

Minutes of the 163rd Meeting of the Board of InterTradeIreland, the Trade and Business Development Body.

Tuesday 26th April 2016 – Europa Hotel, Belfast (10.35am – 12.10 pm)

Present:

Board Members:

Mr Martin Cronin	Chairman
Mr Jack Gallagher	
Mr Paul Greenfield	
Mr Patrick Joy	
Mr Timothy Mayes	
Mr Kevin Norton	
Prof Terri Scott	
Mr James Spratt	
Mr Paul O'Sullivan	

In Attendance:

Executive:

Mr Thomas Hunter McGowan	CEO
Mr Aidan Gough	Director of Policy and Strategy
Ms Margaret Hearty	Director of Programmes and Business Services
Mr Laurence Lord	Director of Corporate Services
Ms Orla McGlennon	Board Secretary

163.1 Apologies.

Apologies were received from Mr Terry Crossan, Ms Rosemary Delaney and Ms Joanne Spain.

163.2 Conflict of Interest.

No conflicts of interest were declared.

163.3 Authorisation of Previous Minutes.

The Minutes of the 22nd March 2016 Board meeting were approved by the Board with one minor amendment and authorised by the Chairman.

163.4 CEO Report

Mr Hunter McGowan presented his CEO report. He advised of a positive meeting with Invest NI, IDA, Enterprise Ireland and Science Foundation Ireland to examine how the opportunities identified in the “*Mapping the Potential of all-island sectoral oral ecosystems*” report can be realised. A number of propositions were developed and it was agreed to initially focus on the Pharmaceutical Sector. It was agreed that the sector specialists from each of the agencies would attend the next meeting which will be hosted by the IDA.

Following meetings between InterTradeIreland Senior Leadership Team and the CEO’s of the new ‘super’ councils in Northern Ireland, a more extensive round of discussions have taken place with the economic development teams from a number of the councils. The purpose of these meetings is to explore practical measures that will ensure closer co-operation and minimise duplication in the delivery of supports to SME’s pursuing cross-border opportunities.

The Chairman thanked Mr Hunter McGowan for his report.

163.5 Board Sub Committee/Steering Committee Reports

Innovation Sub Committee Report

Mr Norton reported from the Innovation Sub Committee meeting held on 22nd March 2016. He advised that 6 Fusion applications were approved and 2 proposals were rejected.

Mr Norton informed the Board that the Innovation Sub Committee had met without the Executive immediately prior to the Board meeting and they discussed proposed improvements to the Fusion approval process. Prof Scott advised that she would discuss the matter with Ms Hearty, Director of Programmes and Business Services. The Sub Committee agreed that a Fusion progress report would be circulated to the Board on a quarterly basis.

The Board noted the decisions of the Sub Committee and the Chairman thanked Mr Norton for his report.

Trade Sub Committee Report

Mr Joy reported back from the Trade Sub Committee meeting held on 22nd March 2016. The Committee considered 12 Acumen applications and approved 5 projects, 2 projects were rejected and 5 projects were deferred for further information.

The Chairman thanked Mr Joy for his update.

163.6 For Consideration, Discussion, Decision &/or Approval

Operations Directorate Progress and Activity Report

Ms Hearty presented the Operations Directorate Progress and Activity Report. She advised that performance for Quarter 1 is on track with all programmes and budgets on targets. Outreach

activities continue with a series of joint export workshops in partnership with Invest NI commencing on 27th April in the InterTradeIreland offices.

Ms Hearty advised that a meeting took place with the Managing Agent for the Acumen programme to consider targeting of the companies most appropriate to the programme.

The Halo Business Angel Network (HBAN) reported 14 deals amounting to €1.9m with a further €14m leveraged up until 31.3.16 compared with 9 deals for the same period in 2015. Ms Hearty advised that the target of 54 deals for 2016 was likely to be met.

Ms Hearty advised that an independent evaluation of phases 2 and 3 of the Elevate programme is underway and the results will be presented at a future Board meeting.

The Chairman thanked Ms Hearty for her report.

Governance and Financial Matters

Mr Lord presented the Governance and Financial Matters report. He advised that fieldwork for the 2014 external audit is nearing completion, with no major audit issues identified to date.

Mr Lord referred to the Draft Risk Appetite paper included in the Board papers. He highlighted the policy requirement for the Board to formally set a Risk Appetite for the Body. The Policy calls for a risk appetite to be stipulated for the 4 risk categories:

- Reputational
- Operational
- Financial
- Compliance or Legal

Mr Mayes recommended the draft Risk Appetite to the Board and commended Mr Lord for his work in this area. The Board discussed and approved the draft Risk Appetite.

Mr Lord informed the Board that the Body's financial procedures stipulate that "*At least one Board Member should be invited onto the Assessment Panel where the tenders being evaluated exceed £20,000 (excluding VAT)*". The Northern Ireland Procurement Guidance specifies that parties on such panels are obliged to have been appropriately trained in the assessment methodology for public sector tenders. Any Board members who may wish to sit on such panels were invited to contact Mr Lord to arrange for their training.

The Board considered the Management Accounts presented as an element of the Governance and Financial report, noted the level of future contractual commitments of the Body and advised that this be kept under review.

Board members were advised that the 2016 Business Plan is expected to be ratified by the NSMC in June.

The Chairman thanked Mr Lord for his report.

Variations to Letters of Offer and Letters of Appointment

Mr Lord reported that the current contract for the provision of creative design, marketing, advertising, print and related services is due to expire on 31st May 2016. At the March Board meeting, a competition for a new contract was approved; however the procurement exercise is unlikely to be completed until late July 2016. Consequently, Board approval was sought to extend the current contract for the period 1st June 2016 to 31st July 2016 to ensure continuity in service provision. The Board discussed and approved this extension.

Ms Hearty advised that due to demand, permission was sought to extend the Funding for Growth Equity Advisory Service by 42 days over three years to enable demand for the programme to be met. She advised that the terms and conditions applying to the extension will be as for the current contract. The Board discussed and approved the extension as requested.

Communications Update

Mr Lord presented the Communications and Marketing Performance Report. He reported on the significant PR activity around the launch of the 2016 Seedcorn launch. Mr Lord advised that the Communications team launched a new improved version of the Cross-Border trade statistics portal with refreshed graphics and a more user friendly interface.

The Communications Plan for 2016 calls for innovative ideas to help promote InterTradeIreland's supports to SMEs across the island. Recently, the Body has advertised on the Cross-Border Aircoach buses from Belfast to Dublin with 3 different messages with the aim of increasing brand awareness. Mr Lord advised that this had drawn positive comment from several sources.

The Board noted the Communications and Marketing report and the Chairman thanked Mr Lord for his update.

All Island Innovation Programme 2016

Dr McGahon joined the Board meeting for this agenda item.

Mr Gough informed the Board that the InterTradeIreland All Island Innovation Programme (AIIP) has been running for 8 years in partnership with Queens University Belfast, University College Dublin, National University of Ireland Galway and University College Cork. The most valued aspect of the programme has been the opportunity for SMEs and microenterprises to engage with the invited International or European experts through attendance at innovation master events. The programme was reconfigured in 2015 to take account of reductions in budget. Last year, the programme delivered benefits to almost 600 attendees, of which 49% came from industry. Mr Gough informed the Board that the programme for 2016 builds upon the structure piloted in 2015 and includes 2 extra innovation master events and 2 specialised seminars. The programme for 2016 will include a total of 12 Innovation Master events and 6 specialised seminars.

Dr McGahon highlighted the benefits of the programme including:

- SME direct engagement with international innovation experts;
- Practical tool kits to help SMEs grow and develop their businesses;

- Networking opportunities with other innovative SMEs
- Further development of university-industry relationships

The Board discussed the proposal and the use of webinars to extend its reach was suggested. The Board approved the 2016 InterTradeIreland All Island Innovation Programme for one year.

Should a world leading expert be identified who would be a good addition to a 2017 programme, the Executive should inform the Board and the necessary funding will be considered.

The Chairman thanked Mr Gough and Dr McGahon for their contributions.

Interreg V Update

Mr Gough gave an update on the Interreg V programme. He advised that the appraisal process was now complete and a decision by the Interreg Steering Committee is expected in June 2016.

The Chairman thanked Mr Gough for his update.

Business Plan Budget Variance and Milestone Exception Report

The Board noted the Business Plan Budget Variance and Milestone Exception Report.

163.6 AOB

Mr Mayes requested feedback from an outreach event for business advisors which was held in Craigavon area.

Prof Scott suggested the preparation of InterTradeIreland briefing packs for appropriate new Assembly members and new Dáil members following the elections.

Mr Gallagher suggested consideration of how successful companies who have availed of InterTradeIreland support could assist in promoting the effectiveness of our programmes to businesses on the island.

.....Authorised by:

Mr Martin Cronin
Chairman, InterTradeIreland
31st May 2016