

## Chief Executive's Diary

I write my last article for Northlink with some sadness as I will soon be retiring from an organisation which has been my privilege to lead for some eight years. I know the past two years or so has been a period of great uncertainty for us all as we negotiate our way through the ongoing and unprecedented economic recession, which has been particularly severe on the construction and materials sectors in Northern Ireland and beyond. The redundancies, which have taken place in our Company, could not have been avoided but it is important to note that the aim of these job losses is to provide employment security for the rest of our staff across the Company into the future. I also take great comfort from the knowledge that our senior management team is making every effort to minimise the effects of the recession on the business as we all work towards identifying, winning and delivering contracts or orders for our products. I am confident that the skills, aptitudes and business acumen of Northstone will see us through this difficult time.

The past six months or so has seen significant changes at director level in Northstone, with Mark Lowry succeeding me in January 2010. There are enhanced responsibilities for Eamonn Sweeney and Graham McQuillan at Farrans and the Materials Division respectively. With the full integration of the CUBIS companies now complete, there is a much more streamlined Board, in keeping with the challenges that we face. I wish Mark, Eamonn, Graham and Michael every success in their new roles.

In our Farrans business the estimating and bid teams are working extremely hard to secure work in GB, as opportunities at home are becoming scarce and highly competitive. Farrans Homes has had a lot of success at the Thaxton development in Lisburn this year and preparatory work at our two former quarry locations in Coleraine and Moneymore is proceeding. Both of these projects

are very exciting as they will transform former quarry landscapes into very attractive residential areas. The level of customer enquiries for new homes has been sustained with bookings well into next year.

The new Northstone Materials Division was formed in October of this year on the retirement of Willie McNabb and brings together our quarrying, concrete, sand, roofing and road contracting activities. The structure which is evolving in the new Division will leave it well placed to take full advantage of the projected recovery in the economy when it occurs.

Willie's career and contribution to the business are covered elsewhere in Northlink, so it simply falls to me to wish Willie and Irene every happiness in the next chapter of their lives.

CUBIS Industries has had a



successful year due to its development of export markets and enhanced production capabilities and efficiencies. All involved at the Lurgan, Liverpool and Roscommon plants are to be congratulated on the CUBIS performance.

It is regrettable that this year also saw the closure of the traditional Beckett business, which has been an important part of the Northstone family for many years. The decision was painful but the current economic climate and related market conditions meant that it was not sustainable to continue. I sincerely hope that Tom Sweeney and all of his team find successful futures elsewhere.

It only remains for me to thank you for your hard work, commitment and most importantly, your friendship during my time at Northstone. I leave with many fond memories of my colleagues at every level in the Company and I ask that you give Mark the same level of support and goodwill that I received and very much appreciated.

*I wish you a happy, peaceful and safe Christmas as well as a prosperous New Year.*  
**Noel Quinn** December 2009

## Construction's Good Samaritan

In today's busy world many road users drive past the scene of an accident having decided it better not to get involved or lend assistance for reasons best known to themselves. However, Spencer Williams, the Farrans site manager at the Belfast Model School for Girls project, does not fit this stereotype.

Our own Good Samaritan was working on site on the Oldpark Road in Belfast when a school girl was knocked down by a car. Spencer immediately took charge of the situation by tasking two of his team to direct traffic and then called the emergency services. He then attended to the injured girl and administered first aid after which he put her in the recovery position until the ambulance arrived. Spencer also assisted the driver of the car.

Our story has a good ending as the school girl suffered only minor injuries in the accident.

Spencer's actions did not go unnoticed as we detail below the wording of an email received from the School Senior Management Team by Spencer's Contract Manager, John Cooper;

*"We would be very grateful if you could pass on to Spencer our heartfelt appreciation for the initiative, efficiency and care that he displayed this morning.*

*Every member of staff who was involved in this accident was full of praise for Spencer and all made a specific point of expressing their gratitude for Spencer's efforts to the senior management team.*

*Thankfully the girl concerned is grand, bar bumps and bruises."*

**Praise indeed for one of our most popular site managers.**



## Ken Becomes Chairman Of The Northstone Board

consultants, working on a variety of projects. He achieved chartered engineer status in 1983.

In 1981, he joined the Australian owned Pioneer Concrete Group progressing to the position of Area Manager in Northern Ireland.

Ken began his association with CRH plc in January 1988 when he was appointed General Manager of its Northern Ireland cement sales and distribution business known as Premier Cement Limited. At this time he was based in Belfast.

He then moved to Dublin in 1988 to become the Sales and Marketing Director of Irish Cement Limited and was promoted to Managing Director in 2004. Further

promotions followed in 2008 when he was appointed Regional Manager India for CRH plc and was then made Regional Director Asia in January 2009.

Ken is also currently Chairman of the Cement Manufacturers of Ireland and also represents CRH in the Plenary Group of Cembureau – the European cement industry trade association. In 2007 Ken became a Fellow of the Engineers of Ireland and of the Chartered Management Institute.

Many of us have known Ken from his time at Pioneer Concrete, Premier Cement Limited and more lately at CRH. He will bring to our Company an understanding of our industry and business acumen which will further enhance our management team not to mention a great sense of humour and an inherent people commitment.

**Northlink welcomes Ken to the Northstone family.**

**The Northstone Board has announced that Ken McKnight will become our new Chairman with effect from 1 December 2009.**

Ken graduated from Queens University, Belfast with a first class honours degree in Civil Engineering in 1975 and was also awarded the Institution of Civil Engineers prize for being the best student in his year. After graduating, he joined Kirk McClure and Morton, civil and structural engineering

# Noel Retires



**This month, as already referred to elsewhere in the pages of Northlink, Noel Quinn, our esteemed Chief Executive retires. Noel succeeded Ernie McClure in 2001 and through his good stewardship, attention to detail and people skills our Company has developed beyond measure. He came to the role with a plan to rejuvenate and make our Company more efficient which he undoubtedly achieved and had the**

**foresight and courage to devise and implement a major rebranding exercise from which our Northstone identity originated . Noel has always recognised the importance of the diversification of the business in dealing with the fluctuations of the market. Evidence of this is the acquisition of the Cubis business, of additional sand reserves and the development of the Coleraine quarry, which have strengthened the Company in the current difficult times.**

The mark of the man was how he could quickly grasp the main issues or pulse points of any situation and use the most appropriate method to achieve the required result. Effective teamwork and involvement were always priorities for Noel to ensure a correct decision was arrived at. Leadership to Noel was all about doing the right thing from the Northstone perspective and the results he achieved speak from themselves. His management style was built around listening, respecting the position of others and putting forward logical and persuasive arguments while at the same time displaying fortitude and dogged determination when required.

No doubt we all will have our own experiences and thoughts on Noel's time with Northstone and invariably these relate to him taking time from his busy schedule to engage in conversation with employees at all levels and take an interest in our role with the Company or our families.

Noel leaves us with a legacy of a focused, motivated and strong management team in each of our divisions as well as an organisation structure and capability which positions the Company well to weather the current recession and to prosper again in the future.

**All at Northstone wish Noel a long, happy and healthy retirement.**

## Willie McNabb

### Reflections on a Working Life

**This month draws to a close one of most eventful and colourful careers in our Company with the retirement of Willie McNabb, the well liked and highly respected Managing Director of the Northstone Quarry and Asphalt Division. Rumour has it he already has received several lucrative offers from major publishing houses to write his memoirs. One thing is for sure that behind the jovial and witty exterior is a person who never failed to give his all for our Company and was unstinting in his support and praise for the work of Northstone and its people.**

William Michael McNabb, known to us all as Willie, joined W.M. Bolton and Sons on 1 November 1970 working in the weighbridge at the quarry in Bushmills Road, Coleraine. His starting salary was the princely sum of £9.10.0 per week. Willie readily provided Northlink with an appreciation of the early days of his career;

*"In the 1970's, the quarrying industry was full of colourful characters none more so than J.G. Wilgar, my first line manager. Hard work and industry was the order of the day and it was these early influences which shaped my later career. I benefitted greatly from working with many senior colleagues, particularly Ronnie McIntyre who was to become the Managing Director of R.J. Maxwell*

*and Son Limited."*

Willie's career developed apace with the acquisition of W.M. Bolton by T.B.F. Thompson (Garvagh) Limited who quickly recognised the talents and potential of this young accountant from Coleraine. Willie played a role in the subsequent acquisition of Carmean Limeworks and J. McLean and Sons Limited. In 1977, Ramseys quarry in Ballymena was acquired by T.B.F. Thompson (Garvagh) Limited which allowed access to the Belfast market and soon after, the Farrans Group was acquired. To further develop the business Willie was asked to move to Ballymena and was appointed a director of North Down Quarries Limited and R.J. Maxwell (Ballymena) Limited to facilitate this process at 29 years of age.

Willie remembers the early 1980's as difficult economic times with a government moratorium on public spending on capital works severely affecting the business;

*"The downturn in the economy in the early 1980's led to a major reduction in our overheads and restructuring. I truly believe that what brought us through this difficult period was the vision, strategic approach, competitiveness and expansion of the then T.B.F. Thompson (Garvagh) Limited Group not to mention the intelligence and work ethic of its people. These were also troubled days in our Province*

*yet our people continued to work normally in very difficult circumstances which always gives me a great sense of pride. However, I am glad to say that we never lost our desire to expand and develop the Company with acquisitions such as Hadden and Milverton quarries being successfully integrated into the business."*

The 1990's saw further change for Willie with the retirement of senior colleagues including Jimmy Telford and Ronnie McIntyre. In 1999, Willie was appointed to the main board of our Company. Willie's achievements in this decade are many and varied including winning a major contract to surface the M77 motorway in Scotland and commencing production and contracting activities in Donegal.

The new millennium brought about our new Northstone corporate identity with Willie playing a pivotal role in securing its success. Willie's list of credits for this decade, as Managing Director of the Quarry and Asphalt Division, include working for the first time in the Falkland Islands, major success in measured term contracts in Northern Ireland and overseeing the relocation of his Division from Coleraine quarry to Croaghan.

It is fitting that we leave the last word with Willie;

*"I leave Northstone with mixed emotions. I will certainly miss the excitement and camaraderie of working for the Company and at the same time I am looking forward to spending more time with my wife and family. The*



*roller coaster ride I embarked on in 1970 has now come back to the halt position and it is time to get off. My approach to working in our Company was always:*

- *Fought hard for everything that the Company wanted and believed in.*
- *Fought hard for all the good people that delivered this.*
- *You achieve nothing in life on your own.*
- *Never a great sportsman but would have loved to play in a great team.*
- *Worked hard and demanded that everyone on the team did likewise.*
- *When work was all done, I utilised the same amount of energy in having a celebratory party.*

*I feel this philosophy stood me in good stead down through the decades."*

**All at Northstone wish Willie a long, happy and healthy retirement and of course, thanks Willie for the memories.**

## Farrans Streets Ahead Team help Hill Croft Special School

**Christmas is always the time when we consider others who may be less fortunate than ourselves and certainly our Farrans Team at the Streets Ahead Project in Belfast have given a lead to the rest of us in this regard.**

A team of site based staff entered the Belfast Marathon in May of this year with the sole purpose of helping the children at Hill Croft Special School in New Mossley, Newtownabbey. Hill Croft is a school for children and young people aged between 3 and 19 years of age who have severe learning difficulties. This year the school initiated a fundraising campaign for the construction of a Play Trail to encourage the children to achieve their goals in life which are made very difficult due to their physical restrictions and learning difficulties. The Play Trail would benefit all children at the school and help them to learn and play in a safe environment.

Our intrepid Farrans team entered the Marathon and by all accounts everyone acquitted themselves very well but more importantly, they raised the magnificent sum of £2,000.00 for the children at Hill Croft School.

The good news is that the school reached its overall funding target of £200,000 and the first phase of



*Presenting the Cheque - (L-R) Clara Kelly, Kevin McKeown, Mal Osborne and Wendy Armstrong (all Farrans) to the Principal and Parent Teacher Association members of Hill Croft School.*

the Play Trail was opened in September of this year.

Clara Kelly, Kevin McKeown, Mel Osborne and Wendy Armstrong from Farrans handed over their cheque to the school in June and in September they returned for the opening of the Play Trail.

Wendy, speaking on behalf of the rest of the Farrans team, told Northlink a little of their visit to the school.

*"After the presentation of the cheque we were given a guided tour of the school and we got the opportunity to view the facilities and gain an appreciation of what the school actually does. We were all overwhelmed by the dedication and attention given to each child. In fact it was a humbling experience. We all left in no doubt that we had supported a very worthwhile cause."*

**Northlink commends all involved at the Belfast Streets Ahead Project for their charitable activities.**



*Julie Irwin presents the Northstone cheque to Geoff Whitehead, Director of the Coleraine Branch, The Samaritans*

## Supporting Local Charities

Northstone has a long tradition of supporting local charities and other worthwhile causes and this Christmas our colleagues in the former Quarry and Asphalt Division decided to make a donation to both The Samaritans and Barnardos. These were made instead of giving Christmas presents to clients and customers.

The Samaritans provide confidential and non judgemental support, 24 hours a day, to people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those which could lead to suicide. The support is also there for people who are worried about something, feel upset or confused or just want to talk to someone. The Samaritans offer their services by telephone, e mail, text, letter or face to face from eight offices across Northern Ireland. The charity relies completely on public donations and the work of volunteers to provide the services

Barnardos, the well known childrens charity, no longer runs orphanages but currently supports 110,000 children throughout the United Kingdom through some 380 different projects in the home, school or local community. The Barnardos mission is to give the most vulnerable children in our society a better start in life whatever the issues which can range from family drug misuse and disability to youth crime, mental health and domestic violence. Their aim is to give every child the chance of a normal childhood.

**Each charity received a cheque for £1250 this Christmas to assist with their invaluable work.**

## Mark Lowry - Our New Chief Executive



**Mark Lowry, our newly appointed Chief Executive, replaces Noel Quinn at the end of this year. Mark's many attributes, talents and skills are well known to most of us. He has kindly provided Northlink with the following piece which provides us with an insight into the man and his mission.**

*"These are indeed challenging times in our industry, but as I succeed Noel as Chief Executive of Northstone and look around me at our various operations and our people, I look forward to the future with genuine optimism. The market is in a 'perfect storm', but that will pass. The key for us is to restructure ourselves to both survive the 'storm' and to prosper when the recovery comes, which it surely will at some point in the future. Firstly though, I want to pass on our best wishes to Noel Quinn and Willie McNabb, two captains of our industry, whose knowledge and experience will be sorely missed. Under Noel's leadership of the group and with Willie at the helm of the Quarry & Asphalt division, both gentlemen have contributed hugely to the status of the Northstone Group as the leading construction group based in Northern Ireland. On behalf of us all, I wish them both good health and fortune for the future.*

*Northstone is a fantastic company, part of another success story in CRH. I get a huge buzz every time I see a Northstone lorry on the road, when I see the Cubis badge on telecoms chamber covers throughout the country, when I walk through Victoria Square, see our sand operations on Lough Neagh, visit our award winning quarry locations, drive along the Westlink, see new Farrans-built schools and healthcare facilities, drink tap water purified in a Farrans treatment plant and transported via a Farrans laid network, see the success of Mattest, visit our new roof tile factory, visit the transformation of our quarry at Coleraine into an eco-friendly residential development, see the quality of our road surfacing business, see the growth and success of the Farrans business in Scotland and East Anglia, visit our utility chamber operations at Lurgan, Roscommon and Liverpool, see the strength of our various sales teams, see our industry leading management systems in health & safety, quality assurance, best practice, energy management and most recently the lean thinking campaign. I have set myself the goal of getting out to visit all our operations; after all, it is you who make the Company what it is! The key here is the strength of the group, and the future leaders*

*amongst you will put the success of the group at the top of your priorities, not just the health and wellbeing of your own particular operation - unity and a common purpose is what will take Northstone through this current recession and come out the other side as a lean, 'best in class' company and still as number one!*

*Looking forward, we now have a restructured main Board of five Directors, with a focussed strategy for the future of the three divisions of Northstone Materials, Farrans Construction and Cubis Industries, led by Graham, Eamonn and Michael, with Andrew as our Financial Director. Backing this up we have a strong core team of key people across all the divisions, and one of the most encouraging signs is to see the next group of competent, enthusiastic and dedicated people coming through. The future success and sustainability of the Northstone Group lies in our hands. I fully realise and appreciate that the word restructuring has meant redundancies, and this process has some way to run yet. My primary responsibility is to steer the group along a path which will sustain the future for both the Company and its employees. This will require tough, but fair, decisions. It will require a lot of hard work, squeezing the last drop out of our supply chain and our contracts, securing and regaining market share in materials, seeking out new markets in the Cubis business, controlling our cash, making the business leaner, maximising our effectiveness without significant investment, improving what we do, being more efficient, minimising waste in every aspect of the business, valuing our customers and making sure that they are getting the best service in the industry. The old adage "Look after the pennies, and the pounds will look after themselves!" applies now more than ever.*

*So although times are difficult and we have all felt the pain of the recession to some degree, I remain excited about the future of this great Company and feel privileged to succeed Noel as the next Chief Executive. May I take this opportunity to wish you a happy, peaceful and safe Christmas as well as a prosperous New Year. **Our Company is in good hands with Mark at the helm.***

# Arecleoch Windfarm

## The story so far

***Tucked away out of sight in the forested hills of south Ayrshire, lies Farrans' largest stand alone construction project in Scotland, Arecleoch Windfarm. The project, which is set to become Scotland's fourth largest windfarm, will produce 120MW of power through its 60 turbines when completed, or enough for about 70,000 homes. For many of the young construction team, led by Neil Sturdy, the project represents uncharted territory in its nature, with many new activities being involved in the civil infrastructure contract.***

Contracts Manager, Martin O'Neill, explains a new engineering experience, 'The £42M Windfarm Project is a huge logistical challenge. The site lies within 24 square kilometres of commercial forest plantations, the majority of which is Forestry Commission land leased by the client, Scottish Power Renewables, for the 25 year design life of the windfarm. Approximately 617 hectares of trees have to be felled throughout the construction, initially to clear the way for the 65km of access roads and the 60 turbine locations themselves. The second phase of forestry works is now well under way to clear over 450ha of the remaining trees before the summer of 2010, with 200 loads of timber (5,500T) leaving site each week. The majority of this timber goes to the sawmills as Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified sustainable timber, with certification being gained by Farrans to ensure their role in the 'chain of custody' is upheld.'

Currently there is only a single access to the site through a 2.5m wide stone railway arch with the main line from Stranraer to Ayr running overhead. Access and deliveries are monitored all day by Network Rail to ensure no damage occurs to the arch structure. Having negotiated this, there is a further 2.5 miles of stone track to reach the site compound.

In order to alleviate this and provide an access route for turbine deliveries, a new railway overbridge is currently in construction at a different location along the main access road. The 35m single span structure commenced in late September and will be traversable before

Christmas. The twin 1.5m deep steel beams were dropped onto the abutments in mid-November as a single 70T lift, with deck and approach works now well under way. The bridge will complete this main access road which is an upgraded 20km stretch of the existing Forestry road network. All turbine component deliveries will use this route in order to avoid passing through the local village of Barrhill. The outer reaches of the site have only recently become accessible as the networks of new roads have propagated out from the main substation area. The 720,000m<sup>3</sup> of stone required to construct the access roads is all being generated from quarries, or 'borrowpits' on site that have been identified through comprehensive site investigation. The number and location of these borrowpits have been carefully planned to ensure the most efficient balance of haul distances against development costs is achieved. The majority of the roads are of a 'floating' construction due to the very low bearing strength of the peat. An 800mm thick sandwich of high strength geogrid and stone provides a running surface capable of withstanding the necessary loadings.

With the roads now 80% complete, work on the turbine bases is taking place in earnest. Currently, three of these 350m<sup>3</sup> reinforced concrete foundations are being poured each week, with the aim to have almost half of them completed by Christmas.

Due to the environmentally sensitive nature of the location, a new wave of environmental awareness has swept across the site team and indeed the subcontractors involved. Stringent planning conditions imposed on the project regarding issues such as pollution prevention, ecology and archaeology have resulted in the evolution of environmental procedures and monitoring. So much so that this has been described as 'the new health and safety', with valuable experience and lessons being learned that can be taken forward by the staff to future projects. A good working relationship based on open reporting and trust has been built up with Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA), who attend site on a monthly basis for a meeting and a tour around the works.

### The Windfarm in Numbers

- 65km of access roads
- 50,000T of concrete
- Over 100,000T of timber
- 4,000T of rebar
- 720,000m<sup>3</sup> of stone
- 60 Turbines

*Aerial overview of the northern part of the site.*

*In the right of the foreground is a borrowpit being opened up. 'Keyholes' for the turbine locations can be seen cut through the trees and large areas of clear felled forest.*



## Farrans Triple Success 3

*(L-r) Kevin Corley, Eamonn Sweeney and John Wilson celebrate their triple success*



Eamonn Sweeney, the Farrans Managing Director, is well known for taking great pride in the achievements of his people but even by his own admission, Thursday 8 October 2009 was a little bit special. This was when Eamonn attended the Construction Employers Federation (CEF) Construction Excellence Awards ceremony in Belfast and witnessed Farrans teams winning three of the award categories. They were as follows:

- **Infrastructure** – Best Health Project for Altnagelvin Hospital South Block
- **Infrastructure** – Best Utilities Project for Project Alpha
- **Quality Performance** – Health and Safety Award

Farrans were also nominated for the overall award on the night in respect of their health and safety entry.

The following morning, Eamonn provided Northlink with his reaction to the success of his hat trick heroes;

*“I was truly delighted with our triple success in the CEF awards and as far as I am concerned, these awards yet again confirm the*

*Farrans position as the premier contractor in Northern Ireland. We are currently encountering challenging times in our industry so it is always rewarding to be recognised for the quality that Team Farrans delivers, especially when this recognition comes from our peers.*

*To win one category would have been a success, to win in each of the three categories we entered as a Company was success well beyond my expectations. These awards help us in all sorts of ways such as attracting high calibre people to our organisation, further enhancing the perception that clients have of us and also as key elements in our quality submissions for tenders.*

*Thanks go to all those who worked on the award winning projects, including the pre tender teams and also those who worked on the submissions and presentations for the awards.”*

Those of us who know Eamonn also recognise the role he plays in leading Team Farrans and the passion and pride he brings to everything associated with the premier contractor in Northern Ireland.

## A Drop Of The Hard Stuff At Bushmills Distillery

The Bushmills Distillery in County Antrim is the oldest whiskey distillery in the world having been founded in 1601. It is a major tourist attraction on the north coast of the Province with some 110,000 visitors each year enjoying the sights, sounds and taste of the famous product.

This year the distillery, which is now owned by Diageo, invested in some new warehousing with the flooring contractor, Twintec Limited, choosing Northstone as its preferred concrete supplier on this prestigious contract.

The concrete was supplied by the Northstone depot at nearby Coleraine and as usual our production team delivered as Materials Division Production Director, Brian Thompson, explained;

*“The pour required us to manufacture and supply some 1,000 m3 of concrete over a 4 day period with the required specialised fibres and admixtures being added to the mix on site by Twintec. On this contract, the most important thing was consistent and uninterrupted supply of concrete to the site to ensure the demanding contract programme was achieved by our customer. As usual our team at Coleraine put in a flawless performance and are to be commended for it.”*

**Looks like the Northstone hard stuff went down well at Bushmills.**



## Record Breakers at Cubis show Olympic Spirit

**CUBIS Industries has recorded a personal best with the production of pre-formed access chambers for the site of the new 2012 Olympic Stadium in London.**

As a preferred supplier of one of the largest construction and engineering projects in Europe,

CUBIS has been manufacturing chambers with clear openings of up to 6m by 3m and 3m deep, easily the largest the Company has produced and thought to be the biggest twin-wall chambers installed anywhere.

So far the chambers have been installed at the Olympic Village, the VeloPark, the Aquatics Centre,

the redevelopment of nearby Stratford and in the Olympic Park area where they are being used to house high voltage power cables, gas valves and draw pits. Other chambers from the CUBIS portfolio are also being used for smaller applications on this Project.

Market Manager Billy Fairhurst, who carried the project over the finishing line with five months worth of meetings and specification work, said that the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) is saving time and money by choosing CUBIS products.

*“We prevented a major headache for the ODA as they had originally considered the use of brick or concrete for the manufacture of the chambers but given the sizes involved this would have had a major impact on time spent on construction and labour costs. Other options they had looked at such as steel frames with the chambers walls constructed from steel sheeting or plywood were also rejected as being unsuitable,”* he explained.

*“As a solution I presented the STAKKAbOX™ Ultima system, which consists of stackable twin wall sections that can be cut and*

*bolted together to form different sizes. After many months of presentations we finally got approval and started manufacturing.”*

The chambers are being manufactured and assembled at the CUBIS Liverpool site. Currently four a week are being sent down to London with this number increasing to six over the next few weeks.

Graeme Pringle, Director of Product Development, when asked to comment on the Olympic chamber contract remarked upon the strong team spirit that helped deliver the business for CUBIS.

*“Everyone on site has played their part in this success and everyone deserves a medal for what has been achieved,”* he said. *“As we had never constructed a chamber of this size before it took a lot of time to get it right, but the experience and hard work of the team at Liverpool meant we were able to deliver. There is a real sense of pride every time a chamber leaves the factory. To me the team are all record breakers.”* he added.

**Congratulations to all involved in the CUBIS Olympic Games supply contract.**



*Another two chambers are prepared in Liverpool for despatch to London.*

# Northstone Colours on Display at Ravenhill



Our famous red and black logo appears at many sports grounds across Northern Ireland and beyond each weekend as we continue our support of the clubs and societies in the communities in which we undertake contracts and supply materials. One such beneficiary is the long established Cooke Rugby Club which plays its home games at Shaw's Bridge in Belfast.

Keith Wood, the Materials Division Sales Director, who played for Cooke in the past, told Northlink something of the history of the Club.

*"Cooke Rugby Club was founded in 1910, and was based in a wooden hut on the grounds at Galwally in Belfast now the site of the Forestside Shopping Complex and since then has at some time won every competition it has been eligible to enter. The Club also takes pride in the fact that five former members went on to become full Irish internationals with one, Roger Young, going on to represent the British and Irish*

*Lions. I continue to coach youth rugby at Cooke as my playing days have long since finished and they are very much a family orientated Club. I know the sponsorship that Northstone provided during the season 2008/09 was very much appreciated."*

Cooke had a very successful 2008/09 season winning the McCrea Cup and reaching the final of the Junior Cup which was played at Ravenhill, the home of Ulster Rugby. In the Junior Cup final the Cooke first fifteen carried our colours into battle against a strong City of Derry team and despite a courageous performance came second best to their North West rivals.

Readers may know that the Ravenhill rugby ground has recently been redeveloped with new terracing and a stand. The Cooke rugby side certainly did us proud on the day of the final which just happened to be played against a backdrop of terracing manufactured from Northstone concrete.



CUBIS senior management team prior to their recent meeting in Liverpool (l-r) Patricia Burns, Colman Cooney, Mark Lowry, Andy Hobbis, Noel Quinn, Michael Wightman, Andrew Wright, Graeme Pringle and Derek Williamson.

## SAY HELLO AND WAVE GOODBYE

**Outgoing Northstone Chief Executive, Noel Quinn, visited the CUBIS plant in Liverpool earlier this month to say goodbye to the newest arrivals to the Northstone Group. The visit also coincided with the first opportunity for Noel's successor, Mark Lowry, to visit the plant which manufactures STAKKAbox™ access chambers and covers.**

Commenting on the Liverpool visit CUBIS Managing Director, Michael Wightman, said "The CUBIS management team were very keen to see Noel before his retirement. The fact that Mark was able to make his first visit at the same time to attend our Directors' meeting was a real bonus. We all recognise that CUBIS would not exist without Noel's vision and we wanted to have an opportunity to give him a proper send off to show our appreciation for his efforts."

The CUBIS team had a very enjoyable 'experience' later that evening at a city centre Teppanyaki restaurant and were, of course, all tucked up in bed at a respectable hour!



(L-r) George Simpson (Atkins Limited), Paul Magowan, Alvar Kenwell, Paul Lowat (Vice President of the Institution of Civil Engineers) and Heather Reid (BBC Scotland)

platform to receive their project commendation award.

Paul provided Northlink with his reaction to the award;

*"There were many achievements on the Scheme including the design and planning to accommodate traffic flows during the works, the sustainable design and construction philosophy, the design of the River Kelvin Bridge as well as working in excess of 500,000 hours without a lost time accident. More than anything, the commendation is just reward for the hard work of the Farrans team on the project with special mention going to Ian Waugh and Derek Matthewson for their tremendous efforts."*

The commendation reads;

*"This Commendation recognises the excellence in concept design and the well planned construction in an extremely busy part of Glasgow with minimum disruption to the travelling public"*

## Saltire Society Commendation for Farrans

The Saltire Society aims to preserve all that is best in Scottish tradition and to encourage every new development which can strengthen and enrich the country's cultural life. The name Saltire is taken from the saltire, the heraldic name of the cross of St Andrew.

Each year the Saltire Society in association with The Institution of Civil Engineers holds an awards event to recognise superior construction projects. This year the ceremony took place at the Surgeons Hall in Edinburgh and it was there, with bated breath that Farrans Director, Alvar Kenwell and Contracts Manager, Paul Magowan awaited the announcement of the award winners.

Farrans had entered the Glasgow Harbour Off Site Highways contract into the competition. This £25m project was to construct the infrastructure on a busy city centre transport corridor linking the Clyde Tunnel to the M80 at the Kingston Bridge.

Our two colleagues did not have long to wait and it was with great pride that they walked to the

## Belfast Elephants make The Right Choice



Since the launch of the Northstone Specialist Sands portfolio earlier this year, our sales team have secured many orders from a wide range of customers. Sports pitches across the Province have benefitted from the superior drainage and aeration qualities of Northstone specialist sands. However, our most demanding and interesting customers reside on the Antrim Road in Belfast where they live in custom made accommodation complete with its own sanded area.

The address just happens to be the Belfast Zoological Gardens and the Asian Elephants which live there have found the Northstone No. 5 Equestrian and Menage Sand very much to their liking.

Area Sales Manager, Jonathan

Gault, secured the order for 200 tonnes of sand by way of a local contractor. He was clearly delighted with this order when he spoke recently to our Northlink reporter;

*"I think it is fair to say that we have all been pleased with the success of our new specialist sand portfolio and the business we have secured to date. The supply contract at Belfast Zoo is indicative of the opportunities available to us as we have a quality product to sell and the necessary customer service level to complement it. For some reason or other I have now acquired the nick name of Hannibal."*

**All at Northlink wish Keith Wood, Brian Watt and Jonathan Gault continued success with their specialist sand products.**

Joan receives a retirement gift from Finance Director, Andrew Donnan



## Joan McMullan Retires

**Joan McMullan, Northstone's payment manager, retired on the 30th September 2009 after over 35 years service with the Company. This landmark occasion ended Joan's terrific contribution to the business. Joan had always worked in the accounts department based in Dunmurry which was convenient as she lived locally.**

Colin Allen, Northstone's Financial Controller, provided Northlink with the following appreciation of Joan, "Joan was an absolute pleasure to work with. She was very hard working, diligent and conscientious in every aspect of her job. Joan always had a smile on her face and had a great sense

of humour. I know that Joan is greatly missed by all her friends and colleagues at Northstone".

Joan had joined the staff as an accounts clerk in Dunmurry. She had gained promotion through her hard work and team spirit to become our payments manager overseeing the processing of all our Northstone payments.

A lunch was held recently at Malone House to mark Joan's retirement and her contribution to Northstone.

**All at Northstone wish Joan a long and healthy retirement and look forward to seeing Joan call in on her way past.**



Angus Kennedy (left) receives the award from Lord Jordan on behalf of Northstone

## National Award for Northstone Guardian Goal Posts

**The Northstone Materials Division has just been recognised for exemplar performance in health and safety when it received a Mineral Products Association award for its development and use of our Guardian Goal Post system.**

The award, also known as the EPIC Trophy, was presented to Northstone by Lord Jordan of Bournville who is President of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents and accepted by the Division's Technical and Environmental Manager, Angus Kennedy. The awards ceremony was held in London on 6 October 2009 at the Institution of Civil Engineers.

The story of the Northstone Guardian Goal Posts began in 2005 when the Division was seeking a more lightweight and easy to erect system to warn of the existence of overhead electricity cables on construction sites. Angus Kennedy was pivotal in undertaking the research and he identified that lightweight, non conductible 6 metre long telescopic poles were available from a Finnish manufacturer. Within days, Angus had purchased some samples and set about having suitable steel bases manufactured locally to support the poles. The poles were then finished with a 25 metre length of red and white warning bunting.

The resultant prototypes were issued to the Division's road surfacing squads to trial as Angus explains:

"We decided to issue the prototypes to our squads to trial as previously they had used posts and barrels to identify the location of overhead electricity cables. The squad reaction was extremely positive and then we knew we had an acceptable, workable system."

The production, marketing and distribution of the Guardian Goal Post system was passed to Michael Wightman at CUBIS Industries. Our system is now used extensively by contractors throughout the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. There is no doubt that the relative ease with which the goal posts are erected and dismantled had led to more overhead electricity cables being suitably identified on site. This in turn has prevented many accidents which always have potential for a fatality when overhead electricity cables are involved.

Congratulations to Angus on his diligence and commitment in devising a safer way to work in the vicinity of overhead electricity cables.

More information on the Guardian Goal Post system can be obtained from Michael Wightman or Finn McCrory of CUBIS Industries on 028 3831 3100 or sales@cubisindustries.com



**Lean Manufacturing is defined as an operational strategy oriented towards achieving the shortest possible cycle time by eliminating waste. It is designed to radically improve profitability, customer satisfaction, throughput time and employee morale.**

Our own Northstone champion of lean manufacturing is David Glasgow, who is based at the Materials Division's Carmean Limeworks, close to the village of Moneymore in County Londonderry. David was engaged by the Division in July 2007 in association with the University of Ulster as a Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) Associate to undertake some project work at Carmean. The purpose of his work was to review current and potential markets for our Carmean products, investigate the existing reserves of material, analyse the production processes and then draw up a development plan for the business. One of the final parts of David's work was to implement a lean manufacturing strategy at the plant.

David recently provided Northlink with an insight into the lean manufacturing aspect of his work to date at Carmean;

*"We began implementing lean manufacturing techniques at Carmean in April 2009. This focused on value stream mapping the quarrying process to analyse the flow of materials. We also*

*carried out what is known as a Kaizen investigation to identify any areas of improvements in the process which could be made, irrespective of how small. In today's market, there is an obvious reduction in the volumes of material crossing the weighbridge so efficient process operations and cost control are essential. Lean manufacturing lends itself to achieving this perfectly as it involves all employees in the process."*

It was not long before David's work came to the attention of our Chief Executive, Noel Quinn, and he was so impressed by the potential of lean manufacturing that he made a presentation to senior managers in CRH on the topic. There then followed a training day and related workshops involving production directors and managers across CRH plc in Ireland on 13 November 2009. This was held at the City North Hotel in Dublin.

At the event, David presented a detailed case study of his work at Carmean to illustrate how lean manufacturing could be used in a practical way within the quarrying activities of CRH plc. The statistics presented by David indicated that production costs at Carmean have reduced by 10% since the introduction of lean manufacturing and when other continuous improvements are made, a further cost saving of 5% can be achieved. The workshops which followed allowed for the

brainstorming of ideas of how lean manufacturing could lead to benefits in the production process of the CRH businesses represented at the presentation. All in attendance found the event to be very useful and it has encouraged further work to be done to implement a lean manufacturing strategy at their own locations.

David holds a BEng degree in Manufacturing and Mechanical Engineering from Queens University in Belfast. He is also undertaking a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 4 in Management.

He lives in Cookstown and lists his interests as motorcycling as well as downhill and cross country mountain biking when time permits.

David told Northlink something of life so far at Northstone;

*"Coming from a 'hands on' engineering background I enjoy the variety of tasks which my job entails. I have gained a wealth of invaluable information and advice by working alongside experienced quarry managers and operatives. I consider the Northstone team to be professional and hard working, and I am proud to be part of it."*

***The good news this Christmas is that David has accepted an offer of employment with the Materials Division and will join the Company as a Process Engineer in January 2010.***

## Christmas Greetings from Team Farrans in Scotland

**The news this Christmas from Farrans Director Alvar Kenwell and his Farrans team in Scotland is about the successful commencement of a new contract in Glasgow and continued progress on the M80 Stepps to Haggs road construction project.**

Following on from the success of the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre (SECC) Infrastructure contract in Glasgow, Farrans were awarded the £7.4m package for the installation of concrete piles and construction of the sub-structure of the new 12,500 seat Arena. This 32 week contract for the same Client was won on a combined price and quality bid. The site works commenced in September with

*Piling underway at the new SECC contract in Glasgow.*



completion due in May 2010. The site team led by Ian Waugh and Derek Mathewson have once again been rising to the sustainable construction challenge by recycling materials on site to provide the 14,000m<sup>2</sup> of piling platform. The materials used include road planings and recycled demolition rubble some of which came from anchor blocks buried at depths of up to 4m below the surface.

The installation of the required 401 rock socketed cast in place concrete piles is beyond the half way mark and construction of the reinforced concrete pile caps has commenced. Currently there are five piling rigs being utilised on site with piling activities due for completion in early January next year. In excess of 13,500m<sup>3</sup> of concrete will be placed before contract completion in May 2010. This is divided between concrete piles (5,500m<sup>3</sup>), pile caps (4,250m<sup>3</sup>) and floor slab (3,800m<sup>3</sup>) and will incorporate approximately 2,500 tonnes of reinforcement. The contract also requires the installation of an 80m long 3.0m diameter service tunnel which will provide access from the back of house to the main stage area in the new Arena.

The M80 Stepps to Haggs road construction project also continues to progress to programme. David Parr and his team are now at the end of the first year of the project to build 18 kilometres of new motorway running across a combination of agricultural land, peat bogs, mine-workings and

existing carriageway, and also the construction of 62 structures. A variety of techniques have been used to stabilise the new carriageway, such as band-drains, concrete modulus columns, earth retaining walls and grouting. The grouting works are required to stabilise an area of mine-workings where limestone and fireclay were extracted. To date 2,000 holes have been drilled, with an average length of 30m, taking the 14,000 tonnes of grout required.

In spite of the August 2009 being the second wettest August on record, 70% of the bulk earthworks was completed, which equates to 1.7million m<sup>3</sup> of cut. This has enabled further progress on structures. Key milestones include the launch of the Bailey Bridge at North Road across the A80, demolition of the Glenview and North Road bridges and completion of a number of major culverts and underpasses.

The M80 project also continues to build on the best practice developed within Farrans Construction. In this regard a Safety Samantha initiative has been developed to promote better awareness among school children of the dangers of playing on construction sites. To date over 150 children in North Lanarkshire and Falkirk have met Safety Samantha. The project also has a Scottish Spina Bifida Challenge which mirrors the CRH Simon Community Challenge and to date some £5,500 has been donated to this worthy charity as a result of the health and safety

performance on site. The site management team have also decided to meet once a month to continue their professional development. The objective of this initiative is that each month one of the team will be asked to deliver a presentation on a particular topic on highways construction to disseminate knowledge and encourage debate. The topics covered so far include earthworks design and testing, demolition, temporary works design, traffic management, construction techniques and the CRH Fatality Elimination Fundamentals. The most recent lecturer to take the podium was site agent Robert McVitty who spoke on earthworks and mass haul diagrams.

Farrans have also recently been awarded the £3M Scottish Water contract to divert all of the water and sewer services currently existing within the M80 road construction envelope. Bob Dooner and Eion McCreight lead the utilities teams in carrying out this work and they have the benefit of liaising closely with colleagues within HMC to ensure the works run smoothly. The Farrans Utilities Department in Scotland continues to achieve tender success and have also won a £3M contract from Transport Initiatives Edinburgh (TIE) to carry out utility diversions on the Edinburgh Trams Project with Conlon Morrison leading the team in this case.

**More from Team Farrans in Scotland next time.**

# PROMOTION for ANDY at CUBIS

Andy Hobbs has been appointed as the new Director of Site Operations at the CUBIS Industries' site in Liverpool.

Andy, who joined the Company in August of this year, will succeed Graeme Pringle, who will take up the new role as Director of Product Development.

Andy started his career with British Aerospace in 1984 as an aircraft fitter in his native Manchester and since then has worked in a number of production management jobs in the North West of England, specialising in compression moulding. His expertise in these production processes has been quickly applied to operations in Liverpool, where the main product lines are manufactured by compression and injection moulding.

The Liverpool site has been doing well in terms of sales in recent months after a good first half of 2009 and Andy admits that one of the main reasons for joining the business was this strong performance despite the current recession. Not one to rest on his laurels, Andy has ambitious plans for the Liverpool site in the future.

"There is great potential for the site and the Company as a whole over the next few years. My role in this development will involve manufacturing our portfolio of products as cost effectively and efficiently as possible. We intend to achieve our sales targets

month by month and with the commitment shown by everyone on site so far, I'm confident this can be achieved."

Along with other members of CUBIS staff in Lurgan, Roscommon and Liverpool, Andy recently attended a CRH seminar in Dublin on Lean Thinking in Production and will implement these values into operations at Liverpool. "I have introduced lean manufacturing processes in my previous roles and found them to be very successful. It is based around eliminating all waste from production in order to improve efficiency and increase profitability."

Andy lives in Oldham, Greater Manchester, and hasn't felt too much animosity as a result of his upbringing in Liverpool's rival city just yet. However, as a lifelong supporter of Manchester City, that may soon change. "There hasn't been too much stick so far, but my team have yet to play Everton or Liverpool so far this season. Maybe when that happens the tribal lines will be redrawn!" he said.

Andy is married to Carmel and the couple have two children, Alexander (9 years old) and Emily (6 years old). Away from work, he enjoys going to the gym, playing lacrosse, playing the bagpipes (not at the same time) and spending time with his family.

**Northlink congratulates Andy on his recent promotion and wishes him every success in his role with our CUBIS business.**



## Another Satisfied Customer

The Farrans team in England are continuing to deliver construction projects on time, on budget and to the required quality standard. This superior performance was exemplified recently when the Lowestoft South Fire Station was officially opened by the Princess Royal. The £3.5m design and build project for Suffolk Fire and Rescue Services had a contract period of 66 weeks.

It involved the construction of a 1500m<sup>2</sup> fire station which included 5 appliance bays and sleeping accommodation as well as a 3000m<sup>2</sup> external concrete yard and a 5 storey bespoke cold smoke house and training tower.

The project was opened by HRH Princess Anne on 24th September 2009 (see inset). In his address to the audience at the ceremony, the Chief Fire Officer, Andy Fry, commented "I'm delighted to announce that this fire station has been delivered on budget and ahead of time. This is testament, in large measure, to the professional way in which the construction team have engaged with fire service staff, to bring lines on plan drawings to life in the form of the fire station we're enjoying today. It's a great achievement and I'd like to place on record my wholehearted thanks to them for their contribution"

Congratulations to Site Manager Phil Browne and his team on further enhancing the Farrans brand in the region.

There have been a number of other reasons for celebration in recent months among our people in Cambridge and none more so than Dan Moore returning to work at the Epping Forest Primary School project after his illness.

At this time of year we also could not ignore the birth of baby Jordan to Rachel Winters and congratulations go to her and Aaron on their recent arrival.

Richard Weir also decided to walk up the aisle with Georgie and rumour has it that there are some broken hearts which will just never mend in the Cambridge area on hearing the news.

Other notable events include James Clark being awarded his degree in Building Surveying and Carl Studd handing over his first three projects as a Farrans Contract Manager, all on time and budget with the clients in each case extremely pleased with their new buildings.

**More from our Cambridge colleagues next time.**

## SAFETY SAM Visits Lisburn

Pupils at Ballymacash Primary School in Lisburn, County Antrim had a special visitor this term when the Farrans Safety Sam came calling.

Safety Sam, also known as Brian Hill, has received many plaudits for his work with schools across the United Kingdom in advising young children of the dangers of playing near construction sites. This is in keeping with the Farrans policy of working with the communities and other stakeholders in the vicinity of our construction works. Brian's other job is as a hard working health and safety advisor with the Division.

Farrans are currently undertaking pipe laying activities in the Lisburn area on behalf of Northern Ireland Water and will shortly be commencing work close to Ballymacash Primary School as part of an 11.5km contract worth £1.5m.

Brian told Northlink something of the philosophy behind his Safety Sam presentation;

"Children are by nature very inquisitive and love to explore so construction sites can look very exciting. However,

there are so many dangers which lie in wait for children if they venture onto sites and these include deep excavations, heavy machinery and stored materials. In the Safety Sam visits to school we always stress to the children that our sites are not playgrounds and ask them to remember the Farrans motto which is 'Play Safe - Stay Safe'."

Northlink commends Brian for his commitment, enthusiasm and skill in delivering the Safety Sam presentation to school children.

*Back row (l-r) Brian Hill and Gerry Curran (Northern Ireland Water) and the kids from Ballymacash Primary School*





## Farrans Project Shortlisted for Streetworks Award

The Farrans Belfast Streets Ahead Project has been named as a finalist in the National Joint Utilities Group (NJUG) Awards which recognise excellence within the street works industry.

The project has been shortlisted in the 'Avoiding Damage to Underground Assets' category, and according to Farrans Contracts Manager, John McReynolds, it is an issue which has proved to be a particular challenge for the team.

*"Belfast City Centre has suffered from decades of underinvestment and previous works undertaken in a haphazard and piecemeal fashion and therefore utility service records have been poor or non-existent in some cases."*

*Avoiding damage to existing underground assets and preventing injury to members of the public and our workforce, has been a high priority for the project.*

*We have brought in a specialist underground mapping company to carry out a ground radar survey to complement the existing utility records and staff have received specialised training regarding locating and avoiding underground services.*

*We are delighted that the efforts being made by the entire team have been recognised by the awards' judging panel."*

NJUG is the only UK industry association representing utilities on street works issues. Its focus is on promoting best practice, safety, quality and co-ordination of works as well as representing utilities in discussions with Government and other stakeholders.

**The award winners will shortly be announced at a prestigious ceremony in the House of Commons.**



Scalloped Oak Moth

## Scalloped Oaks and Burnished Brasses

**The secret life of the quarries in the Northstone Materials Division was further revealed in July this year when a moth trapping and identification training session was hosted by our Long Mountain Quarry in County Antrim.**

The event, which was organised by the Quarry Products Association for Northern Ireland (QPANI), was supported by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency's Biodiversity Unit (NIEA). It was attended by a dozen biodiversity officers from the NIEA, Dungannon & South Tyrone and Newtownabbey Councils, Conservation Volunteers NI and the Ulster Wildlife Trust. Long Mountain was chosen for the course as it has interesting habitats away from the worked quarry area, such as a hazel wood and a heather moor.

Wildlife experts, Dave Allen and Clive Mellon, who were conducting the course, had set up several different types of ultra-violet light traps the previous evening. The traps were lined with cardboard egg trays for the moths to hide in when they get trapped. The traps were opened in turn and the trays, packed with moths, were passed around for the group to examine closely. Dave and Clive identified forty-five different species, of which 27 were new kilometre square records. One, Epagoge grotiana, appears to be a new

County Antrim recorded species. After emptying all the traps, other catching techniques were demonstrated such as netting, beating and sweeping. All involved had a great time using the new techniques, with Dave and Clive giving numerous expert tips and identifying the insects and larvae caught. The course was a tremendous success, with many participants saying how interesting and enjoyable it had been.

Course participants were supervised by the Division's Environmental and Technical Manager, Angus Kennedy. Angus also produced an excellent set of notes and a ten minute training video for all the participants. A write-up of this event, together with a recent visit by the Dorset Geologists' Association to Carmean Limeworks, and the Division's recent open day at North Down demonstrating how we went the extra mile in facilitating such visits, won the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) category in the QPANI 2009 Environmental Awards.



Burnished Brass moth found at Long Mountain Quarry



## The French Connection at Cubis

The CUBIS Industries French sales team are preparing for a busy 2010 after a very positive start working under the new single company identity over the last year.

The three-person team, consisting of Rémi Beauhaire, Yann Canonne and Marie Vaucheret (pictured left), supply access chambers to high profile clients such as SNCF, the French train operator, and France Telecom as well as other market sectors.

The team has risen to the challenge and are ambitious for the future, but it is no surprise that they are finding it easy to adapt to life under the new CUBIS structure. Rémi Beauhaire and Yann Canonne, who look after sales in France, have worked together in the past, as Yann explains: "Rémi and I had been competitors for several years when I was working for Carson Industries and Rémi was selling for C4 Industries. However,

we had a connection from working together previously for another company so when we all became CUBIS it wasn't too bad! I have worked with Marie for the last four years so we are finding it quite natural and rewarding to work as a team."

Marie Vaucheret provides commercial support for Rémi and Yann from her base in the CUBIS Roscommon office. She joined Carson Industries in 2005 after moving to Roscommon with her partner who she met while backpacking in India. In a twist of fate, the day after she arrived in Ireland, Carson were advertising her current job, which required a fluent French speaker.

Marie, who is originally from Paris, but once lived near the French-Swiss border where Rémi and Yann now reside, enjoys the activity levels and sense of satisfaction derived from her job. "Rémi and

Yann are very optimistic about the CUBIS prospects in France and as they are busy, so am I. It's still quite funny to hear our customers tell me what good French I have for an Irish person!" she said.

The team have big plans for the Company in France, not least Marie, who has suggested on several occasions that the French team should move to idyllic French Polynesia. Rémi states his ambitions quite clearly; "The potential for our products in France is huge with several lucrative markets still to be penetrated. My target is for our market share and sales to increase as quickly as possible!"

Northlink looks forward to carrying further reports from our dedicated and energetic French sales team who are ably promoting and selling our products in this important European market.



## Materials Division Drivers Learn More About Fuel Efficiency

**The focus on achieving greater efficiency in the use of all forms of energy across the Northstone divisions continues as we seek to reduce costs and maintain our competitiveness. One of the most recent initiatives in this regard was to improve the awareness of our mobile plant operators of how their driving behaviour can directly affect the fuel efficiency of their machines.**

The story begins with Brian Watt, a director of the Northstone Materials Division, asking one of our mobile plant suppliers, McCormick Macnaughton, to devise and deliver a suitable fuel efficiency training course for the plant operators in his Division.

Brian's course objectives were quite simple, as he told Northlink;

*"I wanted our drivers to be aware of the importance of fuel economy and how they can influence it in their own machines. The one day course had to be both classroom and site based to ensure maximum*

*retention of the learning points. The course design ensures that the drivers understand how slight changes in operating techniques can achieve significant fuel savings. The on site aspect of the course provided practical examples of operating best practice to maximise fuel efficiency."*

Northlink can report that three courses have been delivered to date at our quarries and sand sites with all operators who have attended responding positively to the advice and guidance provided. It is also noticeable that our operators are now making the journey to the location fuel pumps less regularly which in essence is what the course is designed to achieve.

Brian Watt deserves great credit for his diligence in shaping and organising the delivery of the first ever fuel efficiency course for plant operators in Northstone and we understand he already has plans to deliver a similar course for our truck drivers.



## DESSIE'S AWARD WINNING IDEA

**It is not often that a Sand Production Manager is commended for and actually wins an award for reduced tonnages but Dessie McGuckin clearly knew something when he submitted an entry for a Quarry Products Association (QPA) Environmental Award.**

Dessie manages the Materials Division's three sand production sites on the shores of Lough Neagh. He has spent most of his working life in sand production and is very much aware of the significant amounts of fuel used by our barges travelling to and from the pumping grounds on the Lough. He also recognised that the fuel used by their large marine

## Alex's Platinum Performance

The environmental management performance of Farrans Construction has again been recognised in the Northern Ireland Environmental Benchmarking Survey as organised by Arena Network. Arena Network is the environmental arm of Business in the Community in Northern Ireland. It seeks to challenge and support local companies to improve their environmental performance through practical programmes and benchmarking indicators.

Each year Farrans Construction participates in the Arena Network Survey which targets 250 of Northern Ireland's largest public and private organisations with 15 different sectors represented. This year some 139 organisations entered the survey which scores entrants on how well their environmental objectives are integrated into business operations and progress made in improving environmental performance.

Environmental management at Farrans is overseen by the Division's Safety, Health, Environmental and Quality Manager, Alex Anderson, and true to form, Alex exceeded all expectations in this year's survey when Farrans were awarded Platinum status. This means Farrans achieved a score of 90% or more in the survey which was a magnificent performance.

The Platinum Award is deserved recognition for Alex Anderson who

has done much to promote the benefits of sound environmental management practices to Farrans employees. He is also pivotal in communicating the environmental best practice implementation at Farrans to existing and prospective clients.

This year, Alex was also nominated for the George Dawson Award for Environmental Contribution in 2009 which recognises the significant contribution made by a business person to improving the environmental performance of his or her organisation and its impacts on the wider community. Alex was highly commended in this prestigious competition.

Platinum normally sells at twice the market price of gold on world markets but to Farrans Construction and the wider Northstone family, Alex is priceless.



Alex Anderson (seated) explains an aspect of environmental best practice to colleague, Conor McGimpsey

*(L-r) Environment Minister, Edwin Poots presents Dessie McGuckin with his award, and Gordon Best of the QPA is in attendance.*

engines is the main source of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions in the Northstone sand extraction and processing business.

Last summer, in keeping with the Northstone Environmental Policy and Energy Action Plan, the Company launched its first energy suggestion scheme to encourage suggestions from our people to reduce energy consumption. Dessie used the opportunity to submit one of his many energy efficiency ideas as he takes up the story;

*"My idea was to reduce the engine revs on each of our six barges by just over 10%. This would greatly reduce fuel consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions without adversely affecting the performance of the vessels. I was delighted to win a prize for my suggestion but more importantly my director of production, Brian Thompson, backed the idea. The modification to the engines has meant we use 15% less gas oil than previously in each barge. Another advantage is that we have reduced our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions this year by more than 200 tonnes."*

Dessie's idea was subsequently entered for the QPA award and it was no surprise to any of his colleagues at Northstone that his entry won the Carbon Reduction Initiative of the Year category.

Northlink congratulates Dessie on his tremendous idea and all at Northstone look forward to hearing more from our innovative and resourceful Sand Production Manager as he continually improves our carbon footprint on the shores of Lough Neagh.



Safety Awards and Accolades at Farrans. Standing (l-r) Richard Guy, Brian Hill, Declan McLogan and Robin Kirpatrick, seated (l-r) Kevin Corley, Eamonn Sweeney and Alec Anderson.

## Health and Safety Comes First at Farrans

The senior management team at Farrans have always shown exemplary commitment to the paramount importance of health and safety in their business. In fact, the Farrans Employee Safety Handbook clearly states:

*“Remember: Nothing we do is so important that we cannot take the time to do it safely”*

This approach has led to superior performance in health and safety in recent years and the implementation of many best practice initiatives.

In 2009, the Farrans way of managing health and safety was recognised by three highly respected organisations when they declared our Construction Division winners of their respective health and safety competitions.

Farrans won the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) Gold Award, the Construction Employers Federation (CEF) Quality Performance in Health and Safety Award and the National Irish Safety Organisation (NISO)/Northern Ireland Safety Group (NISG) Award for Health

and Safety in Civil Engineering.

It is unlikely that this feat will ever be repeated such is the competition for these coveted accolades.

Farrans Health and Safety Director, Kevin Corley, was clearly pleased with the success of his team when he spoke to our Northlink reporter recently:

*“I am truly delighted for each and every member of the Health and Safety Team at Farrans. It is well deserved recognition for Alex Anderson, Declan McLogan, Brian Hill, Robin Kirkpatrick and Richard Guy. One only has to consider our recent accident record, the quality of the internal training delivered, the initiatives implemented and the way in which health and safety is integrated into the business to realise we have something special going on in health and safety at Farrans. I know I could be accused of being biased but I truly believe we set the standard for others to follow in the industry.”*

**Northlink congratulates Farrans Construction on their well deserved awards.**



## GOLD STANDARD FOR CROAGHAN QUARRY

(L-r) Craig Chisholm, Peter McKie (Chairman of the Health and Safety Executive NI) and Stewart Heaney (Central Procurement Directorate) at the awards ceremony

The ongoing commitment to maintaining and improving health and safety standards in the Northstone Materials Division was recognised this autumn by the Quarry Products Association for Northern Ireland with a gold standard award for our Croaghan Quarry. The rigorous assessment included a full review of the Division's health and safety management system by two external auditors followed by an on site inspection to ensure that the system was effectively implemented. Divisional Health and Safety Manager, Craig Chisholm and Croaghan Quarry Manager, Paul Hughes, were pivotal in preparing and submitting the award entry and facilitating the audit. Divisional Managing Director, Graham McQuillan, told Northlink something of the importance of health and safety in his organisation.

*“Health and safety always comes first in my Division. We always have to be mindful of the inherent risks associated with the production of aggregates and the manufacture of coated materials, concrete, roofing and the delivery of our products to customers. Our team at Croaghan thoroughly deserve this award for their efforts. It pleases me greatly that the auditors were particularly impressed with the communication of safety alerts at the quarry which tells me that we are effectively communicating the important health and safety message as well as involving our people at every level in the process. The fact that our quarry also had no lost time accidents in the year to date is a credit to all involved. I congratulate everyone at Croaghan on their award.”*

To achieve the Gold Standard in the Quarry Products Association Awards Scheme requires a score of over 90% against all the award criteria.

# The SAFETY FACTOR

Over the past few months the Health and Safety Directors have been busy effectively communicating and implementing the CRH Fundamentals for Fatality Elimination. These were devised as an integral part of a strategic response to the eight work related fatalities which have occurred in CRH plc this year. There should now be no doubt as to the position with regard to the requirements in respect of the Fundamentals as detailed below:-

- (1) Risk Assessment
- (2) Mobile Plant Safety
- (3) Isolation of Operating Machinery
- (4) Machinery Guarding
- (5) Confined Space Entry
- (6) Working at Heights
- (7) Lifting Operations
- (8) Underground and Overhead Utility Dangers
- (9) Use of Personal Protective Equipment
- (10) Conveyance and Storage of Materials under Pressure
- (11) Blasting Operations

In the year to 31 October 2009 at Northstone we have had 20 lost time accidents resulting in 103 lost days. These have produced accident frequency and severity rates of 0.31 and 1.61 respectively. In the same period in 2008, we had recorded 34 lost time accidents and 620 lost days. The resultant accident frequency and severity rates were 0.53 and 9.80 respectively. Quite an improvement. In fact our current frequency and severity rates are at their lowest since 2002.

It is also worthy of mention that our former Quarry and Asphalt Division and Beckett Construction Solutions have achieved the landmark of having no lost time accidents in the year to 31 October 2009.

We continue to report and investigate all near miss incidents across the Northstone divisions which had potential for injury. Some 70% of the near misses this year relate to the following causes:-

- defective/malfunctioning fixed plant
- lifting operations
- defective/malfunctioning mobile plant
- operator errors involving mobile plant or vehicles
- underground service strikes

We must do everything we can to continue to improve our standards in these areas to further reduce the risk of an accident.

The Visible Felt Leadership (VFL) visits which have been undertaken this year have indicated again that we have ongoing issues with personal protective equipment not being worn, housekeeping, inadequate planning for safety and unsafe working at height. Again, we must all focus our efforts on eradicating unsafe conditions in this regard to reduce accidents.

In the year to the 31st October 2009 we have also delivered some 22,751 health and safety training hours which equates to 7.42 hours per employee or sub contractor. Achieving our target of 12 hours of training per employee or sub contractor for 2009 will be challenging. As a Company, we are also committed to enhancing the delivery of health and safety training to ensure there is as much involvement of our people as possible in the sessions. It has been proved that such involvement increases the amount of knowledge retained by those receiving the training.

Our health and safety teams in each of the Northstone divisions continue to work tirelessly against the risk of complacency in what is our number one priority.

Their good work has brought external recognition this year with various awards and accolades. They also deserve and demand our full assistance and support in achieving their objective.

**Have a happy, peaceful and safe Christmas and New Year.**

