

# Written evidence submitted by Camlin Group, relating to the Investment in Northern Ireland inquiry, INI0004

## Overview & Summary

1. Camlin Group is a Northern Irish owned and headquartered company focused on optimising critical infrastructures that people, cities and communities around the world depend on daily. Camlin Group operates through business divisions centred on the energy and rail sectors, as is an active contractual supplier to all UK Distribution Network Operators.
2. Founded in 2010 with a small group of 12 people, we have grown into a global team of over 470 people with facilities in 21 cities across 17 countries. We have core highly specialised teams working across ‘Software’, ‘AI’, ‘Analytics’ and ‘Data Engineering’ hubs in Northern Ireland, Italy and Poland and have long held a reputation for engineering and technology excellence, winning a number of prestigious technology innovation awards.
3. The core of Camlin’s work is focused on building intelligence and resilience into tomorrow’s energy and rail networks, enabling a decarbonised future through sustainable and smart solutions. Despite the global pandemic, in the last 18 months Camlin has seen growth of £4.1m demonstrating sectoral resiliency and the global reliance on energy infrastructures, which is only set to increase as the transition to low carbon technologies accelerates against the Build Back Better and Build Back Greener agendas.
4. Camlin Group has a critical role to play in the green transition through investing in innovative and state of the art technologies to solve industry-wide issues and support the UK in meeting its 2050 net-zero emissions target as we move to an increasingly decentralised electricity system. Our innovative and intelligent monitoring products and services help make electricity and rail networks safer, more efficient, resilient and sustainable as we transition to a low-carbon economy.
5. We are delighted to have the opportunity to respond to this BEIS Select Committee inquiry into ‘Investment in Northern Ireland’ which is of great interest and relevance to Camlin Group. We fully believe, and are committed to supporting, Northern Ireland’s unique position, talent, and business environment which can support thriving industries and create long term stability, economic opportunity for its population. Should the BEIS Committee wish to further explore some of the points highlighted in this submission we stand ready to support with further activity and discussion.

## Steps that business can take to invest effectively in Northern Ireland

6. Camlin is a local long-time investor in Northern Ireland and is committed to growing the core of its operations across manufacturing, technology and engineering in the province.
7. We believe Northern Ireland has a wealth of talent to drive our aggressive growth plan and created ‘Future Innovators’, our graduate trainee programme, to attract and engage young people across the community. We want to source and nurture local talent, build relevant skillsets, and provide long term job security with exciting career development. We plan to create up to 200+ additional jobs and apprenticeships across Northern Ireland over the next 5 years, many of which are in a growing ‘high tech’ and ‘green energy’ space.
8. Simultaneously, Camlin contributes and supports the local energy infrastructure development and optimisation, via a long term contracted partnership with NIE. Through Camlin equipment and services, NIE is able to find faults on the network more quickly and easily and there is plenty of scope to extend this further into more predictive and preventative maintenance and asset/network management services.

9. At Camlin, innovation has always been in our DNA. We believe that a future focused, cutting-edge data driven business such as ours, can drive and accelerate Northern Ireland's future as an innovation led economy as outlined in the 2021 UK Innovation Strategy. We have committed an investment of £50 million in R&D between 2021-2025 to help shape and accelerate innovation across our business.

### **Steps to encourage investment in Northern Ireland**

10. Northern Ireland has seen significant Foreign Direct Investment, particularly in the FinTech sector in recent years, and according to a September 2021 report by FinTech NI, 'Northern Ireland could set to benefit from over £25 million in new Foreign Direct Investment; the setup of over 20 new companies; and the creation of thousands of jobs in just three years.'
11. According to Invest NI, as international financial firms and solutions providers seek technology, talent and industry expertise to drive their development, Northern Ireland has become a leading global location for FinTech investments. Capability across these areas is well established in Northern Ireland, which has long held an international reputation for engineering excellence.
12. While Camlin considers such investment extremely welcome, and views this positively in driving economic growth, international companies and investors have benefitted from numerous incentives in attempts to attract them to Northern Ireland, while local 'indigenous' companies have not been offered the same financial support. In turn, Camlin's well-trained, high-tech employees have been offered significant pay hikes to join the newly based FDI companies, which we would struggle to match, with a consequence of losing significant engineering talent.
13. Financial, employment, training and recruitment incentives for the international technology sector have already had the adverse effect of undermining local companies working in similar areas (particularly in software and technology, but also graduate positions) and creating barriers to Northern Irish companies' growth.
14. At a time when Camlin is not only creating a strong growth strategy, but also exporting worldwide – supporting the development of wider engineering and manufacturing supply chains around us – we find ourselves struggling to compete with large multinationals basing their offices around Belfast in a 'war for talent.' We have already been forced as a business to grow and invest in 'technology hubs' outside of Northern Ireland, in countries such as Serbia, instead of nurturing local talent and giving further benefit to wider regional supply-chain employment.
15. A potential suggestion to help incentivise both graduates choosing early careers and skilled engineers deciding on companies to work for could include giving personal tax breaks for people joining local manufacturer/exporting companies which in turn would expedite wider growth in Northern Ireland. Such a tax benefit would help to close the pay gap between local firms and large international offices based in Northern Ireland, which are offering higher wages but are of less overall benefit to the wider local economy.
16. We encourage the committee to consider the position of indigenous companies and adopt approaches designed to support and enhance locally headquartered companies seeking to expand and grow.
17. Camlin would welcome further opportunity to discuss this further and stands ready to provide the Committee with any additional information which it requires.

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