

Minutes of the 192nd Meeting of the Board of InterTradeIreland, the Trade and Business Development Body.

Tuesday 26th March 2019 – InterTradeIreland (8.30am –10.05am)

Present:

Board Members:

Mr Ken Nelson MBE	Chairman
Mr Paul O’Sullivan	Vice Chair
Mr Micheál Briody	
Mr Timothy Cairns	
Mr Terry Crossan	
Mr Paul Greenfield	
Mr James Spratt	

Observers:

Ms Florence Bayliss	Nominated Board member
Ms Adrienne McGuinness	Nominated Board member

Executive:

Mr Aidan Gough	Designated Officer
Mr Martin Agnew	Corporate Services Director
Ms Alayne Kinver	Assistant Director of Strategy and Policy
Ms Orla McGlennon	Board Secretary

192.01 Apologies

Apologies have been received from Ms Ann Rudden, Mr Patrick Joy, Ms Hearty and Mr Morrow

192.02 Opening Remarks

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting. On behalf of the Board he asked that condolences be passed on to Ms Hearty on the recent death of her father.

192.03 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.

192.04 Approval and Authorisation of the 28th February 2019 Board Minutes

The minutes of the 28th February 2019 Board meeting were agreed as a true record of the meeting and were approved by the Board and authorised by the Chairman.

192.05 Matters Arising

Mr Gough advised that all matters arising from the February Board meeting have been addressed. He reported that a breakdown of Brexit applications from the various sectors was now provided in the Operations Directorate Progress report.

192.06 Chairman's Business

The Chairman reported that he had not been available to go to the recent Venture Capital Conference held in Dublin but had been made aware of the record number of attendees at the event. He advised that he had attended the launch of the new phase of the Brexit Advisory Service in Monaghan on 4th March at which Minister Humphreys was present. The enhanced Brexit Advisory Service now includes the new Brexit Implementation Voucher and Virtual Learning Environment. Both Ms Maguire, Brexit Manager and Ms McCrory, Digital Content Manager did an excellent job.

The Chairman advised that he had recently attended the Eversheds Sutherland Annual Leaders Dinner in Dublin at which Mr David Davis MP, former Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union was the guest speaker.

The Chairman informed the Board that the DBEI Secretary General, Dr Orlaigh Quinn and the DfE Permanent Secretary, Mr Noel Lavery have confirmed their availability to meet the Board on Tuesday 30th April. The Board meeting will commence at 11.45am and finish at 1.30pm. Dr Quinn and Mr Lavery are due to arrive at 1.30pm for lunch, followed by a meeting with the Board at 2.15pm. Board Sub Committee meetings would be held prior to the Board meeting. The Chairman encouraged as many Board members as possible to be

available to attend the meetings. Mr Cairns advised that he would be unable to attend the next meeting and asked for his apology to be noted.

192.07 Designated Officer Report

Mr Gough informed the Board that following recent meetings with representatives of the Institute of Directors (IOD), Confederation of Business Industry (CBI), Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NICCI), all have agreed to work with us on a business focussed Brexit event on 16th April in Titanic, Belfast. Invest N.I. have also agreed to be a partner. Although CBI have another event on this date, they hope to be able to send representatives. Speakers will include, Dr Vincent Power, A&L Goodbody and Ms Karen Wheeler, Director General, HMRC. The event will include panels of experts in various categories including; Customs, Logistics and Supply Chain, Data and Legal, People and Business Supports. Mr Gough advised that details of the event will be circulated to Board members when the programme is confirmed.

Mr Gough reported on a meeting hosted by the North South units in the Department of the Taoiseach and Department of Foreign Affairs at which CEOs and Designated Officers of the Cross Border Bodies attended. Most of the issues discussed relate to the on-going governance problems facing the Bodies in the areas of Board appointments and the revised Financial Memorandum. Mr Agnew gave an update on the review of the draft Financial Memorandum and advised that the consultation period which was to be concluded at the end of March would be extended. He advised that the Body was participating in the consultation.

Mr Gough informed the Board of the significant progress of the BioPharma cluster initiative, TechIreland platform and Cancer Trials Networks. He highlighted the added value of these collaborations which facilitate wider cross-border engagements between SMEs as well as private and public sector actors for mutual benefit. Mr Gough reported that as a result of the success of the collaboration between the North South Cancer Trials Networks, InterTradeIreland was approached by Clinical Research Development Ireland to investigate opportunities for all island co-ordination of biobanks. InterTradeIreland facilitated a workshop between HRB, HSC R&D NI as well as representatives of Almac, Randox and NI BioBank which has the potential to increase the competitiveness of the island as a location for clinical research. The Board discussed the progress in these areas and noted the collaboration between clinicians and academic institutes on the island.

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

192.08 Board Sub Committee Reports

Innovation Sub Committee Report

Mr O'Sullivan reported back from the Innovation Sub Committee meeting held on 28th February 2019. Four new Fusion applications and two deferrals were considered and all were approved. The first Business to Business Fusion application was also considered and approved.

Mr O'Sullivan advised that the Executive had provided a draft of changes to the Terms of Reference for the Innovation Sub Committee to include reference to the Sub Committee's role in the Innova approval process. The Sub Committee approved the revised Terms of Reference.

At the Sub Committee meeting, Mr Peter Grant from Helix Innovation Partnerships, the Managing Agent for Fusion presented his bi-annual progress report and statistics to the Sub Committee. Mr O’Sullivan advised that the contract for the delivery of the Fusion Phase V programme had been approved by the Board in September 2014 for a five-year period subject to satisfactory performance reviews during years three and four. The Sub Committee agreed that they were satisfied with the Managing Agent’s performance and approved a second one-year extension of the contract through the Central Procurement Directorate. This will allow recruitment of partnerships to continue until the end of 2020. Mr O’Sullivan informed the Board, that to ensure continuity of the Fusion programme, an economic appraisal for a phase VI of the programme will be undertaken and presented to the Board in early 2020.

As a consequence of the confirmation of the fifth year of the Managing Agent’s contract, the Sub Committee also approved the continuation of the contract with Queen’s University to provide Fusion’s Post Graduate Diploma in Business and Management.

The Board noted the Innovation Sub Committee report and the Chairman thanked Mr O’Sullivan for his update.

Trade Sub Committee Report

Mr Greenfield reported back from the Trade Sub Committee meeting held on 28th February 2019. He advised that the Committee considered fourteen Acumen applications and twelve were approved, one was deferred for additional information and one was not approved.

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

Communications Sub Committee Report

Mr O’Sullivan reported back from the Communications Sub Committee meeting held on 28th February 2019. He updated the Board on the key communications outputs from 2018 and highlighted the significant media value achieved, with the target exceeded by £800,000 mainly attributable to corporate and Brexit activity. Mr O’Sullivan advised that other outputs included the development of the new InterTradeIreland and Co-Innovate websites and an extensive increase in social media followers.

Priorities for the Communications team in 2019 will include the development of new metrics which will focus more on outcomes rather than outputs. Three imminent tenders are being prepared for web development, media monitoring and advertising, print and design. Mr O’Sullivan reported that a corporate marketing and stakeholder event will be held in Autumn 2019, marking 20 years of InterTradeIreland. Promotion of the Brexit Advisory Service will continue including the development of specific marketing strategies. Mr O’Sullivan passed on his thanks to Ms Rudden, Chair of the Communication Sub Committee and to Ms Fitzpatrick, Communications Manager and her team for the work being carried out.

The Board noted the Communications Sub Committee report and the Chairman thanked Mr O’Sullivan for his update.

192.09 For Consideration, Discussion and Noting.

Operations Directorate Progress and Activity Report

Mr Gough presented the Operations Directorate Progress and Activity Report. He advised that there is continued demand for our supports and in particular the Brexit Advisory Service. There has been a significant increase in the number of applications for Brexit vouchers. The virtual learning environment (VLE) continues to be developed with the 'People' modules now live and Supply Chain' module scheduled to go live in April. Mr Gough reported that feedback from the VLE has been very positive and efforts are being made to increase the number of users. He advised that work is ongoing to target and engage with more agri food companies.

Mr Gough gave the Board a brief update on various events including the Supplier Engagement event with Translink, the Venture Capital Conference and Go-2-Tender workshops.

A number of Acumen companies have submitted conclusion reports quantifying substantial increases in their sales as a result of participating in the programme. These reports along with information captured during monitoring visits provide evidence that our supports are delivering value for SMEs on the island.

Mr Gough advised that the Innova economic appraisal had been approved by the DfE Casework Committee and DBEI. We are awaiting the final approval from the Department of Finance.

The Board noted the Operations Directorate Progress and Activity reports and the Chairman thanked Mr Gough for his update.

Co-Innovate Programme Update

Mr Neil Ryan joined the Board meeting for this agenda item. He gave an update on the progress made on the various strands.

Mr Ryan informed the Board that due to uncertainty regarding Brexit, some companies are withdrawing or delaying their progress to other strands of the programme. This has the potential to affect the delivery of targets within the current timescales. Mr Ryan reported that this situation is being closely monitored and he has requested a meeting with SEUPB to discuss further.

The Chairman advised that he would be attending the next Interreg VA Programme Monitoring Committee meeting in Scotland in May 2019.

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

Governance and Financial Matters

Mr Agnew presented the Governance and Financial Matters report. He advised that the annual NIAO audit fieldwork will commence on 27th March. The findings from the first report of the 2018/19 internal audit plan, Corporate Governance and Risk Management will be presented to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting to be held after the Board meeting.

A draft revised Financial Memorandum has been received from the Finance Departments for comment and review. The Board will be advised on progress at a later date.

Mr Agnew gave the Board a brief overview of the 2019 budgetary outturn to date and funding arrangements.

The Chairman asked Mr Agnew to provide the Board with a short paper around the Body's current funding arrangements.

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

Tenders and Variations to Letters of Offer/Appointment

The Board approved Mr Agnew's request to go to competitive tender for a web development and maintenance provider for a three-year period. This will include development and maintenance of the InterTradeIreland website and the Intranet.

Communications Update

Mr Agnew presented the Communications update. He reported that there was very positive feedback from the recent Venture Capital Conference with the highest attendance of delegates to date. There was excellent media coverage of the launch of the enhanced Brexit Advisory Service which was attended by Minister Humphreys. The Translink Supplier Engagement event also attracted over 400 attendees.

Mr Agnew advised that planning is underway for an event to be held in Dublin in mid-October to mark the 20th Anniversary of the Body. Key stakeholders and SMEs on the island will be invited to this networking event with high profile speakers.

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

Business Plan Budget Variance and Milestone Exception Report

Ms Kinver presented the Business Plan Budget Variance and Milestone Exception Report. She advised that there are currently no significant budget variances at this time.

The Chairman thanked Ms Kinver for her report and the Board noted the Business Plan Budget Variance and Milestone Exception Report.

Draft Corporate Plan 2020 – 2022

Mr Gough presented the first draft of the 2020 to 2022 Corporate Plan. He advised that there would be many reiterations of the plan before the final draft would be presented to the Board in September for approval. The standard layout for the corporate plan is provided by the Sponsoring Departments. The plan begins with a review of the Body’s performance from 2017 to 2019. Based on performance to date there is an expectation that all key performance indicator targets should be met.

Mr Gough advised that good progress had been made in delivering the key strategic objectives for 2017 – 2019 i.e. digitisation of services, being a catalyst for collaboration, developing sectoral ecosystems and clusters and the Brexit Advisory Service. Our research over the past three years has also shown the growing inter connectedness and cross-border trade that has made a significant contribution to key government economic objectives. This solid level of performance at the micro and macro levels provides a very strong foundation on which to build over the next years. The new Corporate Plan will aim to do just this by using and developing three key strategic enablers – synergy, digitisation and data analytics and staff development to scale value, participation and opportunities.

The Board discussed the draft plan at length and the uncertainty of the economic outlook and the impacts of Brexit on the work of the Body going forward was highlighted. Budget constraints may pose difficulties. The importance of digitisation and data analytics was emphasised and there was agreement that this would provide the scope to increase scale. Mr Gough informed the Board that the next step would be to consult with staff and stakeholders for their input. The Board endorsed the methodology and approach to the plan and agreed to discuss the plan in more detail at the May Board meeting.

The Chairman thanked the Board for their feedback and the Senior Leadership team for their work in this area to date.

Preparations for Brexit

Mr Gough and Mr Agnew gave an update on the Body’s preparations for Brexit. The Board discussed the proposed plans and endorsed the Executive’s approach to this area of work.

192.10 AOB

The Chairman thanked the Executive and asked that the Board’s appreciation be passed on to all staff. He also congratulated Mr Briody on the recent acquisition of Silver Hill Foods by Fane Valley.

.....Authorised by:

Mr Ken Nelson, Chairman, InterTradeIreland
30th April 2019