

## Breakfast date

A CROSS-BORDER business club has invited companies to a breakfast meeting next Wednesday (February 17).

The Dundalk Newry Business Club Breakfast will meet at the Fairways Hotel in Dundalk from 7am to 9am.

"This is a great opportunity to meet owners of local businesses and to get your own business message out there to a whole new audience," an organiser said.

"The emphasis on our networking meeting is on getting to know attendees rather than the hard sell.

"The main part of the meeting is the informal one-to-one sessions between 8am-9am."

Business owners in Newry, and Mourne are welcome to attend and there's a £10/12 charge that includes breakfast

If you plan to attend meeting, contact Elaine Farrell on (028) 4063 0867.

## Ruane slammed

THE education bill will cause deadlock and confrontation, believes South Down assembly member John McCallister.

The Glascar man criticised education minister Caitriona Ruane for failing to secure consensus on the bill.

"Instead of the minister accepting genuine concerns and reasoned opposition she has pushed ahead with another ideological crusade," he said.

"We are now stuck in another quagmire of incompetence. The education bill is bureaucratic, overly centralising and will debilitate the ability of schools to manage their own affairs and to get the best educational outcomes for children in Northern Ireland."

# Newry leads the way

LESSONS can be learned by how Newry is tackling the recession, according to finance minister Sammy Wilson.

The city was praised for its "resilience and forward-looking approach" at the Chamber of Commerce and Trade business lunch on Thursday.

However, having Mr Wilson as the keynote speaker nearly didn't happen.

Chamber president Conor Patterson told how they were considering cancelling the event given the finance minister's preoccupations at Stormont.

But he fulfilled his obligations, albeit being 30 minutes later than planned.

The lunch at the Canal Court Hotel was attended by the movers and shakers of the business world and sponsored by Barclay's.

The bank's head of commercial banking Adrian Doran echoed Mr Wilson's sentiments and highlighted the city's resilience in the face of the recession.

While Dr Patterson told how Newry has used public money to best affect.

"As shown here in Newry, a little



MAYOR John Feehan with Sammy Wilson, MP MLA, Conor Patterson, president Newry Chamber of Commerce, and Adrian Doran, head of commercial banking at Barclays, at the Chamber's annual business lunch in the Canal Court Hotel on Thursday.

by Joanne Ross

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public investment can go a very long way," he said.

"We have the highest rates of new business not just in Northern Ireland but the UK

The surge in the retail market was cited as a city success story.

"There were no funds drawn from the state to do that. But the state has got a return and what a return," he said.

"There are 200,000 shopping visi-

tors to Newry every month resulting in revenue from corporation tax and rates of the premises to the state as well as the taxation from wages."

Dr Patterson made a veiled appeal for increased investment saying it would be money well spent given "how well this area has capitalised on other investment".

The recommendations in the Bain report to decentralise government jobs from Belfast was mentioned.

Dr Patterson planned to discuss it with the finance minister saying it would be more cost effective to move to Newry with its "high cali-

bre workforce and cheaper locations".

Meanwhile, during Mr Wilson's address he admitted the assembly comes under criticism "some justified, a lot not" about its delivery of devolved government.

"However, for improvements to be made for the people of Northern Ireland, it is necessary for cooperation between government and the private sector," he said.

"We value the input of the business community. We will only prosper if we work together."

However, he told how "popular decisions" will have to be made when carving up departmental funding as he believes rescuing the economy should take priority.

"It is imperative that we invest in a manner that generates enduring and tangible economic return - this is the bedrock for prosperity and wealth," he said.

"In a tighter financial environment we, as an Executive, need to take difficult decisions about economic policy - which may mean moving resources from other less important areas."

Mr Wilson noted the cooperation between Newry business leaders and how that has helped secure its future.

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