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on the way to including 75% of all Northern Irish plastics companies in its membership. This is actually a staggering achievement when compared to the ratios of most other plastics-based trade associations.

Inclusiveness is important too and has played a part: One of the ground-breaking features of NIPA today is the way in which plastics composites are increasingly becoming a part of its membership. I personally have never understood why the reinforced plastics sector has remained apart from the bulk of other plastics processing industries. It seems to Ceramicx that NIPA is leading the way here - to have all polymer-based industries speaking with one voice.

SPE All Ireland heard that numbers of NIPA joiners are on the increase and that many parts of the plastics processing scenario are buoyant and healthy thanks in no small part to the efforts and investment of the leading names such as Armstrong Medical, Brett Martin, Denman, Denroy, Greiner Packaging and many others.

Localism is supremely important - as it should be, NIPA has identified several key challenges here and has recognised the need to work as a consortium in order to address these and to rally the sector in a market led approach to innovation, energy, transport logistics, education and training.

NIPA Members also have a keen external and export market focus and view these markets as their main opportunities for growth. One in three of the NIPA Members individually exports to over 30 countries and one in eight have received the Queens Award for Enterprise in recognition for these efforts.

The main manufacturing areas covered by the membership include extruding (pipes/tubes, sheet & film), injection moulding, composite technologies, thermoforming, blow moulding, stretch blow moulding, and rotational moulding.

The membership is made up of manufacturers, research and development / advisory & support services / higher education, and the wider supply chain. The NIPA Board is drawn from and annually elected by the local manufacturing members.

NIPA facilitates inter-company networking and Working Groups in Composites, Energy, Manufacturing Processing and Material Innovations.

NIPA has also established links into Cogent and Semta (the Sector Skills Councils), as well as the British Plastics Federation (BPF) and other agencies: to help promote, manage and support the delivery of the industry strategy and plans.

Ceramicx undertook our second visit in early May of this year. This further cemented the NIPA relationship and, via a series of company visits in Northern Ireland, allowed us to talk turkey and get down to business with a number of leading manufacturers.

More detailed issues of infrared energy and IR heat work, naturally, were the focus of our 2nd trip itinerary. The common denominators most often are reduction of energy and of cycle time in order to decrease costs and to improve profitability.

Ceramicx is now well on the way to reciprocating the same hospitality and trading with Gerry and NIPA member companies. Our factory based training in West Cork in Infrared Heat know-how is already underway for a number of Northern Irish business. The resulting closer business relationships can only bring good to all.

The next issue of HeatWorks magazine will report in more detail on both our own and NIPA’s work into energy saving matters.

Northern Ireland Polymers Association

The Northern Ireland Polymers Association (NIPA) promotes and supports a network that encourages the innovation, training, sustainable development and profitable growth of the plastics industry in Northern Ireland.