

**Minutes of the 190<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Board of InterTradeIreland, the Trade and Business Development Body.**

**Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2019 – InterTradeIreland (8.30 am – 09.50 am)**

Present:

Board Members:

Mr Paul O’Sullivan                      Chair (for this meeting)  
Mr Micheál Briody  
Mr Terry Crossan  
Mr Paul Greenfield

Mr Ken Nelson – via teleconference call (9.05am – 9.27am)  
Mr James Spratt – via teleconference call (9.05am – 9.27am)

Observer:

Ms Florence Bayliss                      Nominated Board member

Executive:

Mr Aidan Gough                              Designated Officer  
Ms Margaret Hearty                          Assistant Designated Officer  
Mr Martin Agnew                              Corporate Services Director  
Ms Orla McGlennon                          Board Secretary

**190.01 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Mr Patrick Joy, Mr Timothy Cairns, Ms Ann Rudden and Ms Adrienne McGuinness.

**190.02 Opening Remarks**

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting.

### 190.03 Matters Arising

Mr Gough reported that the matters arising from the last Board meeting had been addressed. He circulated a high level corporate and Brexit messaging card to Board members.

### 190.04 Chairman's Business

The Chairman advised that the next meeting would be held at 8.30am on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> February and conclude at 9.50am followed by a meeting with the DBEI Secretary General, Dr Orlaigh Quinn and DfE Permanent Secretary, Mr Noel Lavery. Board members wishing to raise any issues with the Secretary General and/or the Permanent Secretary were asked to email the Board Secretary for consideration by the Chairman, Mr Ken Nelson. Mr Gough informed the Board that a background briefing note would be sent to Board members in advance of the meeting.

### 190.05 Designated Officer Report

Mr Gough reported that the 2019 Business Plan has not been formally approved as yet. Managers have now prepared detailed implementation plans for each activity outlined in the 2019 Business Plan, which will form the basis of the monthly milestone and budget variance report to the Board.

The Senior Leadership Team has identified three strategic priorities for this year which include the development of a new Corporate Plan for 2020 – 2022, innovative new programme and process development and staff development. Mr Gough advised that the Senior Leadership team would bring forward an outline of key strategic objectives for the new Corporate Plan for consideration by the Board next month. A key driver for consideration will include digitisation to provide information to a much wider audience. Following the success of our Investors in People accreditation there will also be a continued focus on staff development and the performance appraisals process is currently being reviewed.

Mr Gough advised that plans are underway to mark the 20<sup>th</sup> year of InterTradeIreland and Mr Agnew would update the Board later in the meeting.

Correspondence has been received which advises that NSMC are unable to take decisions in the absence of Minister which will affect the appointments of Board members and CEO.

Mr Gough updated the Board on recent events and meetings including the very successful All Island Innovation Programme events. Meetings were held with Invest N.I. and a plan is in place to enhance the process for collaborative working between the two organisations.

The Board noted the Designated Officer's report and the Chairman thanked Mr Gough for his update.

## 190.06 Board Sub Committee Reports

### *Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Report*

Mr Crossan reported back from the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2018. He advised that no direct award contracts had been awarded since the previous meeting and no incidences of fraud were reported.

The NIAO representative was absent from the meeting but had provided a paper. The 2018 audit would commence in March to facilitate sign off by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019. Mr Crossan reported that a new NIAO audit team would be undertaking the audit field work although the Audit Manager and Director would remain unchanged.

The internal auditors reported that the first audit on the 2018/19 Internal Audit Plan, Corporate Governance and Risk Management was in progress and the report would be presented at the next meeting of the committee.

The Corporate Risk Register was reviewed and remained unchanged from the previous meeting.

The Board noted the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee report and the Chairman thanked Mr Crossan for his update.

### *Innovation Sub Committee Report*

Ms Hearty reported back from the Innovation Sub Committee meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2018. Three new Fusion applications were considered and all were approved.

The Board noted the Innovation Sub Committee report and the Chairman thanked Ms Hearty for her update.

### *Trade Sub Committee Report*

Ms Hearty reported back from the Trade Sub Committee meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> November and 13<sup>th</sup> December 2018. She advised that the Committee considered ten new Acumen applications at the November meeting and seven were approved, one was deferred for further information and two were not approved. A further fourteen applications were considered at the December meeting and eleven applications were approved and three were deferred for additional information.

The Board noted the Trade Sub Committee report and the Chairman thanked Ms Hearty for her update.

### *Communications Sub Committee Report*

Mr Agnew reported back from the Communication Sub Committee meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> November which reviewed 2018 activities and highlighted priorities for 2019. He advised that 2018 was a very busy year for the communications team. Mr Agnew outlined the key outputs in 2018 including the development of two new websites, brand refreshment, corporate digital and social media campaigns. There has also been a wider

engagement with DBEI and INI by members of the communications team involving the sharing of current and upcoming communications activities.

Mr Agnew advised that most of the 2018 performance metrics had been met and advised that brand awareness and understanding figures are the highest to date, reflective of all the activity, events and advertising campaigns undertaken. Priorities for 2019 will include a corporate promotional campaign highlighting our 20<sup>th</sup> year, tendering exercises and the development of a digital advertising strategy.

The Board noted the Communications Sub Committee report and the Chair thanked Mr Agnew for his update.

#### 190.07 For Consideration, Discussion, Noting, Decision &/or Approval

##### *Operations Directorate Progress and Activity Report*

Ms Hearty presented the Operations Directorate Progress and Activity report. She gave an update on achievements of the Operations Directorate during 2018 and plans for 2019. All programmes have exceeded targets for 2018 as a result of increased demand and all budget targets have been met. There has been a significant number of staff changing roles and taking on additional responsibilities as well as number of new recruits. Ms Hearty reported that at the beginning of 2018, the Brexit team consisted of a Brexit Manager and two Administrative Officers. This team has now grown to seven staff. A total of 650 Start to Plan Voucher applications were received in 2018 and there have been 95 voucher applications in first 3 weeks of January 2019. Ms Hearty informed the Board that all approvals are now in place for the Brexit Advisory Programme with the exception of approval from the Department of Finance which was expected in the very near future.

There continues to be a strong pipeline for all programmes. A small number of companies who have recently been approved for Acumen support are delaying the recruitment of a sales person to await the outcome of Brexit. The additional support to assist in the recruitment of sales personnel is proving to be very successful. Ms Hearty informed the Board that the first Fusion Business to Business application is due to be considered next month.

The next phase of the Innova programme will be considered by the DfE Casework Committee on 4<sup>th</sup> February and pending the necessary approvals, the programme is due to be launched this year.

Ms Hearty reported that our public procurement initiatives will be informed by the key recommendations from the research report – *Public Procurement on the Island of Ireland* and the economic appraisal for Go-2-Tender Phase 8.

The Board were informed that the 2019 InterTradeIreland Venture Capital Conference will take place in Croke Park, Dublin on 7<sup>th</sup> March.

The Board noted the Operations Directorate report and complimented the team on their successes, particularly given the significant staff changes and new recruits. The Board asked that their appreciation be passed on to the Operations team.

The Board noted the Operations Directorate Progress and Activity reports and the Chairman thanked Ms Hearty for her report.

Both Mr Ken Nelson and Mr James Spratt joined the Board meeting via teleconference call at 9.05am. The meeting was deemed quorate at this point.

#### 190.08 Conflict of Interest

The Chairman asked members to declare any conflicts of interest relating to today's agenda. Mr Nelson 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. Mr Briody also declared a potential conflict of interest arising from his position as CEO of Silver Hill Foods who are participants on the Co-Innovate programme.

No other conflicts were declared.

#### 190.09 Approval and Authorisation of the 27<sup>th</sup> November 2018 Board Minutes

The minutes of the 27<sup>th</sup> November 2018 Board meeting were agreed as a true record of the meeting and were approved by the Board and would be authorised by the Chairman (Mr Nelson) at the February Board meeting.

#### *Tenders and Variations to Letters of Offer/Appointment*

Mr Agnew sought permission to go to competitive tender for a research report. Mr Gough reported that the Fourth Industrial Revolution(4IR) will potentially change the way that business is conducted and will provide both opportunities and challenges for SMEs. The aim of the research is to consider the strengths in new technologies that currently exist on the island of Ireland and to identify the opportunities for growth in cross border collaboration, such as block chain, cyber security and nanotech. Mr Gough advised that the research report would help shape new programmes for the Body and identify opportunities where the Body could add value for SMEs.

The Board discussed the proposal and considered the timing of the commissioning of this report in light of Brexit, its fit with InterTradeIreland's remit and the costs. It was agreed, following this discussion that the Executive would prepare a terms of reference and distribute to Board members for further consideration.

The Board approved Mr Agnew's request to extend the media monitoring contract current from mid-March to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2019.

The Board approved additional funding to Dublin Business Innovation Centre to deliver the HBAN programme on an all island basis.

Mr Nelson and Mr Spratt concluded the teleconference call at 9.27am.

### *Governance and Financial Matters*

Mr Agnew presented the Governance and Financial Matters report. He advised that a planning meeting was held with the new NI Audit Office team in early January and interim audit fieldwork would commence in early February.

Any Board member who had not completed their annual Statement of Interests form were asked to return them to the Finance Manager before the next Board meeting.

Mr Agnew gave the Board an overview of the 2018 budgetary outturn and funding arrangements for 2019.

The Board noted the Governance and Financial Matters report and the Chairman thanked Mr Agnew for his report.

### *Co Innovate Programme Update*

Mr Neil Ryan joined the Board meeting for this agenda item. He advised that the Co Innovate programme was progressing well. The main concern continues to be Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) which is behind target in Phase 2 of the programme (Business and Innovation Assessments) mainly due to the geographical challenges in this area. Their Project Manager for the programme has left and it may take some time for a replacement to be appointed. To help overcome this issue, a proposal has been submitted to SEUPB to allow HIE to use their management budget for consultancy services to deliver the audits. Mr Ryan advised that a framework of consultants currently exists and has been approved by SEUPB. Approval is being sought for HIE to use this framework for strand 2 mentoring.

Mr Ryan advised that a proposal for additional funding for an increase in Strand 3 activities has been submitted to SEUPB to enable more companies to benefit from mentoring support. Final approval for this additional support is expected at the earliest in February.

Mr Ryan outlined the progress made in the various strands of the programme to date.

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

### *Communications Update*

Mr Agnew presented the Communications report. He advised that work has commenced on activities to promote the Body's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. This includes a new 20-year badge which has been created and is being used for all promotional materials and on our website and will be used for social media and digital communications. A range of cross border business statistics has been updated and creation of video content is underway. A press release was issued nationally that garnered a substantial amount of media attention generating a media value of over £700k. Mr Agnew reported that an all island event is planned for the autumn to celebrate the success of cross border trade and to look ahead to the next 20 years. This event will involve SMEs and stakeholders and Board members wishing to share contacts for possible invitees were asked to advise the Executive. Mr Agnew outlined proposed activities including editorials in various media and trade

and business magazines throughout the year and advertising around core events such as the Venture Capital Conference.

The 2018 Seedcorn Awards Ceremony and the US Ireland Partnership generated significant media coverage. Mr Agnew advised that all performance metrics for 2018 had been achieved or exceeded. Brand Awareness and Brand Understanding is at the highest level ever. The impact of the Brexit programme has contributed substantially to the achievement of these metrics.

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

### *Brexit Advisory Services Update*

Ms Deirdre Maguire, Brexit Programme Manager joined the Board meeting for this agenda item.

The Chairman welcomed Ms Maguire to the meeting. Ms Maguire gave an update on Brexit activities. She reported that from January to date, 100 applications have been received for Brexit Start to Plan Vouchers. Over 22 Brexit events have been planned for 2019. She recently presented to representatives of the Local Enterprise Office in Athlone. The Board was advised that the Brexit virtual learning training modules are due to be available on our website by the end of February. Topics covered will include – customs, data and services, people, supply chain and logistics. InterTradeIreland's tariff checker is also available on the Body's website for SMEs to use.

Mr Gough informed the Board that the key focus is to continue to support SMEs through the Start to Plan Vouchers and encourage businesses to use the on-line learning tools when they are launched. InterTradeIreland will organise specific Brexit events and seminars as well as speaking at events organised by other organisations.

The Board discussed and it was agreed that the virtual learning environment will be of great benefit to many SMEs on the island. The importance of engaging with the most appropriate person in the business was highlighted. Ms Hearty reported that the on-line learning tool will be available to multiple users in the business and is very interactive and easy to use. Ms Hearty advised that the RTE Brexit radio campaign will continue along with extensive social media campaigns.

The Chairman thanked Ms Maguire for her update and wished her well in her new role.

### *Business Plan Budget Variance and Milestone Exception Report*

Mr Gough presented the Business Plan Budget Variance and Milestone Exception Report.

The Chairman thanked Mr Gough for his report and the Board noted the Business Plan Budget Variance and Milestone Exception Report.

.....Authorised by:

Mr Paul O’Sullivan  
Vice Chairman, InterTradeIreland  
28<sup>th</sup> February 2019