

MINUTES
28th Meeting of the Retail Forum
5 October 2022
3.00pm – 5.00pm
(via video / tele conference & Room 110, Kildare Street)
Meeting held under Chatham House Rules

Chair: Damien English TD, Minister of State for Business, Employment and Retail.
Attendance and apologies at Appendix 1.

Agenda item 1 was open to invited representatives from the Retail Grocery and Distribution sector

1. Welcome and Opening Comments

The Chair welcomed those in attendance and particularly the guests who were invited to join Item 2 of the agenda 'energy and sustainability' as the current energy situation is impacting the wider retail supply chain.

The Chair outlined some of the budgetary measures including direct supports i.e., the Temporary Business Energy Supports Scheme (TBESS) and Small Firms Investment in Energy Efficiency Scheme and credit schemes i.e., the Ukraine Credit Guarantee Scheme and the Growth and sustainability Loan Scheme. He added that the Ukraine Enterprise Crisis Scheme which is targeted at businesses in manufacturing and internationally trade sectors may be applicable to the wider retail supply chain. Full details of the schemes will be available in the weeks ahead.

Agenda item 2 was open to invited representatives from the Retail Grocery and Distribution sector

2. Energy and Sustainability

The Chair invited

- Mr Fergus Sharkey, Head of Business Supports and Transport, SEAI to give an overview of the current SEAI supports available (copy of presentation available on enterprise.gov.ie) and
- Mr Pat McCourt, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment representative on the Government Task force on Emergency Planning.

Points Raised

- Guidance for retailers – SEAI Retail Guide due to be launched shortly.
- SEAI Winter Tips for Business is available on SEAI website [Calling all business owners - Reduce Your Energy Use this Winter | SEAI Blog](#)
- Overview of main SEAI schemes.
- The Government Task force on Emergency Planning, which co-ordinates and oversees the emergency planning activities of all Government departments, advised that they are planning for all eventualities.

[representatives from the Retail Grocery and Distribution sector left after this item]

Action:

1. SEAI presentation to issue to Retail Forum members.

Usual Retail Forum meeting – Retail Forum members only

The Chair advised that

- Minutes from the last meeting have been published on the Department’s website and on gov.ie. He added that minutes from this meeting will be approved under silence procedure and placed on the Department’s website and gov.ie.
- A review of the membership of the Retail Forum will take place to ensure that current members are still able to engage and the Forum has adequate representation.
- The Department of Social protection are currently hosting recruitment fairs with a focus on retail- a direct outcome of the labour shortages meetings the Minister held with members of the Retail Forum. He thanked members for their engagement. Ms Eimear Hayes, Department of Social Protection (D/SP) commented that the target of the recruitment fairs is those out of work for more than a year and older workers. Ms Hayes acknowledged the support of the Retail Forum members including the Musgrave Group, Retail Ireland and Retail Excellence. 30 recruitment fairs have been organised with 1,500 job seekers participating in person to date. A report by D/SP of the impact of the initiative will circulate to members and further updates expected at the next Retail Forum meeting.
- The Retail Forum’s Town Centre First/Night-Time Economy Working Group met recently with the newly appointed Town Centre First National Co-ordinator, Ms Mairead Hunt and that 7 Town Regeneration Officers have been appointed and 13 due to be appointed mid-October. The Minister highlighted the importance of the policy and encouraged members to engage in driving forward actions for implementation.

Action:

1. D/SP to forward a report of the outcome of the recruitment fairs.

Agenda item 3 was open to Retail Forum members only**3. Retail, Technology and Skills**

The Chair called on Ms Anna-Marie Turley, Retail Team, Enterprise Ireland (EI), to provide an update on the Online Retail Scheme (ORS).

Key Points

- Call 4 of the Online Retail Scheme provided €9.3m in grants to successful applicants.
- 347 applications were received, 317 evaluated, 216 retailers approved funding from 94 different service providers with 72% regional.
- 86 first-time applications (80% funding), 130 repeat applications (50% funding).
- Enterprise Ireland advised that the applications were of a high standard and that there was huge awareness of opportunities for omnichannel retail in the applications.
- Enterprise Ireland held two webinars on the application process and one post approval workshop on claim submission.
- The final date for claim submission is 4 November 2022.
- The retail team in EI are currently developing case studies to demonstrate the impact that the Scheme has had on the beneficiaries.
- Enterprise Ireland was due to host a sustainability webinar on 6 October for all applicants to the Online Retail Scheme which will include a presentation from Climate Action Unit, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (D/ETE) on the Climate Action Toolkit for Business and a presentation from the SEAI.

The Chair thanked Ms Turley for the update.

Agenda item 4 was open to Retail Forum members only**4. Retail Study**

- The Chair invited Mr Morgan Crumlish and Mr Cailean Keaveney, KPMG Future Analytics (KPMG FA) and Mr Niall Savage, KPMG to provide an update on the Retail Study which was commissioned by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. Their presentation included study objectives, methodology, research findings (including case studies), conclusions and recommendations. KPMG FA said that the two key current themes for the retail sector on a global level is sustainability and digitalisation. They advised that they are due to forward the final version of the report to the Department on Friday (7 October) for circulation to Retail Forum members initially and later for publishing to the D/ETE website. Copy of presentation available on enterprise.gov.ie

Comments arising:

- *The report is welcomed but what are the next steps with the recommendations.*
The Chair advised that the report clarifies the importance of the sector and the recommendations are reflected in the Retail Forum's Work Programme for 2022/2023 which has been formally adopted as of 05 October 2022. The Department added that we now have an evidence-based Work Programme that members will be asked to drive in the coming months ahead. The Minister stressed the importance of the Retail Forum progressing future development of the retail sector as the sector has been forced adapt because of Brexit and the pandemic in the last few years.
- *Further supports are needed for sustainability*
The Chair said that the SEAI's Community Grant is an option that retailers should consider and maybe a video is required to demonstrate how it works in practice and the potential benefits.
- *The report indicated that 320,000 are working in retail. Can this be broken down.*
KPMG FA said that these statistics are available from the CSO. D/ETE advised that a new CSO Business Demography is due soon and provides further sectoral breakdown. The Chair added that it would be useful to capture the varieties of careers in retail.

The Chair thanked KPMG FA for their presentation and said that if all is in order the Report will be published after it is reviewed by Retail Forum members.

Actions:

1. Copy of the KPMG FA presentation to be forwarded to Retail Forum members and be published on enterprise.gov.ie
2. KPMG FA to forward the final Retail Study to the Department on Friday 7 October.
3. The secretariat to forward a copy of the Retail Study to members of the Retail Forum.
4. SEAI to be contacted about Community Grant video.
5. The secretariat to supply CSO data in line with the KPMG FA Report.

Agenda item 5 was open to Retail Forum members only**5. Retail Forum Work Programme**

The Work Programme and the Working Groups was formally adopted by the Retail Forum. The secretariat outlined that the Department would facilitate the Working Groups but that members would be responsible for implementation of actions.

Agenda item 6 was open to Retail Forum members only**6. Government Initiatives****Legislation**

The Chair invited Ms Catherine McGinty, Circular Economy – Material Management Division, Department of Environment, Climate Action and Communications (D/ECC) to update attendees on initiative that will impact retailers in 2023/2024.

Coffee Cup levy

- Consultation – late September or early October
- Regulations – December 2022
- Introduction early 2023
- Consultation will have three strands (public, business, other stakeholders)

Single use plastics

- No timetable yet for levies

Deposit Return Scheme

- DRS Ireland appointed in July 2022
- Scheme due to be launched Quarter 4 2022 when the scheme will be open for registrations from producers and retailers
- Deposits early 2024

Comments arising:

- *Clarification of the commencement date for the Coffee Cup Levy*
D/ECC advised that it will be 2023.
- *What is the Loose packaging commencement date or any other levies that are imminent*
D/ECC advised that all new levies are subject to extensive consultation.
 - What will the collection model be?
The collection model will be based on the plastic bag levy administered by Revenue.
- *Who is the contractor working with DRS Ireland*
Kepak Ireland.
- *Why were the consultations delayed on the coffee cup levy and regulations mention 20c to €1 levy. Will it be increased to €1*
D/ECC said that the consultations were delayed to strengthen engagement. The Circular Economy Act sets the value and there will be consultation if the value was to be adjusted.
- *Are compostable cups included in the levy*
D/ECC clarified that the Coffee Cup levy will be applied to all single use cups, including compostable cups. The Chair said that the Department will engage directly with D/ECC on this. D/ECC has conducted a Regulatory Impact Analysis.
- *What is the VAT status of the DRS*
D/ECC advised that they have engaged tax advisers.

Action:

1. D/ETE to engage with D/ECC on the status of compostable cups under the Coffee Cup levy.

Agenda item 7 was open to Retail Forum members only**7. AOB**

- **Agricultural and Food Supply Chain Bill 2022**
Further information sought on the establishment of the Office of Fairness and Transparency.

- **Living wage**
The Chair agreed that the secretariat will convene a meeting to discuss the Living Wage with D/ETE officials and Retail Forum members before the next Retail Forum meeting in December.
- **Impact of the Tax-Free Incentives as part of the UK's mini budget**
The Chair advised that there is a similar scheme in Ireland and the development of a UK Scheme could be monitored and considered for the agenda for the next Retail Forum meeting.
- **Retail Forum Working Groups**
The secretariat advised that Retail Forum members could nominate their members or businesses in their supply chains to participate in the Working Groups. A member asked if the Terms of Reference for the Working Groups along with the expected participation time could be sent to Retail Forum members to assist in bringing members onboard.
- **Date of Next Retail Forum Meeting**
The date of the next meeting is due to be amended due to Minister's availability and a new date will be forwarded to Retail Forum members shortly.

Actions:

1. Secretariat to convene a Ministerial led meeting on the Living Wage before the next Retail Forum with D/ETE officials and Retail Forum members.
2. Development of the UK's VAT-free shopping scheme for non-UK overseas visitors to be monitored and considered for the agenda for the next Retail Forum meeting.
3. Working Groups TOR and anticipated involvement on the Working Groups to be sent to RF members.
4. Date for the next Retail Forum meeting date to be forwarded to Retail Forum members.

Appendix 1 – Attendance and Apologies List

Company	First Name	Last Name	Title
CSNA	Vincent	Jennings	CEO
D/Enterprise, Trade and Employment (D/ETE)	Maedhbh	Cronin	Principal Officer
D/ETE	Cathy	Madden	Principal Officer, Communications Unit
D/Housing, Local Government & Heritage	Áine	Friel	Planning, Policy and Legislation
D/Social Protection	Eimear	Hayes	Assistant
D/Taoiseach	Jerome	Wholihane	Economic Policy
D/Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport & Media (D/TCAGSM)	Tadhg	O'Shea	Tourism Policy
Dublin Town	Richard	Guiney	CEO
Fishers of Newtownmountkennedy	Rebecca	Harrison	Director
Hardware Association Ireland	Martin	Markey	CEO
Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)	Gerry	Light	General Secretary (MANDATE)
Irish Pharmacy Union	Jim	Curran	Operations Director
ISME / Sligo BID	Finbarr	Filan	ISME/Sligo BID Business Owner
Musgrave	Edel	Clancy	Director of Communications & Corporate Affairs
Primark	Emma	Ormond	Head of Government Affairs
Retail Excellence	Duncan	Graham	Managing Director
Retail Ireland	Arnold	Dillon	Director
RGDATA	Tara	Buckley	Director General
Presenters			
KPMG FA	Niall	Savage	Partner
KPMG FA	Morgan	Savage	Consultant
KPMG FA	Cailean	Keaveney	Consultant
SEAI	Fergus	Sharkey	Head of Business Supports and Transport, SEAI
D/ETE	Pat	McCourt	Principal Officer
D/Environment, Climate and Communications (online)	Catherine	McGinty	Circular Economy - Materials Management Division
Enterprise Ireland	Anna-Marie	Turley	Manager, Retail, Consumer & Online
Secretariat			
D/ETE	Deborah	Dignam	Secretary to the Retail Forum
Apologies			
D/ETE	Pauline	Mulligan	Assistant Secretary
D/TCAGSM	Michelle	O'Mahoney	Assistant Principal Tourism Policy
Ecco Ireland	Keith	Rogers	Head of Retail
Enterprise Ireland	Jennifer	Melia	Head of Retail, Consumer & Online
Retail Ireland /Aramark	Shane	Flynn	Chairman
Small Firms Association	Elizabeth	Bowen	Policy and Public Affairs Lead
TU Dublin	John	Jameson	Head of Retail School

