

MINUTES
Meeting of the 14th Meeting of the Retail Consultation Forum

NECC Meeting Room, Agriculture House, Kildare Street, Dublin 2
20th September 2018

Chair: Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Heather Humphreys, TD

The attendance list is at Appendix 1.

1. Welcome and Opening Comments

The meeting was chaired by Minister Heather Humphreys. The Minister welcomed those in attendance, and thanked Members for their work and commitment to the Forum and Working Groups.

Apologies were received from Aidan Candon of Euronics Ireland, Anne Marie Harte of the Hardware Association, Helen O'Donnell of Dolmen Catering, Phil O'Flaherty of the Department of Education and Skills, Rebecca Harrison of Fishers of Newtownmountkennedy, Sven Spollen-Behrens of the Small Firms Association.

Brendan O'Connor of the Department of Finance was represented by Michael Flanagan, Gary Ryan of the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government was represented by Aisling Holohan, Ian Talbot, Chambers Ireland was represented by James Kiernan.

The minutes of the meeting of 20th November 2017 were approved.

2. Announcement of Pilot Online Retail Competitive Scheme by Enterprise Ireland

Stephen Hughes, Enterprise Ireland, outlined to the Forum details of the new pilot scheme to support SME retailers to strengthen their online trading ability. The *Online Retail Scheme* is a competitive call to retailers with 20 employees or more with an existing online presence, to increase their customer base and build a more resilient business in the domestic and global marketplace both online and offline.

The €625,000 scheme consists of a financial support of up to €25k to enable retailers to enhance their online presence. The scheme will match a retailer's eligible investment costs with a grant of between €10,000 and €25,000. The scheme will be administered by Enterprise Ireland.

The Scheme is not about taking the first steps, it is about raining the bar. (Attached is the Information leaflet from Enterprise Ireland on the scheme)

Following the presentation from Stephen Hughes, Minister Humphreys urged Forum members to promote this new scheme throughout the sector as much as possible, and opened the floor for questions and answers facilitated by Stephen Hughes.

3. Preparedness of the Retail Sector for Brexit

Minister Humphreys launched a new Brexit leaflet specifically aimed at providing a comprehensive guide to all the supports available to the Retail Sector. The Brexit Leaflet is available on the website for the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation:

<https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Getting-Brexit-Ready-Retail-brochure.pdf>

Minister Humphreys asked Forum members to share this Brexit information leaflet through their networks both online and offline.

The launch of the Brexit leaflet for the Retail Sector was followed by three presentations on the latest developments in relation to Brexit from:

- Owen McFeehly, Director, Retail and Consumer Practice, PwC,
- Shane Hamill, Overseas Trade Manager, Bord Bia "*Bord Bia: Responding to Brexit*",
- Sandra O'Reilly, Brexit Unit, Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation "*Retail Forum Brexit Update*".

Presentations from PwC and Bord Bia attached for information.

Minister Humphreys opened the floor to questions and answers.

Comments arising:

- Members of the Forum highlighted their need for a focus on the impacts of Brexit on imports as well as exports. Members suggested that with the majority of goods now sourced from non-domestic suppliers, disruption to import procedures could significantly affect retail operations.
- Members suggested a coherent 'voice' is needed to represent the challenges for importers. Members asked that a meeting be held between retail members, importers/distributors, and representatives dealing with customs and physical infrastructure (e.g. Dublin Port, Revenue) to discuss the impact of Brexit on imports and to identify what action can be taken.
- On the cost of Brexit preparations, it was suggested that 'A-Brand' suppliers, operating with larger margins compared to smaller retailers, may have more capacity to absorb the costs associated with preparing for Brexit and potential impacts such as deflation.
- A potential area of action is for retailers to collaboratively engage with suppliers to emphasise the need for planning and investing in Brexit preparations. Members of the forum expressed difficulties in engaging with domestic suppliers on Brexit. Bord Bia stated their willingness to engage with members on this, to find out and follow up on what retailers need from their domestic supply base in terms of engagement in Brexit preparation.

4. Retail and Skills Working Group Update

Sean Carlin, Chair of the group, provided an update on the progress of the Retail and Skills Working Group.

Highlights from the Working Group to date include:

- Strong focus on Ecommerce and digital marketing at all meetings of the Working Group. This had led to the development of new courses including digital marketing, digital photography and imaging, online marketing, and social media marketing.
- The development of a retail apprenticeship programme *Apprenticeship in Retail Supervision – Level 6* is progressing with the aim of pilot delivery early in 2019.
- Emphasis by the Working Group on making Retail a career of choice. Development of the *Think Retail* programme for Transition Year students, based on the success of the *Tourism Insight* learning programme developed by Natasha Kinsella, Regional Skills Manager, Regional Skills Dublin. The *Think Retail* programme aims to encourage students to consider Retail as a career of choice by highlighting the various roles and career paths within the Retail Sector. The *Think Retail* programme would help to ensure a long-term talent pipeline and act as a recruitment tool for Retail Apprenticeships.

Minister Humphreys thanked Sean Carlin for the update, and the members of the Working Group for their work.

5. A.O.B

Members expressed an interest in hearing from DBEI about progress of the Cost of Insurance Working Group at the next meeting.

Minister Humphreys agreed to continue to discuss the issues raised through meetings of the Forum. In the mean-time Forum members are encouraged to engage with the Forum secretary.

Next Meeting

10.30am 22 November 2018

Deborah Dignam
Secretary to the Retail Consultation Forum

Appendix 1
Retail Consultation Forum Meeting, 20th September 2018
Attendance List

Name	Organisation
Minister Heather Humphreys	Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation
Rónán Hession	Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection
Dr. Stephen Brennan	Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment
Tara Buckley	RGDATA
Thomas Burke	Retail Ireland
Sean Carlin	Retail Ireland Skillnet
Jim Curran	Irish Pharmacy Union
Lorraine Higgins	Retail Excellence
Aoife Mullen	Department of Taoiseach
Damian O'Reilly	DIT
Aisling Holohan	Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government
Keith Rogers	ECCO Ireland
Richard Guiney	Dublin Town (BID)
James Kiernan	Chambers Ireland
Willie O'Byrne	Retail Ireland
Vincent Jennings	CSNA
Edel Clancy	Musgrave Group
John Jameson	DIT
Deborah Dignam	Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation
Declan Hughes	Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation
Céline McHugh	Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation
Sandra Mullen	Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation
Emily Odium	Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation
Helen Keane-MacDonough	Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation
Kieren Mee	Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation

Presenters	
Sandra O'Reilly	Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation
Stephen Hughes	Enterprise Ireland
Shane Hamill	Bord Bia
Owen McFeely	PricewaterhouseCoopers

Apologies:

Aidan Candon of Euronics Ireland, Anne Marie Harte of the Hardware Association, Helen O'Donnell of Dolmen Catering, Phil O'Flaherty of the Department of Education and Skills, Rebecca Harrison of Fishers of Newtownmountkennedy, Sven Spollen-Behrens of the Small Firms Association.