



Minutes: 34th Meeting of the Retail Forum

27 March 2024, 11.00-13.00

(hybrid meeting held in Room 110, Kildare St and online)
Meeting held under Chatham House Rules

Chair: Neale Richmond TD, Minister of State for Business, Employment and Retail
Attendance at Appendix 1.

Item 1: Welcome and Opening Comments

The Chair welcomed Retail Forum members to the meeting, in particular new members of the Retail Forum - Aldi, Basecamp Outdoor Stores, Bookselling Ireland, Brown Thomas Arnotts and the Irish Petrol Retailers Association (IPRA).

Item 2: Retail Crime

The Chair welcomed Inspector Damian Boland, An Garda Síochána (AGS) and invited him to give an overview and update of Operation Táirge.

Points raised included

- Operation Táirge is focusing on threats in shops with an intelligence led approach.
- AGS is asking retailers to notify them of all incidents and as a result they expect the number of incidents to increase but are hoping to also see an increase in detections.
- It was outlined that yearly returns would be in December 2024 as Operation TÁIRGE was launched on the 11th December 2023.
- AGS met with the Retail Theft Forum and a number of points were raised.
- There was reference by AGS to working with the National Business Crime Centre in the UK and looking at best practices in other jurisdictions.

Following his presentation Inspector Boland said that they are keen to work with retailers and asked Retail Forum members and representative bodies to contact them directly with any concerns. Contact details for Crime Prevention officers can be found on the Garda website. He also invited members to submit feedback on the Crimercall episode on retail crime which aired earlier in the week.

The Chair invited comments from Forum members.

Comments arising:

- Should the focus be on Antisocial behaviour orders (ASBOs).
- Widen the focus to include Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), not just Retail crime and include statistics for ASB.
- Gardai response to ASB seems to differ from one area/street to another.
- A member sought continued resources for An Garda Síochána.
- What is happening with serial offenders.
- There is an increase in stock loss and an increase in violent crime.
- A retailer said that his company is seeing an increase in European theft gangs coming into Ireland.
- Collaboration/Liaison with employee representatives is also needed.

- Retailers need current information about perpetrators.

The Chair added that additional resources have been made available and echoed the point made about engagement with employee representative bodies.

Item 3: 'An Assessment of the Cumulative Impact of Proposed Measures to Improve Working Conditions in Ireland'

The Chair invited Mr Dermot Coates, Principal Officer, Economic and Tax Policy Unit, Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment to update the Retail Forum on the recently published 'An Assessment of the Cumulative Impact of Proposed Measures to Improve Working Conditions in Ireland',

Points raised included

- All the measures proposed by Government are already subject to a degree of conditionality – capacity of the economy absorbs additional costs and maintain competitiveness.
- The Department is working with the Department of Social Protection and the Department of Further and Higher Education on an Options Paper to address issues such as Employer PRSI thresholds and how the National Training Fund can be deployed to help employers. Minister Coveney will report back to Government in due course.
- The Department highlighted the new Increase Cost of Business Scheme (ICOB) at a cost of €257million and advised that payments will be made shortly. They also added that the Energy Efficiency Grant has been increased by €3,000 bringing it to €8,000 (50% matched funded). The Department asked retail representative bodies to promote both initiatives to their members.

The Chair invited comments from Retail Forum members.

Comments arising:

- The report was welcomed.
- A number of representative bodies advised the Chair that they will revert with their observations directly to the Minister and one body is due to publish a paper on this within the next two days.
- A retailer said that the current supports are not targeted and supports in options paper need to be targeted.
- Need to show the difference between business insolvencies and business closures.
- Corporation Tax Liability.
- The level of support given to business was significant over the past number of years, but the State cannot continue to support unsustainable businesses.
- There needs to be a balance between the business and its employees.
- In relation to the Energy Efficiency grant retailers cannot afford to match the funding.
- Some of the ideas around PRSI do not go far enough.
- It was suggested that in relation to pension auto-enrolment, that perhaps the Government should take on the Employers' contributions for some time.
- Need retail representation on the LEEF and the Low Pay Commission, in particular from small retailers.
- Can we get data on payment capacity on a monthly basis.
- The main issue is the number of significant changes in a short period of time.

- Retailers need to be given early notification of impending changes e.g. received notification 10 days ago from SEAI about new requirement for Petrol stations to display price comparisons between petrol, diesel, and electric vehicles.
- Accelerated Capital Allowance.

The Chair thanked members for the discussion. The Chair advised that where government supports have an impact on viable businesses they will continue. The Chair advised that the Programme for Government is not changing, and this item will be on the next Retail Forum meeting agenda. He said that it is not expected that Government aspirations are to be paid solely by businesses and it was important to acknowledge the acute pressures on certain sectors and on certain sized business.

Item 4: Injuries Resolution Board's New Mediation Service

The Chair invited Ms Deborah Dignam, Principal Officer, Company Law Enforcement and Personal Injuries Policy Unit to introduce this item.

Ms Dignam advised the Forum that the Central Bank's National Claims Information Database (NCID) is due to be released next week.

Ms Rosalind Carroll, Chief Executive, Injuries Resolution Board presented on the new mediation service.

Following her presentation Ms Carroll asked the Retail Forum to raise awareness of the mediation service with their members.

The Chair invited comments from attendees.

Comments arising:

- A Retail representative body praised the work of the Injuries Resolution Board and asked when will this work impact their premiums.
- Another member asked whether the CCPC has a role to play regarding the issue of passing on of premiums reductions to the consumer.
- The 'Delaney' case may impact the work of the Injuries Resolution Board (The Forum was advised that this judgement is due on the 9 April)

Action: Copy of the presentation to be forwarded to the Retail Forum members.

Item 5: AOB

The Chair advised that he understood a number of topics were due to be raised under AOB including

- Deposit Return Scheme
- Future Work Programme
- Grocery Prices
- Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme
- Late Payments and
- Tax Free Shopping

However, due to the time constraint these items could not be discussed at the meeting.

He added that the Future Work Programme will be discussed at the next meeting and a separate meeting will be arranged for the new Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme with relevant retailers and representative bodies invited.

Appendix 1 – Attendees – Retail Forum members

Company	Name	Title
Aldi Ireland	Padraig Barry	Communications Director
Basecamp Outdoor Stores	Jack Layden	Owner
Bookselling Ireland	Cian Byrne	Maynooth Bookshop
Brown Thomas Arnotts	Mark Limby	Stores Director
Chambers Ireland	Aoife Quinn	Policy and Research Executive
Clydeville Investment	Emer McCarthy	Strategy and eCommerce Director
CSNA	Vincent Jennings	CEO
Department of Education	Grainne Egan	Principal Officer
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE)	Pauline Mulligan	Assistant Secretary
DETE	Maedhbh Cronin	Principal Officer
Department of Social Protection	Siobhan Lawlor	Principal Officer
Department of the Taoiseach	Fiona Curran	Economic Policy
Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media	Tadhg O'Shea	Tourism Policy
Digital Business Ireland	Robert Babos	Head of Communications
Dublin Town (BID)	Clyde Carroll	Director of Communications
Eason	Liam Hanly	Managing Director
Enterprise Ireland	Teri Smith	Manager, Retail Consumer & Online
Hardware Association Ireland	Martin Markey	CEO
Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)	Gerry Light	ICTU representative
Irish Petrol Retailers Association	Orla Allen	Director of Communication
Irish Pharmacy Union	Jim Curran	Director of Public Affairs and Communication
LEO Enterprise Network	Padraig McElwee	Head of Enterprise, Clare
Musgrave	Edel Clancy	Director of Communications & Corporate Affairs
Primark	Emma Ormond	Head of Government Affairs
Retail Excellence	Jean McCabe	CEO
Retal Ireland	Arnold Dillon	Director
RGDATA	Tara Buckley	Director General
Sligo BID	Finbarr Filan	
Small Firms Association	Jonathan McDade	Public Affairs Lead
Technological University Dublin	Damian O'Reilly	Senior Lecturer - Retail Management
Tesco Ireland	Rosemary Garth	Corporate Affairs Director

Waterford City and Co Council (LGMA)	Michael Quinn	Director of Service
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Presenters and additional Attendees

An Garda Síochána	Damian Boland	Inspector
An Garda Síochána	Susan Lawlor	Sergeant
DETE	Dermot Coates	Principal Officer
DETE	Deborah Dignam	Principal Officer
Injuries Resolution Board	Rosalind Carroll	Chief Executive
Injuries Resolution Board	Hilary McGouran	Head of Mediation Services
DETE	Marian Cassidy	Secretary to the Retail Forum
DETE	Fiona Campbell	Advisor

Apologies

Department of Environment, Climate and Communications	Bernie Kiely	Circular Economy, Materials Management Division
Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage	Áine Friel	Planning Policy and Legislation Sector, Planning Division
Department of Justice	Gerry O'Brien	Strategic Policy and Planning, Criminal Justice
Enterprise Ireland	Anne Lanigan	Divisional Manager, Technology and Services
Skillnet Ireland	Oran Doherty	Programme Manager