

## File

**name:** Chapter\_2\_-\_Welcome\_to\_Northern\_Ireland\_-\_The\_Rt\_Hon\_Chris\_Heaton-Harris\_MP,\_Secretary\_of\_State\_for\_Northern\_Ireland[1].mp3

**Moderator questions in Bold**, Respondents in Regular text.

**KEY: Unable to decipher** = (inaudible + timecode), **Phonetic spelling** (ph) + timecode), **Missed word** = (mw + timecode), **Talking over each other** = (talking over each other + timecode).

Rt Hon Chris Heaton-Harris: Welcome, everybody, to the Northern Ireland Investment Summit 2023. I was pleased to meet many of you last night. Many people here for the first time, so if I could welcome some people who I know are here for the first time from Neumora, from Moderna, from AstraZeneca, and from Petronas, it was a pleasure to meet you all, and I hope you like what you've seen so far. I also hope that you all enjoyed an Ulster fry this morning, and that will keep you going until we break for any refreshments. And it's wonderful to be with you all today as we showcase what makes Northern Ireland a fantastic place to invest. I'd to thank you all for coming, and also extend my thanks to colleagues and the co-hosts for this fantastic event, and someone you'll hear from a bit later, the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, Kemi Badenoch. Michael Gove, I'd like to-, my fellow Secretary of State, I'd like to welcome you. My Minister of State, Steve Baker. Dominic, who is also co-hosting, Dominic Johnson from the Department for Business and Trade, you are all more than welcome, and thank you for your participation. And I'd love to thank Emma for her fantastic and inspiring words just now. She is a fantastic example of a young person who is actively contributing to Northern Ireland's peace and prosperity by building a successful small business, developing an innovative product, and leading change in her community. Thank you, Emma, very much indeed. Now, in today's Northern Ireland, people-, young people, like Emma, are able to work hard and build a wonderful future against a backdrop of opportunity.

Northern Ireland has enormous economic potential and is full of the talent and expertise required by the sectors we've mentioned, and many others, to the sectors of the future, to succeed and to thrive. It's particularly fitting that this investment summit, which showcases that success, is being held in Belfast as we mark the 25 years since the signing of the Belfast Good Friday Agreement. A quarter of a century on, this landmark agreement continues to provide the framework for peace and prosperity in Northern Ireland, and the UK government remains steadfastly committed to the agreement. Earlier this year, we welcomed signatories and supporters of the agreement, including Senator George Mitchell and President and Secretary Clinton, to Northern Ireland to mark the anniversary, and we had a real sense of-, in that room, that particular day, of energy and optimism, and I feel a similar, exciting buzz-, well, felt it yesterday evening, as we all networked, and in this room today, and it was lovely to see so many people networking so hard last night, exactly what this event is all about. Now, to understand why the Belfast Good Friday Agreement is so important, all you have to do is look around you. During the troubles, an event like this would have been impossible.

I'm very proud to say that this event, Northern Ireland's-, through this event, Northern Ireland's innovative businesses are being showcased over 200 investors from the USA, the Middle East, Europe and Asia-Pacific regions, and the Belfast Good Friday Agreement continues to stand as an internationally recognised example of conflict resolution, which has benefited all communities. Today, we're part of an agreement story, as we not only consider how far Northern Ireland has come, but we all look forward to the future and what it brings. Now, if you're an internationally renowned firm considering investment in Northern Ireland, be assured that Northern Ireland has everything you need to grow. From its highly-educated workforce and its strong partnerships between academia and business, to its stunning scenery, tourism offer and rich cultural and artistic heritage, Northern Ireland is a great place to live, to work and to invest. Already established as a world-leading-, as world-leading in key growth sectors, Northern Ireland's history of economic innovation and ingenuity, gives this place every chance to thrive when supported by continued investment in business, talent and infrastructure. Northern Ireland's already expanding into industries with enormous future growth potential, such as cybersecurity, where we now have over 2,700 cyber professionals working in 120-, over 120 companies here.

This, together with the fantastic progress we've seen in FinTech, health and life sciences and advanced manufacturing, are-, is one of the reasons why Belfast is ranked in the top 25 tech cities in the world, second in the UK, after London, and I was reminded last night, I should say this, we have many other centres of excellence in business in Northern Ireland, including Derry, Londonderry and Newry. The UK government is committed to supporting Northern Ireland's talent and expertise. I hope we are demonstrating that commitment today, but for example, in the-, the new government's-, in the UK government's New Decade, New Approach agreement, we pledged to ensure that there were 5,000 cyber professionals working in Northern Ireland by 2030, a target that we are well on track to meet. Northern Ireland is home to 4% of the UK's cybersecurity workforce, despite only representing 2.8% of the UK's population. We've invested £15 million in Skill Up, which will enable higher education providers to deliver more than 20,000 training places and ensure that businesses can access the skills they need. Through the new deal for Northern Ireland, we've also invested £8 million in Invest NI, to expand their overseas presence and promote trade and investment in Northern Ireland, and of course, Northern Ireland is now uniquely positioned to take advantages-, to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the Windsor Framework.

The framework provides great opportunities for Northern Ireland to build on the unique benefits of being part of the United Kingdom and our internal market, having access to the new trade arrangements that we negotiate, and being subject to the UK regime for trade in services, whilst also having access to the EU single market for goods. The framework restores the free flow of trade from GB to NI through a new green lane. It gives the people of Northern Ireland a veto over new EU laws that apply here, and it protects Northern Ireland's place in our union, through fixing the practical problems that were displaying themselves, and ensuring that UK decisions on tax and spend benefit people and businesses in Northern Ireland, as they do in Great Britain. The Windsor Framework really does help build a brighter future for the people and businesses of Northern Ireland. Now, I'd hoped by now that we would have an executive back up and running for potential investors here to travel here today and be met by ministers from Northern Ireland and discuss their ideas. Sadly, it's-, this has proved not to be the case, but my team and I

have worked intensively with the DUP, and indeed all the main political-, Northern Ireland political parties across the summer, and I'm genuinely hopeful that progress will be unlocked very very soon.

Now, I know it will require courage on all sides to prioritise reconciliation and prosperity over division, but I know this can be done because it was done in spades 25 years ago to deliver the foundation-, the foundations of peace and prosperity here in Northern Ireland, but I can tell you, getting the executive back is the UK government's top priority for this place, and we will do everything we possibly can to do that, and to make Northern Ireland a great place to live, to work and to do business for the future. We're committed to make sure Northern Ireland can deliver on its full potential, and deliver peace, prosperity and progress. Now, throughout Northern Ireland's history, and indeed, some extremely challenging and difficult times, the business community has always kept driving forward. Their resilience and ambition for a better Northern Ireland has played no small part in the journey that has brought us to the place we are today. This investment summit is not just a showcase of the best Northern Ireland has to offer, but a celebration of those people who have put this place on the map as an incredible place to work and to live. You'll have the opportunity today to hear about Northern Ireland's exciting present and promising future directly from Northern Ireland's businesses, and from investors, who have already chosen Northern Ireland as the best place to grow their businesses.

Now, let me me please encourage you to listen to our panel discussions with thought leaders, attend our breakout sessions with sector experts, and visit the exhibition spaces where businesses from right across this place are ready to promote their latest innovations and technological ideas. And as you will have seen from Emma, they're very, very good at getting their point across. Northern Ireland's business community benefits from a very collaborative and productive relationship with its educational institutions. As part of the Belfast City Deal, Queen's University and Ulster University are collaborating on the screen and media innovation lab, which seeks to build on the incredible success story that creative industries have made for themselves here in Northern Ireland. Both of the Northern Ireland's universities rank in the top ten in the UK for bioscience research. Indeed, in February '23, earlier this year, the UK government announced £11 million will be provided to deliver a cyber AI-, a cyber AI technologies hub at the Centre for Secure Information Technologies in Queen's University, which also is unlocking a further £4.5 million in investment from the private sector.

This hub will see-, will build-, will build on already stellar track record of collaborating with industry, working with the cybersecurity companies based in Northern Ireland already on research and development projects, to harness the power of AI-enabled cyber security, and I'm very pleased to see that Queen's University, Belfast and Ulster University are here supporting the summit today, and please, when you get the opportunity, do speak to them about their exciting-, the exciting work they're doing with start-ups and businesses, and how they can possible help you. Please also speak to my government colleagues from UK government. and our colleagues in Invest Northern Ireland, about how we can support your ambitions to invest and do business here. We are, surprisingly for government I feel, here to help. Finally, I'm delighted to have so many international government representatives with us here today from Ireland,

who I specifically-, absolutely welcome. The EU, the US, North America and Asia-Pacific countries. This is a great demonstration of the UK's commitment to building global partnerships for the benefit of local people and local businesses here in Northern Ireland, and you are all more than welcome. This is an exciting event, future-focused and full of potential, just like today's Northern Ireland. I know that the relationships that people will build in this room today will benefit businesses and communities in Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK for-, and beyond, for years to come, and I really do hope you enjoy the summit. Thank you very much indeed.

Captions by Verbit Go