

MINUTES
25th Meeting of the Retail Forum
1st December 2021
2.15pm – 4pm (via video / tele conference)

Meeting held under Chatham House Rules

Chair: Damien English TD, Minister of State for Business, Employment and Retail.

Attendance and apologies at Appendix 1.

1. Welcome and Opening Comments

The Chair welcomed those in attendance and reminded attendees of the ongoing 'Shop Safely' campaign led by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The Chair thanked Retail Forum members for supporting the campaign and reiterated the importance of continuing to take steps individually and collectively to reduce the spread of COVID-19 including the maintenance of hand sanitiser units in retail settings.

The Chair updated members on the 'Be Winter Ready' 2021 – 2022 information campaign that was recently launched by the Government. ([gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie) - [Government launches Be Winter Ready Information Campaign 2021-2022 \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie))

2. Retail Sector Study

The Chair called on Mr Niall Savage and Mr Morgan Crumlish, KPMG Future Analytics (KPMG FA) who provided an update on the Retail Sector Study which they were commissioned by DETE to conduct. Their presentation included an overview of the methodology and approach taken, update on stakeholder engagement to date, an overview of the emerging themes and interim findings.

Mr Savage informed attendees that there had been a good response from stakeholders to date and KPMG would welcome any further inputs from members.

The Chair thanked Mr. Savage and Mr. Crumlish for their presentation.

Comments arising:

- Member asked if, under the area of Localisation (project theme), there is enough attention given to cities. They asked if cities could be considered a sub-theme, as cities currently may need more attention than towns.

KPMG advised that this has been noted.

Action

Presentation to be shared with Retail Forum members only.
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3. Online Retail Scheme

The Chair called on Ms. Maedhbh Cronin, Principal Officer, Retail and Sector Transformation Policy Unit, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment to provide a presentation on the Online Retail Scheme (ORS)

Ms Cronin provided an overview of the survey of successful recipients of Call 1 of the COVID-19 ORS carried out by Enterprise Ireland.

Ms Cronin asked Retail Forum members for feedback directly and to provide any member feedback on the ORS to her directly. Ms Cronin added that the intention is to look at how a new Call of the ORS in 2022 could address any current gaps between the Trading Online Voucher Scheme and the ORS.

The Chair thanked Ms. Cronin for her presentation.

Comments arising:

- The ORS funding received by businesses was extraordinarily helpful and has been a lifeline during COVID-19.
- The ORS should be retained as some businesses were only established at the time of the previous Calls and may be interested in applying for future Calls.
- 15,000 Trading Online Vouchers (TOVs) were approved by the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) in 2020. The maximum grant is €2,500 which limits ambition. Some businesses have received the maximum two vouchers under this scheme.
- Funding for digital provided by the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) is insufficient for SMEs with under 10 employees.
- Businesses with under 10 employees have the same needs as businesses with 10+ employees in relation to trading online and should be eligible for the ORS.
- LEOs are due to launch a new voucher for digitalisation in 2022.

Action

Members were asked to forward feedback about the ORS to Ms. Cronin. (Several Retail Forum Members shared feedback after the meeting.)

4. AOB

(i) Department of Social Protection

The Chair called on Ms. Cassandra Hinchy, Employer Support Services Unit, Department of Social Protection to provide a presentation on the services offered by the Employer Support Services Unit.

The Employer Support Services Unit works with employers and job seekers by: advertising vacant positions on [JobsIreland.ie](https://www.jobsireland.ie) and on the European [EURES service](https://eures.europa.eu), reviewing CVs, offering tailored recruitment fairs. The service provided is free of charge.

An overview of the [Pathways to Work Strategy](#) and the [JobsPlus](#) initiative (an employer incentive which encourages and rewards employers who employ jobseekers on the Live Register) was provided.

The Chair thanked Ms. Hinchy for her presentation and encouraged businesses to engage with the Department of Social Protection on employment supports and initiatives.

The Chair raised the point about employees leaving Ireland due to COVID-19 and not returning. He asked Retail Forum members to send on an information they may have on this.

Action

Presentation slides circulated to members after the meeting.

(ii) Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media re the Night-Time Economy (NTE) Taskforce

The Chair called on Ms. Deborah Lawlor, Night-Time Economy Unit, Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media to provide an update on the Night-Time Economy.

Ms Lawlor gave an overview of the Night-Time Economy Taskforce which was established in July 2020 by Minister Catherine Martin. The NTE Taskforce was tasked with producing a set of recommendations on how to support and develop a night-time economy in Ireland through consultation with relevant stakeholders. Representation on the Taskforce included the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment along with other Government Departments, Agencies, and relevant Stakeholder Groups.

The [Report of the Night-Time Economy Taskforce](#) was published in September 2021. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment was assigned lead responsibility for Action 15 '*Work with the Retail Forum to examine the types of interventions required for late retail opening. Establish a Retail Forum working group to discuss this along with the Town Centre First initiative*'.

Ms. Lawlor also advised the Retail Forum on a few current activities

- Ongoing public consultation with the Department of Justice about the Review of Alcohol Licensing which will impact the Night-time Economy
- Department of Tourism Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media to fund NTE pilot projects in 6 towns/cities across the Country. Night-Time Economy advisors will be appointed to the selected towns and cities which will also be funded by DTCAGSM. The NTE advisor in each town and city will carry out a consultation process leading to the development of an action plan setting out a range of interventions to support the area's NTE.
- An Implementation structure of the Night-Time Economy is in development.

The Chair thanked Ms. Lawlor for her presentation.

Comments arising:

- The need for a united team of stakeholders collaborating on both the day and night-time economy.

- Stakeholders involved in the Purple Flag process have 9 years of expertise on the promotion of the Night-time Economy. Towns who have a purple flag should be involved in the pilot towns scheme re NTE.
- Labour market issues. Availability of staff to serve the NTE.
- Security and safety concerns for those working in the NTE. Proposed that D/Justice ensure there is sufficient Garda support.

Action

Information on Vulnerability Training issued to Retail Forum members. (Information circulated on 2 December 2021)

The Chair advised that he would follow up with D/Justice about security on the streets.

(iii) Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE): Overview of the Climate Toolkit 4 Business

The Chair called on Mr. Joseph Cummins, Assistant Principal Climate Action and Economic Infrastructure Unit, DETE, to provide an overview of the Climate Toolkit 4 Business (<https://www.climatetoolkit4business.gov.ie/>).

The toolkit is an online resource for businesses developed by DETE to enable businesses to calculate their carbon footprint. Members were encouraged to share the toolkit with their members, networks, and their supply chain.

The Chair thanked Mr. Cummins for his presentation.

Comments arising:

- There may be an opportunity to link businesses to the Green for Micro programme offered by the Local Enterprise Network. (*The toolkit signposts the Green for Micro programme*).
- Suggested that usage of the toolkit by the retail sector be considered at future meetings of the Retail Forum.

Action

Information on the Climate Toolkit 4 Business and related communications material were issued to Retail Forum members.

Additional issues raised under AOB:

- COVID-19: The Chair advised members of the need to remain vigilant, and how a combined effort is needed to help bring down the numbers of those affected by COVID-19. The priority is to keep retail open.
- Sick Leave Bill: Concerns raised by a member about the Bill. The Chair advised that the Bill will not be enacted until Q1 2022 and there will be a lead in time for businesses.

- The Chair advised members that this meeting was the last quarterly meeting in 2021, however if another meeting was required before the end of the year, he asked Retail Forum members to contact the retail team in the Department.
- The Chair advised the Retail Forum that Mr Declan Hughes, Assistant Secretary, DETE is transferring to a new position in DETE in early 2022 and thanked him for his contribution to the Retail sector and the Retail Forum.

Appendix 1 – Attendance and Apologies List

Company	First Name	Last Name	Title
CSNA	Vincent	Jennings	CEO
Hardware Association of Ireland	Martin	Markey	CEO
Retail Ireland	Arnold	Dillon	Director
Irish Pharmacy Union	Jim	Curran	Director of Communications
Retail Excellence	Duncan	Graham	Managing Director
Chambers Ireland	Ian	Talbot	CEO
Chambers Ireland	James	Kiernan	Director of Relationship Management
Retail Ireland Skillnet	Sean	Carlin	Manager of Skillnet
Ecco Ireland	Keith	Rogers	Head of Retail
Fishers of Newtownmountkennedy	Rebecca	Harrison	Director
Primark	Emma	Ormond	Head of Government Affairs
Primark	Lorraine	Culligan	Group Director of People and Culture
Technological University Dublin	Damian	O'Reilly	Senior Lecturer - Retail Management
Louth County Council	Thomas	McEvoy	Head of Enterprise
Waterford City and Co. Council (Local Government Management Agency Rep)	Michael	Quinn	Director of Service
D/Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science	Stacey	Cannon	Further Education and Training
ISME	Finbarr	Filan	
Small Firms Association	Stephen	Browne	SFA Senior Executive

Presenters

KPMG Future Analytics	Niall	Savage	Retail and Manufacturing Lead
KPMG Future Analytics	Morgan	Crumlish	Associate Director
Enterprise Ireland	Ross	O'Colmain	
Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media	Debbie	Lawlor	Night-time Economy Unit
Department of Social Protection, Community and Rural Development and the Islands	Cassandra	Hinchy	Employer Support Services Unit
D/Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Joseph	Cummins	Climate Action and Economic Infrastructure Unit

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

D/Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Declan	Hughes	Assistant Secretary
D/Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Maedhbh	Cronin	Principal Officer, Retail and Sector Transformation Policy Unit
D/Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Sandra	Mullen	Acting AP, Retail and Sector Transformation Policy Unit
D/Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Mary	Cullen	AP, Retail and Sector Transformation Policy Unit
D/Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Tommy	Murray	Principal Officer, Enterprise Agencies and Programmes Unit
D/Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Karen	Hynes	Principal Officer, SME, and Entrepreneurship Policy Unit
D/Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Aisling	McCarthy	Climate Action and Economic Infrastructure Unit

Additional:

KPMG Future Analytics	William	Hynes	Managing Director
KPMG Future Analytics	Caoimhin	Kelly	
KPMG Future Analytics	Killian	O'Sullivan	
Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media	Deirdre	Currivan	Night-time Economy Unit

Apologies:

RGDATA	Tara	Buckley	Director General
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