

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**BELFAST INSTITUTE OF FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION TO BENEFIT FROM £44MILLION PROJECT – EAGLE.**

Ivywood Colleges Limited Consortium has been awarded “Preferred Bidder” status for the Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education (BIFHE) City Centre Public Private Partnership (PPP) project.

Education and Learning Minister, Maria Eagle MP confirmed today that the Consortium will now enter into negotiations to agree a contract to design, build, finance and operate the teaching accommodation of the college for a period of 25 years.

The project, with a £44million capital value, will replace existing ageing accommodation at the Institute’s Brunswick Street and College Square East Campuses. The existing colleges fail to meet modern requirements and have been in urgent need of repair for some time. The proposals also involve building a new 20,000m<sup>2</sup> college on a single site in the Titanic Quarter area of Belfast.

The Strategic Investment Board has worked with the Belfast Institute, the Department for Employment and Learning and other stakeholders in the development of the project.

Welcoming the progress to announcement of preferred bidder stage, Maria Eagle said:

**“I am pleased to announce preferred bidder status for this major investment in the development of further education facilities for all the people of Belfast.**

**“I am confident that Ivywood’s proposals for this development will result in an exemplar building that will create a stimulating educational and training environment.**

**“The choice of site will also contribute positively to the rejuvenation of Belfast’s historic Titanic Quarter. The ongoing regeneration and planned expansion of this area will integrate the city centre across the river.**

**“This will make the Eastbank area, the Odyssey Complex and Titanic Quarter part of an enlarged, vibrant, business, education, leisure and residential core. Plans for improving access to the site are well developed and include proposals for both new and improved bus and rail services to provide high frequency connections to the city centre and improved pedestrian access.”**

Congratulating the preferred bidder on its design plans for BIFHE and highlighting the importance of the investment for the future of further education the Minister concluded:

**“Ivywood’s proposals for the design and development of Belfast Institute’s new college is creative and innovative. They take full cognizance of functionality, efficiency, aesthetics, build ability, durability and sustainability in all areas.**

**“Today’s announcement underscores the importance of the further education sector to the economy. The Review of Further Education envisages a sector**

**that engages with its community and industry to ensure local business is provided with a highly skilled workforce, to help Northern Ireland become a**

**world-class economy. This investment will enhance Belfast Institute's ability to be a key driver of economic development in the City for many years to come."**

**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

1. Subject to the successful negotiation of the contract which will include planning permission being obtained for the Ivywood design, it is anticipated that the construction could begin in the 2007 year with an expected completion date of 2010.
2. PPP differs from traditional procurement in that, instead of providing a building to a specified design, the contractors are bidding for the provision of facilities to agreed standards for a period of 25 to 40 years.
3. Ivywood is part of the Titanic Island Group of Companies including the Ulster Bank (funder), Todd Architects (designers), Amey Business Services (Facilities Management Service provider) and the Patton Group (building contractor).
4. The SIB has three main roles: delivery of key investment programmes and projects; supporting the reform of public services; building a 10 year investment strategy for Northern Ireland. For further information on the latest Annual Review and Accounts 2006 visit: [www.sibni.org](http://www.sibni.org)
5. Media enquiries to the Department for Employment and Learning Press Office on 0289025 7492