

Minutes of the 177th Meeting of the Board of InterTradeIreland, the Trade and Business Development Body.

Tuesday 26th September 2017 – InterTradeIreland (12.30pm – 14.30 pm)

Present:

Board Members:

Mr Ken Nelson	Chairman
Mr Paul O’Sullivan	Vice Chair
Mr Micheál Briody	
Mr Paul Greenfield	
Mr Patrick Joy	
Ms Ann Rudden	
Prof Terri Scott	
Mr James Spratt	

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
Ms Orla McGlennon	Board Secretary

177.1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Mr Timothy Cairns, Mr Terry Crossan, Ms Rosemary Delaney and Mr Laurence Lord,

177.2 Opening Remarks

The Chairman welcomed all Board members to the meeting.

177.3 Conflict of Interest

The Chairman asked members to declare any conflicts of interest relating to today’s agenda. The Chairman declared a potential conflict of interest arising from his position as CEO of LEDCOM, which is a member organisation of Enterprise Northern Ireland and is involved in the delivery of

the Co-Innovate programme. Mr Greenfield declared a potential conflict of interest arising from his position as a member of the Peace IV Working Group and as Board member of East Border Region Ltd which is involved in the delivery of the Co-Innovate programme. Ms Ann Rudden declared a potential conflict of interest arising from her position as founder and MD of Áine Hand Made Chocolate who are applying to the Co-Innovate programme. Prof Scott advised that she had declared a conflict of interest at the 29th August Innovation Sub Committee meeting. She absented herself from the meeting during the discussion on an application from D4 Products Ltd and the Northern Regional College.

No other conflicts were declared.

177.4 Authorisation of the 27th August 2017 Board Minutes

The minutes of the 27th August 2017 Board meeting were agreed as a true record of the meeting, approved by the Board and authorised by the Chairman.

177.5 Matters Arising

The CEO advised that all Board members had been invited to the Co-Innovate programme launches in Monaghan and Oban.

The Chairman thanked Mr Hunter McGowan for his update.

177.6 Chairman's Business

The Chairman reported on the launches of the Co-Innovate programme in both Monaghan and Oban which he had attended and asked that the team involved be commended on the successful events. He advised that he attended the All Island Innovation Programme, Breakfast Lecture by Patrick Collister, Creative Lead in Google on 25th September.

The Chairman informed the Board that he had attended an Interreg Va Committee meeting in Scotland and the InterTradeIreland Co-Innovate programme was hailed as a flagship project.

Mr Nelson advised that as Chairman of InterTradeIreland he had been invited to address delegates at the NILGA Conference on the 12th October 2017.

The Chairman advised that the results of the Board Effectiveness Self-Assessment questionnaire would be discussed at the November Board meeting.

Any Board members requiring accommodation on 23rd October in Belfast, in advance of the Brexit event and Board meeting on 24th October in Titanic, Belfast should advise the Board Secretary.

177.7 CEO Report

The CEO reported that he had attended the Co-Innovate programme launches.

He advised that Aidan Gough would accompany Junior Minister Robin Walker, MP from the Department for Exiting the EU and Junior Minister Chloe Smith, MP, from the NI. Office to a meeting with Re-Gen Waste in Newry on Thursday 28th September.

Mr Hunter McGowan advised that Brexit events continue at pace with InterTradeIreland presenting this week at an IMSTA (the umbrella group for medical supply companies in Ireland) briefing event. He also reported that a meeting is due to be held later this week with the HSE to discuss Brexit activities and were also taking part in the All Island Civic Dialogue.

The Chairman thanked Mr Hunter McGowan for his update.

177.8 Brexit Update and Discussion

Mr Mark Sterritt, Brexit Advisory Service Manager, joined the Board meeting for this agenda item.

Mr Gough informed the Board that a new Brexit presentation had recently been developed. He reported that the Executive has engaged with Sponsoring Departments on our Brexit activities and has gathered views of small businesses on the island. He advised that research is ongoing and the second strand will look at the degree to which products cross the border and back. Research will draw out the top three conclusions which will inform both policy makers and businesses.

Ms Hearty introduced Mr Mark Sterritt, Brexit Advisory Service Manager who joined InterTradeIreland in June 2017. Prior to this, there was no dedicated resource for Brexit activities. An Executive Officer has also been assigned to provide additional support. The Brexit cross directorate team continues to meet on a regular basis and the team are energised with this new area of work.

Mr Sterritt advised that he has been engaging with SMEs, representative bodies and stakeholders across the island to promote the InterTradeIreland Brexit Advisory Service. The service has been extensively promoted via social media channels. The website content and format continues to evolve, with up to date information including video case studies of companies from Northern Ireland and Ireland. A knowledge gap has been identified amongst SMEs with regards to Brexit terminology which may hinder their capacity to commence planning so a Glossary of Terms is being introduced.

Mr Sterritt outlined the planned programme for the Brexit event which will take place on 24th October 2017 in Titanic, Belfast. The event will be hosted by broadcaster Mark Simpson and businesses and stakeholders will receive up to date insights from industry figures including Vincent Power from A&L Goodbody, & Johnny Hanna from KPMG. Three workshops will be held simultaneously covering topics on rules of origin, tax/vat/people and customs. The keynote speaker is David Meade who will provide delegates with the techniques needed in preparation for Brexit. He advised that the invitations to SMEs and stakeholder were being issued today. The Chairman suggested that Board members could provide Mr Sterritt with a list of potential invitees.

The Chairman thanked Mr Sterritt for his update.

177.9 Board Sub Committee Reports

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Report

In the absence of Mr Terry Crossan, Mr Micheál Briody reported back from the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meetings held on the 29th August. He advised that the Committee had met with the new internal auditors and a comprehensive three-year internal audit strategy was presented. Mr Briody advised that the Committee had agreed that expenses incurred on travel to Scotland by staff from the Co-Innovate programme would be excluded from the requirement to disclose travel outside Ireland, since such travel will be an integral aspect of the delivery of the programme.

The Chairman thanked Mr Briody for his report.

Innovation Sub Committee Report

Prof Scott reported back from the Innovation Sub Committee meeting held on 29th August. She advised that she had declared a conflict of interest at the meeting and absented herself from the meeting during the discussion on an application due to the involvement of the Northern Regional College.

Prof Scott informed the Board that thirteen new Fusion applications were considered. Twelve projects were approved and one project was deferred for additional information which had subsequently been approved. At the Innovation Sub Committee meeting held prior to the Board meeting, Mr Peter Grant, MD, Helix Innovation Partnership Ltd presented to the Committee. Prof Scott advised that Fusion projects are ahead of target and the ratio of North/South projects is well balanced. Members were given the opportunity to provide feedback to Mr Grant and a useful discussion took place.

Trade Sub Committee Report

Mr Joy reported back from the Trade Sub Committee meeting held on 29th August 2017. He advised that the Committee considered thirteen Acumen applications. Eleven projects were approved and two were deferred for further information. One of the deferred projects was subsequently approved.

The Chairman thanked Mr Joy for his report.

Draft InterTradeIreland 2018 Business Plan

Ms Alayne Kinver, Policy Planning Manager joined the meeting for this agenda item.

Mr Gough informed the Board that guidance has still not been issued from the Sponsoring Departments in respect of the 2017 Business Plan and the 2017 – 2019 Corporate Plan is yet to be approved. The 2018 Business Plan activities are evidence based backed up by economic appraisals and evaluations and will deliver value for money. Mr Gough reported that as a result of InterTradeIreland's research, new initiatives will be piloted in 2018 including the development of sectoral ecosystems and clusters. He advised that Brexit will impact on all aspects of business and InterTradeIreland is well placed to provide practical advice on Brexit related issues. Mr Gough

referred to the Business Plan programme expenditure. Ms Kinver advised that recent economic appraisals and evaluations of the Acumen and Fusion programme demonstrate real impact and demand for the programmes.

The Board discussed and recommended that the sponsoring departments should be made aware of additional activities InterTradeIreland could implement with a further increased budget.

The Board approved the draft 2018 Business Plan and associated budget for submission to the Sponsor Departments.

The Chairman thanked Mr Gough and Ms Kinver for their work in this area.

Operations Directorate Progress and Activity Report

Ms Hearty presented the Operations Directorate Progress and Activity Report. She informed the Board that all programme budgets and targets are on track with a very healthy pipeline for all programmes. The Executive are currently reviewing programme budgets. General corporate outreach activity is ongoing with staff in attendance at the National Ploughing Championships, the N.I. Chamber networking event in St Georges Market and the Food and Drink Expo. The programme managers had a very useful meeting with the Invest N.I. Council Leads team who are responsible for delivering a c€20m “SME competitiveness” ERDF initiative to the 11 Councils in Northern Ireland. Ms Hearty reported that the meeting was very beneficial and provided the opportunity to exchange information on all our services including possible referrals to the Co-Innovate programme and to avoid duplication in terms of supports to SMEs. She informed the Board that InterTradeIreland would be consulted to ensure maximum benefits for all. Bespoke mentoring packages will be provided by the Councils which include the Business Start Up Programme. Ms Hearty stated that one of the key criteria of this funding is to create one job for every €1k invested, which could pose challenging.

Ms Hearty advised that the 2017 Seedcorn Competition is nearing completion. There were 104 business plans received this year compared to 121 received last year but Ms Hearty reported that the quality of the applications was high. The shortlisting of plans has just been completed and 24 regional finalists will be selected to progress. Board members were invited to attend the final awards ceremony to be held in the Crowne Plaza, Northwood, Dublin on Wednesday 22nd November. Ms Hearty advised that the Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation has confirmed her attendance at the event.

Ms Hearty reported that the Trade team are currently completing the terms of reference for the tender for a managing agent for the next Acumen programme. Permission to go to competitive tender for a new managing agent for the programme will be requested at the next Board meeting.

Ms Hearty thanked Mr Joy for his participation in the evaluation panel for the selection of a delivery agent for the Funding for Growth programme.

The Board noted the Operations Directorate Report and the Chairman thanked Ms Hearty for her update.

Governance and Financial Matters

The CEO presented the Governance and Financial Matters report. He informed the Board that the Report to Those Charged with Governance was considered by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee at its meeting in June. The Board were advised that no internal control issues were identified during the audit. The Board asked that the finance team be commended for their work.

Advances by the Co-Innovate delivery partners have been sought from SEUPB. Mr Hunter McGowan advised that the Body as Lead Partner for the programme may apply for cash advances at a later stage.

A copy of the 2016 Annual Accounts were circulated to Board members for information.

The Board noted the Report to Those Charged with Governance.

The Chairman thanked Mr Hunter McGowan for his report.

Communications Update

The CEO presented the Communications Update. It was noted that web visitor numbers were down from the same period last year and the Executive were asked to explore the issue and provide analytics.

The Chairman thanked Mr McGowan for his update.

Business Plan Commentary Report

The Board noted the Business Plan Commentary Report.

Co-Innovate Programme Update

Mr Neil Ryan, Co-Innovate Programme Director joined the Board meeting for this agenda item.

The Chairman congratulated Mr Ryan and his team on the successful programme launches in both Monaghan and Oban. Mr Ryan advised that Minister Heather Humphreys TD and the Permanent Secretary, Andrew McCormick attended the Monaghan event and Minister Michael ~Russell MSP attended the Oban event. Both events were well received and significant press and radio coverage resulted. The first claims for the programme have been successfully certified by the SEUPB financial control unit.

Mr Ryan reported since the previous board meeting, 10 workshops have taken place in Ireland with attendees numbering between 20-25 companies at each. Scottish Enterprise have held their first 3 workshops, while Highlands & Islands Enterprise have held their first 2. For the three priority sectors, sectoral workshops in Life and Health Sciences, and Agri-food/tech have also occurred, with the first renewables workshop planned for 11th October. Scheduling and attendances are progressing as planned.

Mr Ryan informed the Board that the Management Information System (MIS) is currently being developed. The system on schedule to be completed by mid-October. The assessment and award of Business Status Review (BSR) consultants and the Innovation Audit (IA) Consultants has been completed. Training for BSR consultants is scheduled for the 28th of September and training for the IA consultants will be scheduled for the end of October.

Framework documents for procuring the Academic Institutes and also the technical expertise to support SME capability development are now being developed with the assistance from Central Procurement Directorate.

The Board noted the Co-Innovate programme report and the Chairman thanked Mr Ryan for his update.

177.10 AOB

The Board agreed that the next meeting would commence at 2.00pm on Tuesday 24th October in Titanic Belfast following the morning Brexit event.

The Chairman asked that the results of the Board Effectiveness Self-Assessment Questionnaire and comments should be circulated to Board members.

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.....Authorised by:

Mr Ken Nelson
Chairman, InterTradeIreland
24th October 2017