

THE OFFICIAL VOICE OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND FEDERATION OF CLUBS

Club Review

VOLUME 37 - Issue 7, 2024

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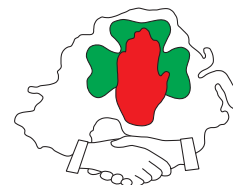
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Club Officers

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Tel:

Secretary:

Tel:

Treasurer:

Tel:

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c/o Unit B7 Portview Trade Centre,
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For telephone queries call:
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(Please include your membership fee or completed standing order form with your application)

For administration purposes only

Accepted by: Secretary

Seconded by: Chairman

Date:

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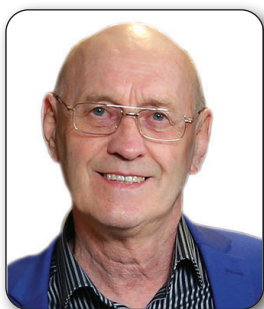
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Labour government's policies raise concerns for hospitality sector



John Davidson BEM
Chairman, N.I.F.C.



Harry Beckinsale BEM
Secretary, N.I.F.C.

It hasn't taken long, has it? Since being elected in July with a strong parliamentary majority, the new Labour government has raised concerns among many, not just within the business community.

Within the hospitality industry, which includes the registered club sector, the daily news has been increasingly worrying. The government is discussing potential reforms to workers' rights, which could introduce uniformity in the minimum wage across all age groups and provide full employment rights from the first day of employment. However, while this is a key policy area, it is yet to be clarified as to what specific changes are to be implemented, leaving businesses in a state of uncertainty. It's unclear if those in power fully understand the dynamics of small businesses, which often rely on a probationary period to ensure a good fit before making long-term hiring decisions.

Zero-hours contracts, which have been frequently criticised by Labour, serve an essential purpose for many businesses and employees, particularly students who find such contracts a good fit with their studies. While safeguards for employees are important, any changes should balance the needs of both workers and small businesses.

Another looming issue is business rates. In Great Britain, the current 75% discount is set to expire on 1st April, and there is little indication that the Labour Chancellor plans to extend it. This would lead to a fourfold increase in business rates, which many, if not most, clubs and pubs would find unsustainable. While Northern Ireland's rates are a devolved issue, there is concern Stormont may be forced to follow Westminster's lead, given current budgetary pressures. For an industry already facing significant challenges, this could be devastating. The hospitality sector, along with the broader high street economy, needs support, not additional burdens.

Another hot topic is National Insurance. Throughout the pre election campaign we were told it wouldn't go up, yet only in the past days has the Prime Minister indicated that the employer's

contribution is likely to increase, clarifying that the pre-election promise only applied to the portion paid by employees. This is yet another rising cost for businesses and our members, especially those already grappling with everyday operational expenses.

Finally the Trust Registration Service (TRS) has caused confusion in who it applies to. We have been in discussion with our solicitors, Sheen Dickson Merrick, and our accountant, Lawrence Shearer, seeking clarification as to whether a registered club falls within the requirement to register, or indeed if it falls outside the remit. At present we await clarification.

While we're bracing for the worst, we still hold out hope that impending budget concerns may be overblown and that the situation won't be as dire as it currently seems. Perhaps the bad news is being overstated, and we'll find that the new Government's policies are more balanced than they initially appear.

In the meantime please remember that the Helplines remain in place to assist you.

John Davidson BEM - Chairman Harry Beckinsale BEM - Secretary

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Minutes of the Executive Meeting

Hosted by the West Belfast Sports & Social Club on 18th September 2024

A discussion by the Chairman, John Davidson, provided a comprehensive overview of matters included on the Trust Registration Service (TRS), which is a service under HMRC money laundering legislation.

TRS is most confusing to say the least, and as such it has been left in the hands of the Federation solicitors and accountant, having also been referred to our counterparts in mainland GB, who it appears, know little or nothing about it.

In addition to the correspondence received last month from Stephen Moore, formerly of Goodyear Sports

and Social Club, Joe Patterson provided further detail of the Goodyear Club redevelopment plans. We have fond memories of the club and the association with the late Tony Moore and in more recent years his son Stephen.

The Federation Executive Committee feel it important to recognise the fact that in the period of 2016 to 2024, three Federation Officers have been awarded BEMs in the Honours List for various facets of community life in Northern Ireland. Readers may be interested to know that the Federation Treasurer received his award for services to boxing, the Secretary for

voluntary service to education and most recently the Chairman for service to the licensed/registered club sector.

The desire for our membership to engage with our associated suppliers when, and if at all possible, remains of importance which will acknowledge the support

we have received and which underpins the day-to-day activities of the Federation.

The Chairman brought the meeting to a close at this point, extending best wishes to those in attendance.

Harry Beckinsale BEM
Secretary

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The “Good Jobs” Employment Rights Bill for N.I.



The “Good Jobs” Employment Rights Bill for Northern Ireland has garnered significant attention as one of the most comprehensive employment law reforms in recent years.

As businesses across the region anticipate the final shape of the legislation, the public consultation phase, which closed at the end of September 2024, has paved the way for the next stage in the legislative process. This article provides an overview of the proposed changes, the current status of the bill, and the potential implications for employers in Northern Ireland.

Background and Aims of the “Good Jobs” Bill

The primary goal of the “Good Jobs” Employment Rights Bill is to enhance the protections and rights of workers, improve job quality, and create fairer working conditions across all sectors. The bill is rooted in the wider recognition that Northern Ireland’s labour market is facing significant challenges, particularly in areas such as job security, low wages, and the rise of precarious forms of employment.

At its core, the bill seeks to address:

1. **Job Insecurity:** Combatting issues related to zero-hours contracts and casual work arrangements.
2. **Fair Pay and Conditions:** Ensuring that all workers receive fair treatment, particularly in terms of wages, paid leave, and rest periods.
3. **Worker Empowerment:** Enhancing collective bargaining and giving employees greater voice and input in their working conditions.

Key Provisions of the Bill

While the final content of the bill is still under review following the public consultation, several key proposals are expected to shape the future of employment law in Northern Ireland:

1. **Zero-Hours and Variable Hours Contracts:** The bill proposes placing tighter restrictions on the use of zero-hours contracts and other variable hours arrangements. It aims to limit their use to situations where the employer can clearly justify the need for such flexibility, such as seasonal work or emergency cover.

Employers may also be required to offer guaranteed hours after a certain period of employment, reducing the number of workers facing insecure and unpredictable working patterns.

2. **Right to Predictable Working Hours:** One of the most significant changes is the introduction of a right for workers to request more predictable and stable working hours. This would give workers in sectors such as hospitality, retail, and care - where shift patterns can be unpredictable - a legal mechanism to seek more regular hours after a defined period of employment.
3. **Enhanced Redundancy and Dismissal Protections:** The bill looks to strengthen protections for workers facing redundancy or unfair dismissal, particularly for those on fixed-term or casual contracts. This includes reducing the qualifying period for unfair dismissal claims from one year to six months, offering earlier protection for vulnerable workers.
4. **Fair Pay and Wage Enforcement:** There is an emphasis on ensuring that all workers receive at least the minimum wage, with proposals for stricter enforcement and penalties for employers who fail to comply. The bill may also introduce enhanced wage transparency measures, requiring employers to provide clearer breakdowns of pay and working hours in payslips.
5. **Improved Worker Consultation:** The bill aims to strengthen the role of workers in decision-making processes by expanding collective bargaining rights and improving mechanisms for



Ronnie McCullough,
Managing Director
Tel: 07835 255794



Nicola Curry,
HR Consultant



Alan Hall,
Health & Safety
Specialist

continued on page 6

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employee representation, particularly in larger organisations. This reflects an increasing focus on worker empowerment, ensuring that employees have a greater voice in discussions about their working conditions, pay, and organisational changes.

6. Family-Friendly Rights: The bill is expected to include enhanced provisions for maternity, paternity, and shared parental leave. This will provide more support to working parents, enabling them to better balance their work and family responsibilities.

Public Consultation and Key Concerns Raised

The public consultation on the “Good Jobs” Employment Rights Bill closed in late September 2024, with a wide range of stakeholders submitting responses. From trade unions to employer associations, the consultation attracted significant input, highlighting both strong support for many of the proposed changes and concerns from businesses about potential implementation challenges.

Trade unions and worker advocacy groups broadly welcomed the bill, applauding its focus on reducing job insecurity and enhancing protections for workers in precarious employment. Many argued that the proposed reforms are long overdue and necessary to bring Northern Ireland’s employment framework in line with modern labour market challenges.

On the other hand, employer organisations raised concerns about the potential cost implications of some proposals, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). For instance, the requirement to offer guaranteed hours after a certain period may lead to operational challenges for businesses with fluctuating demand. Some employers also expressed apprehension about the administrative burden of implementing enhanced consultation

mechanisms and the potential for increased litigation as a result of the shorter qualifying period for unfair dismissal claims.

What Happens Next?

Now that the public consultation has closed, the Northern Ireland Executive will review the feedback and make any necessary amendments to the draft bill. This process is expected to take several months, with a final version of the bill likely to be presented to the Northern Ireland Assembly in early 2025.

Employers should remain vigilant and prepare for potential changes to employment law, as many of the provisions within the bill - particularly those related to zero-hours contracts and fair pay - are likely to have a significant impact on employment practices. Businesses should start reviewing their current employment contracts, policies, and procedures to ensure they are ready to comply with any new requirements.

Conclusion

The “Good Jobs” Employment Rights Bill represents a major shift in employment law for Northern Ireland, aiming to improve job security and working conditions for thousands of workers. While the bill’s exact shape is still being finalised, the proposed changes signal a move towards greater protection and empowerment for employees, particularly those in insecure or low-paid roles.

For employers, it is essential to stay informed about the progress of this legislation and to begin preparing for the potential changes. By reviewing existing practices and ensuring compliance with the new requirements, businesses can minimise disruption and ensure that they continue to provide fair, compliant, and “good jobs” for their workers.



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Winter weather

How should your club prepare?

Over recent years, increasingly extreme weather patterns and snowfall are causing disruptions and creating hazards that can lead to slips and falls. Clubs should endeavour to make the entrances and exits to the club premises as safe as possible.

Gritting and Protecting Surfaces

Arrangements should be made to minimise risks from snow and ice, by gritting, snow clearing and the closure of some pathways, particularly outside stairs.

It is wise to keep a good supply of grit handy to help clear them. Gritting is not an automatic way of ensuring you are blameless but it is definitely recommended, especially around important thoroughfares, such as car-parks, entrances and exits.

Temporary closures and footwear

If some pathways or entrances become too dangerous or troublesome to clear, place barriers and signs to close any footpaths that may pose a significant risk. Also making sure all employees are wearing correct footwear is advisable to help protect against avoidable slips/falls. Alternatively, if the club's clothing policy typically involves smarter shoes, it could be worthwhile to allow boots or more hard-wearing footwear during winter.

Preparation as well as reaction

Ignorance is not a defence against a claim, so make sure steps are taken to reduce foreseeable risk whenever

possible. Paying attention to weather forecasts can help you get a head start in preparing for upcoming hazardous conditions such as, pre-emptively laying down grit, or arranging appropriate signage to be placed on pathways.

Records

It is important to document as much as possible such as, retaining invoices and receipts for items in order to show you have taken an active effort to combat the problems and potential dangers caused by snow and ice.

Keep a log to demonstrate when snow and ice have appeared and the action taken to reduce the risk posed. Remember that a claimant has three years from the date of the incident in which to pursue a claim, so it is important that checklists and logs are retained for at least this period.

Any incidents which could give rise to a claim should be communicated to the club's insurers. You should arrange to take photos of the area where the accident took place to demonstrate conditions at the time, especially if you have made significant attempts to make the club safer.

If you have CCTV covering the area, please ensure that any images are retained securely for three years.

Written Warnings and Signage

Arrange to have some written instructions and warning signage on hand to inform members of the public that



there is a risk of falling/slipping and that reasonable care should be taken.

Not providing warning signs will leave the club more open to a liability claim.

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Questions & Answers

Q. We have recently been informed that the club must offer free tap water to all members, members' guests and visitors. Is this an absolute requirement or does the club have flexibility to refuse free tap water for persons who have not purchased anything from the club's bar or restaurant?

A. We advise that all clubs should offer free tap water to

members and their guests upon request.

The specific legislation states that licensed premises, which includes clubs, must provide free tap water to customers. This does provide the ability to refuse or to charge for tap water for persons whom the club does not consider to be customers. Therefore, whilst the club may be within its rights to refuse to serve tap water to a person who has not already purchased from the club, should a person who has already purchased from the club request a glass of tap water, then the club should provide this free of charge.

Q. The club's members have called a Special General Meeting to remove a committee member from the committee. This is obviously going to be a

difficult meeting for the club's president to chair. Could you provide some advice on best practice regarding such a meeting?

A. There are a few ways to run a SGM of this nature, with the final decision being down to the person who is chairing the meeting. The most important part is for the vote to be undertaken fairly.

There are probably three ways a meeting like this can be held. Firstly, it could be that unlimited discussions and debate can occur from any interested member, which can be time consuming and can risk the vote being disrupted if the people who have attended the meeting drift off as the meeting length goes on.

Alternatively, it could be decided that only the proposal and seconder can speak and then the vote taken, although this can give rise to complaints that only one side has been allowed to speak. The only way to combat this is to allow a response from the other side - in this case the committee member in question - and this could also cause an issue if the response then requires a further response from the proposer and seconder.

In short, allowing any discussion to take place can spiral into simply allowing option 1 to take place. This also ignores the fact that it may be difficult to agree who will be the proposer and seconder and therefore who has the right to speak on this important vote - if 30 people have signed a petition to remove the committee, or a member of the committee, it is possible that all 30 people have different reasons for wanting the committee (person) be removed and all 30 will wish to speak on the subject - who decides who

is going to be the proposer and seconder and who are therefore permitted to put their point of view across?

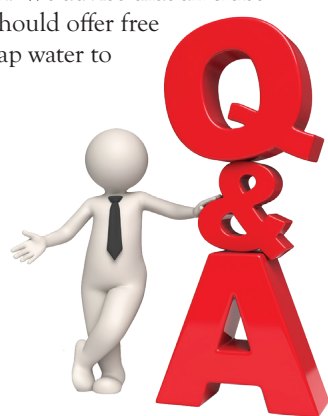
The third option is to simply open the meeting, announce the vote which is to take place and then hold the vote quickly and efficiently. The benefits of this option is that the meeting is swiftly concluded with the will of the members present carrying the motion.

Therefore, whilst it is for the person chairing the meeting to make the final decision on how the meeting is run, we are sympathetic to an approach which prioritises speed and allows the vote to be taken without delay. We also have to consider the view of the members who have turned up at the meeting at the appointed time and whether they should be required to have to spend a possibly lengthy time attending a meeting before they can cast their vote.

Q. Our President is retiring this year and we have not had any nominations to fill the position. Are we able to take nominations for this position from the floor of the AGM? Additionally, once the President steps down at the AGM, who will continue to chair the meeting?

A. If no one is proposed for this position then nominations can be taken from the floor. If there are no nominations taken from the floor then the committee can fill this position at the first committee meeting after the AGM using the club's casual vacancies rule. The committee can also choose to leave it unfilled until the next AGM.

If you have any questions you need answered for your club, then please send them to us at: nifederationofclubs.com





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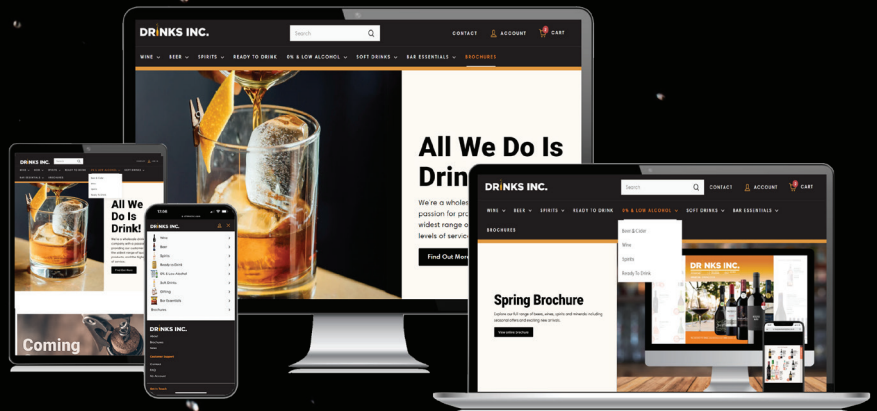
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Greenisland Workingmen's Club raise £3,500

A fantastic evening was had in the Greenisland Workingmen's Club recently, with wonderful support from their members and the local community, all coming together to raise funds for a truly worthy cause.

The club welcomed Rev. Dr Isobel Hawthorne from the Church of the Holy Name, Greenisland, and other members of the church congregation, to the club, all in an effort to raise valuable funds to help with rebuilding costs for the church after it was destroyed in a recent blaze. Everyone enjoyed an evening of top entertainment, provided by singer, Roberta, and DJ, S.R., both of whom were booked by Amber Castle Entertainment.

The club has raised £3,000, an incredible achievement, and it simply wouldn't have been possible without their members, as well as friends of the club and local businesses, also donating fantastic ballot prizes.

Finally, not to be outdone, the club's pool section also got in on the action, arranging a tournament. Their efforts added a further £430 making a final total of £3,430, only for this to be rounded up to £3,500 by club member, and Greenisland Colts pool captain, Harry Warwick.

Of the tournament itself, a high standard of play was displayed on the evening by an 18 strong field of quality players, culminating with Greenisland Colts pool team Vice Captain

and club committee member, Colin Beckinsale, and Times Tigers pool team from The Times Bar Belfast's member, John Fulton, facing each other in an exciting final, with Fulton ending up the evening's victor.

Thanks to everyone who supported the event.

To make a donation to the church rebuilding fund visit <https://gofund.me/2dd6c42d>

Top: Greenisland Workingmen Club members pictured with Rev. Hawthorne.
Bottom (L-R): Colin Beckinsale and John Fulton



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Confidentiality of committee meetings

The confidentiality of committee meetings is paramount to the effective management of a club. Discussion in committee should remain confidential between committee members. The Minutes of committee meetings should merely record the motions and amendments and decisions which are agreed and, again, remain confidential. This does not mean that there are never circumstances in which the membership ought to be informed of what takes place during committee meetings.

In all clubs there are issues which are of immediate concern to all the membership. The committee may have discussed some matter referred to it by a general meeting for

consideration. In such cases, the Secretary should arrange for a suitable notice to be posted on the club notice board. The general membership does not have a right to inspect the committee's Minutes. However, a club's auditors will have a right to inspect the committee's Minutes in order to confirm that certain transactions have been authorised.

There are, however, a few clubs registered as Friendly Societies. Such clubs are different from those registered under the Clubs Order. No member of the committee is entitled to inform anyone of the proceedings and deliberations of the committee. If a club is to be served well, then it is essential that the committee

should be free to conduct their affairs in a frank and open way. Committees are therefore entitled to insist on the confidentiality of their proceedings and the right of quasi privilege in the conduct of the affairs of the club while, at the same time, keeping the members informed of matters that affect them generally, but not in respect to individual members.

Proceedings in committee are not privileged, but qualified privilege may apply where the person who makes the communication has an interest or duty, legal or moral or social, to make it to a person, or persons, having a corresponding interest or duty to receive such a communication.

On the whole, the spirit of this principle has been upheld by the courts. It appears that the courts will not usually intervene in respect of domestic decisions, and cannot demand explanations. If reasons are given, however, the courts reserve the right to consider their sufficiency.

It may be said that normally decisions of a committee made in accordance with the rules, and made fairly, cannot be overturned.

In conclusion therefore, what is said in committee should not be repeated outside the confines of a committee meeting, and committee Minutes should remain confidential.

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Unmissable football, F1 thrills, golf glory, and more this autumn!



Get ready for a feast of football in October. There are some unmissable matches coming up in the Premier League, including a massive Super Sunday that kicks off with Chelsea v Newcastle, followed by Arsenal v Liverpool. The big games keep coming in November too, with Tottenham v Aston Villa, Manchester United v Chelsea, Chelsea v Arsenal and more for football fans to enjoy.

There are also all the matches that matter from the Scottish Premiership, the Women's Super League, the Bundesliga and the EFL. You can also show all the action from the fourth round of the Carabao Cup, where the matches include some mouthwatering all-Premier League clashes, such as Tottenham v Manchester City and Brighton v Liverpool.

There are four Formula 1 weekends coming up in October and November, with the United States, Mexican, Brazilian and Las Vegas Grands Prix, all leading up to December's season-ending events in Qatar and Abu Dhabi. Can Red Bull's

Max Verstappen make it four Drivers' Championship wins in a row?

There's plenty for golf fans to enjoy too, with action from the PGA Tour, Ladies European Tour, LPGA Tour and the DP World Tour, where November's DP World Tour Championship takes centre stage. The climax of the Race to Dubai, this event sees the biggest names in the sport in action as they compete for the prestigious title.

The stars of darts return to the oche in November as they battle it out for the Eric Bristow Trophy in the Grand Slam of Darts. Luke Humphries is the defending champion after beating Rob Cross 16-8 in last year's final.

Of course, that's not all. There's international cricket, including the final Test match between Pakistan and England, plus every touchdown and tackle from all the NFL games that matter. With the ATP and WTA tennis finals and much more, there's something for every sports fan this autumn.



Picture courtesy of Getty Images



OCTOBER / NOVEMBER

- Sunday 27th October.....Motherwell v Celtic - 3.00pm (SPL)
Chelsea v Newcastle Utd - 2.00pm (PL)
Arsenal v Liverpool - 4.30pm (PL)
Formula 1: Mexican Grand Prix
- Wednesday 30th October.. Brighton v Liverpool - 7.30pm (Carabao Cup)
Tottenham v Manchester City - 8.15pm (Carabao Cup)
- Saturday 2nd November Wolves v Crystal Palace - 5.30pm (PL)
- Sunday 3rd November..... Tottenham v Aston Villa - 2.00pm (PL)
Manchester Utd v Chelsea - 4.30pm (PL)
Formula 1: Brazilian Grand Prix
- Monday 4th November Fulham v Brentford - 8.00pm (PL)
- Saturday 9th November Brighton v Manchester City - 5.30pm (PL)
Grand Slam of Darts
- Sunday 10th November Nottingham Forest v Newcastle Utd - 2.00pm (PL)
Chelsea v Arsenal - 4.30pm (PL)
- Sunday 17th November Grand Slam of Darts: Semi-finals & Final
- Sunday 24th November Formula 1: Las Vegas Grand Prix

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Knowledge: Energy brokers have a good understanding of the commercial energy market. They constantly monitor gas and electricity market prices, enabling them to help clients make informed business energy buying decisions.

Independence: A fundamental advantage of using a broker is their impartiality. Because we

work independently of all the gas and electricity suppliers, our service is unbiased.

Competitive: The price paid for energy is largely down to 'Supply and Demand'. Think of it this way... smaller businesses often get a raw deal when it comes to energy prices. Larger businesses often benefit from lower prices due to their higher consumption. We give suppliers the opportunity for dozens of accounts every month, however they must compete for the business.

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For a review of your gas and/or electric bills just get in touch.

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MJ Utilities has recently partnered with b4b renewables, an engineer led team specialising in the design and installation of advanced renewable energy solutions, including Solar PV.

B4b Renewables excel in integrating renewable systems that boost energy efficiency, cut operational costs, and reduce carbon emissions for your business. The team manages all aspects of design and installation with zero disruption to your daily operations.

While the systems are designed for minimal maintenance, their Service 365 ensures they respond to urgent issues on-site within 24-48 hours. They are committed to helping businesses across

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Don't Just Take Their Word For It

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Dr. Phillip Cooke GP Partner, Carryduff Surgery

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Drinks Inc. hosts successful third annual wine portfolio tasting

Wholesale drinks company Drinks Inc. hosted its third annual wine portfolio event on Tuesday 8th October at the iconic Grand Opera House in Belfast.

Showcasing the full Drinks Inc. wine portfolio and Christmas gifting offer, the event brought more than 150 members of Northern Ireland's licensed trade to experience over 175 handpicked wines, including more than 50 additions to the range.

The event welcomed producers from over 60 wineries from around the world including Mionetto, Trivento, Beronia and Wakefield. Edward Dillon were also in attendance, showcasing their portfolio of wines and champagnes to the NI market for the first time.

Julie Dupouy-Young, Edward Dillon Brand Ambassador, who won Best Sommelier in Ireland in 2009 and 2018 and also placed third at the ASI World Sommelier Championship representing Ireland and the Irish Guild of Sommeliers was on hand to share her invaluable knowledge with guests.

Drinks Inc. Wine Specialist Jonny Callan said, "We were delighted to welcome representatives from the licensed trade, including our valued customers, to our wine portfolio tasting event. Guests discovered what's new in our portfolio, sampled exclusive and award-winning wines, and met the people behind our wine brands from around the globe.



"It was great to work with the Grand Opera House team for a second year, and our thanks to them for providing a guided tour of the historic theatrical landmark, and to our sister brand Musgrave MarketPlace, for providing charcuterie bites, the perfect wine pairing. It was a fantastic event which took our guests on a delightful wine tasting journey."

The event also showcased local producers including Armagh-based cider maker Maclvors, and Donegal distillers Muff Liquor, which recently announced a new partnership with Drinks Inc. as it expands into Northern Ireland.

For more information on Drinks Inc. and support from a dedicated wine specialist please contact Jonny Callan, Wine Specialist on 07379 066786 or visit www.drinksinc.com



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McGuigan's Black Label celebrates 30th birthday in style



The McGuigan's iconic Black Label range has been part of many aspects of our lives for over three decades - whether that's raising a glass to life's big milestones or quietly toasting the everyday moments in between.

In September, Craigavon-based drinks distributor, United Wines, threw a 30th birthday party to celebrate the occasion, with Managing Director, Martin McAuley, on hand to welcome representatives from Australian Vintage Limited (AVL), owners of the famous McGuigan brand.

Guests took a trip down memory lane, enjoyed delectable party bites, and spun the 'wheel of fortune' for some Black Label surprises. One lucky guest even hit the jackpot, winning an incredible £1,000 cash prize!



Martin McAuley (second left), Managing Director of Craigavon-based drinks distributor United Wines, celebrates the 30th birthday of McGuigan Black Label - Australia's top-selling red wine over the last five years - with visiting guests from the brand's owner, Australian Vintage Limited. Pictured (l-r), John Doyle, Business Manager; Julian Dyer, Chief Operating Officer for UK, Europe & Americas; and Henry Moran, Head of Sales UK & Ireland. * Courtesy of Ulster Tatler

Freixenet brings a taste of the French Riviera to Belfast

VIPs and guests from the licensed trade across Northern Ireland attended the launch of Freixenet Brut Royal wine recently at an exclusive event in Belfast.

Hosted by United Wines and Freixenet Country Manager, Shane McNally, guests were treated to a taste of the French Riviera with complimentary drinks, food, music and entertainment.

After successfully revitalising the prosecco segment globally, Freixenet, the international leader in sparkling wines, is confident that its newest innovation, Freixenet Brut Royal, will be a huge hit with Northern Ireland consumers.



Celebrating the launch on the evening were (l-r) United Wines Procurement Manager, Michael Keenan; Becky Hargroves, Customer Marketing Manager at Freixenet UK; and Ciaran Meyler, Wine Manager at United Wines.

Made with the finest grapes from the south west of France, and presented in strikingly elegant packaging, inspired by haute couture, Freixenet Brut Royal is described as a 'crisp,

charming and delicately hued wine that perfectly expresses Freixenet's Mediterranean spirit with an unmistakably French elegance'.

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Major WKD campaign

The CEO of Blueness

WKD, both Northern Ireland's and the UK's No.1 ready-to-drink (RTD), is to benefit from a bold major new ad campaign this autumn. Owner, SHS Drinks, is supporting the brand that pioneered the initial development of the RTD category and yet still remains at its absolute forefront with a highly relevant and engaging approach which is set to turn heads.

The £2m UK-wide campaign kicked off in October with ad support running throughout the remainder of 2024. The lead out-of-home (OOH) thrust of posters will be complemented by arresting billboard sites which will create additional interest in key high traffic areas in prime locations.

The strategy behind the campaign is to re-enforce consumer recognition of WKD as 'the original and best' RTD, with all executions focusing solely on the lead WKD Blue variant. Using the brand's trademark humour, the impactful, eye-catching posters are designed to talk to a key 18-21 demographic, whilst leaving most others in the dark and wondering 'what's that all about?'

The language the ads use will connect with - and raise knowing smiles amongst - the target audience, whilst leaving others puzzled as to the true meaning. The lead execution states 'CEO of Blueness', referencing how young people use the term 'CEO of' to mean 'what you're known for'. Parodying Instagram images, another execution shows both the front and blank back of

a bottle of WKD and states 'Front Shot for the Poster/Rear Shot for the Gram'; another ad declares 'Pure Blue Aura', which is a term inferring how cool something is and meaning here that WKD Blue is really cool.

The tongue-in-cheek lines reflect WKD's fun take on life and will be appreciated by an in-the-know audience. Additionally, some of the ad creatives will be tailored to siting locations; for example, 'Any Buses Going to Napa?' and 'Any Trains Going to Napa?' will appear at bus stops and trains stations respectively, referencing the popular party resort of Ayia Napa in Cyprus. The overall outdoor campaign comprises a significant number of different poster executions, allowing it to remain fresh and interesting over the length of the activity.

Following the same humorous urban-speak theme, the nationwide poster campaign will be supplemented by 30-second ads on Spotify. Through the tight targeting of music genre and leading podcast subject matter, these radio-style ads will talk specifically to WKD consumers, appearing within content that they know and love.

Sampling

By the end of October, 150,000 bottles of 4% ABV WKD will have been given away UK-wide to the brand's target-market, re-enforcing the major media campaign and driving trial of the triple-distilled vodka RTD. In an innovative approach, WKD will utilise sampling in student halls of residence, as well as at carefully selected workplace



environments which heavily over-index versus the brand's core audience.

Alison Gray, head of brand - WKD at SHS Drinks, says, "Our bold and forthright ad campaign will raise brand awareness from the all-important start of the new university term right through to the key festive period. We're making a significant investment to engage consumers and grow additional throughputs for stockists in Northern Ireland.

"Our posters will raise smiles amongst our target audience, sales amongst our customer base, and maybe even a little confusion amongst those not young enough (or young-at-heart enough) to be up to speed with the latest street-slang. Those who we want to 'get it' will definitely 'get it', those who don't need to get it, probably won't! WKD is, and always has been, the CEO of Blueness and this campaign allows us to proudly proclaim that - and a whole lot more - to a receptive consumer audience."

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NI Football Writers Awards

Ballymena United FC attacker Ben Kennedy has won the Sports Direct Player of the Month prize for September.

Kennedy hit six goals in as many games, including late winners against both Larne and Glentoran, as United picked up three points in each of their five top flight matches in the month to propel themselves to second spot in the table with progress in the Co. Antrim Shield also secured.

Kennedy said, "After the first four games of the season, we could have gone on a long losing streak, but we've bounced back well. If I didn't feel I could make a difference joining Ballymena, then I wouldn't have signed.

"I'm really enjoying it here and I'm embracing the challenge but, while I might be scoring a few goals here and there, I couldn't do that without the rest of the lads, the people around me who give me the platform to go and score goals. It's a great club and a tight-knit group and long may this winning streak continue."

Kennedy becomes the first Ballymena player to win the award since Shay McCartan back in 2021 and, with Jim Ervin being named Manager of the Month as well, it is also the first monthly awards double for Ballymena United since Tony Kane and David Jeffrey achieved that feat in February 2017.

Ballymena United FC boss Jim Ervin is the NIFWA Manager of the Month for September.

Ervin started the month with victory in the Co. Antrim

Shield before guiding the Braidmen to five wins from five in the Sports Direct Premiership, with successes over Larne, Glentoran, Carrick Rangers, Cliftonville and Portadown, seeing them rise to second in the table.

Ervin said, "I'm very thankful to win this award for the month of September. But a lot of the plaudits need to go to the backroom staff and the players because, ultimately, it's a team effort and everyone at the club deserves to be recognised for how we've gone about September.

"We've done well after a slow start, but it's very early days yet. It's only the start of October and it's a long season, so we won't get carried away."

Bangor Football Club striker Matthew Ferguson is the NIFWA Championship Player of the Month for September. The centre forward helped the Seasiders to an impressive month with four wins from four in the Playr-Fit Championship as Lee Feeney's side joined Ferguson's former club Harland & Wolff Welders at the top of the table.

A red-hot scoring streak has helped **Cliftonville's Danielle Maxwell** win the Sports Direct Women's Premiership Player of the Month award for September.

The standout moment for Maxwell was a hat-trick as Cliftonville beat Lisburn Rangers 8-1 in a crucial game in hand that put them clear at the top of the table five games from home.



Ballymena United's Ben Kennedy receives his Player of the Month award from NIFWA Chair Michael Clarke and Ronnie Balmer from sponsors Sports Direct.



Ballymena boss, Jim Ervin collects his Sports Direct Premiership Manager of the Month award from NIFWA Chair, Michael Clarke.



NIFWA Chair, Michael Clarke, presents Bangor forward, Matthew Ferguson, with the Championship Player of the Month trophy for September.



Cliftonville star Danielle Maxwell receives her September award from Sports Direct's Matthew Calderwood.

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