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BIZ

Spring / Summer 2010

The newsletter which keeps Northern Ireland in touch with the Dutch



NI-NL BIZ provides readers with an update on Northern Ireland - Netherlands trade relations in a period when political and economic stability are the name of the game.

In the 6th edition of NI-NL BIZ Steve Murnaghan, Founder of NI-NL...

- looks back on the 4th NI-NL New Years Dinner held at the Harbour Commissioners in Belfast
- reports on the 'Taste of Holland' Trade Mission and Matchmaking Session supported by the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture
- views the progress made by Lisburn companies in the short period since their Outlook visit to the Netherlands in March
- follows Invest NI's Going Dutch alumni of 2009 and provides a preview of the first 2010 cohort visiting the Netherlands in June
- provides an insight into success stories in the world of commercial vehicles in an Industry Special
- updates readers on recent Trade successes
- welcomes Dutch tour operators and incentive organisers who visited the province recently

Celebration of NI-NL Trade



Fourth NI-NL New Year's Dinner

In January, the Northern Ireland – Netherlands Trade and Export Society celebrated its fourth New Year's Dinner at the Harbour Commissioners in Belfast, in the presence of representatives of the Netherlands Embassy, London, and the NI-NL founding partners, Invest Northern Ireland, Lisburn City Council and Northern Ireland Consultants BV.

Over 80 company representatives, including 32 who travelled over from the Netherlands, enjoyed a succulent menu of Dutch cuisine specially supplied and prepared for the occasion.

The dinner coincided with a Dutch Ministry of Agriculture Trade Mission of 10 food companies who were in the province for a matchmaking session.

Pictured at the pre-dinner reception are Ron Holland of DeBioderij, Councillor Jenny Palmer, Chair of Lisburn City Council Economic Development Committee, Laurens Westhoff, Minister Plenipotentiary, Netherlands Embassy, Tracy Meharg, Invest Northern Ireland and Philip Morrow, PRM Group.

NI-NL 4th New Year's Dinner

Wednesday 27th January 2010

Eighty company representatives of trading partners between Northern Ireland and the Netherlands travelled to be in Belfast at the end of January for the fourth NI-NL New Year's Dinner. Delegates heard details of the successes and export potential between the Northern Ireland and Dutch markets.



In his opening address NI-NL Founder [Steve Murnaghan](#) looked back on a busy and successful 2009 and thanked Lisburn City Council and Invest Northern Ireland for their ongoing commitment to NI-NL – especially in nurturing new aspirant exporters who are keen to get in Touch with the Dutch through the various programmes they provide.



Keynote speaker and host of the evening **Laurens Westhoff**, Minister Plenipotentiary, Deputy Head of Mission at the Royal Netherlands Embassy London, impressed on the guests the importance of trade relations between The Netherlands and Northern Ireland and how the two countries need each other for prosperity and stability.

Minister Westhoff updated guests that over 50 Dutch companies had participated in trade visits to Northern Ireland during the four years since NI-NL was established and that clear and tangible results in environmental and renewable energy projects and agricultural technologies had been achieved. He referred to the fact that these successes were partly due to the fact that The Netherlands and Northern Ireland are natural partners to each other.



Speaking at the dinner, **Tracy Meharg**, Invest NI's Managing Director of Innovation and Capability Development said: "Over recent years, Northern Ireland has had great opportunities to enhance trade and export links with The Netherlands, and there is much scope for further growth. Last year, 17 local companies benefited from Invest Northern Ireland's innovative 'Going Dutch' programme, which offers businesses extensive on-the-ground, practical support from an experienced marketing consultancy."

Ms Meharg announced that in 2009 local Northern Ireland companies secured £6 million worth of business in the Netherlands, thanks to Invest Northern Ireland trade initiatives in the region.

Ms Meharg added: "In order to accelerate economic growth, I would encourage local businesses to take advantage of the opportunities that exist to develop export links."

Delicious Dutch Dining

Guests dined on a delicious combination of Dutch delicacies supplied to Hamilton and Kirk and Posh Nosh for the dinner by the Dutch exporters on the Trade Mission.

AVIKO

Innovative potato products

BORGESIUS CONVENIENCE

Tasty Bread Snacks

BRESC

Processed fresh herbs & spices

FRUITMASTERS

Dutch grown and imported fruit

GROENVELD VLEES

Poultry specialists

KAAS-PACK HOLLAND

Processing of cheeses

KOPPERS CRESS

'Aromatique Architecture' cress

DE BIODERIJ

Traditional delicious pancakes

REMA

Mayonnaise, sauces, dressings

VIVERA

Meat replacement products

Mouth Watering Menu

Warm Sliced Roast Duck
On Baby Gem Leaves with
Avocado & Affilla Cress
Cumberland Sauce
Multi Cereal & Sea Salt Rolls

Roasted Loin of Texel Lamb with
Provencal Herbs & Roasted Garlic
Rosemary & Thyme Jus
Potato Gratin
Creamed Carrot & Parsnip
Bundle of Fine Beans

Dutch Pancake with a
Compote of Soft Berries,
Vanilla Seed Ice Cream,
Honey Cress &
Drizzled with Chocolate Sauce



The 'Taste of Holland' trade mission participants and their local Northern Ireland guests were given a special welcome as well as a word of thanks for the produce provided. The sentiment of the evening was maintained to the end as guests received a small gift on departure to remind them of the warm trade relations which NI-NL continues to nurture.



Photos from NI-NL New Year's Reception and Dinner

At the NI-NL New Year's Dinner companies from a wide range of sectors were represented– including environmental, building materials, furnishings, textiles, aerospace, environmental, plastics, packaging, transport, business services and the food sector.

The drinks reception and dinner at the start of 2010 provided Dutch and Northern Ireland partners with the perfect opportunity to meet up, to network, to engage, to trade, to plan for the year ahead, but most importantly to communicate face to face with each other in a unique and welcoming location.



The Mayor of Lisburn, Founding Partner of NI-NL, formally welcomes local companies and their Dutch guests to the New Year's Drinks Reception and Dinner



John Huddleston and Mark Huddleston of JHE Engineering welcome senior purchasers from Fokker Aerostructures to the Harbour Commissioners Office



Ron Holland supplier of MaRaeburn's pancakes and Philip Morrow of PRM discuss Shrove Tuesday with Jonathan Verner of Costcutter.



Gerard Wilson, Sales Director of SAM Mouldings is delighted that Dutch building materials distributor Christiaan Kramer (r) can incorporate a factory inspection and the New Year's Dinner during a short visit to the province.

Background to NI-NL

The Northern Ireland Netherlands Trade and Export Society (NI-NL) was founded in 2006 to encourage and stimulate export trade between Northern Ireland and The Netherlands. NI-NL's Mission is "to proactively assist in developing Partnerships in Trade, Enterprise & Investment between Northern Ireland and The Netherlands"

NI-NL is a forum and platform for companies and professionals active, or who wish to be active, in trade between Northern Ireland and the Netherlands. NI-NL is a not for profit foundation and plays an active role by organising a number of business network events and activities per year and keeping businesses abreast of activity between the 2 regions.



Going Dutch 2009 participant Cormac Diamond of Fourds Blinds (r) with Dutch partner Maurice Winkel (l) flank NI-NL Founders Steve Murnaghan of NITC and Elaine Curran of Invest NI.



Representatives Den van den Ende (l) and Dick Heijmans (r) of leading Dutch exporter of fresh fruit to the province Royal Fruitmasters meet with Cecil Sloan of Orchard County Foods, Honorary Dutch Consul Carson McMullan and Henk-Jan Bakker, Head of Economic Department at the Netherlands Embassy.



Gary Nicholls of Northern Ireland Plastics welcomes Dutch customer Len Heldens on his first visit to the province in the presence of Laurens Westhoff, Netherlands Embassy, and Tracy Meharg, Invest NI.



Jeroen Bergman of Piralisi, pictured with Mayor Allan Ewart and Councillor Jenny Palmer of Lisburn City Council, combines the NI-NL Dinner with a sales tour hosted by Nigel Johnston and Kenny McAleenon of Linton Solutions.



Erwin Dirkse of DMT Milieutechnologie who enjoyed the NI-NL New Year's Dinner at Hillsborough Castle in 2008 returns for the 2010 dinner with Colm Gribben of Viltra, Newry.



Dutch Food suppliers Gert-Jan Gombert of Vivera (l), and Paulies Melissant of Bresc (r) are delighted to have met with PRM's Business Development Director David Connolly during the Ministry of Agriculture Trade Mission led by Age van Balen.

David Hall, Managing Director of Blue Diamond, brings Aviko's Managing Director Sales Bert-Jan Loman (l) up to speed with the Northern Ireland Food industry.



A 'Taste of Holland' for Northern Ireland

Ten Dutch food companies - participating in a Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Fisheries sponsored programme engaged on a Trade Mission to Northern Ireland in January.

The companies participated in supermarket visits, a visit to a leading retail distributor, a food service cash and carry, a 1-2-1 Matchmaking event with potential partners as well as the NI-NL New Year's Dinner, during a 60 hour visit to the island.

The mission, delivered by NITC, was led by Age van Balen, Coordinator International Trade Promotion, from the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality in The Hague and Ewald Wermuth, Counsellor for Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, based at the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in London.



Tight scheduling

Day 1

Market Information and Orientation

Following a training session at Groenveld Vlees in Nieuw Venneep in early January the companies were keen to experience the well documented 'Newry Effect' of Irish customers travelling North over the border to purchase goods and groceries at lower prices due to price differences created mainly by exchange rate and taxation differences.

The companies were then welcomed to the PRM Group in Lisburn which is responsible for the sale and distribution of a portfolio of major chilled food brands throughout the island of Ireland.

Following a presentation by Trevor Magill and Philip Morrow the companies toured the impressive 4,500 m2 warehouse facility operating under three temperature regimes.



Day 2

'A Taste of Holland' Matchmaking

Each of the 10 companies engaged in 1-2-1 pre-planned meetings with buyers and decision makers from retailers, foodservice distributors, and industrial processors in the unique location of Hillsborough Courthouse. Age van Balen and Ewald Vermeuth ring the bell to kick off the Matchmaking



While the world's press camped outside waiting for white smoke from the important talks taking place next door at Hillsborough Castle, Dutch and Northern Ireland companies negotiated their way through no less than 90 individual meetings each lasting twenty minutes.



VIP guests who greeted the Dutch participants and tasted the delicacies included:



Arlene Foster, Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment dropped in for tasty Dutch pancakes



Mayor Allan Ewart of Lisburn City Council pictured with representatives of local food companies O'Kanes Foodservice and Dailyfresh.

Day 3

Confirmation and 'Let it all sink in'

Companies engaged in individual meetings as well as a visit to Musgraves Cash and Carry in Belfast prior to departing via Belfast International airport for Amsterdam.



Positive Outlook for Lisburn in 2010

In March 2010 six companies from the city of Lisburn completed the European Outlook Programme and an intensive 3 day Trade Visit to the Netherlands.

33 individual appointments were successfully completed during the 3 day visit averaging at 6.5 meetings per company. In terms of suitability of partners met the average score across the board was rated at an incredible 75% !

From participant feedback new trade opportunities of over € 1.7 million can be generated from the programme over the coming 18 months. The following pictorial article records part of the preparation and delivery of the programme.



A week prior to departure the companies received their visit schedules and some final tips in the presence of the Chair of Lisburn City Council's Economic Development Committee Councillor Jenny Palmer.



Arriving at Amsterdam Schiphol airport the companies explored opportunities throughout the country from their Amsterdam base.



Philip Morrow and David Connolly of PRM taste what's hot in the Dutch kitchen.



Paul Templeton of Kelly's European Freight Service meets with leading Dutch exporters of ultra fresh products.



Peter Blair of explains the advantages of A & B Pneumatics airsprings to Dutch vehicle seat manufacturers.



Andrew Coulter of Fabrite Fit Out views leading edge design in the Dutch HoReCa sector.



David Craig is delighted to present Craig's Fuel Polishing solution to leading marine and industrial distributors.

Each of the companies departed with a network of new contacts, clear market information and opportunities to commence trading with the Dutch.



Breaking News from this mission

From Flowers to Freight

Kelly European Freight Service, based at Knockmore Hill Industrial Park in Lisburn, Northern Ireland, operates temperature controlled articulated lorries across between the British Isles and the European mainland - The Netherlands, France, Belgium, Sweden, Denmark and Italy.

Kelly European Freight Service is a family business whose background is in importing and wholesaling flowers from the Netherlands, offers transport to and from Holland, each day, on a full load or groupage basis.

The company specialises in refrigerated transport with dual temperature control trailers allowing a combination of chilled, frozen or ambient goods to be transported on the same trailer.

Kelly's European Freight Service has already developed regular new business offering logistics to the UK for a Dutch food exporter on the back of the trade mission.

Kellys European beat the current logistics supplier in terms of price, speed of delivery and service making it a win, win and win situation for their new client.

“ This is what the participants had to say on their return from the Netherlands... ”

Lisburn City Council's Netherlands Outlook Programme has helped A & B Pneumatics to get serious about export.
A & B Pneumatics | Peter Blair, MD

Lisburn City Council's Netherlands Outlook Programme enables new ideas to be developed within a new market that is naturally responsive to enthusiastic business people. It also provides the flexibility, structure and motivation to do something different within the timescale given.
Craigs Ltd | David Craig, MD

Lisburn City Council's Netherlands Outlook Programme is an excellent way of seeking potential new business in a new market place.
Fabrite Fit Out | Andrew Coulter, Director

Lisburn City Council should feel very proud that they take great interest in local business and should be praised for this.
Kellys European | Paul Templeton, Transport Manager

An excellent Programme which would not be possible to complete without the support of NITC/ Lisburn City Council, the week provided a really good understanding of the Dutch market and meetings with high calibre companies , I would highly recommend this programme to anyone wishing to take their business forward in the years ahead
PRM | David Connolly, Business Development Director

Lisburn City Council's Netherlands Outlook Programme is an affordable and efficient way to explore an export market.
Unitrunk | Ivan Major, Export Manager



A Polished Approach to Business

Craigs has offered Benelux distribution of their fuel polishing system to Kemper en Van Twist BV in Dordrecht who supply and service the energy, industrial and marine markets with generator sets – including FG Wilson and Perkins products.

Kemper en Van Twist have a dedicated sales and maintenance team who will be trained by Craigs in the use and installation of fuel polishing systems to improve the quality of stored fuel by removing impurities.

Craigs to open doors in Ireland for Waterkracht

Powerful, hot and environmentally friendly into the bargain

Waterkracht, a Dutch specialist within the field of (high-pressure) cleaning equipment and effective cleaning solutions has recently announced a partnership with Craigs of Lisburn for distribution of their equipment throughout Ireland.

Waterkracht recently launched the Hot Aqua Blaster with Ecoboiler system with a high efficiency heat exchanger forming the basis for the patented Boiling Hotwater Technology with thermoshock effect. The system which produces clean boiling water reduces the use of chemicals, is guaranteed to save up to 20% on fuel and up to 50% on water consumption.



The Hot Aqua Blaster has already caught the interest of three local councils and four contractors who would like to replace the chemical removal of graffiti with a clean hot water approach. A unit will soon be available in Northern Ireland for demos to local councils and contractors in Ireland.

Pictured at the InterClean International Trade Show in Amsterdam is Gerhard Gilbers, Sales Manager of Waterkracht.

2009 Participants make record progress

Five SME's touched down in Amsterdam in early December, bringing to 17 the number of Northern Ireland companies who completed Invest NI's Going Dutch programme in 2009 alone.

Record growth in new business developed with the Netherlands through the Going Dutch programme was announced by Invest NI during the NI-NL New Year's Dinner in early 2010.

In total 17 companies who participated in the programme in 2009 won over £6 million worth of new business.

The final cohort of 2009 was similar in make-up to groups which visited the Netherlands in June and October 2009 with a wide range of sectors represented – the common thread was that each of the companies who participated was keen to develop export sales into Europe.

On arrival at Schiphol, given the inclement weather, the participants were sensibly advised by Steve Murnaghan of NITC to wrap up well and be visible in the marketplace!

The 5 companies from Ballymena, Belfast, Carrickfergus and Omagh engaged in 31 individual sales appointments - averaging 6 per company - over the 3 day visit. Sectors represented included red meat, agricultural engineering, software, packaging as well as decorative and architectural glass art.

The photographs below tell part of the story of the market visit.



Spire Interior Solutions hope to hit the jackpot supplying the hotel and leisure sector in the Netherlands.



Quad-X meet one of Holland's leading quad dealers.



MSO Cleland, leading supplier of printed sleeves and labels, shop for new private label business by meeting with half a dozen leading food processors selling into Dutch supermarkets such as Albert Heijn.



Ballymena Meats tours fresh meat importers and catering wholesalers with a requirement for high quality Northern Ireland beef and lamb.



Mindmill, supplier of psychometric assessment tools, manage a final meeting prior to departure from Schiphol airport.

The Going Dutch participants were delighted to return to Belfast in time for Christmas with live RFQ's, potential distributorships in place and sales in the pipeline for 2010.

Recent research has shown that over 80% of the companies who participated in the Going Dutch programme in 2009 are making progress in the Netherlands.

“ Programme feedback from all the companies was excellent ”

Our thanks for the very successful Going Dutch trade mission - all our appointments were excellent, we have received enquiries and samples are already underway. In all - time well spent and a very cost effective way to internationalise one's business.
Spires Art

The Going Dutch programme gave us the opportunity to have a stronger market presence in Europe, and to realise the potential for our product and the support of the NITC made the transition into the market seamless.

Quad-X

Going Dutch has offered our company an excellent opportunity to open our doors to the European Marketplace. We have gained an sound experience into the Dutch Meat industry and will use this experience to ensure that we develop and become a success partner in exporting into Europe.
Ballymena Meats

The Going Dutch Program provided an excellent insight into the Dutch market and how they operate. NITC supported us immensely throughout the program.

Mindmill

Going Dutch was an extremely worthwhile exercise to broaden our understanding of the Dutch market specifically and the European market generally. NITC managed the whole process very well which allowed us to maximise our time with customers on the trip.

MSO Cleland

'Marathon Like'

Trade Missions take not only a lot of preparation and follow up but also a lot of stamina, as can be seen from the short photo 'reportage' which followed Kaas-Pack Holland's Sales Director and half marathon runner Wybe Wiekema over the few days in Ireland and Northern Ireland.



Going Dutch puts forward its Case

The case studies outline in more detail three successful projects representative of the type of partnerships developed with Dutch businesses through the Going Dutch Programme. Prior to participating in the Going Dutch programme, in June and October 2009, neither Fourds Blinds, Erne Extrusions nor SAM Mouldings had sales in the Netherlands



European Window of Opportunity

In spring 2009, just twelve months ago, Cormac Diamond, Managing Director of Fourds Blinds in Draperstown, decided to take part in Invest NI's Going Dutch programme and the return on investment is already an astonishing 10,000 %!!!

Fourds Blinds, established in 2005, designs, manufactures and supplies roof window blinds to suit all major brands such as Velux®, Fakro®, Roto®, and Rooflight®.

The rationale for choosing the Netherlands as a key market for expansion was clear for Fourds Blinds:

- A 16.8 million population
- Close proximity to the U.K.
- A high number of roof windows
- Window décor important to Dutch householders
- A practical and cost effective development programme in Going Dutch to deliver the market intelligence and generate the leads was offered by Invest NI.

The objectives set by Fourds Blinds were twofold – to develop trade contacts for supply of window blind kits to specialised retailers and to develop an online presence in the Netherlands to supply directly to consumers.

Both objectives were met in record time for Fourds Blinds as initial meetings with buyers took place in June and the first orders were dispatched in September.

Through Going Dutch Fourds Blinds met a Dutch entrepreneur with a background in both curtains and e-tailing and together they

worked at the Dutch website www.dakraamgordijnen.nl including Dutch language, the right product and colour combinations, payment systems and help desk.

Looking back over the last 6 months of trading with the Netherlands, Cormac has experienced very few problems in dealing with the Dutch and his confidence in approaching export markets is growing by the day. 'The business mentality in the Netherlands is uncannily similar to our own, the communication is clear and direct and the payment morality is strong', he reflects.

'Yes. We have made some minor alterations to the product, some of the Dutch sizes and colours are not so common in the UK, and we have improved our retail packaging for export deliveries, but these are small, affordable market considerations in terms of the level of business we have developed', he states.

Logistics are not a headache either, as today, through a partnership with Parcelforce and GLS Netherlands, Dutch customers throughout the country are having goods dispatched from Draperstown delivered to their doors within 48 hours.

The new export business in the Netherlands has grown today to 25% of Fourd's turnover,

employment levels have increased by a similar percentage and plans are afoot for the next steps within Europe.

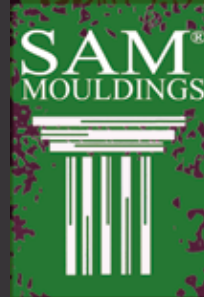
Cormac also believes it helps having a proactive like minded entrepreneurial partner who is committed to Fourds Blinds and who is on the same wave length.

Cormac Diamond is delighted he signed up for Going Dutch as has provided him and Dutch partner Maurice Winkel with the template for further expansion into Germany, Belgium and France in 2010-2011.

The window of opportunity for Fourds Blinds is no longer Ireland, United Kingdom and the Netherlands but the whole of Europe, according to Diamond with a rye smile which one knows will deliver the goods.

Cormac Diamond of Fourds Blinds (left) invited Maurice Winkel to his 1st NI-NL event – the New Year's Dinner in Belfast, whilst on a visit to Fourds Blinds in Draperstown.

SAM Builds Business in Holland



Pictured left
Dr. Vicky Kell and
Gerard Wilson carry
out final check on the
first shipment to the
Netherlands.

SAM Mouldings in Antrim has won its first mainland European export business from Invest Northern Ireland's 'Going Dutch' programme. The company has signed a deal to provide a range of products, including primed MDF mouldings, wood veneer mouldings, skirting boards, and architraves, to a leading specialist in construction materials for a network of builders' merchants throughout The Netherlands.

SAM Mouldings, a UK leader in MDF architectural mouldings for the construction and DIY industries, was helped to pinpoint the market opening through its participation on the 'Going Dutch' programme last November.

The programme enabled the company to tap into the knowledge and experience of Northern Ireland Trade Consultants (NITC) of doing business, an Amsterdam-based business with a wealth of experience gained doing business in The Netherlands. NITC delivers the 'Going Dutch' programme under contract with Invest NI's Trade division.

Gerard Wilson, Sales Director at SAM Mouldings, describes the contract in The Netherlands as "an immensely important breakthrough" for the Northern Ireland company. "It's our first export business outside the UK and will give us the knowledge and confidence to build our sales in The Netherlands and also to explore opportunities for our products and expertise in other neighbouring markets.

"We had been looking at how to diversify and strengthen our sales beyond Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland, which together accounts for 97% of our business. Both markets have been experiencing difficulties because of the severe downturn in construction.

"The practical support we received through 'Going Dutch' was excellent. NITC's knowledge of the market and ability to organise interviews with key buyers were extremely impressive. Going Dutch proved to be a really worthwhile programme for us.

"We were delighted to host a visit by our new Dutch customers to see our operation at Antrim and now have a strong relationship with them. As a result, we are already discussing how we can help them with new products for their extensive distribution network."

Dr Vicky Kell, Invest NI's Trade Director, commenting on the new business for SAM Mouldings, says: "Going Dutch has become one of our most successful initiatives particularly with smaller businesses new to export markets. Over the past year, we've seen very many SMEs securing their first export sales. Others from previous programmes have gone on to win business in other international markets.

"Smaller companies clearly benefit from the practical assistance from an experienced marketing operation on-the-ground in The Netherlands. This expert support with market intelligence, lead generation and help with logistics helps build confidence among participating SMEs.

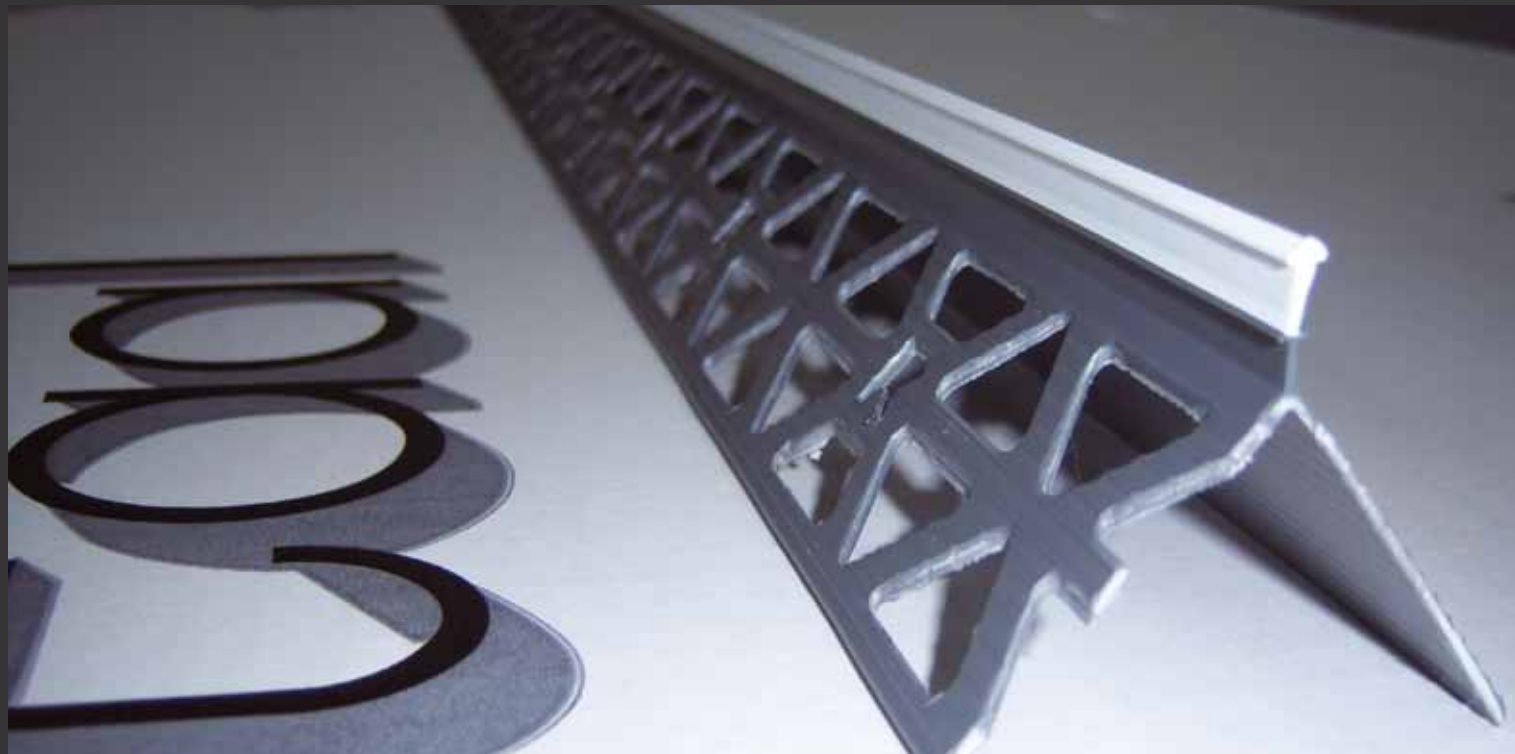
"The Netherlands, of course, is an ideal market for first time and inexperienced exporters because of its close and historic links with the UK and Ireland and because English is widely spoken. We've found that Dutch business people are generally keen to develop relationships with Northern Ireland companies and are willing to work with them on developing sales elsewhere in Europe."

SAM Mouldings employs 85 people in Antrim and is recognised as among the most progressive and quality conscious businesses of its type in Europe. It operates a purpose-built manufacturing and distribution facility at Antrim. The company, which has won a series of major awards for its commitment to quality throughout the operation, has an extensive portfolio of MDF moulded products.

Going Dutch Case Study

Erneplas Extrudes into Europe

Erneplas, the Lisnaskea-based manufacturer of plastic materials and components such as PVC plasterbeads, secured its first business in The Netherlands from its participation in a recent Invest Northern Ireland 'Going Dutch' programme.



The company, which employs 15 people in Lisnaskea, is aiming to generate £750,000 in the first full year of production to supply products to the market leading manufacturer of plasterbeads in The Netherlands.

Erneplas, a sister company of Erne Extrusions, took part in the Invest NI 'Going Dutch' programme, which has been developed to assist companies new to exporting to Europe in 2009. The programme included extensive in-market guidance and practical support such as lead generation from Amsterdam-based Northern Ireland Trade Consultants (NITC).

Vincent McCoy, Managing Director of Erneplas/Erne Extrusions, commenting on the programme, said: "Going Dutch has proved to be tremendously successful for us. Based on the initial successes since we first visited the market in June 2009 our partner is already talking about a contract which could be worth around £6 million over the next five years."

"As well as gaining valuable knowledge about the Dutch marketplace and business procedures there from our engagement with NITC, we were introduced to a major manufacturer that resulted in substantial business for our PVC plasterbeads and the prospect of further contracts for another product in Germany."

"Our new Dutch partner, who has already visited us in Lisnaskea, has a well-established and successful business supplying metal profiles to builders in The Netherlands and Germany through an extensive network of builders merchants. This manufacturer had been planning to offer PVC beading in response to market demand."

"The timing of our visit to The Netherlands, therefore, was perfect. We were able to offer him access to our expertise and experience in the production of PVC extrusions. Going Dutch introduced us to a new business opportunity and an established partnership that will enable us to grow our sales in The Netherlands and Germany, two very dynamic markets," he added.

Welcoming the success of Erneplas in The Netherlands, Dr Vicky Kell, Invest NI's Trade Director, said: "Going Dutch is proving to be one of our most popular and successful export initiatives for smaller companies particularly those with either limited or no experience of trading outside Northern Ireland."

"Success in The Netherlands has encouraged many small and medium sized enterprises to explore opportunities in other international markets and a number have taken part in our extensive trade missions/exhibitions programme over the past

year. Going Dutch has given companies confidence in - and experience - of business opportunities, practice and processes in global markets. They benefit from the structured approach to export sales and marketing that underpins the Going Dutch programme. "The key stages in this approach include workshops covering market intelligence and business procedures, a visit to The Netherlands for pre-arranged meetings with potential customers, and feedback sessions to help them convert leads into sales."

Erneplas is a sister company of Erne Extrusions, which recently announced a £1.3 million expansion at Manderville Business Park in Lisnaskea. Erne Extrusions makes recyclable plastic products for roofing and other applications.

Invest
Northern
Ireland

Building Locally
Competing Globally

Seeking the Perfect Dutch Partner

Five Northern Ireland companies are preparing for a visit to the Netherlands in June 2010 as part of Invest NI's Going Dutch programme. The companies, from the North and West of the province are currently involved in the pre-market visit training delivered by Northern Ireland Trade Consultants on behalf of Invest NI.

The companies are coached during the training sessions about:

- The Netherlands and The Dutch economy
- Researching European markets
- Choosing the route to market and correct channel of distribution
- Identifying the 'perfect Dutch partner'
- Presenting their companies and Meeting the Buyer

On arrival in Amsterdam the companies enjoy a final training session which includes attempting to master the Dutch language !!

In preparation for 'Going Dutch' in June the companies have recently completed the Perfect Dutch Partner training session, the results of which can be found below.



Allpipe Engineering Ltd
www.all-pipe.co.uk

Allpipe Engineering Ltd provides pipe fabrication and installation for the oil, gas, petrochemical, pharmaceutical and power industries to customers including DuPont, Shell and Esso

Allpipe seeks direct contacts in storage and distribution projects, both new build and refurbishment in the oil & gas, petrochemical and pharmaceutical industries in the Netherlands as well as introductions to relevant design and engineering bureaux.



BMI Trailers
www.bmitrailers.com



The BMI group is the leading manufacturer and supplier in the UK and Ireland for waste ejector trailers, WALKING FLOOR® trailers, kerbside recycling vehicles and waste roll compactors to local authorities, waste management companies and processors.

BMI Trailers is keen to identify potential dealers involved in body works with sales force, workshop and repair service servicing the waste sector and / or local authorities.



Limavady Gear
www.skyrota.com

Limavady Gear Company (LGC) supplies services to the renewable energy industry in the repair and maintenance of wind turbine gearboxes as well as the Skyrota windmill for urban wind generation.

LGC is interested in meeting with operators of onshore wind farms in the Netherlands who as well as intermediaries in renewable technologies with existing distribution to SMEs and potential private users.



Northern Engineering Ltd.
www.staircaster.com

Northern Engineering has developed and manufactured the Staircaster range of adjustable moulds for the pre-cast concrete industry. Northern Engineering would like to appoint an agent or intermediary involved in supplying non competitive machinery or capital goods into the precast concrete industry in the Netherlands.



Total Mobile
www.totalmobile.co.uk

Total Mobile offers a complete mobile working software system suitable for all types of government workers (local authorities, housing organisations and other government departments and agencies) who operate outside of the office environment.

Total Mobile is interested in engaging with Dutch municipalities through channel partnerships with software suppliers and mobile operators servicing government in the Netherlands.

Should you require any further information on any of the companies outlined below or feel that you, or a business person you know, 'fits the bill' of the Perfect Dutch Partner, please do not hesitate to contact Steve Murnaghan of NITC on murn@nitc.nl.

Commercial Vehicles Special



The Netherlands has a long and proud history of transport and logistics, which is closely tied to its entrepreneurial nature and can-do mentality and location on the Rhine-delta. One of the main reasons that the Netherlands has become the Gateway to Europe, is its excellent system of roads, rails, inland waterways and integrated approach to multimodal logistics.

Cool business partnership in the Netherlands

NI-NL BIZ takes a look at two of Northern Ireland's leading commercial vehicle manufacturers and studies the relationships and milestones which have made them an example to many in Anglo Dutch trade relations.

- The Netherlands is the leading road transport nation in Europe - accounting for 22% of international transport of goods throughout Europe.
- Around 20,000 businesses are active in the transport sector.
- The Netherlands is an undisputed leader in the area of European Distribution Centres for American and Asian companies operating in Europe, hosting around 51% of all EDCs
- The sector as a whole generated revenues of around €53 billion, or 4% of GDP, not taking into account related services.
- Transport companies are dealing with legislation aimed at reducing noise related to deliveries, by developing silent trucks
- The Netherlands is a small and densely populated country, with more than 16 million people (484 inhabitants per square km) – making mobility a major challenge and public transport a real option to beat the traffic jams.
- The government is investing heavily in road maintenance, increasing the number and size of roads and taking measures to combat traffic jams.
- Connex is an independent network of more than 125 Dutch companies and authorities that connects parties in order to work on the sustainable improvement of mobility in the Netherlands.
- The Dutch have an innovative online system called 9292OV which enables travellers to receive advice on the best possible multimodal journey - including the use of trams, trains and busses.

These are just some of the facts and reasons why two County Antrim companies, Wrightbus and Gray and Adams, have focused their efforts on building Dutch relations.



Gray & Adams Ltd and Ducarbo BV celebrate their one year partnership anniversary.

Gray & Adams, the UK's leading designer and manufacturer of refrigerated and specialist transport equipment, has built a strong relationship with Dutch company, Ducarbo BV, over the last year.

The arrival of a new Gray and Adams demonstration trailer at the recent Carrosserie Vakdagen exhibition at Hardenberg was the icing on the cake of the one-year partnership celebrations.

At the beginning of 2009, Gray & Adams approached Ducarbo - a group of prominent bodybuilders located across the Netherlands - to take on the company's Benelux repair and back-up agency. For the three years previous to the Ducarbo partnership being established, Gray & Adams had been supplying Dutch foodservices distributor, Deli XL, with highly specialised multi-temperature trailers.

With some of the Ducarbo members being in business for more than 100 years, it was clear that the organisation had tremendous experience in the manufacture, repair and maintenance of specialist bodywork, and with various facilities spread across the country, Ducarbo offered the perfect back-up network for the Gray & Adams product. The partnership was announced at the Carrosserie Vakdagen in Hardenberg in April 2009.

Having since exhibited at the Gorinchem Carrosserie Vakdagen show in September 2009, where a trailer manufactured for Dutch bakery cooperative, Back Beko IJsselstreek was displayed, the joint Gray & Adams-Ducarbo venture made its mark on the Hardenberg show this year again from 20th-22nd April. At this show,

a Gray & Adams unveiled a demonstrator trailer which has been designed and manufactured to PIEK standards - enabling the trailer to be used for night time distribution - as all components have been designed and tested to emit noise levels of less than 60 decibels.

Gray & Adams is the only UK bodybuilder / trailer manufacturer to have achieved PIEK certification. The product, called the Gray & Adams 'Eco-Low', was first designed for UK supermarket, Sainsbury's, for the first UK night time distribution trials. The Eco-Low is part of the wider Gray & Adams Eco-Range that consists of three main products aimed predominantly at reducing fuel consumption and costs whilst increasing fleet efficiency.

Since the first Hardenberg show in 2009, Ducarbo has taken on a stronger role within the partnership by taking on the sales responsibility as well as providing a back-up service and has diversified their own organisation's scope. In late 2009, a subsidiary company, Ducarbo Solutions BV, was established to primarily look after Gray & Adams customers in the Benelux.

Dutchman Igor Blauw, who has has 15 years experience in the automotive and transportation industry, including six years within refrigerated transport, has been brought on board to head up this arm of the Ducarbo company, and is now responsible for sales of Gray & Adams products in the Benelux.

Ducarbo rates the highest quality of Gray & Adams manufacture together with the ability to supply to the most stringent Dutch specifications as the winning combination and after the initial engagement period, both companies are looking forward to a mutually-beneficial future together.

A long term approach to bilateral Dutch relationships



Wrightbus have worked for many years in the UK with Arriva PLC - one of the major UK based bus & train operating companies. An aggressive expansion plan by Arriva gave Wrightbus the opportunity to expand upon the UK relationship and work with VDL to supply vehicles to Arriva in the north of Holland for their new bus operations.

Arriva Netherlands needed new buses and knowing the Wrightbus product well in the UK asked Wrightbus to tender for a small batch of buses for Holland with the prospect of more to follow if the project proved successful. At the time of bidding the Netherlands already had one major domestic manufacturer VDL Berkhof Valkenswaard an operational company of the bus and coach division of the powerful and innovative Dutch VDL Groep.

Wrightbus had an established relationship with VDL Groep in the UK for the supply of chassis but none the less the tender was tricky to negotiate because of the VDL Berkhof relationship. Wrightbus shipped the first batch of vehicles & spent time customising these to the needs of local drivers & garage maintenance personnel. The Wrightbus strategy paid off as they were quickly awarded another small batch order taking Arriva Netherlands delivery requirements to a total of 20 buses. The buses settled into service successfully. Arriva Netherlands prospered & as a result Wrightbus received a good share of their orders. Over a three-year period Wrightbus shipped nearly 200 vehicles for service throughout Dutch territory.

Along the way Wrightbus were also introduced to two Dutch suppliers who have gone on to become strategic supply partners to the Ballymena based bus builder. Heavac b.v a heating, ventilation and air-conditioning company based in Neunen produce equipment that was well known in their home market but not at all in the UK. Wrightbus were very impressed with Heavac's engineering and determination to support their product. Relations blossomed over time and today Heavac b.v. supply nearly all Wrightbus requirements throughout the UK.

The second supplier gained through Dutch projects was Ventura Systems - an innovative designer & manufacturer of bus doors systems headquartered in Bolsward. In the Netherlands bus drivers

pay particular attention to close fit of bus doors that, if badly designed, can tend to let in drafts & rain. Ventura Systems design of door virtually eliminates these problems and, whilst a little more expensive, it offers superior performance and durability. Initially Wrightbus introduced the Ventura door system on their bus bodies in London and now they are standard for the Capital city. The relationship with Ventura Systems continues to go from strength to strength and Wrightbus have now introduced this supply component on their buses as far a field as Hong Kong & Las Vegas.

The combination of complementary relationships outlined placed Wrightbus in a unique position and they were delighted to be chosen as the winner of the Anglo Dutch Award for Enterprise, awarded by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, Sir Leon Brittan, in November 2002.

Subsequent to receiving this accolade further buses have been developed (both single deck and double deck) in partnership with VDL. VDL also supplies Wrightbus with components known as "gliders" (chassis frames with no engine or drive train) on which Wrightbus build their unique hybrid electric buses now in service in London and Dublin.

Following earlier successes Netherlands export opportunities have declined somewhat as more competition arrived on the horizon and unfortunately Arriva lost some Dutch concessions.

Wrightbus still have strong business relationships with VDL, Heavac & Ventura and find their products to be well engineered & well received by their customers and for the most part competitively priced although decreased value of sterling against Euro are presenting real cost challenges for Wrightbus to manage. None the less Wrightbus tries to invest in long-term relationships and so hope the supply line will be able to withstand current economic pressures.

Wrightbus' experience of doing business in Netherlands has been for the most part successful though it goes without saying that they would prefer to be selling buses into the market today. The Wright Group hopes one day they will be back in the Dutch market as they have ideas and plans for new innovative products particularly suited to Dutch needs but NI-NL BIZ readers will have to wait a few months to hear more!

Pictured below

A Double Deck bus featuring a new generation of Hybrid Electric driveline - the Wrightbus Gemini HEV - is the first high capacity vehicle fitted with hybrid technology to go into operation in the British capital.



Milestones

- 1999 Wrightbus establish relationship with VDL (then known as DafBus International) for "Cadet" midi bus
- 2001 Wrightbus launch a new lightweight single deck bus in partnership with VDL & Arriva Bus & Coach
- 2002 Expotech Ltd, the export division of the Wright Group, announces an £11m order from Arriva Nederland for 102 buses - thus establishing it as the largest British bus exporter to the European mainland
- 2002 Wright Expotech announced winner of the Anglo Dutch Award for Enterprise
- 2003 Wright Expotech Winner of the Institute of Export, Exporter of the Year Award
- 2008 Dutch Foreign Trade Minister Frank Heemskerk visits NI with VDL and suppliers & learns about the bilateral partnerships
- 2009 NI Economy Minister Arlene Foster announces an £11m order for Wrightbus and VDL Groep from London bus operator Arriva during a NI Trade Mission to the Netherlands

Good Traffic at Amsterdam Show

PWS Ireland, a leading sign manufacturer in the road sign and traffic control equipment industry, exhibited recently at Intertraffic at the Amsterdam Rai along with Dutch partner Joosten van Huet. PWS displayed their PWS 548 QS solar powered portable variable message sign which offers operators clear benefits of no running costs, no engine maintenance, no noise as well as a multitude of programming messages and pictograms.



Global Wind Alliance blows into the Netherlands

The Global Wind Alliance is an exciting new concept for the successful operation and maintenance of wind farms across the world.

The Global Wind Alliance (GWA) brings together some of the finest component manufacturers and experienced engineers from the wind industry and beyond under one alliance. This provides the client with one single, reliable, unbiased point of access to the equipment and the people best qualified for keeping the wind farm operational and profitable, wherever it may be in the world.

The GWA offers clients a tailored solution to help reduce downtime of Wind Turbines. This service includes: safety audits and compliance; health monitoring and fault protection; independent inspection and reporting; planned, unplanned and preventative maintenance; rapid repairs; parts refurbishment; technical and operational problem solving; global supply chain management; strategic stocking and logistics centres.

The Global Wind Alliance was launched in May 2009 at the AWEA Windpower exhibition in Chicago with eight founding member companies. However, unlike a trade association where strength is often in numbers, the Alliance has sought to

add new members that complement and strengthen the overall service offered by the Alliance.

There are now fourteen member companies and there is a strong NI-NL representation in the GWA with six companies from Northern Ireland (B9 Energy O&M, Barton Industrial Services, BASE Group, Grants Electrical Services, Limavady Gear Company and South West College) and three companies from the Netherlands (Croon Elektrotechniek, Stork Gears and LM Glasfiber).

In January 2010 at the quarterly steering meeting which was held in Amsterdam, the GWA welcomed its newest member – LM Glasfiber, the world's leading blade specialist with over 30 years of track record in design, manufacture and servicing of rotor blades.

This is a great example of companies in both Northern Ireland and the Netherlands collaborating to take advantage of opportunities in the current environment of rapid global growth in wind energy.

Global Wind Alliance



Some of the GWA members took the opportunity to take part in a visit hosted by Stork Gears at their facility in Rotterdam.

EVD Rebranded



Agentschap NL
Ministerie van Economische Zaken

NL Agency is the newly branded department of the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs that implements government policy for sustainability, innovation, and international business and cooperation. It is the contact point for businesses, educational institutions and government bodies for information and advice, financing, networking and regulatory matters.

NL EVD International, part of NL Agency, is a partner to businesses and public-sector organisations. NL EVD International, the Dutch equivalent of Invest NI in terms of Export Development, aims to help Dutch entrepreneurs to achieve success in their international operations.

EVD, the forerunner of NL EVD International, has supported 10 Trade Missions to Ireland and Northern Ireland for some 115 Dutch SME's from 2006 - 2008.

Heartsine - A Business close to all of our hearts

HeartSine Technologies, based in Belfast, design, manufacture and distribute affordable defibrillators for the non-medical consumer, globally. Lightweight, portable, and easy to use, products are based on 40 years experience in outstanding clinical efficiency.

HeartSine Technologies first met Groningen based Defibrion BV at Medica Dusseldorf 2008 whilst exhibiting on the Invest Northern Ireland stand.

Following up from Medica, HeartSine appointed Defibrion from 1st March 2009 as importer of HeartSine products in the Netherlands initially with future growth opportunity for the Benelux countries.

'The Netherlands has been our fastest growing export market by far, seeing a 97% increase from 2008-2009 and this is attributed to Defibrion's business model for distributing defibrillators to the mass market,' says Nuala Tohill International Market Development Manager.

As a result of Defibrion's success in The Netherlands Professor John Anderson, Chief Technology Officer at HeartSine is giving a presentation at the Dutch Resuscitation Council (Defibrion is the lead sponsor) in June on Heartsine's new CPR Advisor technology, first of its kind

in the world, where the defibrillator gives feedback on the effectiveness of CPR.

Nuala continues, 'We imagine the strategic alliance between ourselves and Defibrion highlights our commitment to bringing defibrillators closer to the masses which is inevitably where Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) strikes. SCA can happen to anyone, anywhere at anytime'.

Joshua Valkenier, Director of Defibrion BV explains that "In the Netherlands Heartsine products are recognised for their excellent price quality ratio, the fact that they are produced in Europe, and offer the longest product guarantee in the sector. Despite being a young company, these factors, plus a no nonsense professional approach have made Defibrion one of the forces to be reckoned with in the Netherlands"

Despite the perception that Dutch people are fit and healthy, Sudden Cardiac Arrest claims over 16,000 lives in the Netherlands each year. Private and public sector



clients such as ArkeFly and the City of Rotterdam, as well as SME's throughout the Netherlands, are today Defibrion clients using Heartsine products. The Samaritan Public Access Defibrillator is also being used in domestic situations and Defibrion also offering the product on hire as well as straight purchase arrangements.



MCD takes top Irish beef



Dutch supermarket chain MCD has recently listed Shannon Matured beef for their customers. A family based chain for over 100 years, MCD is part of the powerful Superunie purchasing group which commands over 25% market share in the Netherlands. MCD's 40 stores, mainly in the South Holland province, are retailing the Shannon Matured Label, sourced from C & J Meats, in a skinpack sleeved tray.

Hopefully the successes at Jumbo and MCD will spread to the other Superunie partners in the coming months.

Harbour chief buoyant despite drop in trade

Belfast Harbour recently reported a drop in trade for last year, but said it had significantly outperformed other Irish ports.

Northern Ireland's largest seaport said that total tonnages fell by 4.4% to 15.7 million tonnes in 2009 as the impact of recession continued to be felt. However, it noted that tonnages at other ports in Northern Ireland and the Republic had fallen by as much as 18% in the same period.

On the positive side it also said it had seen double digit growth in dry bulk trades associated with the agri-food sector and a 3% rise in passengers numbers to 1.33 million, double the rate of growth in most of the UK port sector.

Roy Adair, Belfast Harbour's chief executive, said: "While nobody in the port industry likes to record a drop in traffic, there are significant positives in last year's figures, particularly for trades associated with the agri-food sector.

"Over the past five years Belfast Harbour has invested around £30m in developing new facilities to support the sector and



establish Belfast as the leading port on the island for agri-food businesses.'

"It's also a clear indication of the resilience and value to the local economy of the agri-sector which has demonstrated, particularly in poultry and dairy related products, that quality Northern Ireland produce remains in high demand."

However, container traffic fell 15.8% and break bulk trade such as cement and steel plummeted 49% in tonnage terms, showing the continued impact of recession on manufacturing and construction firms. Mr Adair said the downward trend in these sectors was beginning to ease and added: "Recent infrastructure developments have established Belfast as the leading Port on the island for a number of trades. Also in terms of European connections Belfast Harbour operates 11 weekly freight sailings to the continent - of which 5 call at Rotterdam."

Profile

Marina Millington-Ward

NI-NL BIZ speaks with Amsterdam-based, Queens University Belfast-educated entrepreneur Marina Millington-Ward.



Marina is one of four founders of Stamp Communications; an Anglo-Dutch financial PR firm that helps international companies get their message across in the Dutch and UK markets.

NI-NL caught up with Marina in Stamp's offices on the Prinsengracht - one of Amsterdam's most picturesque canals.

It's quite a long way from a Law Degree at Queen's University Belfast to Stamp in Amsterdam. How did you land up in an office on the Prinsengracht?

Well, I have to admit that while I really enjoyed studying law at Queen's I realised fairly early on that practising law wasn't really for me. I wanted a bit of travel and action. I only got as far as Dublin at first – where I did a postgraduate diploma in marketing and business at the Michael Smurfit Business School in Blackrock. One of my tutors at Queen's had suggested I should try writing or journalism as a career and I wanted to get into finance writing. After that I went more or less straight into the Bloomberg newsroom where I met lots of people and got a drilling in crafting stories in a 24/7 multi-media environment. I was very suited to the Bloomberg office in Amsterdam because I spoke Dutch – I had been to school here because my father worked at Leiden University.

How did you move from journalism into financial PR and investor relations?

After Bloomberg, I worked as a financial analyst and then an investor relations officer at a Dutch blue-chip company before returning to journalism as coordinator of the economics desk at NOS, the Dutch public broadcaster. Stamp seemed like a good way to tie it all together, putting my messaging skills to work on improving companies' communications. As a journalist I was so often on the receiving end of uninformative press releases, or of pitches from companies about 'news' that was of no interest whatsoever to me as a journalist.

What does Stamp do, and with whom?

We help companies get their message across in all kinds of Dutch and English media – varying from TV and radio to print and online. We hone their messages and make their story clear and compelling for both external audiences such as journalists and investors, and internal audiences – their employees. Our companies are usually international ones trying to package themselves for the specialised Dutch market. We work for many companies - from big ones like Ahold, ING and Shell to small ones like Libersy and Sports Revolution.

Has your background been useful to you?

I think it's very helpful that I was educated in Belfast and travelled extensively before settling here. Most of my colleagues have lived and worked in various different countries too, which really helps in navigating cultural sensitivities and potential misunderstandings posed by the Dutch market. When a Dutch person or an Irish person says the same thing they can actually mean something entirely different. A famous example we always use is the word 'interesting'. In Dutch it means exactly that, 'tell me more'. But to an Irish person it can be a polite way of saying the exact opposite.

Do you still retain your links with NI?

I have a lot of friends and relatives there still. My family and I actually spent last Christmas in Hillsborough and I had a great time showing them all around. Stamp has no NI clients so far though, which I'd definitely like to change. I'd love to raise the profile of Northern Irish companies in the Dutch press!

Ferry Good Alternative

During the recent travel chaos caused by the Eyjafjallajökull volcano eruption in Iceland, NI-NL Founder Steve Murnaghan found himself grounded in Belfast and took the opportunity to check out ferry crossings between Northern Ireland and the Netherlands !



Ringling around local Northern Ireland transport companies offering daily groupage and road freight services into Europe, it soon became clear that Thursday was not a handy day to depart from Northern Ireland, given that deliveries on Saturdays in Europe are not in high demand. Terribly inconvenient having a volcano erupt on a Thursday !

However Lisburn company Kelly European Freight Services who offer chilled and frozen distribution in and out of UK and Europe came up trumps and offered the perfect solution via Stena Line into Europe.

Departing Larne at 20.30 on Thursday onboard the Stena Ferry to Fleetwood, the seven and a half hour sailing offered a free meal on board and was made comfortable with the option of a cabin.

Alternatively Stena Line, the biggest ferry company in Europe, offers Belfast - Stranraer with the Stena HSS and Stena Superferry crossing to Scotland in between 2 hours 20 and 3 hours respectively, depending on the vessel.

From arrival in Fleetwood at 04.00 it was onto Nottingham to delivery of a full load of Irish beef followed by collection of 18 pallets of display materials in London before heading for Harwich.

Harwich to Hoek van Holland departing just before midnight landed Murnaghan back into his adopted homeland at 7 am on Saturday morning, whilst aeroplanes were still grounded well into the weekend, never mind the backlog of flights which was not cleared until the middle of the following week.

Quick thinking and the flexible partnership of Kelly European Freight and Stena Line ensured that the NI-NL Founder made good time into Europe and also received a masterclass on the finer details of logistics into Europe.



Perfect Vocation



How often have you heard business contacts telling you that they never mix business with pleasure ?



Loretto Coyle decided to do just that when she exchanged a busy lecturing position at St. Mary's University College of QUB Belfast in order to fulfill a dream in turning her hobbies into her profession.

Six years ago Loretto established Outdoor Ireland North based at the foot of Slieve Donard in the town of Newcastle, County Down.

Today, Loretto, a Blue Badge Tourist Guide & qualified mountain leader, works with small groups of both corporate and private clients in guiding them through the scenic and historic Mourne Mountain area.

Loretto leaves the decision on means of transport - by bicycle or by foot - to the client, but client favourites include:

- Guided walking in the Mourne Mountains - including Slieve Donard (the highest peak in Northern Ireland at 850m),
- Hike Slieve Bearnagh along the route Loretto guided for BBC Programme Off the Beaten Track,
- Guided cycling in the scenic rural roads of St Patrick's country and the Mournes. Learn about the Granite Men of Mourne on a ride from Spelga to Newcastle,

- Walk and Talk; Easy rambles in the countryside

Outdoor Ireland North provides a service completely tailored to the individual's or group's wishes and abilities, providing routes, bicycles, advising on accommodation and most importantly guidance.

Loretto has cycled widely in continental Europe and knows from meeting many Dutch cyclists and walkers that they would love to visit Northern Ireland but miss the local knowledge of the best and safest routes.

It is clear from meeting Loretto that she enjoys the outdoor life with a passion. After all she has developed the perfect vocation for herself and the perfect location for clients choosing a relaxing or challenging break in one of the most scenic areas in Northern Ireland.

Interested (and interesting) potential clients should browse to www.outdoorirelandnorth.co.uk for further information.



Famous sons of Northern Ireland talk about their hometowns



In a new pocket-book publication called **My NI** - some of Northern Ireland's most famous sons; actor Liam Neeson, poet Seamus Heaney, musician James Galway and playwright Brian Friel- talk about where they grew up, their favourite places in the region and the real hidden gems that only a local would know about. The book highlights art that inspires, food that delights and a landscape that captivates. The stories in the collection come from all over Northern Ireland and all story-tellers share a real love of Northern Ireland, a pride in their heritage and a shared excitement for their future.

If you are based in the Netherlands and would like a free copy of this beautiful pocket-book – please send an email with your name and address details to Jackie Keogh (jkeogh@tourismireland.com)

Travel and Tourism News



The Giant's Causeway Visitor Experience Centre

has been given the official green-light allowing building to commence in the coming months. This state-of-the-art visitor and interpretation centre costing an estimated £18.5 million is expected to open in early 2012.

The Belfast Titanic Quarter

project is also well under-way for completion in 2012. This £7 billion investment and regeneration project of the former Harland Wolff shipbuilding yards will become a premium 'must-see' visitor destination. The iconic Titanic Signature Building in the heart of the Titanic Quarter will showcase the story of the Titanic and the wider theme of shipbuilding and seafaring in Belfast, including the engineering, industrial, social, cultural and economic origins and connections.

Upcoming Festivals in 2010

Guinness Blues on the Bay Festival	(27th-31st May)
Tullamore Dew Causeway Coast Amateur Golf Tournament	(7th – 10th June)
Belfast Taste & Music Festival	(4th-8th Aug.)
Hillsborough Oyster Festival	(2nd -5th Sept.)
Belfast Festival at Queens	(16th-31st Oct.)
Banks of the Foyle Halloween Carnival, Londonderry.....	(29th-31st Oct.)

*Visit www.ierland.nl/festivals to see all festivals and events in the region

Dutch Group & Incentive Agents visit Northern Ireland

A group of 8 incentive buyers visited Belfast and Northern Ireland from February 4th-7th 2010.

The reaction was overwhelmingly positive regarding the standard of service and accommodation as well as the vast array of activities available for groups to partake in.



After a luxurious first night in Galgorm Resort & Spa just outside Ballymena, the participants had a chance to do some exciting off-road driving at Clondeboye Lodge Estate with Ireland Off Road, followed by afternoon tea in Ballywalter Estate with Lord & Lady Dunleath.

The second day took in a drive along the breath-takingly beautiful Causeway Coastal Route stretching from Belfast to Derry. The group learned the secret of Irish whiskey-making from the Master distiller, Colum Egan, during a personal tour of the wonderful Bushmills Whiskey Distillery (the oldest licensed distillery in the world).

The last 2 days spent in Belfast were action-packed including a political tour, a concert in the newly re-furnished Ulster Hall and a tour of the fabulous Ulster Museum.

The group enjoyed excellent food at some of Belfast's hottest restaurants, followed by cocktails in the Merchant Hotel and of course a few pints in the Crown Saloon Bar. The participants were unanimous – Northern Ireland is hot – get there before the rest do!

*Visit www.galgorm.com, www.ni-offroad.com and www.ballywalterpark.com for more information

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