

# Newry Sparkles 20 Years On from City Status



**“There is a real sense that we are on the cusp of something great, of realising our full potential in this area, or beginning to at least. It finally feels like the rest of NI, GB, ROI and even Europe are sitting up and taking note of where Newry really is on the map.”**

Words of Newry Chamber of Commerce and Trade President Julie Gibbons in her address to guests who gathered in the Canal Court Hotel in Newry for the annual President’s Banquet.

The theme of the event was ‘City of Celebration’ as 2022 marked the 20th Anniversary of Newry attaining City Status.

The President told the audience:

“We are now the civic and business leaders who must roll up our sleeves, get stuck in and really ensure that we rise to the challenge, forge ahead and ensure that no momentum is lost as we fix our vision on the next 20 years and beyond.

“We deserve to finally grow into the city we always knew we could be, worthy of our status, reclaiming our title as a city of merchants and

carrying on the legacy passed to us by those visionaries who went before us 20 years ago this year.”

The Chamber President paid a glowing tribute to the late Mr Declan McChesney, referring to the local businessman and former Chamber Vice-President as ‘Mr Newry’.

“Over the past year many people have asked me about WHY I took on the Presidency of Newry Chamber, and in the early days, I may well have asked myself the same question!

The truth is, that one of the reasons I became involved in the Chamber and eventually accepted the nomination to become VP and now President, was because a previous, much loved, dearly and recently departed Chamber Vice President badgered me into it!

“Most of you will recognise that I am referring to Declan McChesney, whom I have to make mention of today given his huge contribution to our Chamber and City over his family’s business Cahill Brothers’ long and illustrious presence on Hill Street in Newry. In fact Declan was Mr. Newry. Every time a TV news crew came to Newry

you can be sure that some footage was shot in Cahill Brothers with Declan articulating clearly and passionately what was good or bad for trade in Newry. I could make this entire speech about Declan, but as a friend and a colleague and as a passionate advocate and ambassador of all things Newry and city centre traders, he will be sadly missed by many, and by me personally.”

Looking to the future the Chamber President commented:

“Our vision truly is to be The leading voice for businesses in the Greater Newry Area, promoting the area as a happy, healthy place to live, work, study, shop, visit and invest. And we focus all of our Chamber activity on our vision and strategy to ensure that we achieve this.

This year we have been lobbying across all parties for infrastructure and planning improvements to push investment on in our city. We have lobbied on business rates, public affairs, Brexit and protocol issues. Just yesterday, Board Member Conor Patterson and I and several member companies here today gave evidence to the House of Lords European Affairs Sub-Committee on the

Protocol, who came to Newry.

Through our partnerships and civic engagement such as representing our members on the Newry City Centre Regeneration Stakeholder group, the Council Economic Forum Group, the Labour Market Partnership or leading the Greater Newry Vision Group, which brings together leaders from the Department of the Communities, the Southern Health Trust, Newry, Mourne & Down Council and Newry & Mourne Enterprise Agency, Federation of Community Groups, Southern Regional College and Invest NI to ensure that our strategies are congruent and complimentary to each other’s, and ensures that we are truly in working in partnership and progressing the bigger picture for all citizens of this area.

“We have been proud and active members of the Daisy Hill Pathfinder Group, which has evolved into the Daisy Hill Future Group chaired by Conor Patterson, announcing this week that Daisy Hill Hospital has been strengthened by plans to develop it as a Regional Elective Surgery Hub,

Continued on page 26

# NEWRY CITY - 20 YEARS CELEBRATIONS

## City of determination

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Continued from page 25

picture for all citizens of this area."

Looking to the future, The Chamber President spoke of the determination and grit of the City.

"The Chamber has also been lobbying all political parties hard on the issues of rising energy costs and overheads and the impact of Brexit and the Protocol.

"This year alone we have met NI Economy and Finance Ministers, UK Government EVER-CHANGING cabinet Ministers, MLAs and MPs, most NI political Party Leaders, Dail Eireann TDs, Foreign Ambassadors and Senior Whitehall officials from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to voice our members' concerns and to try influence decision making and tangible actions.

"We are also part of the One Voice Group which is a collective consisting of 13 Chambers of Commerce across NI and Retail NI, Hospitality Ulster and the NI Takeaways Association. This week we went to Stormont to lobby for a rates holiday for sectors most affected by the cost of living and energy crises and we are joint signatories to a paper laying out suggested actions to both the NI Executive and Westminster to alleviate current economic headwinds facing our members.

But we have always been a City of determination, resilience and grit. In fact, if we can see past the current challenges, and it is difficult, there is much to be optimistic about in the Greater Newry Area.

Firstly, Newry Mourne and Down's inclusion in the £1 billion Belfast Region City Deal is going to deliver a bespoke package of funding to Newry, Mourne and Down District helping the development of long awaited and hard fought for infrastructure projects such as the Southern Relief Road and regeneration of the city centre including public realm, theatre, conference and innovation space and the Mourne Mountain Gateway. The Albert Basin Park will finally deliver a City Centre Park with funding of £16.2mn from the Complimentary Fund, and this is on track to be out to tender in quarter 2 next year.

These projects are finally mobilising a major infrastructural overhaul of our almost 900 year-old city and will include new grade A offices in the city, new health facilities, an enhanced night-time economy with new conferencing and event space and a range of other projects which will all boost investor confidence and appetite to invest more in this area, out of which jobs and further opportunities will come. The ambition

is that businesses scaling up or locating here will create opportunities for talent who will choose to stay here and also relocate to this area and that the infrastructure, the housing, the health care and the education will meet growing demand.

We already have the lifestyle in this our beloved Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – and these tourism initiatives, estimated to attract at least half a million domestic and international tourists a year, together with projects such as the Narrow Water Bridge will make this area more accessible and attractive to visitors, talent and investors.

Across the Belfast City Deal region, 20,000 jobs will be generated as it is delivered over the next 10 years accelerating economic growth for the region in an inclusive and sustainable way. The council has also secured funding from the Shared Island Fund to kick start 6 projects locally, and have a number of bids applied for through the Levelling Up Fund and is exploring Investment Zones and opportunities for this area through the Shared Prosperity Fund."



Feargal McCormack, Managing Partner of FPM, addresses the audience.

## Visit Newry and Mourne Museum

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## "See Newry City Charter at Newry and Mourne Museum"

**In 2002, as part of Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee celebrations, the market town of Newry was granted City Status. The City Charter was presented by the Queen to Councillor Frank Feely, then the Deputy Chairman of the former Newry and Mourne District Council, in May 2002.**

The themes for the artwork on the Charter, undertaken by Wendy Selby, represent Newry's pride in its long and diverse history. The border of the Charter consists of Irish Yew tree leaves, which represents the tradition of St. Patrick planting a Yew tree at a sandy stretch by the Clanrye River as a symbol of the Christian faith. Iubhair Cinn Tragh, the Irish name for Newry, translates to 'yew tree at the head of the strand'.

The seal depicting St. Patrick and the Yew Trees represents the Cistercian Abbey. Established in 12th century, the abbey became a significant stimulus to the development of Newry as a settlement in the medieval period.

A castle built by Sir Nicholas Bagenal, a settler from Staffordshire and Marshall of the Army in Ireland, in the mid-16th century is also shown on the Charter and is the oldest known surviving building in Newry. It is now the location of the Museum.

St. Patrick's Church, and the Cathedral of St. Patrick and St. Colman are both illustrated on the City Charter. St. Patrick's Parish Church was originally built by Nicholas Bagenal c.1578 as the first purpose-built Protestant church in Ireland. The present church dates from the 18th and 19th centuries. The Cathedral was constructed in 1829 from local granite and was designed by architect, Thomas Duff.

The arms of the Earls of Kilmorey illustrate the long association of this family with the town of



Newry. The Needham family, which inherited the Bagenal estates in Newry and Mourne in 1712 and became Earls of Kilmorey in 1822, were responsible for much of the commercial growth and development of the town in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The maritime history of Newry and the construction of the first summit level canal in the British Isles is symbolised on the Charter by a ship on the Canal at Merchant's Quay. It signifies the trade and commerce that it engendered.

One of the last projects undertaken by the Newry Town Commissioners before the introduction of the Urban District Council was the building of the Town Hall in 1893. The building, designed by William Batt, is built on a three-arched bridge over the Clanrye River.

The Newry City Charter can be seen in gallery three of the Museum. Entrance to the Museum is free of charge, with free car parking.

For opening hours, information on events, upcoming exhibitions and other services please telephone 0330 137 4422.

# NEWRY CITY - 20 YEARS CELEBRATIONS

**MJM Marine, based in Carnbane Industrial Estate, Newry, has been providing local employment opportunities in the region since it was founded in 1983 by Chairman, Brian McConville, CBE.**

Originally based in Rathfriland, specialising in marine outfitting to the cruise and ferry market, MJM relocated to a larger purpose-built facility in 2009 in Newry's Carnbane Industrial Estate.

In 2019 the firm launched The Navigate Programme, a new student recruitment and engagement brand. Since then, many students, graduates and apprentices have

joined the company through the programme in areas such as Design, Quantity Surveying, Production, Contracts and Estimating. Students engaged on the programme have the opportunity to embark on a dynamic and rewarding career, equipping them with the skills, knowledge and experience they need to succeed.

MJM are now on the look out for the next intake of Graduates and Higher-Level Apprentices across areas including Design, Technical Engineering, Quantity Surveying and Contracts Management. Check out the company website [mjm-marine.com](http://mjm-marine.com) for further details of opportunities and to apply.

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# NEWRY CITY - 20 YEARS CELEBRATIONS



JUDE Abraham and Ciara McManus. NM224433  
Noel Moan



JULIE Gibbons, President Newry Chamber of Commerce with past Presidents, Jerome Mullen, Deborah Loughran and Paul Convery enjoying the Newry Chambers Presidents Banquet in the Canal Court



RAFAEL and Brenda Crummy enjoying the Newry Chambers Presidents Banquet in the Canal Court Hotel on Friday. NM224431

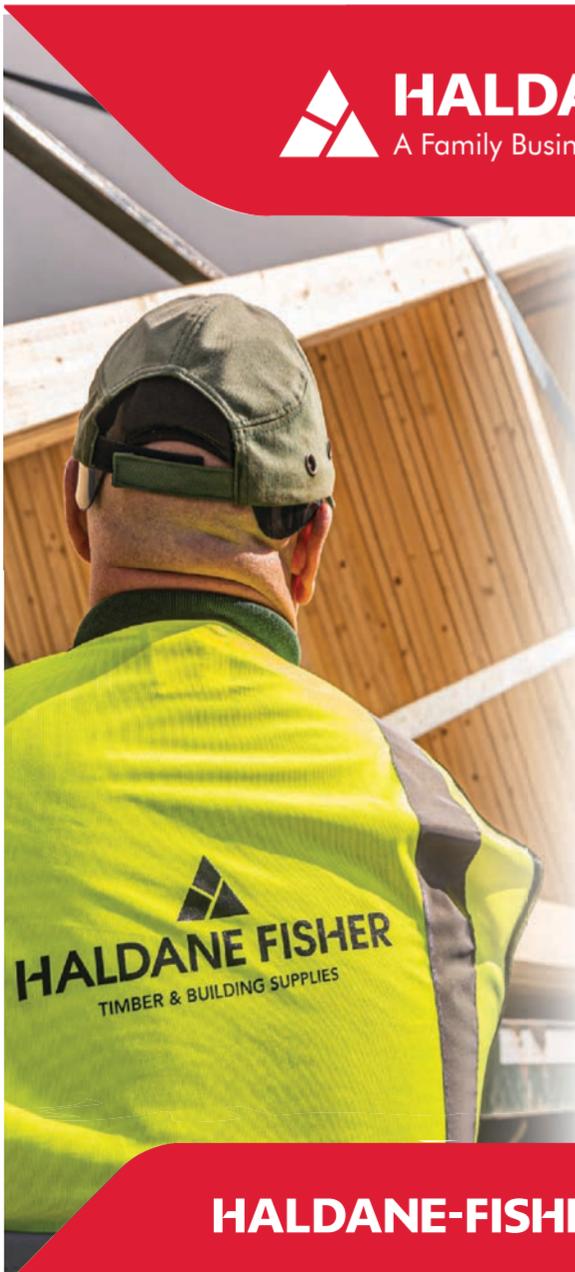
Noel Moan



STAFF from the SRC enjoying the Newry Chambers Presidents Banquet in the Canal Court Hotel on Friday.



PADDY McParland, David Buchannon, Leonard Ryan and Noel Kilpatrick enjoying the Newry Chambers Presidents Banquet in the Canal Court Hotel on Friday. NM224430

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# NEWRY CITY - 20 YEARS CELEBRATIONS



**JULIE Gibbons, President Newry Chamber of Commerce with Aidan O'Kane, President of Derry Chamber of Commerce and Una McGoe, President of Dundalk Chamber of Commerce. NM224441  
Noel Moan**



**TRACY Rice, Heather Coote, Andrea Kearney and Sara Coppard. NM224440  
Noel Moan**



**JOANNE Murphy, Sarah McStarvick, Aileen Madden and Louise Ireland. NM224439  
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**Friday. NM224443**



**MARK Bleakney, Miceal Murphy and Jerome Mullen. NM224442  
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# NEWRY CITY - 20 YEARS CELEBRATIONS

## “We can approach the future with great enthusiasm, passion and confidence”

**It's been 20 years since Newry was granted city status and FPM Accountants are proud that their Managing Partner, Feargal McCormack, played a pivotal role in Newry's bid for city status.**

Speaking at the recent Newry Chamber President's Banquet, a very fitting celebration of 20 years city status. Feargal stated:

“We need to put things in context, Newry had been a town for over a 850 years and a city for just 20 years. At the outset in applying for City status, the objective was that people should be at the heart of and central to our City bid to create awareness of the existence of a people and town that had come along way in terms of collaboration and working together for the better good, built on a strong entrepreneurial, self help spirit, with the desire for an imagination to become a European gateway city located half-way on the Belfast / Dublin Economic Corridor, as a place of real opportunity, playing a pro-active role in the island economy.

Civic Society, the Business Community, Churches and schools all got behind the city campaign as did other people with connections to the Greater Newry Area at key city campaign events hosted in Belfast, Dublin and London.

Without doubt the pace of the desired vibrant city with enhanced infrastructure including education and skills has not moved as fast as we could reasonably have expected, but It has to be acknowledged that the global financial crises in 2008, Brexit and political instability at Stormont have created strong facing headwinds. However, the current significant agreed investment plans for the city are encouraging, including participation in the Belfast City deal and moving on the critical Southern Relief Road project to an implementation stage.

When Dean Swift visited Newry in the 1700s he

recorded his impression as: High Church and Low Steeple; Dirty Streets and Proud People. I believe, although the proud people remain, much has changed for the better and achieving City Status has been a milestone on that journey with much more to be achieved.

As we look forward, we can approach the future with great enthusiasm, passion and confidence. We have witnessed much change over the past 20 years including the preponderance of data, 24/7 news cycles, volatile geopolitical events, fluctuating global economy and a global pandemic. Living in a world of continual disruption, we have made delivering change without the drama, our mission, responding pragmatically with compassion and agility.

Working Together, we have overcome and achieved much for the Greater Newry Area. Going forward I have long argued that our priority should be, to be pro-active as a population Centre of Excellence on the Belfast / Dublin Economic Corridor, enhancing economic prosperity and quality of life for our own citizens and those of NI and the island as a whole. The concept of building a twin city of Newry/ Dundalk should again be elevated or there is a risk we will become peripheral to both Belfast and Dublin

Looking to the future, we should remain confident, always encourage positive mindsets, in the context of joined-up thinking and working together with imagination, unlimited creativity and ambition to ensure that current and future generations have pride and a sense of belonging in Newry City and the Greater Newry Area in the evolving global world, as a place to live, work and enjoy recreational activities.”



Feargal McCormack, Managing Partner of FPM, looking out over Newry City and forward to the next 20 years

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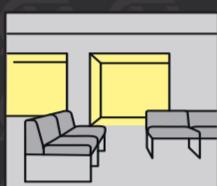
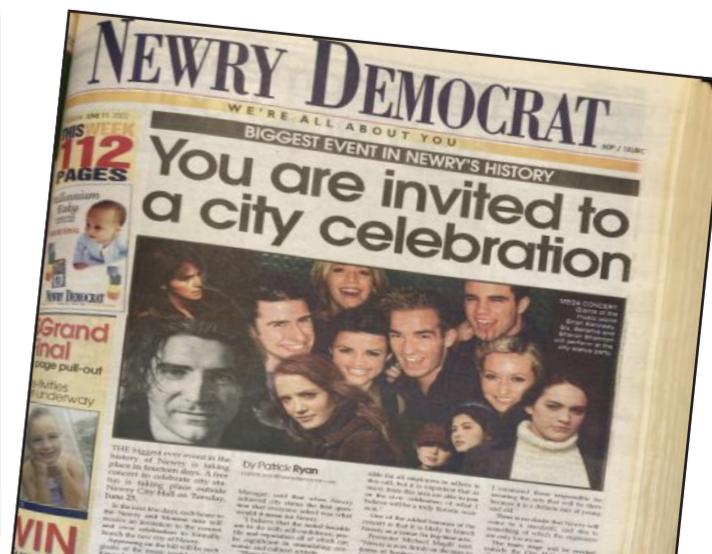
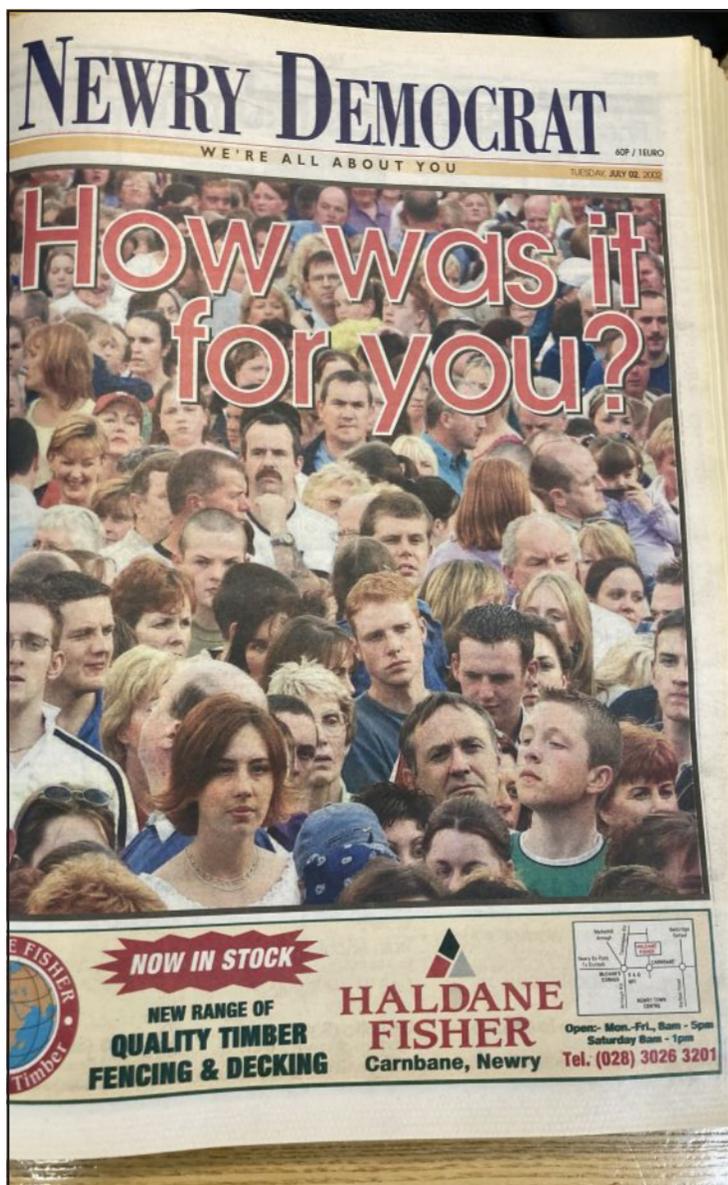
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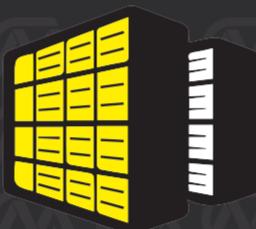
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# NEWRY CITY - 20 YEARS CELEBRATIONS

## “This place has unlimited potential...”

**Anthony Boden, MD of insurance company Digney-Grant shares his excitement for Newry's next twenty years.**

“As a native company, Digney Grant Insurance is delighted to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Newry's city status.

“We have been serving the local community for twice that time, and have seen the massive changes this place has experienced first-hand. We still see the brighter days ahead for our city too, with all the potential it has as a lynchpin between the UK and EU.

“Without Newry's city status, we could never have attracted or capitalised on the far-reaching initiatives priming the city for future success. The benefits of the Belfast Region City Deal and Newry, Mourne and Down Council's role as secretariat of the Belfast-Dublin Economic Corridor hold massive potential for the wider area.

“As a local business which supports and enables other local businesses, we stand ready to play our part in that future growth.

“Digney Grant works with all sorts of companies in every sector and at every stage of development, from local independent retailers to new tech start-ups and large multinational corporations. The breadth of our exper-

ience means we can find the right cover for each and every business with a personalised and partnership-based approach.

“We are a local, independently run insurance broker and risk management advisory, but we are now part of a global group of insurance intermediaries. This gives us an even wider level of international experience, exclusive access to a unique panel of insurance providers and the buying power of a global group to ensure we achieve excellent value for our commercial clients.

“We're currently in a high-growth stage of development and are expanding our operations across Northern Ireland with recent appointments bolstering our network in Fermanagh and Tyrone. However, our commitment to Newry never wavers as we continue to grow our team here. We recruit frequently in the local area for trainee and experienced insurance professionals who will benefit from one of the best training and accreditation programmes in the business.

“Our commitment to Newry continues to grow as we grow and we're excited to share in our city's future success story.



**ANTHONY Boden and Sean Grant from Digney Grant with Julie Gibbons, President Newry Chamber of Commerce and Tony McKeown, Newry Chamber of Commerce pictured at the N.I Small Business Conference in the Canal Court Hotel**

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# NEWRY CITY - 20 YEARS CELEBRATIONS

## Brian Conlon honoured by President



**President's Awards were launched in recognition of people who have made an inspirational contribution to the Greater Newry Area and Brian Conlon most certainly falls into this category.**

In 1996, responding to a NI initiative called 'Make It Back Home', Brian decided to return to his roots. And so, the Brian Conlon story became the First Derivatives story.

The journey all began in the back bedroom of his mother's house with the start up finance provided by his local credit union in Newry. Those local roots were paying off.

As First Derivatives grew, it expanded its services to other continents. It literally spanned the globe from Hong Kong to San Francisco and now employees over 3,000 people worldwide.

Back in 2017, when Brian during his keynote speech at a previous President's Banquet, he reminded our guests to take note of how FD had already and would continue to change the world.

Brian Conlon left more than a footprint during his lifetime. He leaves a living lasting legacy which through the work of The Brian Conlon Foundation, will continue into the future.

For all his great success in the world of business, it was his beloved wife Julie and children Fionn and Danú, who were his pride and joy in life and we were honoured to have them accept the award on behalf of Brian at our President's Banquet.



**Julie Conlon, wife of the late Brian Conlon, Founder of First Derivatives plc, their children, Fionn and Danú accepts the President's Award**

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# NEWRY CITY - 20 YEARS CELEBRATIONS

## Newry company are firmly established on global stage

Since its founding in 1996, FD Technologies (formerly First Derivatives) has been a major presence in Newry, both as an employer and a strong supporter of the community.

While much has changed over the last 26 years, not least the passing of its inspirational founder Brian Conlon, the company's connection and commitment to the local community remains strong.

"There was no bigger an advocate for the people of Newry and their potential when given the proper support and opportunities than Brian," says Elizabeth Toner, Vice President of Global Talent. "We have built a reputation globally as being a Group of companies that have deep domain and technical expertise and excellence in delivery. That reputation is built on the understanding that our people are our greatest asset and Newry has been central to that success."

As a major employer of talent locally, regionally and nationally, FD Technologies runs many programs to attract people into the business. While its graduate trainee schemes are some of the most admired and respected in the industry, what's perhaps less well known are the many schemes the company runs to bring talent into the business through other routes, as well as various initiatives designed to energize and excite schoolchildren about a career in technology. And much

of this is done at the local level.

Adds Toner: "We run a Higher Level Apprenticeship program where students can gain invaluable workplace experience with us while studying for their BSc Hons in Financial Technology. We also offer short-term and annual paid work placements for university students. More broadly we foster strong relationships with leading universities and colleges, attending careers fairs and hosting insight days to give students a taste of what life, especially within our First Derivative business unit."

Closer to home, staff have recently completed training with Code Club partnering with St Clare's Abbey primary school in Newry on an eight-week program to inspire children to understand the world of work, raise aspirations, improve digital skills and promote coding in primary schools.

Additionally, 16 secondary pupils from across Northern Ireland are currently participating in a virtual learning program using the Python programming language to highlight the importance of STEM subjects and careers in the sector.

These new projects sit alongside established initiatives such as the IMPACT program that empowers women at university to forge a career in STEM by offering a 6-month program of mentorship, confidence camps and CV clinics.

"We take our responsibilities as a business

founded in Newry very seriously. While we recruit globally and across the island of Ireland, we never forget that our community helped found the company and that there is an amazing pool of talent locally."

As the Group continues to grow – its First Derivative business unit recently opened an office in Lodz, Poland and has strengthened its presence in Toronto, Madrid, and its offices across Ireland – Toner says that a focus on demonstrating that the Group is a great place to build a career is key.

"It's a competitive jobs market at the moment and we're well aware that we compete with some of the biggest firms on the planet. Whether it's graduate or experienced hires we need to ensure

we are competitive and attractive to new talent, as well as ensuring our existing staff continue their journey with us. The employee experience is so important to us"

Says Toner: "It's a great time to join one of our three businesses or indeed the central Group and I'd encourage anyone and everyone with a curious mind, a passion for learning and an interest in technology, especially in how it relates to financial services and capital markets to get in touch. We're a friendly team and always keen to speak to like-minded people."

The most up-to-date vacancies at FD Technologies can be found here <https://fdtechnologies.com/careers/opportunities/>



Colleagues from our First Derivative business unit at a recent IMPACT event in the newly refurbished Canal Quay offices. Left -

Colleagues from FD Technologies Group and our First Derivative and KX business units had a great time with staff from St Clares Abbey Primary School, Newry as they kicked off the Group's first TimeTo-Code workshop.

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