

**Minutes of the 263rd Meeting of the Board of InterTradelreland,
Tuesday 27th April 2026
09.30 – 11.30am**

Board Members Present:

Mr Richard Kennedy	Chair
Mr Cathal Mallaghan	Vice Chair
Dr Richard Fernandes	
Mr Michael Hanley	
Prof Brian MacCraith	
Mr Chris Shannon	
Ms Denise Walshe	
Ms Jackie King	
Dr Conor Patterson	

Executive:

Ms Margaret Hearty	Chief Executive
Mr Martin Agnew	Corporate Services Director
Mr Colin McCabrey	Trade Director
Mr Martin Robinson	Strategy Director
Ms Barbara Orr	Enterprise Development Director
Ms Caroline Moore	Board Secretary

Apologies: Mr Ryan Warren

Presenting: Ms Anne-Marie McAteer, Mr Grant Gilmore, Ms Rachael Corridan

Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and reminded the Board to declare any conflicts of interest.

Conflict of Interest

No conflicts of interest were declared.

263.1 Board Minutes

The Board approved the minutes of the 31st March 2026 meeting.

Matters Arising

N/A

263.2 Chair's Business

Mr Kennedy welcomed everyone to the meeting. He reminded members to complete their Statement of Interest and return to the Board Secretary and for those who have not yet completed the Evaluation questionnaire which has been circulated via email. Mr Kennedy advised that the Trade strategy supplier will join the meeting for a consultation on the new Trade Strategy which follows preliminary works that they have already undertaken. This includes a review of trade supports and the wider support ecosystem throughout the island. The Chair encouraged all members to engage in the discussion.

263.3 Chief Executive's Report

Ms Hearty presented the CEO report and updated the Board on recent meetings with DfE and DETE. DfE has advised on the financial challenges facing the Executive and DfE.

Ms Hearty attended a DETE Heads of Agencies meeting where representatives gave a presentation on potential inflationary pressures and costs associated with the current fuel crisis which are likely to significantly affect some key sectors including agrifood, manufacturing, transport & logistics and tourism.

All sectors will see some impact. The ask of agencies like InterTradeIreland is to help businesses manage these issues. The department was briefed on how information was gathered through the AIBM and that our current supports remain very relevant in terms of helping businesses to explore new technologies/processes to reduce costs and open new opportunities.

The Board was also briefed on the communications campaign and future regional events to broaden outreach efforts.

The Board thanked Ms Hearty for her update.

263.4 Sub-committee Reports

- The Innovation Sub-committee report from 31st March was reviewed and noted.
- The Trade Sub-committee report from 31st March was reviewed and noted.

263.5 Operational Reports

Trade Progress Report

Mr McCabrey summarised the activities from the Trade report highlighting the 'Help to Grow Sales' theme this month. Mr Grant Gilmore and Ms Anne-Marie McAteer joined the meeting and gave a presentation reflecting the benefits to our SME customers and key opportunities available for growing All Island Trade. They focused on 4 key areas and gave an overview of a typical Trade Customer – Including their profile, sector and Readiness to Export; Current Sales Supports create Impacts – how they support and solve today's issues; Key Insights, impact & learnings – summary of outcomes, performance highlights and critical insights gained and Export Sales Pathway & Next Steps – Future direction and growth opportunities.

The Board reviewed and noted the Trade Progress Report and thanked Mr McCabrey for his update. The Board thanked Mr Gilmore and Ms McAteer for their presentation and welcomed the objectives outlined.

Innovation and Entrepreneurship Progress Report

Ms Orr presented the Innovation & Entrepreneurship Report including activities from the Innovation and Entrepreneurship team across Collaborative Innovation, Collaborative R&D, Clustering, Entrepreneurship, and the Shared Island Enterprise Scheme. She informed the Board that the 2026 Seedcorn Competition has officially closed with 301 applications.

To meet demand for the WeScale programme the Board approved Cohort 2 being accelerated to run alongside Cohort 1 with programme spend to deliver another WeScale cohort and maintain programme continuity in 2027/28.

The Board thanked Ms Orr for her update.

Strategy Report

Mr Robinson presented the Strategy report highlighting areas under Research including Tradeable Services, Sectoral Ecosystems and AI. A contract has been awarded to a specialist digital transformation consultancy. A key early focus will be calibrating existing policy and strategy documents against expert analysis and stakeholder needs.

Board approval was given to extend the contract for the Independent Economist services to December 2026. The current contract has been in place from April 2024 to April 2026 and remains with original spend and therefore only a time extension is sought.

The Board reviewed and noted the Strategy Report and thanked Mr Robinson for his update.

Communications Report

The Board reviewed and noted the Communications Report on the selected targeted media campaigns and opportunities.

263.6 Business Cases

The Board approved a proposal for an Entrepreneurial Leadership pilot programme at a cost of £140k (excl VAT) and permission to go to tender for a delivery partner for the pilot.

Ms Rachael Corridon joined the meeting to present Cluster proposals delivered with DETE's International Cluster Programme with Board approval for both proposals with spend of €167k (excl VAT) each for a Cyber Ireland cluster which aims to position Ireland as a leading cybersecurity industry in Europe and Advanced Technologies in Manufacturing's industry-led cluster hosted by the Technological University of the Shannon (TUS).

The Board held a lengthy discussion on Clusters and their comments and feedback were welcomed.

The Board thanked Ms Corridan for her proposals.

263.7 Governance and Financial Matters Reports

Mr Agnew presented the Governance Report. The draft Audit Strategy and draft 2025 Accounts will be presented to the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) at its meeting in April. Detailed audit fieldwork is expected to commence in April/May. The first audit from the 2025/26 internal audit programme focuses on programme supports, specifically the Business Explorer and Synergy programmes. Fieldwork is underway, and progress will be presented to the ARAC.

InterTradelreland currently has ten Board members in place. Further appointments are required to meet the full complement of twelve members, and to ensure the Body does not experience difficulties in achieving a board quorum.

The Body's 2026 Business Plan has been approved by Sponsor/Partner and Finance departments and NSMC. The DfE share of the 2026 Business Plan funding requirement is £5.7m, which is funded from baseline funding, together with a successful bid for NI Protocol funding in the 2026/27 DfE financial year.

DETE has confirmed core funding of €15.8m, including €2.7m of Shared Island funding, which will meet its share of the 2026 budget. This amount excludes pension costs.

The Board thanked Mr Agnew and noted the Governance report.

Permissions to go to Tender

The Board approved permission to go to tender for the delivery of an Entrepreneurial Leadership pilot at a cost of £140k (excl VAT).

Variations to Letter of Appointment

The Board approved the time extension to the contract for the Independent Economist Service to December 2026.

Authorised by

Mr Richard Kennedy

Chair