

**Minutes of the 193<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Board of InterTradeIreland, the Trade and Business Development Body.**

**Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2019 – InterTradeIreland (11:45am – 13:20pm)**

Present:

Board Members:

Mr Ken Nelson MBE	Chairman
Mr Paul O’Sullivan	Vice Chair
Mr Micheál Briody	
Mr Patrick Joy	
Ms Ann Rudden	
Mr James Spratt	

Observers:

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

Executive:

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

#### 193.01 Apologies

Apologies were received from Mr Timothy Cairns, Mr Terry Crossan and Mr Paul Greenfield.

#### 193.02 Opening Remarks

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and thanked Board members for agreeing to the change of time of the Board meeting to accommodate the visit from the DBEI Secretary General and the DfE Permanent Secretary. He gave a brief outline of the timings for the day.

### 193.03 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 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. Ms Ann Rudden declared a potential conflict of interest arising from her position as founder and MD of Áine Hand Made Chocolates who are participants on the Co-Innovate programme.

No other conflicts were declared.

### 193.04 Approval and Authorisation of the 26<sup>th</sup> March 2019 Board Minutes

The minutes of the 26<sup>th</sup> March 2019 Board meeting were agreed as a true record of the meeting and were approved by the Board and authorised by the Chairman.

### 193.05 Matters Arising

Mr Gough advised that all matters arising from the March 2019 Board meeting have been addressed. Mr Agnew circulated a paper on the Body's current funding arrangements.

### 193.06 Chairman's Business

The Chairman advised that he had recently attended a dinner in Dublin Castle with the Taoiseach and Ms Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the United States House of Representatives. He reported that he had the opportunity to meet with Minister Humphreys and other senior officials including Mr Paddy Harte, Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland.

The Chairman reminded Board members if they wished to review and update their bios for the InterTradeIreland website and 2018 Annual Report to advise the Board Secretary by Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2019.

### 193.07 Designated Officer Report

Mr Gough informed the Board that the Body had been extremely busy, particularly in the week leading up to the 12<sup>th</sup> April in preparation for a potential No Deal Brexit. He reported that the Body was fully prepared to respond to an increase in enquiries and staff had displayed a high level of flexibility and support at this time. The Body will continue to assist businesses prepare for any new trading relationships. The Board noted their appreciation of the flexibility and support of staff in ensuring the Body was fully prepared for a No Deal Brexit.

Mr Gough advised that the Brexit event on 16<sup>th</sup> April organised in association with INI, FSB, IOD and NICC was a great success with over 300 businesses in attendance. The event focussed on the steps businesses can take to prepare for Brexit, with high calibre speakers including Dr Vincent Power, A&L Goodbody and Ms Karen Wheeler, Director General, HMRC. Dr. Andrew McCormick, Director General of International Relations for Brexit was also present at the event. Panels of experts in various categories including: Customs, Logistics and Supply Chain, Data and Legal, People and Business Supports provided advice to businesses.

Mr Gough reported that the Body's application for the Small Business Research Initiative Challenge Fund, has been successful. Our project, 'Better Data Better Decisions' will help provide real-time intelligence to utilise the power of an artificially intelligent big data analytics system. He advised that the project aligns with the Body's corporate strategy and wider Government strategies.

The Board agreed to review the Corporate Plan at the next Board meeting.

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

#### 193.08 Board Sub Committee Reports

##### *Innovation Sub Committee Report*

Mr O'Sullivan reported back from the Innovation Sub Committee meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2019. Eleven new Fusion applications and one deferral were considered and nine projects were approved at the Sub Committee meeting, with three deferred, one of which has subsequently been approved. He advised that the approvals were for twelve and eighteen month projects from an interesting mix of sectors. The second Business to Business Fusion application was also considered and approved at the Sub Committee meeting.

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

##### *Trade Sub Committee Report*

Mr Joy reported back from the Trade Sub Committee meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2019 which was chaired by Mr Greenfield in his absence. He advised that the Committee considered eleven new Acumen applications and ten were approved and one was deferred. A deferral from the February meeting was approved and a rejection from the February meeting was also approved following an appeal.

Mr Joy asked that the Board's appreciation be passed on to the Acumen team for their work.

The Board noted the Trade Sub Committee report and the Chairman thanked Mr Joy for his update. The Chairman also passed on his appreciation for the work done by Board Sub Committee members.

## 193.09 For Consideration, Discussion and Noting.

### *Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Report*

Mr Agnew reported back from the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee held on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2019. He advised that the external audit was nearing conclusion. The Draft 2018 Accounts were presented to the Committee and Ms Quinn, Finance Manager had incorporated suggestions made by Committee members.

The Committee was informed that given the absence of agreed arrangements by which the UK will exit the EU, the Brexit risk had been escalated in the High-level Risk Register.

Mr Agnew advised that a draft Financial Memorandum had been received from the Finance Departments and reviewed by management and feedback has been submitted. He highlighted the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Annual Report to the Board (which was included in the Board papers) which summarises deliberations of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee in 2018.

The Board noted the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Report and Annual Report to the Board. The Chairman thanked Mr Agnew for his update.

### *Operations Directorate Progress and Activity Report*

Ms Hearty presented the Operations Directorate Progress and Activity Report. She advised that the Brexit team had been extremely busy in the run up to 12<sup>th</sup> April. There is continued demand for our supports and in particular the Brexit Advisory Service. The virtual learning environment (VLE) continues to be developed with more process improvements now in place. Ms Hearty reported that due to the high demand for the Brexit Start to Plan Vouchers, activity was being frontloaded into 2019. The Board noted this approach.

Ms Hearty informed the Board that all the necessary Departmental approvals have been received for the next phase of the Innova programme.

All trade programmes are on target and the pipelines for all are strong despite uncertainty and potential impacts of Brexit. Workshops are ongoing across the island to promote the 2019 Seedcorn Investor Readiness Competition.

Ms Hearty informed the Board that the Body had been approached by Energia Family Business Awards to participate as sponsors and judges of the 2019 Awards. She participated on the judging panel on 23<sup>rd</sup> April and highlighted the quality of applications from businesses across the island. The Body are sponsoring the Manufacturing and Engineering Family Business Award and the Awards Ceremony will take place on 24<sup>th</sup> May in the Mansion House Dublin.

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

### *Governance and Financial Matters*

Mr Agnew presented the Governance and Financial Matters report. He advised that the annual NIAO audit fieldwork is nearing completion which should facilitate the certification of the accounts by the required deadline of 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019. As discussed earlier in the meeting, the Body has provided comments on the draft revised Financial Memorandum to the Sponsor Departments. Three Board members' terms of office are due to finish later this year and Mr Agnew advised that this matter would also be raised with the Sponsoring Departments.

Mr Agnew gave the Board a brief overview of the 2019 budgetary outturn to date and advised that spend was on target for the period up until 31<sup>st</sup> March.

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 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 continuing to withdraw or delay 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. A review will be carried out at the end of June 2019 with a view to requesting an extension to the programme from SEUPB. The Board were informed that an extension for a six-month period could be considered.

The Chairman advised that he would be attending the next Interreg VA Programme Monitoring Committee meeting in Scotland on 30<sup>th</sup> May 2019.

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

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

The Board approved Mr Agnew's request to go to competitive tender for a Contract for Services to deliver the specialist networking and co-ordination management function for the Innova Phase 3 programme for a three-year period.

Following consideration of the draft terms of reference (which had been emailed to Board members), the Board also confirmed their approval to go to competitive tender for the Cluster and I4.0 Research Report.

### *Communications Update*

Mr Agnew presented the Communications update. He reported that the 2019 Seedcorn Investor Readiness Competition was launched at the Venture Capital Conference in April. A new online dashboard has been introduced this year, making the application process easier and more transparent for entrants. Mr Agnew

advised that the Brexit event on 16<sup>th</sup> April in Belfast had generated excellent media coverage. He asked the Board to note the forthcoming events in April and May, detailed in his Board report. Mr O’Sullivan recommended that contact could be made with the Southern press to promote the Seedcorn Investor Readiness Competition.

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

*Brexit Update*

Mr Gough advised that work continues on planning for Brexit. Significant demand for the Brexit Start to Plan vouchers continues given the uncertainties for businesses on the island. Other Brexit events are planned over the coming months. He advised that the work in this area has been recognised by businesses and representative Bodies. The Sponsoring Departments have acknowledged the work being done by the Body including Minister Humphries and Dr McCormick.

The Board noted the Brexit verbal update and the Chairman thanked Mr Gough for his update.

*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.

**193.10 AOB**

The Chairman thanked the Executive and asked that the Board’s appreciation be passed on to all staff on their work and highlighted the quality of information provided in the Board and Sub Committee papers.

The Board viewed the Prezi presentation to be made to the Secretary General and the Permanent Secretary following the Board meeting and suggested minor refinements to it.

.....Authorised by:

Mr Ken Nelson, Chairman, InterTradeIreland  
28<sup>th</sup> May 2019