to Invest NI programmes and other support organisations.

## [nibusinessinfo.co.uk](http://nibusinessinfo.co.uk)

[nibusinessinfo.co.uk](http://nibusinessinfo.co.uk) is Invest NI's online information and support facility which gives practical information to help people set up and run successful businesses. The website has over 5,000 fact sheets of information, and over 70 interactive business tools.



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These cover every aspect of setting up and running a business, from the earliest days of developing a business idea to the legal issues involved in selling.

nibusinessinfo.co.uk brings together information from over 40 government departments, such as Revenue & Customs and the Health & Safety Executive, which have developed tools and information to help businesses comply with regulations and run their businesses as efficiently as possible.

The information on the site is tailored for the Northern Ireland business community and includes specific area profiles of the different regions within Northern Ireland, a database of local companies to help users find partners or suppliers, and a local property database.

The site's extensive range of interactive tools gives businesses the opportunity to increase the efficiency of their business, stay up to date with government regulations and ensure they are not missing out on any available support.

### Business accommodation

Providing businesses with appropriate high quality accommodation is essential to supporting economic growth. Invest NI's Property Solutions Unit helps local client companies to find the right accommodation for their business needs whether at start-up stage or expanding. It also helps international companies that are planning to locate in Northern Ireland to find suitable premises.

Invest NI provides access to a comprehensive database of office, industrial and commercial property in Northern Ireland as well as providing property searches, property market intelligence and property advice.

Business properties can be sourced via the agency's property portfolio or from private sector developments. Invest NI holds a database on both options and can offer a single, co-ordinated source for all types of property requirements.

Invest NI currently owns 43 industrial estates and business parks together with 19 buildings located across Northern Ireland. In the Belfast area we own eight industrial estates and business parks and eight buildings. From this building stock two units are vacant and space is available to offer in a further two sub-divided units.

### Centres of excellence

Invest NI's research and technological development Centres of Excellence programme supports the establishment of research and development centres to stimulate industrially-exploitable and commercially-focused research. To date 18 centres of excellence have been created through this programme. They include four centres in Queen's University covering nanotechnology; aircraft technology; electronics, communications and information technology and environmental tools.

**Web.** [www.investni.com](http://www.investni.com)  
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Tim Pentland and Neil Macdonald,  
co-founders of Pentland Macdonald

### Pentland Macdonald

Pentland Macdonald is the only locally-owned specialist contaminated land consultancy in Northern Ireland. It was set up two years ago by Tim Pentland and Neil MacDonald. It now employs eight and operates from new high-spec premises in Hollywood, outside Belfast.

Despite being highly qualified in their own areas Tim and Neil realised that running a business was going to throw up many new challenges.

"When you actually start running a business you no longer have the luxury of just concentrating on your 'job', you have to manage the finances, market the company and so on," says Tim.

Before they set up their business Tim and Neil did Invest NI's Start a Business programme. "Initiatives such as the Start a Business programme, which give an overview of key business areas, are invaluable for new entrepreneurs," says Neil.