



Minutes: 31st Meeting of the Retail Forum

21 June 2023, 11am-1pm

*(via video / tele conference and Room 110, Kildare St)
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. He also welcomed members of the grocery sector in attendance for Agenda item 2 of the meeting.

Item 2: Retail Grocery Prices

The Chair welcomed the publication of the Consumer and Competition Protection Commission's (CCPC) report, [A High-level Analysis of the Irish Grocery Retail Sector](#) on the 20 June 2023 and said it was useful for further engagement and discussion on the issue of grocery prices and added that the issue is still live across the country.

Comments arising:

- *Retailers updated the Minister on actions taken to reduce prices of grocery goods.*
- *The Chair invited a member to submit comments on CCPC Report in writing*
- *Effects of Brexit still being felt*
- *Retail theft is a major issue*
- *Living wage poses concern for retailers*

Actions:

- Minister/DETE to write to retailers in August to seek update on grocery pricing with a view to meeting again in September.
- An Garda Síochána and D/Justice to be invited to attend September meeting of the Retail Forum
- Brexit to be an agenda item at the September meeting of the Retail Forum

Item 3: Work Programme

Ms Marian Cassidy, Assistant Principal Officer, Retail and Locally Traded Enterprise Unit, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and Secretary to the Retail Forum, provided an update on the completion of the Retail Forum's Work Programme for 2022/2023 and informed the members that the 2023/2024 Work Programme will be developed. Ms Cassidy urged members to submit feedback on actions that could be prioritised in the next year's Work Programme. Ms Cassidy also invited members to monitor the Department's Retail Sector in Ireland webpage (enterprise.gov.ie/retail) and to submit updates/suggestions where appropriate.

Comments arising:

- *No Comments*

Action: Draft Work Programme for 2023/2024 for circulation and feedback during the summer.

Item 4: Government Legislation

The Chair invited Ms Angela Robinson from Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine to update members on:

- Agricultural and Food Supply Chain Bill 2022
- Comments arising:
 - *a member thanked D/AFM for the update and reiterated their call to ensure balance and that various interests are reflected on Board of the Agri-Food Regulator*

The Chair invited Mr Seamus Clancy, Chief Executive of Re-turn to update members on

- The Deposit Return Scheme (S.I. No. 599/2021 - Separate Collection (Deposit Return Scheme) Regulations 2021)
- Comments arising:
 - *A member asked whether the Reverse Vending Machines (RVM) can be added to list for Accelerated Capital Allowance (ACA) eligibility as this would support small retailers*
 - *Manual intervention will be problematic for retailers*
 - *Clarity was sought on exemption list under the SI – to be finalised in next week or two*
 - *Clarity was sought on issue of VAT on redeemable deposits – this is in discussion*

Actions:

- Copy of the presentation made by Mr. Clancy to be forwarded to the Retail Forum members.
- Minister/DETE to look at ACA scheme (scheme seems to be good fit) for DRS Reverse Vending Machines. – *This suggestion was sent to relevant colleagues in DETE dealing with the DETE Budget 2024 submission*

Item 5: AOB

The Chair invited members to discuss issues arising.

Comments arising:

- *Criteria for TBESS was discussed with calls for reference period to be amended and a query whether the scheme would be extended beyond July.*
- *The Chair invited members to submit TBESS points/suggestions to D/Finance and copy DETE.*
- *The Chair invited a member to submit observations on employment permits review*
- *Living Wage and its cost to retailers was discussed*

- *Tobacco legislation and its impact on retailers was discussed with a call for D/Health to engage with the Retail Forum.*
- *A member praised the Department's Retail Sector in Ireland webpage and suggested that more detail on ethical legislation be added it as it is significant issue for many retailers.*

Actions:

- Wage/living wage issue– Minister said he will take it away and discuss with Senior Ministers.
- DETE/Minister to engage with D/Health on tobacco issue.
- Explore possibility of expanding detail on ethical legislation on website (Retail Sector page)
- DETE to engage with D/Finance re TBESS 'ref period' and possible extension of scheme beyond July.
 - Update: DETE engaged with D/Finance –and reply received:
The Temporary Business Energy Support Scheme (TBESS) is provided for by Finance Act 2022 as a measure to support businesses over the winter months with increasing energy which arose due to the invasion of Ukraine by Russia. The scheme is approved State aid under the EU Temporary Crisis and Transition Framework (TCTF). The rules contained in the TCTF, together with the focus on support over the winter period dictated the reference (or look back) period used in the scheme. Changes to the scheme can only be made by legislation and state aid approval under the TCTF. Recent amendments to the scheme were brought in by the Finance Act 2023 as part of package of cost of living measures. These changes were subject to State aid approval, the application for approval of the amendments was made in February 2023 and confirmed in April 2023. The scheme will expire on 31 July 2023 and there is no legislative provision allowing for any further extension or amendment.

Appendix 1 – Attendees

Company	Name	Title
CSNA	Vincent Jennings	CEO
Musgrave	Edel Clancy	Director of Communications & Corporate Affairs
ISME / Sligo BID	Finbarr Filan	
Small Firms Association	Elizabeth Bowen	Director Interim
Retail Ireland	Arnold Dillon	Director
Technological University Dublin	Damian O'Reilly	Senior Lecturer - Retail Management
Tesco Ireland	Rosemary Garth	Corporate Affairs Director
Primark	Emma Ormond	Head of Government Affairs
Chambers Ireland	Shane Conneely	Director of Policy
Retail Excellence	Keelan Bourke	
RGDATA	Tara Buckley	Director General
LEO Network	Padraic McElwee	Head of Enterprise, LEO Clare
Digital Business Ireland	Emma Cunningham	
D/Taoiseach	Fiona Curran	Economic Division
Enterprise Ireland	Teri Smith	Manager of Retail, Consumer/ Online & ICT Technologist Team
Hardware Association Ireland	Jim Copeland	Head of Member Relations
Kilkenny Group	Emer McCarthy	Group Strategy and Ecommerce Director
.IE	David Curtin	CEO
D/Housing, Local Government and Heritage	Anthony O'Mahony	Planning Division
D/Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Pauline Mulligan	Assistant Secretary, Indigenous Enterprise Division
D/Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Maedhbh Cronin	Principal Officer, Retail and Locally Traded Enterprise Unit
D/Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Marian Cassidy	Secretary to the Retail Forum
D/Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Dermot Coates	Principle Officer, Economic and Tax Policy Unit
D/Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Barry McGreal	Principal Officer, Competition and Consumer Policy Unit
D/Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Ruth Morrissy	Assistant Principal, Competition and Consumer Policy Unit

D/Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Mary Cullen	Assistant Principal, Retail and Locally Traded Enterprise Unit
D/Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Cathy Madden	Principal Officer, Communications Unit
D/Agriculture, Food and the Marine	Niamh Lenehan	Head of the Unfair Trading Practices Enforcement Authority
D/Agriculture, Food and the Marine	Ray Sheehy	
Ministers Advisor	Fiona Campbell	

Presenters

Re-Turn	Seamus Clancy	CEO
D/Agriculture, Food and the Marine	Angela Robinson	PO, Head of Division, Food Industry Development Division

Apologies

Eason	Liam Hanly	Managing Director
IPU	Jim Curran	Director of Public Affairs and Communications
Dublin Town (BID)	Richard Guiney	CEO
D/Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media	Bernard O'Shea	PO, Tourism Policy, Tourism Division
Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)	Gerry Light	General Secretary (MANDATE)
Retail Ireland	Shane Flynn	Chair
ISME	Neil McDonnell	Chief Executive