

**Minutes of the 197th Meeting of the Board of InterTradeIreland, the Trade and Business Development Body.**

**Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> September 2019 – InterTradeIreland (08:30am – 10:15am)**

Present:

**Board Members:**

Mr Ken Nelson MBE	Chairman
Mr Paul O’Sullivan	Vice-Chair
Mr Timothy Cairns	
Mr Micheál Briody	
Mr Terry Crossan	
Mr Paul Greenfield	
Mr Patrick Joy	
Ms Ann Rudden	

**Observer:**

Ms Adrienne McGuinness

**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

**197.01 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Mr James Spratt and Ms Florence Bayliss.

**197.02 Opening Remarks**

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting. He welcomed Ms Orla McGlennon back to work and asked that the Board’s appreciation be passed on to Ms Nicola Quinn for acting as Board Secretary for the past few months. The Board also asked that their good wishes be sent to Mr James Spratt.

#### 197.03 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 which is involved with 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 Chocolates which is a participant on the Co-Innovate programme.

No other conflicts were declared.

#### 197.04 Approval and Authorisation of the 27<sup>th</sup> August 2019 Board Minutes

The minutes of the 27<sup>th</sup> August 2019 Board meeting were agreed as a true record of the meeting and were approved by the Board and authorised by the Chairman.

#### 197.05 Matters Arising

Mr Gough advised that all matters arising from the August 2019 Board meeting would be addressed during and following the Board meeting.

#### 197.06 Chairman's Business

The Chairman reported that he had recently attended an SEUPB Interreg Va event in Scotland which provided a great networking opportunity. He also advised that he is due to attend Belfast's first Female Investment event organised by the Ulster Bank and an Interreg Va Sustainable Conference in Dublin on behalf of InterTradeIreland.

#### 197.07 Designated Officer Report

Mr Gough informed the meeting that Brexit activities continue to dominate the landscape and the Executive are supporting businesses to take action to prepare for all eventualities. He updated the Board on the various meetings and committees he had attended recently. Mr Gough reported that the Executive continue to monitor our own Day One Planning preparations in both a deal or no deal scenario. An InterTradeIreland taskforce including the Policy Research Manager, Ms Kerry Curran, the Communications Manager, Ms Eimear Fitzpatrick and the Brexit Manager, Ms Deirdre Maguire continue to work at pace and the Body's reaction to the Brexit situation has been widely commended.

Mr Gough informed the Board of a new piece of research which models the UK Governments schedule of tariff rates to be applied on a temporary basis in the event of a no deal exit from the EU. Research now shows that the overall average tariff being faced by exporters from Ireland to Northern Ireland is down to 1.45% compared to potential increases of 17.5% if the UK had adopted the EU level of tariffs. In contrast, trade from Northern Ireland to Ireland with the EU tariff schedule applied would increase prices by 15.8% on average. Mr Gough advised that the majority of this tariff effect for Northern Ireland would be on the Dairy and Beef sectors. The Chairman complimented the Executive on providing this evidence based information.

Mr Gough reported that he had positive discussions with DBEI officials and the Body's new corporate strategy will align with key government objectives and should contribute to the wider government targets.

The Board were advised that a draft report from the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) had been received. Mr Gough informed the Board that he has provided a response which accepts the findings and recommendations of the draft report subject to changes in specific areas. Mr Gough also pointed out that we had already taken action in many of the points raised in the report and reiterated our strong commitments and record of ensuring the highest standards of public sector governance and service.

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

#### 197.08 Board Sub Committee Reports

##### *Innovation Sub Committee Report*

Mr O'Sullivan reported back from the Innovation Sub Committee meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> August 2019. Fifteen new FUSION applications and one B2B project were considered by the Sub-Committee, all of which were approved. He reported on the high quality of applications from a variety of sectors.

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 27<sup>th</sup> August 2019. He advised that fifteen new Acumen applications had been considered. Twelve projects were approved, two were deferred and one was rejected due to the high risk of displacement and reseller/distributor concerns. Mr Joy highlighted the good screening process resulting in fewer rejections of Acumen applications.

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

#### 197.09 For Consideration, Discussion and Noting.

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

Ms Hearty presented the Operations Directorate Progress and Activity Report. She advised that the last quarter was a particularly busy period in terms of outreach events and other Brexit and programme related activities.

Attendance by InterTradeIreland staff at the Ploughing Championships in Carlow was highlighted. The Brexit Advisory Service reported increased activity including a significant increase in invitations to external Brexit events. Applications for the planning voucher doubled in the month of August. Ms Hearty advised that recruitment for additional Brexit staff is currently underway under fixed term contracts. The Brexit Bite Size messaging campaign was recently launched and feedback to date has been very positive. Telephone Brexit enquiries have risen sharply and the team are building up a series of frequently asked questions. Ms Hearty updated the Board on the Dublin Brexit event on 5<sup>th</sup> November at which Mr Vincent Power is due to provide a keynote address and interpret the position at this date.

In August, our Go-2-Tender programme delivered a breakfast briefing in partnership with Kildare Chamber. Upcoming events in October include a large scale Supplier Engagement event with four Local Authorities in the greater Dublin area and Louth, Kildare, Meath and Wicklow on 1<sup>st</sup> October in the City West Hotel, Dublin. An OGP Facilities Management Category briefing event will be held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October in Athlone. Ms Hearty advised that a number of internal training workshops have been arranged to upskill InterTradeIreland staff on topics including specification and terms of reference development, contract management and selection and evaluation.

Applications and approval for all trade programmes continue to meet or exceed targets and there continues to be a strong pipeline of applications which is being closely monitored by the Trade team.

A tender to engage a Networking and Co-ordination Manager for the Innova programme is currently on-going.

Ms Hearty reported that the 132 companies across the island submitted business plans to the 2019 Seedcorn Investor Readiness Competition. This compares with 82 submissions in 2018 and the competition is very highly regarded. The business plans are now being assessed by external business plan markers utilising a new on-line business marking portal which has proved very successful. The regional Seedcorn Competition winners are due to be announced on our website in the near future.

The Chairman complimented the Operations team on their work and targets achieved to date.

#### *Co-Innovate Programme Update*

Mr Neil Ryan joined the Board meeting for this agenda item and provided an update on the progress made on the various strands of the Co-Innovate Programme. He advised of the new reporting format to the Board which now includes progress of the programme against the final output indicators. Due to the unforeseen impact of Brexit to the programme, a significant number of Strand 4 and Strand 5 companies are holding off proceeding with projects until a final Brexit outcome is known. SEUPB has granted the Co-Innovate programme a three-month extension to the delivery deadlines and a further additional six-month extension to the programme will be reviewed by SEUPB at the October Steering Committee. Mr Ryan reported that SEUPB have now allowed direct entry to Strand 4, without having to complete the previous strands. This is due to the number of companies participating in earlier Strands who are not of the calibre to proceed to Strands 4 and 5. There is a concern that achieving Strand 4 targets may prove challenging without the proposed extension and plans are being put in place to mitigate against this.

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 and advised that the 2018 financial statements and Annual Report would be laid in both jurisdictions before the end of this month.

The internal auditors have commenced a review of the Body's implementation of GDPR regulations.

Mr Agnew provided an overview of the 2019 budgetary outturn to date and advised that spend was on target.

Mr Agnew advised of the 2019 Business Plan which has a total funding requirement of £12.6m, exclusive of pension payments as detailed in his Board report. The Board discussed the current funding arrangements and its effect on the Body's long term planning. This matter will be discussed again at the next Board meeting.

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

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

Mr Agnew advised that Board permission was being sought to go to competitive tender for the procurement of Lead Generation Services for Trade Supports. The Board approved the request to go to tender for the procurement of Lead Generation Services Supports for Trade Supports for two years.

### *Communications Update*

Ms Eimear Fitzpatrick, Communications Manager joined the Board meeting for this agenda item.

Mr Agnew provided an update on recent Communications activity, including the new Brexit integrated marketing campaign which went live on 26<sup>th</sup> August, comprising national and regional radio, media relations, print, outdoor and digital platforms to provide cross border traders with practical advice to get ready for Brexit. The campaign to date has generated positive media coverage.

New market research conducted by the Innovation team has shown a significant change in the way graduates perceive 'graduate programmes'. Mr Morrow advised that as a result the formerly known 'InterTradeIreland Graduate Programme' has been rebranded to the 'Career Boost Programme Connected by InterTradeIreland'. He stressed the importance of attracting and recruiting the right graduates in a very competitive market place. The InterTradeIreland advertising agency – Big Dog had presented a very impressive approach to the new campaign which is being launched today in UCD. The new name and imagery delivers a clear and concise message to the graduate; the programme will boost their career by connecting them with a real job and with real support.

Mr Agnew confirmed that plans for the 20-year event on 24<sup>th</sup> October are at an advanced stage. Invitations to the event have been sent. The MC for the evening and the panel of speakers has been confirmed. Minister Humphries DBEI and Mr Noel Lavery Permanent Secretary, DfE have confirmed their attendance.

Ms Fitzpatrick presented the format for the evening which will include a short video of highlights and achievements from InterTradeIreland's last 20 years. The Board discussed the event and it was agreed that Board members should be sent a short briefing note about the event.

The Board were asked to advise the Board Secretary if they would be attending the event. The Board noted apologies from Mr James Spratt and Mr Timothy Cairns.

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

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

Ms Kinver presented the Business Plan Budget Variance and Milestone Exception Report and provided explanations for minor issues highlighted.

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 final draft of the 2020-2022 Corporate Plan. He advised that the Corporate Plan identifies a number of key challenges and opportunities that the Body will face and is best positioned to address. These include – Brexit, SME productivity, helping businesses adjust to a low carbon economy, Industry 4.0, cluster development and extending supply and enhancing impact. Mr Gough reported that a new strategic delivery platform has been developed to meet these challenges that has been built on the twin pillars of trade and innovation, prioritises SME productivity, adjustment to a low carbon economy, Industry 4.0 and cross border cluster development. The Plan will focus on the bio economy, advanced technology and the health and life science sectors. This will be underpinned by developments in the areas of digitalisation, data analytics, customer focus and awareness and personal development. To fully implement the Plan, a budget of £12.5m per annum will be required.

The Board discussed the proposed plan and agreed that it captured previous Board discussions. It was suggested that Corporate Social Responsibility should be captured in the plan. Some changes to the layout, tone and flow of the plan were recommended. The importance of relevance to government strategies were highlighted. The Board commended the evidence based and informed approach to the plan which will deliver real value for businesses on the island. The Chairman thanked Board members for their engagement in the process. The Board endorsed the draft Corporate Plan with suggested refinements. Mr Gough advised that the Plan is unable to be published until all necessary approvals are in place.

The Chairman thanked Mr Gough and the team for their work in this area.

#### *Brexit Update*

This agenda item was discussed as part of the Operations Directorate Progress and Activity Report.

197.10 AOB

The Chairman reported that Mr Noel Lavery, DfE Permanent Secretary would be leaving the NICS in November 2019. He advised that when his replacement was announced a letter on behalf of the Board should be sent welcoming him/her to their new position. A meeting with the new DfE Permanent Secretary and the DBEI Secretary General, Dr Orlaigh Quinn should be organised in early 2020.

.....Authorised by

Mr Ken Nelson, Chairman, InterTradeIreland  
29<sup>th</sup> October 2019