

# THE BIG QUESTIONS

Ever wondered what Northern Ireland business figures did before reaching the top, or what has been their greatest act of financial extravagance? This week Brian Nelson, founder of Forth Data Management answers the Big Questions

#### What is your career background?

I have quite a varied career background. I started off in accountancy and then progressed to sales within the oil industry before moving into a business development role within the public sector. From there I went into the video and TV industry, which I really enjoyed and then went on to opening my own advertising and direct marketing agency. After 16 years I sold the company and set up Forth Data. The rest, as they say is history.

#### What was your first job and how much were you paid?

My first job was as an Articled Clerk, to a firm of accountants in Brighton and I was paid four guineas per week.

#### Have you ever had a job you hated?

I have never had a job I truly hated but I did dislike working within the public sector. I found it quite stifling.

#### What was your first success in business?

As a junior member of a team of two people, I went to Europe to introduce new products from our US company's Belfast office to Europe. Against the odds we won a multi-million pound contract when we were told by sages within the industry that it would be totally impossible. It was a business triumph for me.

#### What business figure(s) do you most admire?

Stuart Rose - I really admire his

approach in business.

#### Have you ever made a big mistake in business and if so what did you learn from it?

Yes - Having made the mistake, I learned never to do the same thing again. Always accept professional advice with reservation - and that's all I'll say about it!

#### What one item would you take with you to a desert island and why?

I would take my laptop, as long as there was an internet connection. Not just for business but also for social reasons.

#### What has been your biggest financial extravagance?

I'm not extravagant. My Cartier

watch is probably the most expensive item I own.

#### Do you have a business mantra?

Not as such, but business is subject to change and so 'keep alert for change' is probably the best piece of advice I could offer.

#### What items do you always carry with you?

My mobile phone which is becoming increasingly sophisticated with extra add-ons and, hopefully, some common sense.

#### When will you retire?

I am planning to gradually wind down and then retire sometime over the next five years.



Brian Nelson

## Kelvin set to position NI as 'a hotbed for new technologies'

BY RICHARD SHERRIFF  
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THE potential behind Project Kelvin means that Northern Ireland could emerge as a global hotbed for financial systems, creative media, education and cloud computing technologies, according to a major thought leadership event organised by NISP CONNECT.

The event entitled 'Monetizing Kelvin' brought together more than 200 top technologists, entrepreneurs and business leaders to discuss how best to unlock the commercial opportunities offered by Project Kelvin, the transatlantic fibre optic cable due to become operational in March.

Emphasising the Province-wide impact Kelvin could make on the local economy, the event was held simultaneously in (and video relayed between) University of Ulster's Magee campus in Londonderry and Northern Ireland Science Park in Belfast.

Project Kelvin, which is being built by trans-Atlantic submarine transport cable provider Hibernia Atlantic, will see the island of Ireland provided with its first direct 40Gbps network capable of carrying huge amounts of data in seconds.

It is anticipated that the new direct, secure, high capacity data

cable to Northern America will enable the region to build businesses and services that until now would not have been possible.

"Northern Ireland is at a crossroads," said NISP CONNECT Director Steve Orr.

"Traditional industries and familiar markets have been going through great change - the key to which is innovation and the development of radically new technologies. Project Kelvin offers us a unique opportunity to build industries founded on the brilliance of our people and create the environment that will present opportunity for everyone."

The event, he added, had been staged specifically to set out and explore visions for the commercial possibilities of the project.

"Hopefully this can inspire others to come forward with their ideas and add to the conversation."

Moderator for the evening was Sinclair Stockman, former Chief Scientist of BT. The gathering heard from five experts focusing on education; financial systems; cloud computing; creative media; and new entrepreneurs.

Presenters included: Padraig Canavan, CEO & Founder of Singularity; Johnny Gilmore, CEO Sling Media; Ben Greene, Director SAP Research; Sinclair Stockman, former Chief Scientist of BT; and Greg Maguire of ZooGloo LLC, San Francisco.



One small cable with a host of possibilities, Bjarni Thorvardarson, CEO of Hibernia Atlantic, foreground, and Derek Bullock, Vice President of Network Operations pictured with a sample of the fibre optic cable as it arrived onshore at Portrush this summer.



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