



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Assembly Committee for Enterprise, Trade & Investment Inquiry into developing the Northern Ireland Economy through Innovation, Research & Development
Date:	10 January 2012
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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	The Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Enterprise, Trade & Investment recently announced an inquiry into developing the Northern Ireland Economy through innovation, Research & Development with a submission date of 16 December 2011.
1.2	The inquiry has been established in order to identify the barriers faced by organisations in availing support for innovation, research and development.
1.3	Members will be aware that Belfast City Council plays a key role in the development and support of the local business community and as such would welcome the opportunity to participate in the inquiry and its response.

2	Key Issues
2.1	The recent Treasury consultation on Rebalancing the Northern Ireland economy noted Northern Ireland's traditionally low level of Business Expenditure on Research & Development (BERD). Over the last 5 years this has averaged just 0.69% of Gross Value Added (GVA) compared to the UK average 1.23%.
2.2	Additionally, it is estimated that the majority of BERD (57%) is undertaken by only 10 businesses.
2.3	The Committee is interested in collecting the views on what barriers exist to engagement in innovation & R&D and what opportunities exist to increase the level of involvement?

2.4	<p>This inquiry aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Examine the current policies, programmes and opportunities available to support innovation, research and development at international, EU, UK, cross-border, Northern Ireland and Local Government levels; - Examine the current policies, procedures and practices being deployed to assist organisations to avail of these opportunities; - Compare the assistance provided in Northern Ireland with that provided at regional level in England, in the other devolved administrations, in the Republic of Ireland and in other EU member states; - Assess the appropriateness of current policies, procedures and practices in assisting organisations to avail of opportunities for innovation, research & development; - Identify actions to be taken by the UK Government, Northern Ireland Executive, DETI, other NI departments, InterTradeIreland, universities, businesses and business support organisations and local councils; and - Report to the Assembly with full findings, conclusions and recommendations on how policies, procedures and practices can be improved in order to maximise opportunities to support innovation, research & development for the benefit of the Northern Ireland economy. - Report to the Assembly with full findings, conclusions and recommendations for improvements in: policies and delivery mechanisms; and collaboration among all key stakeholders, to further develop and enhance the potential of the creative industries in Northern Ireland. <p>The Council has provided a number of mechanisms to encourage local small businesses to engage in R&D, Knowledge Transfer and Innovation and to embed a sustainable approach to engagement with the research base within the local micro-business sector through support under the sustainable competitiveness Programme for Northern Ireland.</p>
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3	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
3.1	There are no specific Equality and Good Relations Considerations attached to this report.

4	Recommendations
4.1	<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Note the Committee for Enterprise, Trade & Investment inquiry into developing the Northern Ireland Economy - Note the Belfast City Council response to the inquiry

5	Decision Tracking
No decision tracking attached to this report.	

6	Key to Abbreviations
BERD – Business Expenditure on research & Development GVA – Gross Value Added R&D – Research & Development	

7	Documents Attached
Appendix 1 - Draft Belfast City Council response to Committee for Enterprise, Trade & Investment enquiry into developing the Northern Ireland Economy through Innovation, Research & Development.	