

**MINUTES**  
**21<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Retail Forum**  
**Via videoconference**  
**21<sup>st</sup> October 2020**  
**4pm – 5.30pm**

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

Attendance and apologies at Appendix 1.

### **1. Welcome and Opening Comments**

The Chairperson welcomed those in attendance and advised attendees of some updates in the Department. Céline McHugh, who also leads on Regional Enterprise Plans, is moving to fully focus on that work and the Minister acknowledged the contribution Céline has made to the work of the Forum over the past two years. He added that Maedhbh Cronin has been appointed to and will lead on the new Retail and Sector Transformation Policy Unit.

The Minister recognised the impact to the retail sector of the recent move to Level 5 of the Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021: Plan for Living with COVID-19.

He welcomed the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Leo Varadkar.

The Tánaiste thanked Minister English and gave an overview of the current status in relation to COVID-19. He also highlighted the various supports including Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP) and Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme (EWSS).

The Tánaiste asked retailers to follow the spirit of the guidelines, in particular asked essential retailers with mixed goods to separate them. DETE added that the following non-essential businesses should not open during this time;

- Garden centres
- Bookstores
- Business supplies
- Flooring/carpets
- Clothes shops

Minister English thanked the Tánaiste and reminded attendees to check Gov.ie for updates.

### **2. COVID-19**

#### *Comments arising*

- Communication
  - It is important that public are aware that they can access essential items beyond 5km
  - Consumer being prepared for Christmas – shop early
- Essential and Non-Essential
  - Definition of Essential Retail
  - Request for clarification if uniform / orthopaedic shoes can be sold
  - Click and collect

- Shopping by appointment
- Enforcement re separation of mixed goods
- Ensure level playing field
- Test and Tracing
  - Close contact tracing
  - Fasttrack testing
- Supports
  - Top-up of restart grant
  - EWSS / TWSS – This is a critical support for businesses that want to maintain their link with employees. Asked that criteria be reviewed.
  - CRSS
  - Issues for retailers who don't have a strong online presence
  - Online training – Launch of Retail Ireland Skillnets report *Retail Technologies & Future Skills Report 2020* due in coming week
- Face Coverings – Further clarity sought
- Supply Chain – There is capacity in supply chain
- Other issues
  - Staggering shopping after level 5 on run up to Christmas re crowd management
  - Support local/Green campaign
  - Reopening date – must be back as a sector on 1<sup>st</sup> December.
  - Commercial Rents/Independent arbitration/vacancy levels
  - Delay closures of large stores
  - Fears for small retailers re psychological effects of restrictions

In response the Tánaiste said that the situation will be reviewed after the four weeks temporary restrictions, but that there is currently no certainty. Retailers are asked to advise NSAI of their current experiences to assist them in augmenting their guidelines.

Minister English added that clarification will be sought on the issues raised. The Minister highlighted the online support available via the Local Enterprise Offices' Trading Online Voucher Scheme and the COVID-19 Online Retail Scheme administered by Enterprise Ireland.

The DETE Secretary General advised attendees that her Department is willing to work with this sector throughout this pandemic.

**Action**

Clarification re essential/non-essential retail issued to Retail Forum members on 23 October

## Appendix 1 – Attendance List & Apologies

<b>Representative Bodies</b>		
Arnold Dillon	Director	Retail Ireland
Brian Donaldson	Chairman	Retail Ireland (CEO of The Maxol Group)
Duncan Graham	Managing Director	Retail Excellence Ireland
Vincent Jennings	Chief Executive	CSNA
Elizabeth Bowen	Senior Executive	Small Firms Association
Neil McDonnell	Chief Executive	ISME
Richard Guiney	CEO	Dublin Town
Jim Curran	Director of Communications & Strategy	Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU)
James Kiernan	Director of Relationship Management	Chambers Ireland
Gerry Light	General Secretary (MANDATE)	Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)
Sean Carlin	Network manager	Retail Ireland Skillnet
<b>Retailers</b>		
Edel Clancy	Group Director of Corporate Affairs	Musgrave Group
Keith Rogers	Head of Retail	ECCO Ireland
Rebecca Harrison	Director	Fishers of Newtownmountkennedy
Helen O'Donnell	Owner	Dolmen Catering
<b>Academic Bodies</b>		
John Jameson	Head of Retail School	TU Dublin
Damian O'Reilly	Retail School	TU Dublin
<b>Government Departments</b>		
Dr Orlaigh Quinn	Secretary General	Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation
Declan Hughes	Assistant Secretary	Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation
Deborah Dignam	Assistant Principal	Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation
Maedhbh Cronin	Principal Officer, Retail and Sector Transformation Policy Unit	Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation
Cathy Madden	Head of Communications	Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation
Pamela Malone	Economic Division	Department of the Taoiseach
Tanya Ganly	Economic Division	Department of the Taoiseach
Claire Hayes Curtin	Brexit Preparedness and Contingency Planning Unit	Department of the Taoiseach
Maria Melia	Tourism Policy & Marketing Division	D/Transport, Tourism & Sport

Cassandra Hinchy	Employer Support Services Unit	D/Employment Affairs & Social Protection
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**Apologies**

Martin Markey	Chief Executive Officer	Hardware Association Ireland
Tara Buckley	Director General	RGDATA
Ruairí Ferrie	Planning Policy	Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government
Brendan O'Connor		D/Finance
Phil O'Flaherty	Further Education & Training Section	D/Education & Skills
Dr Stephen Brennan	Chief Digital Advisor	D/Communications, Climate Action & Environment
Michael Quinn	Director of Services	Waterford City and Co. Council (Local Government Management Agency Rep)
JP Mulherin	Principal Officer	D/Rural & Community Development