

Minutes of the 180th Meeting of the Board of InterTradeIreland, the Trade and Business Development Body.

Tuesday 30th January 2018 – InterTradeIreland (12.30pm – 14.05 pm)

Present:

Board Members:

Mr Ken Nelson	Chairman
Mr Paul O’Sullivan	Vice Chair
Mr Timothy Cairns	
Mr Paul Greenfield	
Ms Ann Rudden	
Mr James Spratt	

In Attendance:

Executive:

Mr Aidan Gough	Designated Officer
Ms Margaret Hearty	Director of Programmes and Business Services
Ms Orla McGlennon	Board Secretary

180.1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Mr Micheál Briody, Mr Terry Crossan and Mr Patrick Joy.

180.2 Opening Remarks

The Chairman wished everyone a very Happy New Year.

Mr O’Sullivan congratulated the Chairman on behalf of the Board on his MBE award announced in the New Year’s Honours List for services to economic development and the voluntary sector.

180.3 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 participants on the Co-Innovate programme.

No other conflicts were declared.

180.4 Matters Arising

Mr Gough reported that all matters arising from the November 2017 Board meeting had been completed or were due for review at a future Board meeting.

180.5 Chairman's Business

The Chairman thanked Board members for their responses and feedback to the communication he had sent regarding the possibility of reducing the quorum until all outstanding Board appointments have been filled. He reported that the meeting today was not quorate as there were only six Board members in attendance. Mr Gough reported that advice had been sought from the NSMC but they had advised that a quorum of 7 Board members would be required to approve a reduction to the quorum. The Board discussed the matter at length and it was agreed that the meeting should proceed but any agenda items requiring a Board decision would be reconsidered and ratified at the next meeting when the Board was quorate. It was also agreed that the Chairman should write on behalf of the Board to officials in DfE and DBEI outlining their concerns regarding outstanding appointments to the Board and seek advice and approval on reducing the Board quorum. The matter would also be discussed at the next Departmental Oversight and Liaison meeting. The Board asked that the Chairman and Senior Leadership team should seek meetings with the DfE Permanent Secretary and the DBEI Secretary General. A note of congratulations on his appointment as DfE Permanent Secretary should be sent to Mr Noel Lavery on behalf of the Board.

Board members reviewed the current Board Sub-Committee membership. It was agreed that Mr Paul O'Sullivan would chair the Innovation Sub-Committee and Ms Ann Rudden would chair the Communications Sub-Committee. The Chairman advised that other vacant posts would be filled when new Board members are appointed. He also informed the Board that he would be willing to sit on Board Sub-Committees on an ad hoc basis if required.

180.6 Authorisation of the 28th November 2017 Board Minutes

The minutes of the 28th November 2017 Board meeting were agreed as a true record of the meeting however they will be reconsidered and approved by the Board and authorised by the Chairman at the next meeting when quorate.

180.7 Designated Officer Report

Mr Gough thanked Board members for approving the revised Acumen V budget by written procedure. This approval will be ratified at the next Board meeting when quorate. He informed the Board that the Department for the Economy Casework Committee had recently approved the next phase of the programme and we were awaiting approval from the Permanent Secretary and the Department of Finance.

Mr Gough informed the Board of the appointment of two assistant directors and advised that the recruitment competition for a new Corporate Services Director would be advertised in the coming weeks. He updated the Board on the recent half day sessions with staff to review the past year and prepare for the challenges in 2018. A statement and set of core values that encapsulates our approach was developed:

“We Care..... Opening minds, enabling growth”

Flexible – we are approachable, proactive and resourceful

Supportive – we believe in better outcomes through collaboration

Integrity – we strive for excellence in being honest, fair, consistent and transparent

Mr Gough advised that in the absence of joint planning guidance, the Senior Leadership team are satisfied that resources are in place to deliver the 2018 Business Plan as approved by the Board at the October 2017 meeting.

The Chairman and Senior Leadership team are presenting to the Board of Invest N.I. and to SOLACE (The Society of Local Authority Chief Executives). The Body is hosting a meeting in InterTradeIreland of the IBEC/CBI Joint Business Council on 23rd February which the DBEI Minister would be attending. All Board members were cordially invited to attend the meeting.

Mr Gough reported that going forward all Board and Sub-Committee papers would be sent electronically. The Board Secretary will be in contact with Board members to ascertain if they require a secure device to receive InterTradeIreland papers. Any secure device loaned to members would be for the duration of their term of office and would remain the property of the Body.

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

180.8 Board Sub Committee Reports

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Report

Mr Cairns reported back from the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting held on 28th November 2017. He advised that there would be a new NI Audit Office Director and Manager responsible for the InterTradeIreland audit for 2017. An audit planning meeting was held with the Executive in early December 2017.

The Board noted the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee report.

Innovation Sub Committee Report

Mr Paul O'Sullivan reported back from the Innovation Sub-Committee meeting held on 28th November and by teleconference on 19th December 2017. He informed the Board that three previously deferred applications were approved following the receipt of clarifications. Five new Fusion applications were considered and all were approved.

The Board noted the Innovation Sub-Committee report and the Chairman thanked Mr O'Sullivan.

Trade Sub-Committee Report

Mr Greenfield reported back from the Trade Sub-Committee meeting held on 28th November 2017. He advised that the Committee considered sixteen Acumen applications. Nine projects were approved, three were deferred for further information, one project was transferred to the Elevate programme and three projects were rejected. Mr Greenfield thanked Ms Rudden for agreeing to chair the sub-committee meeting to be held following the Board meeting.

The Board noted the Trade Sub-Committee report and the Chairman thanked Mr Greenfield for his update.

All Island Innovation Programme

This agenda item was deferred to the next Board meeting.

Operations Directorate Progress and Activity Report

Ms Hearty presented the Operations Directorate Progress and Activity Report. She informed the Board that 2017 was a busy and productive year with the majority of targets set for programmes being achieved. The sad and untimely passing of our colleague and friend Paddy Savage was a very significant upset for staff, however the team chose to deal with this by focusing on building upon and honouring the good work and spirit Paddy brought to

InterTradeIreland. Ms Hearty advised that the post for Trade Manager is due to be advertised this week.

The Board was informed that the fluctuating exchange rate provided a real challenge in terms of managing programmes and operating budget particularly for the Fusion programme. Ms Hearty advised that 2018 would be an extremely busy year, particularly with Brexit activities and the new Acumen V programme.

Ms Hearty advised of the breakdown of the 2018 Seedcorn Competition prize fund which the Board noted. She reported on the very successful Fusion Exemplars event held recently in Carton House, Maynooth which generated extensive media coverage.

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

Governance and Financial Matters

Ms Hearty presented the Governance and Financial Matters report. She informed the Board that the internal auditors, RSM N.I. have commenced work on the second audit from the agreed audit strategy and the results will be reported to the next Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting. Ms Hearty advised that the Risk Register has been reviewed and it will also be presented to the next Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting.

The Board was informed that the revised Financial Memorandum has not yet been finalised by the Sponsor and Finance Departments. This matter will be raised at the next Oversight and Liaison meeting.

Ms Hearty advised that all Board members are required to complete a Statement of Interests form on an annual basis. She asked any members who had not already done so to return their forms to the Finance Manager by 27th February 2018.

Ms Hearty outlined the budgetary outturn for 2017.

The Board noted the Governance and Financial Matters report and the Chairman thanked Ms Hearty for her report.

Tenders and Variations to Letters of Offer/Appointment

This agenda item was deferred until the next Board meeting.

Communications Update

Ms Hearty presented the Communications Update. She reported on the very busy 2017 period with significant targets being achieved. Metrics for 2018 as detailed in the Board papers are very ambitious but are geared towards more meaningful engagement and quality. The Board was advised that Ms Naomi McMullan has recently joined the Communications team. Her background is as a business journalist from UTV with extensive digital expertise. Ms Hearty advised that eight tender submissions were received in respect of the redevelopment of our corporate website. An evaluation meeting was held with CPD and we are waiting to be advised of the outcome.

The Board noted the Communications Update and the Chairman thanked Ms Hearty for her report.

Brexit Update

Mr Sterritt joined the Board meeting for this agenda item.

Mr Spratt advised the Board that he was exploring the possibility of setting up a meeting with appropriate officials in the Department for Exiting the European Union in Westminster and InterTradeIreland to discuss the potential of accessing funding for Brexit activities in Northern Ireland. The Board commended this approach.

Mr Sterritt presented details of the Brexit Advisory Service 2018. He advised that the goal is to increase the number of SMEs planning for Brexit from 5% as indicated in the recent Business Monitor survey. The message continues to be: Plan, Act, Engage. Mr Sterritt informed the Board that the approach will be:

- Evidence based with practical information
- Enhanced digital interaction with SMEs
- Geographically targeted events e.g. Sligo, Leitrim, Cork
- Strategic partnering

The Board discussed and endorsed the Brexit Plan for 2018. Mr Greenfield advised the Board that Mr Sterritt recently presented on the InterTradeIreland Brexit Service to the Armagh, Banbridge Craigavon District Council which was very well received.

The Chairman thanked Mr Sterritt for his update.

Business Plan Commentary Report

A copy of the Business Plan Budget Variance and Milestone Exception Report was circulated to Board members. The Board noted the report.

Co-Innovate Programme Update

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

Mr Ryan informed the Board that the third Co-Innovate claim has been approved and paid by SEUPB. Claims four and five have been submitted and claim six will be submitted at the end of February. All strands of the programme are progressing well and are in line with SEUPB requirements. The Board discussed and noted the Co-Innovate programme report and the Chairman thanked Mr Ryan for his update.

180.9 AOB

The Chairman thanked Board members for their input. The Chairman and Board members thanked the Executive for their work in exceptional circumstances over the past few months and asked that the Board’s thanks be passed on to all staff.

.....Authorised by:

Mr Ken Nelson
Chairman, InterTradeIreland
27th February 2018