

THE BELFAST MANIFESTO

7 PRIORITIES FOR A BETTER BELFAST



AS WELL AS BEING NORTHERN IRELAND'S CAPITAL AND BIGGEST CITY, BELFAST IS ALSO THE DRIVER OF OUR ENTIRE REGION'S ECONOMY. HELPING BELFAST TO REACH ITS FULL POTENTIAL IS NOT JUST GOOD FOR BELFAST'S CITIZENS, BUT FOR PEOPLE RIGHT ACROSS THE REGION.

Belfast's recent success has not happened by accident. It has required consistent investment and concerted action on the part of government and the business community in the city over many years. That relentless focus on growing a capital city of scale needs to be maintained. Now is the time to keep our foot on the pedal towards an even more successful Belfast where greater numbers of people want to live, work, study and visit and where companies choose to invest.

Business has demonstrated its confidence in our city. We need government and our politicians to continue to do the same.

This is Belfast Chamber's Belfast Manifesto. It sets out Belfast Chamber's '7 Priorities for a Better Belfast'. Belfast Chamber has an ambitious vision for our city. A vision of a wealthier, greener, diverse, accessible, vibrant and powerful Belfast. Government and political support for and delivery of our '7 Priorities for a Better Belfast' can help us to achieve those aims that we all share of more jobs, more investment, more growth and improved wellbeing for all of the citizens of our city and the region it serves.

THE VOICE FOR BUSINESS
BELFASTCHAMBER.COM



7 PRIORITIES FOR A BETTER BELFAST

AN ECONOMICALLY EMPOWERED CITY

Belfast's economy has been performing well in recent years despite the uncertainties created by Brexit and the absence of a devolved government at Stormont. We have the 3rd fastest growing office market in the world. Belfast is ranked as the best city of its size for business friendliness. And a record 145 cruise ships docked in our port this year bringing more than 275,000 visitors.

Belfast Chamber believes that there is still a huge amount of unrealised potential in the city's economy. To help us hit those heights, Belfast Chamber supports fiscal policies and incentives including:

- A reduced rate of Corporation Tax;
- The elimination of Air Passenger Duty and a lowering of the level of VAT for tourism businesses; and
- Root and branch reform of the business rates system recognising that a property based local taxation system is no longer fit for purpose.

A VIBRANT CENTRAL BELFAST

Central Belfast is the beating heart of the city. The majority of Belfast's retail, office, tourism and leisure offer is located between our two university campuses and from Titanic Quarter to the Westlink. This engine room of the Belfast economy needs to be nurtured and developed further. More people working and living in the city centre will provide significant boosts to our retail and hospitality sectors but achieving that outcome requires further action.

Belfast Chamber supports actions aimed at creating a vibrant and attractive central Belfast such as:

- The development of more high quality, mixed use streets that are accessible to pedestrians, cyclists, public transport and necessary vehicles;
- An iconic waterfront that expands our leisure, tourism and business potential;
- More open and green spaces for citizens;
- A new major tourism attraction located in the city centre;
- Encouraging a more urbanised city centre through incentivisation of more city including through the rates system, reduced car parking requirements for city centre housing and a scheme to help convert empty retail space into housing; and
- A focus on attracting more families to the city centre through, for example, a programme of family friendly events on Sundays.



A CITY THAT CAN DELIVER

Around the world and increasingly across the rest of the United Kingdom, cities govern themselves. In places like Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham, increasing amounts of power are being devolved down to the local level. In terms of the ability to shape how it grows and develops sustainably into the future, Belfast is falling far behind those other cities that it is competing with for investment.

Belfast Chamber believes that Belfast City Council must be the dominant authority for Belfast if the stretching targets set out in the Council's Belfast Agenda are to be met. We are also seeing how the City Region Deal is demonstrating the mutual benefits of the city collaborating more closely with its neighbours and encourage more of this moving forward.

Belfast Chamber supports an examination of the full range of options for empowering Belfast including the devolution of more powers such as regeneration and transportation, enterprise zones and development corporations.

Belfast Chamber also implores our local political parties to restore the Assembly and Executive without delay.



AN ACCESSIBLE CITY

Getting people into, out of and around Belfast as efficiently and sustainably as possible is essential for the future growth of Belfast. That will require ongoing and significant investment in our city's infrastructure. The Glider has been a huge success and illustrates how investment in a sustainable public transport infrastructure in particular can have a hugely positive impact. Belfast Chamber is supportive of the development of the new Transport Hub as a landmark gateway into our city.

These investments in Belfast's infrastructure are just the starting point of what we need. Belfast Chamber supports continued improvement in our infrastructure including:

- The delivery of phase 2 of the Glider running from the north to the south of the city through Royal Avenue and Donegall Place;
- An hourly Enterprise service connecting Belfast to Dublin initially at peak times, then throughout the day;
- Investment in zero emission, zero carbon prioritised public transport across the city;
- Improved air connectivity between Belfast's airports to London and other key hub destinations like Paris and Frankfurt;
- More pedestrian friendly streets across the city centre with greatly enhanced cycling infrastructure;
- An upgrade of the city's water and sewerage infrastructure; and
- The development of the York Street Interchange as a priority for the entire region's economy.

A CLEAN AND SAFE CITY

Clean and safe streets are an absolute pre-requisite for a successful city. Whilst Belfast is, by and large, an exceptionally safe city, we have, unfortunately suffered from some of the same issues that other cities experience. Belfast Chamber members are concerned that cleanliness and safety in the city centre especially do not get the attention they warrant.

Belfast Chamber wants to see:

- More policing and more of a focus on crime in central Belfast; and
- An integrated approach between government, PSNI and the third sector to issues like rough sleeping and alcohol and substance abuse.



AN INTERNATIONAL AND DIVERSE CITY

Successful cities are open, international and diverse. Belfast has come along way. We are attracting tourists from around the world and are increasingly a magnet for talent from every part of the globe. It is vital that in the years ahead, Belfast continues to be outward looking, attracting investment, talents and visitors from the rest of Europe and beyond, and that our businesses are encouraged to seize new opportunities for trading internationally.

Belfast Chamber calls for:

- A business friendly Brexit which permits local businesses to trade with the EU without a hard border and the rest of the UK unencumbered and reflects the desire of 94% of Belfast Chamber members that a no-deal outcome should be avoided
- An immigration system that allows for the continued recruitment of non-UK labour into both low skilled and skilled sectors of our economy;
- The establishment of an International Baccalaureate School in Belfast to help attract and keep international business leaders.

A TECH CITY

Belfast's tech sector is booming. The Financial Times has rated Belfast as the 3rd best city in the world for financial technology investments and the city is the number one international investment location for US cyber security development projects. Belfast is attracting investment from companies like Concentrix and FinTru because of the talent of our workers. Maintaining that skills pipeline and the infrastructure the sector relies on is crucial for the ongoing success of the Belfast economy.

To cement our growing status as a global tech city, Belfast Chamber supports:

- Continued investment in Belfast's broadband and 5G network to give us a competitive advantage;
- More university places for STEM courses and a reorientation of the primary and secondary education system towards producing more of the skills required for the economy of the future; and
- The development of a new Innovation Park in the city.

ABOUT BELFAST CHAMBER

Since its inception in 1912, Belfast Chamber has been the voice for business in the city. Belfast Chamber represents over 500 businesses of all sizes, in all sectors and in all parts of Belfast. Our growing membership employs thousands of people and contribute hundreds of millions of pounds to the local economy annually.

Businesses join Belfast Chamber because they recognise that we are the only business organisation that is focussed on lobbying for and supporting all businesses within the entire city of Belfast. We put Belfast First.

We passionately believe that the voice of business in Belfast must be listened to by policy makers and politicians in order to build the strongest possible framework for investment and business growth. We want those policymakers to also put Belfast First.

Membership of Belfast Chamber gives companies access to a full range of services to enhance business success and establish stronger relationships within the wider Belfast business community.

To find out how to join us or for further information, visit www.belfastchamber.com



THE VOICE FOR BUSINESS
BELFASTCHAMBER.COM

