



The Retailer

The Magazine for **Retail NI**



Retail NI Supplier
Showcase 27th
February 2024

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Message from the President

Welcome to the first edition of **The Retailer for 2024.**

Retail NI has big plans for the year ahead, with several high-profile events taking place.

Our 2nd Supplier Showcase is taking place on 27th February at Titanic Belfast with over fifty suppliers exhibiting innovative products and services. We are delighted to have BIOPAX and Bobby's Foods as the keynote sponsors and the Department of Business and Trade and Invest NI providing support. A senior UK Government Minister will also be speaking.

At the time of writing, Retail NI is also working a major research and policy document on retail crime and the impact on your business and the wider sector. By now you will have received a short survey and would greatly appreciate if you could fill it in and return it. This will provide us with important data to help with our engagement with the PSNI and our lobbying with Government to get effective action.

Another date for your calendar is 22nd May our annual Trade NI reception at the House of Commons. With the UK General Election taking place this year, this will be an important opportunity for our sector to lobby and engage on the key issues facing your business.

As ever our most important role is to help you and your business with any problems or challenges. On a daily basis we are assisting members with diverse problems such Business Rates, Planning, Car parking, Energy costs and many more.

Get in touch with our team below if we can assist you.

Hope you have a great 2024.

Peter McBride
(President)

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RETAIL NI UNVEILS SECOND ANNUAL SUPPLIER SHOWCASE

Retail NI, is delighted to announce the return of its Supplier Showcase event.

Following the success of last year's inaugural event, this year's showcase promises to be bigger and more impactful.

Supported by key partners Biopax Limited, Bobby's Foods, nijbfinder and the Department for Business & Trade, the event is scheduled to take place on Tuesday, 27 February 2024, from 3-6 pm at Titanic Belfast.

The event is an opportunity for players in the retail and wholesale sectors to network with suppliers and promote and celebrate the huge contribution local producers and manufacturers make to the wider economy.

Distinguished speakers will impart invaluable perspectives on the industry, shedding light on current challenges and opportunities.

Glyn Roberts, Chief Executive of Retail NI and the driving force behind orchestrating the event, said: "Our Supplier Showcase is back, and it's bigger and better than ever. We're proud to have the support of Biopax Limited — the newest and most progressive green packaging company in Europe — and Bobby's Foods, key partners who share our commitment to promoting and celebrating the remarkable contributions of local producers and manufacturers in Northern Ireland."

Mr. Roberts is encouraging industry members to mark their calendars for this essential event.

Liam O'Connor, Sales and Marketing Director, Biopax Limited, said: "Biopax Limited is honoured to be a key partner for Retail NI's Supplier Showcase. This event provides an invaluable platform for local businesses to showcase their products and services, and we are thrilled to contribute to the growth and

success of the Northern Ireland business community."

Additionally, John Lucas from Bobby's Foods expressed their anticipation: "Bobby's Foods is proud to stand alongside Retail NI in supporting the Supplier Showcase. We believe in the strength of local businesses, and this event is a fantastic opportunity to highlight the innovation and quality that our community brings to the retail and wholesale sectors."

This year's showcase will feature over 50 exhibits, allowing attendees to explore a diverse range of products and services from local suppliers. Glyn Roberts added: "We want everyone to save the date for this exceptional event that celebrates the vibrancy and diversity of our local business community. It's an opportunity to connect, discover, and support the incredible talent that drives our economy." More details about the event will be released in the coming weeks.

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RETAIL ROUND UP

Retail NI & Hospitality Ulster welcome £15m for flooding damage

Retail NI and Hospitality Ulster jointly welcomed the announcement of £15m by the NI Secretary of State for businesses impacted by the Floods as a first step toward recovery.

Retail NI and Hospitality

Ulster Chief Executives Glyn Roberts and Colin Neill said:

“This is a welcome first step towards the recovery and reopening of the impacted businesses. The next challenge will be getting the funding structure in place and payments distributed as quickly as possible”.

“While this funding is welcome, much more will be needed to ensure Newry, Downpatrick and the other areas affected can rebuild for a speedy return to normal trading”. “Speed is of the essence to ensure that these businesses do not miss the vital Christmas trading season”.

Details on Emergency Rate Relief for Businesses Affected by Flooding



Land & Property Services (LPS) published further information on the rate relief available to business premises impacted by the recent flooding.

The rate relief measures will include 100% relief for non-domestic rates on flooded properties as well as support to help businesses temporarily relocate. Further information can be found on the nibusinessinfo website at <https://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/emergencyraterelief>

Rates Relief for flooded premises

Businesses will receive 100% relief from non-domestic rates on flooded properties for the period between 1 November 2023 and 31 March 2024 if:

- The relevant district council has confirmed that the property was flooded; and
- The property was valued for non-domestic rates on the rating system on the date of the flooding incident; and
- Either the business was trading from the flooded property and liable for non-domestic rates on the date of the flooding incident;

• Or the property was listed as vacant with LPS and the owner was liable for vacant rates on the date of the flooding incident.

Ratepayers do not have to make an application for the relief. The local Council will provide LPS with a list of flooded properties in their area and LPS will automatically apply the relief to the rate account. Ratepayers who have already paid their rates for the current year in full will receive a refund.

Public sector properties are excluded from the emergency rate relief.

Investment Fund for Northern Ireland launched

The British Business Bank have announced that the £70m Investment Fund for NI is now live.

This new investment fund is designed to support the growth of small and medium-sized businesses across NI and in particular to increase the supply and diversity of early-stage finance for new and growing small businesses.

As part of a bigger £1.6 billion investment committed to UK businesses, this new

funding is part of a wider goal to drive sustainable economic growth in Northern Ireland.

The Investment Fund for Northern Ireland offers two different commercial finance options of loans ranging from £25,000 to £2 million and equity investments up to £5 million. The fund covers the whole of Northern Ireland, including rural, coastal and urban areas.

It is increasing the supply and diversity

of early-stage finance for smaller businesses across Northern Ireland, providing funds to businesses that might otherwise not receive investment and helping to break down barriers in access to finance.

The new fund has embedded ESG awareness into its design and will help support the UK economy's transition to net zero.

Upcoming Events

A series of **roadshow events** will also be held in February 2024 in **Newry, Omagh, Derry Londonderry and Ballymena**.

These will provide an opportunity to meet fund managers in person and to find out more about the fund and how to apply. For more information and details of how to apply for funding from the **Investment Fund for Northern Ireland**, please take a look at their www.british-business-bank.co.uk

Retail NI Slam UK Government Decision To Cut Levelling Up Funding for Northern Ireland

Retail NI Slam UK Government Decision To Cut Levelling Up Funding for Northern Ireland Commenting on the decision,

Retail NI Chief Executive Glyn Roberts said:

“This is a deeply disappointing and disgraceful decision by the UK Government. This funding would have helped with much needed efforts to regenerate our local high streets and town centres.”

“While it is crucial, we get Stormont restored, its absence should not be a reason to not proceed with these projects”

“Yet again local small businesses and independent retailers are losing out compared to their counterparts elsewhere in the UK”.



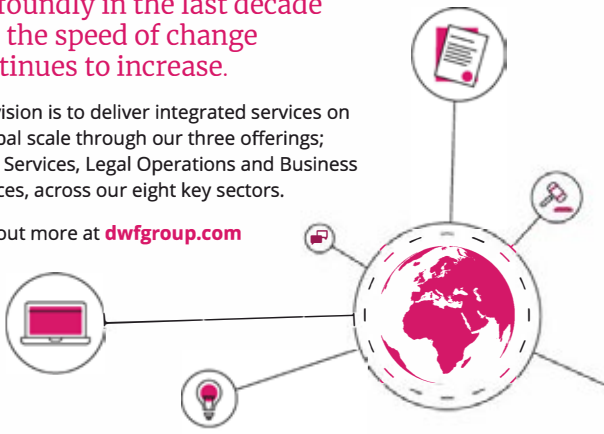
Glyn Roberts, Retail NI CEO

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KEEPING LIGHTS ON: ‘CONSIDERABLE CHALLENGE’ OF BUSINESS ENERGY DEBT NOT PORTRAYED

Advice NI has already managed £7.8m of business debt and calls on struggling businesses to seek advice early.

Despite lower energy costs expected this winter, Advice NI says many businesses will continue to struggle and risk falling into energy debt as we brace for freezing temperatures and increased electricity usage during the colder months. The charity highlights the considerable challenge of energy costs for businesses is not accurately portrayed, with some businesses going into the winter months still facing energy debt from 2022. It's reminding small businesses seeking expert advice as early as possible is crucial.

From 1 October, Ofgem's energy price cap comes into effect in Great Britain. Ofgem's Energy Price Cap won't impact Northern Ireland from 1st October. Instead a 'tariff review process' has begun in association

with the Utility Regulator. A recent review saw no change to the electricity tariff, which is currently cheaper than Great Britain, yet despite a 7.56 per cent decrease from Firmus in the domestic gas tariff, customers across Northern Ireland are still paying around 30 per cent more.

Sinead Campbell, Head of Money Debt & Quality at Advice NI explains, "During April 2022 to March 2023, our service has seen an 85% increase in energy debt. This underlines the growing concern of the energy debt crisis, with businesses struggling with cash flow and



For businesses, debt can come in many forms such as rental arrears and missed creditor payments. Advice NI's free and confidential Business Debt Service, provides straight-forward debt advice to help businesses understand and tackle these debts head-on. When a business owner calls the debt service, expert business debt advisers provide advice and information that will help them to gain control of their finances, and in many cases may be able to negotiate with creditors on your behalf.

Advice NI and the Independent Advice Network have 65 members and 300 advisers across Northern Ireland, all providing free, impartial and confidential advice. Struggling businesses can call **0800 915 4604** or by emailing advice@adviceni.net where they can speak directly with an adviser between 9m and 5pm, Monday to Friday.

paying for basic expenditures such as employee wages. Unfortunately, this means that many will turn to additional borrowing to ease their financial pressures. This can lead to further financial difficulty, and we encourage businesses at risk of debt or struggling during the winter months, to seek our help as soon as possible. It is important they know they are not alone; many are struggling right now and debt is nothing to be ashamed of."

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Long Meadow Cider

Long Meadow Cider is very much a family run business with family at the very heart of everything they do. Long Meadow farm has been owned by the McKeever family for three generations. It all began over 50 years ago with Pat's father, Peter McKeever, planting the first mature trees on the home farm. Through their stewardship, they have focussed on Bramley apple production, but each generation of the family has also had a policy of growing a mix of varieties and using different planting processes to further refine the apples used. Their apple plantations consist of Mature trees, dwarf systems and a fruit wall system. They currently grow, harvest and hand pick over 80 acres of the PGI Bramley Apple as well as a variety of sweet apples.

As a result of an ambitious diversification programme driven by the family's love and knowledge of the apple industry the McKeever Family now produce a range of artisan Craft Ciders, Apple Juice and Apple Cider Vinegar from the apples they harvest. Their craft ciders are produced in small batches using a unique and slow fermentation process resulting in greater flavours. They have also achieved various accolades such as The Great Taste Awards and the Irish Food and Drink Blas na Heireann Awards, a testimonial of the products they produce.

They have diversified their family business even further and now offer bespoke, immersive orchard/cider experiences on their family farm all of which can be adapted to suit the needs and requirements of their visitors as all experiences are family led. Their new glass-fronted Bramley Barn situated in the heart of the orchard offers



spectacular views of the apple blossom in May or the trees laden with apples in September and October. It will shortly include a purpose-designed kitchen that will offer guests a range of locally sourced foods and where they can also try their hand at making traditional soda bread.

They also host unique events throughout the year



to include A Murder Mystery Evening (February 2024), Wine Versus Cider as part of the Armagh Food & Cider Festival in early September and Santa's Grotto to name a few. Their stunning glass fronted Bramley Barn is also available for businesses to hire for meetings or events.

Further information on their family business, tour experiences and events can be found on their website www.longmeadowcider.com

HUGE BOOST FOR LOCAL HEROES

Local retailers and members of the public great a big Boost 'thank you'

Ten of Northern Ireland's unsung heroes were cheered on by over 120 people at a special event held by Boost Drinks in their honour and to celebrate the drinks company's 20th birthday.

The ten men and women from all over Northern Ireland were clearly overwhelmed to receive their well-deserved award, explained Francine Matthews, Brand Manager, Boost Drinks.

"Boost Drinks 2023 Always in Your Corner campaign put the people of Northern Ireland right at the heart of it. This year we have given amateur singers a leg up, we have helped local charities, given students a boost and kept the whole country going

with our Iced Coffee, Energy and Sports ranges.

"The five local people and five retailers that we honoured are perfect examples of unsung heroes who are quietly doing what comes naturally to them. They expected nothing in return, so it was a complete pleasure to give them a night dedicated to their selfless achievements. This was their time to shine, and we really hope they felt the love."

and love to help when I can. I was very happy to receive this award and I will continue to serve my customers in the best way I can."

The owner of McCreadie's in Coleraine, Darren McCreadie, said: "When I found out that our store was a winner, I was so shocked. To know that someone took the time to get in touch with Boost Drinks about us is very touching. We love what we do and I think when people visit our store, they feel that."

Rosie Lennon, owner of Nearby in Kircubbin, said: "My store is located right in the heart of the community, and I love what I do. I know every customer

Since 2003, the Boost Drinks brand has grown from strength to strength, establishing itself as the number one selling soft drink in Northern Ireland*.

** All figures are from the latest Circana/IRI based on the latest 52we to 9th September 2023. Distribution numbers are via Greenfield Marketing.*

5 LOCAL SHOP HEROES ARE:

- MCCREADIE'S, DANEHILL ROAD, COLERAINE
- NEARBY, KIRCUBBIN
- VIVO ESSENTIALS, GREENISLAND
- THE GEM, ANDERSONSTOWN ROAD, BELFAST
- KEARNEY'S, RANDALSTOWN



FunDays is a unique social support group for families, set up over nine years ago by a few local mums who have children with additional needs and saw a real need to create a safe and fun space, not just for their children with disabilities but somewhere where siblings, parents and carers could come together.

Through meeting once a month in East Belfast, the group strives to reduce isolation, promote inclusion as well as providing a comfortable social space where the entire family can relax and spend time together. With almost 90 families from across the community registered, we cater for an extremely diverse group welcoming children who have a range of additional needs from tiny babies to older teenagers. We feel strongly that ALL children have the right to play and socialise and most importantly, have fun.

As well as providing an opportunity for parents to meet with others who can really understand and empathise with some of the extra challenges faced when you have a child with additional needs, another motivation was to create a place where siblings could also attend. Often siblings take on caring responsibilities and FunDays gives them somewhere where they can make friends, share experiences and ultimately enjoy themselves.



Each month a wide range of inclusive activities are organised to meet the varying needs of all the children attending covering everything from physical activities such as football to cooking to music and dance sessions along with entertainment such as magicians and visiting animals. These are held alongside standard activities such as seasonal arts and craft, dress up, role play, Lego and video games. We also provide drinks and snacks for all the parents and children to give them the chance to stop and chat.

The group is enjoyed by many families who find it challenging to locate organisations and activities that cater for the whole family, no matter their age or ability. As there is a real lack of any similar environment available for such a diverse group, it is very well

attended and really does make a huge difference to the lives of so many children and their families. This is evidenced by the continued support of families post COVID-19 with our numbers increasing month on month.

FunDays does not receive any funding and relies entirely on donations and the group's own fundraising efforts. As with many things, we have found the cost of running the group to be increasing and, as such, are seeking ways to ensure that we can continue to provide this much needed service for years to come to the many children and families who attend. We would welcome any donations either financially or gifts such as equipment or non-perishable food items that we could use for drinks and snacks for the families.

If you would like to get in touch about how you can help us, please contact us on fundaysfamilies@gmail.com or on **07828 853210**

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BELFAST CITY AIRPORT'S ASPIRE LOUNGE OFFICIALLY OPENS FOLLOWING £1.2M INVESTMENT

Belfast City Airport has officially unveiled its new Aspire Lounge at an exclusive event attended by representatives from some of Northern Ireland's leading business organisations and prominent aviation industry figures.

After a £1.2m investment into the facility, the Aspire Lounge reopened during the summer with capacity increased by 70 to accommodate 178 passengers.

This follows the recent news that Belfast City Airport, which was the UK's most punctual airport for H1 2023, will soon fly to more routes than ever before with the addition of Reus, Venice, and Barcelona to its extensive charter portfolio.

Speaking at the event, Katy Best, Commercial Director at Belfast City Airport, commented:

"We are excited to unveil our new Aspire Lounge to some of our most influential stakeholders, showcasing a new standard for luxury travel in Northern Ireland.

"The quality finish and distinct sense of comfort and relaxation is heightened only by the stunning views of the runway and delicious food and drink offering.

"The final result is testament to our commitment to delivering an exceptional experience for passengers, further demonstrated by our dedication to providing connectivity across the UK and beyond.

"Passengers now have a choice of 30 routes with our six airline partners, including major hubs

such as Frankfurt, London Heathrow, Manchester, and Amsterdam.

"This, coupled with our speedy security times of only six minutes, means that passengers choosing Belfast City Airport will enjoy convenient and comfortable travel."

Inspired by the best bits of Northern Ireland, the Aspire Lounge features sound-proof booths, private seating areas, and charging stations throughout.

Graham Allen, Head of Aspire Lounges UK and Ireland, added:

"We are thrilled to formally launch the newest Aspire lounge in our Global network at Belfast City Airport which showcases the Aspire brand and the rich culture of Belfast and beyond. Aspire is the UK's and Europe's largest airport lounge brand.

"The demand for Airport Lounges is growing exponentially and our partnership with Belfast City Airport represents a luxury £1.2m development, ensuring we can deliver against our brand promise of the 'The Perfect Start' for today's travellers."

With 34 years of airport hospitality experience, business travellers, families and individuals can avail of a welcoming, relaxing and energising experience before



their flight, in a comfortable lounge that is recognisably Aspire, with a distinct sense of place.

The lounge offers enhanced food and beverage options, purpose-built booths for working and relaxing areas to soak up the view of the airfield and iconic Belfast Harbour skyline.

Aspire Lounge access is available to book now starting at only £36.99.

Graham Allen, Head of Lounges for UK and Ireland, Aspire; Katy Best, Commercial Director at Belfast City Airport; and Matthew Hall, Chief Executive at Belfast City Airport celebrate the new Aspire Lounge at Belfast City Airport following a £1.2m investment to upgrade and modernise the facility.

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Conversation with the Chair

Retail NI were delighted to welcome Paddy Murney Retail Sales Director for Musgrave NI as their new Chair. Musgrave NI is part of the Musgrave Group which is Ireland's leading food retail, wholesale and foodservice company. The business employs over 1,500 people in Northern Ireland and operates the retail brands SuperValu, Centra and Mace as well as Musgrave MarketPlace, Drinks Inc and La Rousse Foods through its wholesale arm.

Paddy joined the Musgrave in October 2021 and is responsible for driving the sales and profitability of the SuperValu, Centra and Mace brands and building upon the strong relationships Musgrave has with its retail partners. He also leads the development of new commercial opportunities and is focused on the growth of the brands through conversions and strategic acquisitions..

We sat down with Paddy to find out a bit more about him

Who in the business world do you admire the most?

I've always liked Alan Sugar or Lord Sugar as he is now referred to. From his early days with Amstrad through to the social media era where The Apprentice is regularly on our screens, I have learned more about him and his background. There is a lot to admire as he came from a working class family, council flat home and worked in a greengrocers whilst at school to earn some money. His involvement in Tottenham (Spurs) football club probably brought him on to my radar as an avid football fan if truth

be told.

What do you do when you are not working?

Family wise I spend a lot of time driving my 3 children to and from drama, dancing, gymnastics and golf. The winter is spent at lots of dance events watching my youngest daughter Sophie. Laura my eldest loves drama and there's a few shows and festivals to go and see her perform in. Jamie is following in my footsteps and plays golf so there are lots of competitions and interclub matches to go to. For my sins I am the Junior Convenor at Belvoir Park Golf Club. This takes up a lot of time as we have a fantastic junior section and most recently I had a group of 10 at the All-Ireland finals in Castletroy Limerick which was a great experience for all.

What is the biggest misconception people have about you?

I'm not too sure if there are any misconceptions as I'm very much a what you see is what you get character. I've often been told that I wear my heart on my sleeve.

Who are your biggest role models in life?

I'd say my Mum has been the biggest influence on me in so many ways. Being a single Mum of 3 boys, working full time as a nurse can't have been easy. Then throw in a medical history that would make your eyes water, forcing her to retire at only 39 and it makes me wonder how she ever did it all. I've learned so many valuable lessons from her over the years that she probably doesn't even realise.



If you had a superpower, what would it be?

It would be connected to the point above – the power to cure illness. There is nothing worse than seeing family or friend's lives impacted by poor health or illness.

Describe your job in 3 words

Business Growth Officer

These are always difficult questions to answer. In reality it is busy, very busy, but it's fun, rewarding, people centric which are all things that I like in any role. Fundamentally though I am here to deliver growth whether that's in sales, new stores or in people and I love all of that.

Where do you see things going in the next 12 – 24 months?

It's not going to be easy. I don't think we have really seen the impact of changes to fixed rate mortgages filter through to disposable income so that could be a challenge for us all. Local government is needed to help local business succeed with business rates, VAT etc all challenges we face in to whilst costs continue to rise. There is no doubt we will get through it as we have done in the past but there is uncertainty and that is always a challenge.

What company do you admire most & Why

I have worked for Coca-Cola, Unilever and Musgrave – 3 fantastic companies and I'm proud to have them on my CV. I have a real soft spot for Monster Energy as it's a brand/company I worked very closely with in my past. Taking on the No 1 energy drink brand Red Bull is something many brands tried and failed. Monster went about it in a very different way and used a disruptor strategy rather than simply replicating what Red Bull did. I'm not as close to the data as I once was but think in Ireland they are or are close to being the No 1 brand – who would have thought 10 years ago!

What has been the most valuable piece of advice you have been given in your career?

Get the best people around you – even if they are better than you and never be afraid of that, as they will only make you better. I was told this by a friend and mentor over 20 years ago and it still rings true today and I imagine will do long into the future.

When you were a child, what did you want to do and why?

I wanted to be a teacher as I had a brilliant teacher in P6 at school. Mr White (Declan) was someone who really inspired me at school, and I really was going down the route of teaching when I started at university but never got there in the end. I did marry one though! I would have loved to be a professional golfer but then that's really dreaming.

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Making a Stand against Sexual Harassment in the Workplace by Don Leeson, Chief Executive, Labour Relations Agency

Sexual harassment and violence are unlawful, unacceptable and has no place in any workplace. Everyone has the right to work in a safe environment where they are valued, and their dignity is respected. Unfortunately, for far too many people, predominately women, this is not the case and sexual harassment remains a grim reality.

Despite the increased attention since the #Me Too movement in 2017, sexual harassment in the workplace remains all too prevalent. Research by the Fawcett Society¹ suggests that 40% of women will experience sexual harassment at work during their career. Worse still, two-thirds of LGBT+ workers have had such experiences.²

The position in retail might be even more stark. In its 'Sexual Harassment at Work' Survey, USDAW (Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers), found that 90% of young women had experienced workplace sexual harassment in the previous 12 months.

Sexual harassment can take many forms: physical (touching and leering); verbal (sexual comments, jokes, inappropriate conversations, and propositioning); and non-verbal (displaying or send sexual images). It was gratifying to see Northern Ireland recently outlaw 'upskirting', 'downblousing' and 'cyber-flashing'.

Sexual harassment can be a traumatising and isolating experience for the victim. Despite its impact and continuing prevalence, it is estimated that 75% of workplace sexual

harassment in NI goes unreported to employers. Furthermore, around two-thirds of employees who report such behaviour are dissatisfied with how it is handled.³

So, what can employers do to help prevent sexual harassment in their workplaces?

Based on proposals being considered by the UK Government is likely that eventually a duty will be placed on employers to proactively take reasonable steps to prevent employees experiencing sexual harassment in the workplace. Of course, good employers don't need wait on legislative change to do the right thing for their staff.

New guidance being published by the Labour Relations Agency in early 2024 recommends the following actions:

- Foster a culture where casual sexism is unwelcome – don't downplay or excuse harassment ("you know what he's like" or "he means no harm" etc). The Agency's guidance on respectful workplace conversations can help here;

- Develop and implement an effective sexual harassment policy – consult your trade union and/or employees to ensure you get the best possible policy tailored for your workplace. A model policy will be available on the



Agency's website (www.lra.org.uk) from January 2024;

- Ensure employees know who to report sexual harassment to and how. Consider using anonymous reporting tools to enable workers to sexual harassment, such as telephone helplines or online portals;

- Provide training on the sexual harassment policy to all employees and ensure this is included in induction arrangements for new and returning staff; and,

- Ensure that leaders at all levels visibly communicate their commitment to gender equality and a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment in the workplace.

One last thought. Given victims' reluctance to report sexual harassment themselves, more progressive employers are turning to 'bystander' training to build a workplace free from sexual and other forms of harassment. This provides techniques to employees, as peers, to intervene when they witness colleagues harassing or being harassed. Better still, training in this approach can also deliver changes in attitudes and peer group relationships that may prevent sexual harassment occurring in the first place.



PREVENTING UNDERAGE SALES

Make sure all staff members are fully trained. Follow these top tips:



TAKE YOUR TIME

Distractions can prevent proper checks from taking place



MAKE EYE CONTACT

with customers to assess their age



IF IN DOUBT, ASK FOR ID

and check that it's an acceptable form of identification

MINISTERIAL MEETINGS

Jonathan Reynolds MP Shadow Minister of State for Business & Trade

Trade NI, the alliance of Retail NI, Hospitality Ulster and Manufacturing NI hosted Jonathan Reynolds MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Business and Trade on his first official visit to the Northern Ireland.

Over the two days, Mr Reynolds met businesses from across the three sectors and did a walkabout in Belfast City Centre.

Trade NI Chief Executives, Glyn Roberts, Colin Neill and Stephen Kelly said:

“We are pleased to host the Shadow Business Secretary and look forward to engaging with him on the Labour party economic policy agenda. It is important that the business community in Northern Ireland fully contributes to the manifesto of the Labour party ahead of the UK General Election”.



Colin Neill (Hospitality Ulster) Jonathan Reynolds MP & Glyn Roberts (Retail NI)

“Trade NI will be briefing Mr Reynolds on our NI Prosperity Plan, the many challenges facing our three sectors and opportunities for the Northern Ireland economy”.

The Shadow Secretary of the State for Business and Trade Jonathan Reynolds MP said:

“It is fantastic to be here in Northern Ireland meeting business leaders and hearing first hand from them what Northern Irish businesses need from the UK Government to prosper and grow. Northern Ireland is a wonderful place to do business with a vibrant economy and a wealth of opportunities, but I want to make it easier for those who want to start or grow a business here.

“Labour has a plan to provide the economic certainty businesses have been crying out for and our industrial strategy will support more jobs and opportunities in every part of the UK.

“Labour has changed, we know that a successful economy needs Government and the private sector working in partnership together, I am delighted to be building that partnership with businesses of all shapes and sizes in Northern Ireland.”



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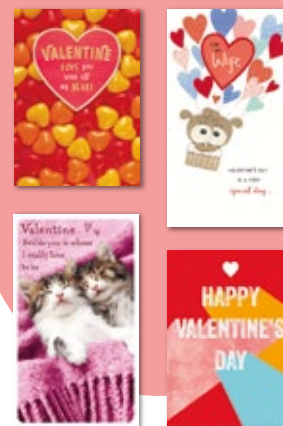
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MOTHER'S DAY Sunday 10th March

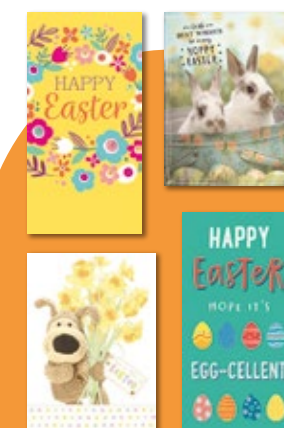


FRESH FOR SPRING 2024

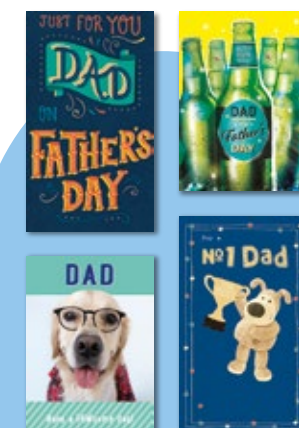
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Business Call to Freeze the Regional Rate

A diverse range of business organisations have united to call on the leaders of the local political parties to support their call for the regional rate in Northern Ireland to be frozen.

The Director of the Northern Ireland Retail Consortium, Neil Johnston led the appeal. "It is vital that government does not add to the cost of doing business at this time. Putting up the regional rate will add to inflationary pressures which ultimately may end up hitting consumers."

"Last year the Secretary of State, Chris Heaton Harris, stepped in late in the day and froze the regional rate. We need clarity sooner rather than later and that is why we have written to the five main political party leaders in Northern Ireland asking them to clarify where their parties stand."

"We are appealing to them to back business and to publicly proclaim their support for a regional rate freeze."

The regional rate is normally set by the Executive but in the absence of an Executive it was set last year by the Secretary of State, Chris Heaton Harris. The regional rate makes up one element of the rates bill levied on most businesses in Northern Ireland, the other part is set by the various district councils.

In recent years, the regional rate has been frozen just as the business rate has been frozen in England, Wales, and Scotland. A decision on business rates in England is likely to be announced in the Autumn Statement of Thursday 22 November.

The campaign for a regional rate freeze is supported by the Northern Ireland Retail Consortium, the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce, the CBI, Hospitality Ulster, Retail NI, the Northern Ireland Hotels Federation, the Horticultural Traders Association, the UK Cinema Association, RETRA (the



independent electrical retailers association), the Booksellers Association of the UK and Ireland and UKactive (who represent many in the fitness industry).

"It is clear from the range of signatories to this letter that business in Northern Ireland is of one mind on the subject of business rates. Business needs the regional rate frozen so that we can continue to focus on what we do best; creating jobs, wealth and opportunity. We hope that all five of the leaders of the main political parties all equally unite in their desire to back business and publicly support a freeze."



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S&W Wholesale Get Green Light for Major New Facility

RS&W Wholesale, one of Ireland's largest independent wholesalers of FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods) has been given the green light for a major, new purpose-built facility at today's (10th January) Newry, Mourne & Down District Council Planning Committee meeting.

The new site, which is located approximately three miles from its current headquarters in Carnbane Business Park, is conveniently situated adjacent to the A1 southbound. Representing an investment of circa £15 million, it will support the business's future growth plans right across the island. The proposal for the 16,730sqm storage and distribution warehouse including ancillary office accommodation has been in planning for quite some time and offers a major boost to the business as it looks to the future.

Michael Skelton, S&W Wholesale CEO said, "We are absolutely delighted to have been given the go-ahead for our new headquarters. The business has been curtailed in recent times through space constraints and operating across multiple sites. This new facility will allow us to maximise our operational efficiency, while giving our valuable team of more than 300 people a pleasant, fit for purpose working environment."



Anthony McVeigh, Deputy CEO & CFO, S&W added, "We have just celebrated our first year in an EOT- Employee Ownership Trust Model. This structure saw control of the 107-year-old business move from private ownership to a Trust model. The Trust's Board ensures the business operates for the benefit of the employees. Building new premises fit for the future and to support ambitious growth plans was a vitally important part of the decision-making progress to move to an EOT."

"We would like to thank all those who have supported us with this project, and we look forward to working with the local community to be a responsible neighbour in our new location. This move is very important for our customers, staff, retailers, and our entire supply chain base. We would also like to thank

S&W our fantastic team who have been very patient throughout this process. We look forward to them having brand new facilities where they can thrive and enjoy their workspace."

S&W Wholesale, previously known as Savage & Whitten is an amalgamation of two local wholesalers and has been operating in Newry for more than 100 years. Its brands include Nearby, Todays and Cuppa. This new facility will see in the region of 120 construction jobs supported for the duration of the build and will allow S&W to grow its payroll from currently just under £10 million to circa £12 million in the near future.

S&W's project team included TSA Planning, Clarman Architects, AtkinsRealis, Aona and King Communication. It is expected that construction will commence later this year.

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Local Development Plan Update

Retail NI's Planning Consultants, Matrix Planning, have provided an update on the status of each of the Local Development Plans. If you have current planning applications it is important you review any changes that may affect your application

Belfast City Council

Following the Independent Examination of the Belfast LDP draft Plan Strategy, the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) issued a Direction under section 12(1)(b) of the Act on 4th February 2023, directing Belfast City Council to adopt the draft Plan Strategy with the modifications as per the PAC recommendations specified in the Direction.

The Belfast Local Development Plan Strategy 2035 was adopted on 2nd May 2023 alongside the Local Policies Plan, which is yet to be published, will form new Development Plan for Belfast. It replaces the Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 as the statutory plan for the city.

Retailing is considered at Pages 158 -180 and takes an identical approach to the SPPS, although it does include more prescriptive size thresholds, consideration of the evening/night-time economy, tourism, leisure and culture and temporary uses.

<https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/Planning-and->

[building-control/Planning/Local-development-plan-\(1\)/Local-development-plan/Adoption-of-Plan-Strategy-documents](#)

Omagh & Fermanagh

Following the independent examination of the Fermanagh & Omagh LDP draft Plan Strategy, the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) issued a Direction under section 12(1)(b) of the Act on 3rd February 2023, directing the Council to adopt the draft Plan Strategy with the modifications as per the PAC recommendations specified in the Direction.

Fermanagh & Omagh Local Development Plan Strategy 2035 was adopted on 16th March 2023. Retailing is considered at Pages 101 – 112. It includes more prescriptive size thresholds, such as 200sqm for convenience stores outside of town centres, and Petrol Filling Stations, with local neighbourhood centres applying an 100sqm threshold to extensions.

<https://www.fermanaghomagh.com/services/planning/local-development-plan/local-development-plan-strategy/>

Lisburn & Castlereagh

Following the independent examination of the Lisburn & Castlereagh LDP draft Plan



Strategy, the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) issued a Direction under section 12(1)(b) of the Act on 28th June 2023, directing the Council to adopt the draft Plan Strategy with the modifications as per the PAC recommendations specified in the Direction.

The Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Plan Strategy was adopted on 26th September 2023 and retailing is considered at Page 87-99 – A vibrant Place and Strategic Policies 14 & 15 (Page 91 – 96) in Part 1 – Plan Strategy and A vibrant Place at Page 54 – 59 in Part 2 – Operational Policies TC1 – TC6.

<https://www.lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk/resident/planning/local-development-plan/lisburn-castlereagh-local-development-plan-2032>

Mid & East Antrim

Following the independent examination of the Mid & East Antrim draft Plan Strategy, the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) issued a Direction under section 12(1)(b) of the Act on 4th August 2023, directing the Council to adopt the draft Plan Strategy with the modifications as per the PAC recommendations specified in the Direction.

The DfI issued a direction to MEA to adopt their draft Plan Strategy on 4th August 2023 and the Council will require the matter to be agreed by resolution of the full Council before it adopts the Plan Strategy. Until such time as it is adopted the retained policies in the SPPS apply.

Antrim & Newtownabbey

The Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) have now completed their Independent Examination of the Council's Draft Plan Strategy which occurred between 03 May and 29 June 2022.

The Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) report has been forwarded to DfI on 4th October 2023 for

consideration. Release of that report is solely a matter for the Department. It is likely that the Plan Strategy will be adopted in early 2024.

Derry & Strabane

The Department for Infrastructure has appointed the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) to conduct an Independent Examination of the Derry City & Strabane District Council Local Development Plan and the Commission has assigned Commissioner Diane O'Neill to perform the IE.

The public hearing sessions have now finished on 4th October 2023, and the closing notes have been published on the PAC's website.

Mid Ulster District Council

Submitted their draft Plan Strategy to DfI on 28th May 2021 it has since been returned for further clarification.

Of the 11 council areas, four have yet to publish a draft Plan Strategy and are revising their timescales for consultation, as follows;

- Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon Borough Council
- Ards & North Down Borough Council
- Causeway Coast & Glens District Council
- Newry, Mourne & Down District Council

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SuperValu and Centra well on target for a record breaking year as October fundraising brings in £63,000

SuperValu and Centra are celebrating after an epic October of fundraising, which saw enthusiastic staff and caring customers raise a phenomenal £63,000 for long-term charity partner Action Cancer.

Pulling out all the stops, stores across Northern Ireland got behind three major fundraising initiatives, while Centra Run Together in Ormeau Park was an overwhelming success.

Kicking off the fundraising and celebrating International Coffee Day, Musgrave's Espresso We Care initiative saw 50p from the sale of each coffee sold over four days in SuperValu and Centra go straight to Action Cancer.

Next up and coinciding with Breast Cancer Awareness month, Musgrave challenged SuperValu and Centra stores to each raise £120 over the course of a week – the amount it costs Action Cancer to provide a free mammogram to women outside of NHS screening age – and the only charity in the UK to do so. With some stores raising enough to pay for three and four breast screening appointments, this campaign really resonated with shoppers.

In the run up to Halloween, 50p from the sale of every pumpkin sold across SuperValu and Centra stores also went to Action Cancer while many stores hosted their own additional fundraising activities. Staff from Lusty's Centra in Larne and Larne Port dressed in pink and raffled a hamper, while more fantastic hampers were up for grabs in SuperValu Tandragee and Centra Deansbridge, Armagh. In Bushmills, Centra staff got into costume for Halloween and held a coffee morning while over in SuperValu Dromore, a giant Andrex puppy was raffled to raise money.

In the most successful Centra Run Together to date, 1,600 runners gathered at Ormeau Park in Belfast to take part



Centra brand ambassador Pete Snodden, Action Cancer corporate fundraising manager Lucy McCusker, fitness trainer Bubba and Centra Director of Marketing Desi Derby at the start line of Centra Run Together.

in 5k and 10k routes. Every penny of the registration fees was donated directly to Action Cancer, while donations on the day and sponsorship from participants brought the total raised for this one event to an incredible £35,500!

Director of Marketing for SuperValu and Centra, Desi Derby said:

"We are absolutely blown away by the support from our retail partners, their staff, our generous customers, and our colleagues, for really getting behind our fundraising initiatives and for being creative and organising their own activities in stores. And, of course to every single person who took part in Centra Run Together. To raise more than £60,000 in one month is incredible and brings us close to our annual target of £175,000.

"This money ensures Action Cancer can keep its mobile detection unit the Big Bus on the road, delivering life-saving services to people in communities across Northern Ireland. Together we are making a real difference."

Lucy McCusker, Corporate Fundraising Manager for Action Cancer added: "This is a fantastic result for one month of extremely focused fundraising activity and we are enormously grateful to everyone at SuperValu and Centra and their wonderful customers for supporting us. It costs Action Cancer £120 to provide a free breast screening or skin cancer detection appointment and £50 for a health check. This £63,000 will provide 525 breast screening or skin cancer detection appointments, or 1260 health checks – which will ultimately help us to continue to save lives."

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Planet is building an integrated payments and software ecosystem which we call connected commerce. We partner with other software providers because it means we can offer customers easy and quick integrations with their business-critical systems, such as POS and OMS, and it allows them to include a wide range of payment methods that can easily be used without spending time, energy, and resources in technical development. We also work with partners to build connectors or plugins, which are a bridge between software and payment & further speeds-up the process.

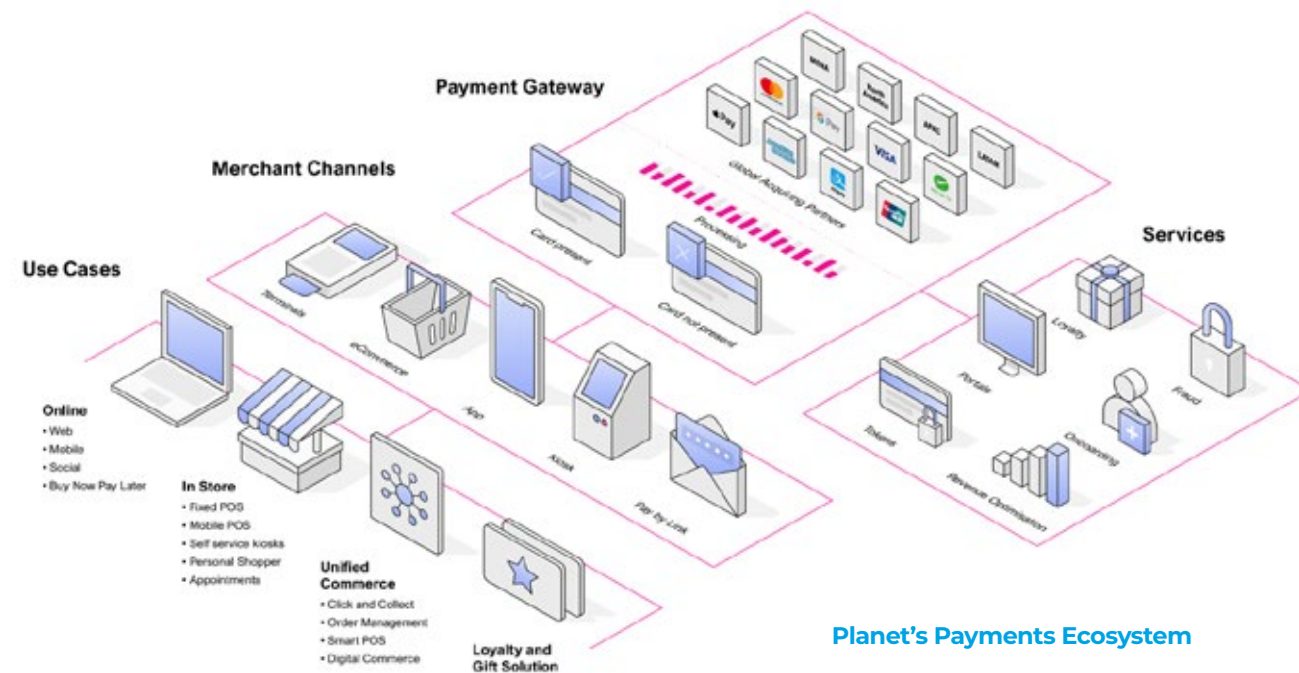
Planet's range of payment methods covers online,

instore, telephone, pay by link, and includes card payments as well as digital wallet payments like Google Pay, Apple Pay, Alipay and WeChat Pay, along with buy-now-pay-later solutions (BNPL).

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NI'S LARGEST FOODSERVICE, RETAIL AND HOSPITALITY EXPO, IFEX, RETURNS 5TH – 7TH MARCH 2024

NEXT March, Northern Ireland's premier retail, foodservice and hospitality event – IFEX 2024 – will return, opening its doors from Tuesday 5th to Thursday 7th March at the Titanic Exhibition Centre, Belfast and increasing its footprint, there's set to be even more ingredients for a successful show than ever before.

Attracting thousands of visitors from the food, retail and hospitality sectors, IFEX 2024 has just announced new industry partners who will be working with the show in the months ahead to ensure the event meets and exceeds the expectations of their members, including Retail NI who have pledged their support for the show.

From meeting new suppliers to learning from best practice and availing of expert advice, there's exciting developments in store for the three-day event. Glyn Roberts, Chief Executive of Retail NI comments: "For our retailers, we're focused on delivering real solutions and guidance that will help members' businesses move forward. We will be working with the team at IFEX to ensure there will be elements within

the show beneficial to our members, features that will clearly demonstrate how they can maximise their profits and operate more efficient businesses. We're hoping that as many members as possible will attend IFEX to visit our stand and to avail of this free event."

Representing the needs of retailers, Retail NI will be at the event offering members advice on the very latest changes in legislation, practical steps to help business growth and be on hand to address any business issues.

Following the highly successful 2022 event, event organisers, 365 Events Ltd, have worked hard to create an exhibition that is set to be even bigger and better than previous shows and one which delivers value to both exhibitors and visitors alike. Confirmed show attractions include Salon Culinaire Belfast, which comprises of the ChefSkills Theatre, the Great Taste Market and new for 2024, the NI Skills Hub, Spotlight Stage and the IFEX Master's Arena which will showcase masterclasses, workshops, competitions and exhibitor tastings across the bakery, butchery and coffee sectors. IFEX will also play host to a trade only Coffee Festival, a first for the event that will feature the National Cup Tasters Competition, where over 30 coffee enthusiasts will put their skills to the test.

The Innovation Awards will also make a welcome return to IFEX. They acknowledge the best products, services and business solutions in



Ciaran Campbell, Emma McIlveen and Sean Owens

the market today and will be judged by an independent panel of industry experts. Successful exhibitors will be awarded for their products and for visitors, a Product of the Show accolade independently confirms the excellence of a particular product or service.

Commenting on the show's return, Toby Wand, Managing Director of 365 Events, organisers of IFEX said: "In 2022, there was a huge buzz around IFEX, with exhibitors reporting a real upturn in business and an increase in visitor numbers, so we've high hopes for 2024. A larger show, coupled with new features, excellent exhibitors and attractions that encourage and reward talent within the hospitality sector, will make IFEX the home of innovation for hospitality and retail from the 5th – 7th March next year."

IFEX returns with industry support from leading bodies including Retail NI, Hospitality Ulster, NI Hotels Federation and NI Takeaway Association.

Registration to IFEX 2024 is now open, visit www.IFEXexhibition.co.uk for more information and follow @IFEX_NI on social for show updates.



Glyn Roberts, Sean Owens and Toby Wand

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Faces of Family Business Exhibition

The phrase “One picture is worth a thousand words” has been in existence since the early 1900s and a recent exhibition sought to explore how visual imagery and artefacts can powerfully convey the narrative, history and legacy of family businesses. Organised by the Northern Ireland Family Business Forum, a partnership between Harbinson Mulholland and Ulster University’s Centre for Sustainable Family Enterprise, this unique exhibition entitled ‘The Faces of Family Business’ ran from 27th to 29th November on Ulster University Belfast campus.

Eleven family businesses submitted photographs and artefacts that they felt best represented their story, history and essence of what it means to be a family in business. Family business forms the backbone of our



economy, but also the social fabric of our communities and this exhibition sought to shine a light on the power of story through imagery.

These images and artefacts often have deep historical and cultural significance, representing the roots and traditions of the family business. They serve as tangible links to the past, connecting the present generation with their ancestors and the origins of the business. This connection to heritage can be a source of pride and inspiration for family

and non-family members alike.

Dr. Ian Smyth from Ulster University Business School “We were delighted to be able to host this unique exhibition and bring together the family firms that took part. Imagery can be a powerful tool to link the past, present and future and in hosting this exhibition we wanted to showcase the best of what being a family business represents and the richness and diversity of the stories on show here – stories worth unlocking through imagery”.

We are grateful for the support of Belfast School of Art and Frances Smyth (designer) in curating this unique exhibition. Most importantly, we thank the family firms who have taken part

Eight wins at NR Awards caps outstanding Awards season for NI SPAR, EUROSPAR and ViVO stores



Sam Davidson, Patrick Doody, Bronagh Luke and Martin Agnew from Henderson Group at the Grocer Gold Awards where Henderson Wholesale picked up the award for Regional Wholesaler of the Year.

Eight SPAR, EUROSPAR and ViVO retailers picked up prestigious awards at the Neighbourhood Retailer (NR) Awards 2023, rounding off an outstanding few months of awards ceremonies for the locally owned and operated stores in Northern Ireland.

The winning stores at the NR Awards included Creightons of Finaghy, Lynch’s EUROSPAR Greysteel, EUROSPAR Ladass Drive, McCullagh’s SPAR Classic Service Station in Omagh, SPAR Castlederg, ViVO Essentials Ballygowan, ViVO Dromore and EUROSPAR Cullybackey.

2023 has been a bumper year of award wins for Henderson Group, their companies, stores and host of independent retailers who have been setting the bar both at home and UK-wide at some of the most prestigious national ceremonies.

Back in July, Henderson Wholesale was named Regional Wholesaler of the Year at the Grocer Gold Awards. The company was the only business

from Northern Ireland to win on the night, with judges commending the company not only achieving but smashing through its ambitious targets for 2022.

Hot on the heels of the Grocer Gold Awards, Northern Ireland stores completely dominated the Retail Industry Awards in September, bringing home a fantastic 11 awards on the evening. Not only did Henderson Retail pick up a hat-trick of company awards including Community Retailer of the Year, Forecourt Retailer of the Year and Convenience Retailer of the Year, but four of their stores also picked up key category awards. NR Award winners Lynch’s EUROSPAR (both Greysteel and Skeoge) and EUROSPAR Creightons of Balmoral joined Hamilton’s SPAR Castlederg as worthy independent winners on the night.

In October, SPAR and EUROSPAR stores in Northern Ireland dominated the Forecourt Trader Awards, with NR Award winners McCullagh’s SPAR Classic Service Station also successful in the Northern Ireland Forecourt of the Year (over 4 million litres per annum) category. The store was one of seven to bring home nine awards from London, including Maxol EUROSPAR Kinnegar, which had a hat trick win on the night.

Patrick Doody, Sales and Marketing Director at Henderson Group commented; “It has been an extremely successful awards season for our

independent SPAR, EUROSPAR and ViVO retailers in Northern Ireland. Not only have they swept the board locally, but they have been bringing home trophies from UK-wide ceremonies. “All our stores have their local communities at their centre and it’s of the utmost importance to our retailers that they provide fresh, locally sourced products and top quality services as well as convenience and value to their shoppers, all while supporting local community groups, charities and sports teams. These retailers go above and beyond, making them unrivalled in all of these areas and we’re proud that they have been recognised for their services.”

Mark McCammond, Retail Director at Henderson Group added, “We’re thrilled to have had another successful year at the local NR Awards and at national schemes over the past six months. Our store teams do outstanding work both instore and throughout their communities, which stands out from their competitors and is appreciated by their loyal shoppers. Congratulations to all the teams.”



William Gilpin (from category sponsor, Giffresh Produce) is pictured with Charlie Hamilton, owner Hamilton’s SPAR Castlederg and Alison Logue, with their award for Fresh Food Store of the Year at the NR Awards

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In the relentless rhythm of the retail world, time isn't just ticking; it's a valuable currency, and each passing second holds the potential for profit. Recognizing the critical role time plays in this dynamic environment underscores the importance of embracing solutions that make every second count. Uncover a new era of efficiency, say farewell to time-consuming tasks and discover savings with Gig Grafter's innovative workforce management platform.

1. Effortless Rota Management

Ever wondered how much time you spend creating, distributing, and updating rotas? Time that can be used in a more productive and profitable way. With Gig Grafter's intuitive cloud-based system, these tasks become a breeze. Choose from templates or replicate previous rotas effortlessly, eliminating repetitive work. A single click is all it takes to publish, notifying your team instantly, no matter where they are. No more manual messages, overwhelming group chats, or paper schedules cluttering your walls.

Need to make changes? Forget about messy scribbles or complete rota rewrites. With Gig Grafter, inputting changes takes just minutes, can be done on the go on mobile or tablet and republishing is as simple as a click.

2. Smart Cost and Productivity Management

Gig Grafter's budgeting features provide valuable insights into your business, helping you to make informed decisions, highlighting opportunities for improvement, and giving you the ability to propel your team toward greater efficiency and profitability. This comprehensive toolkit allows you to strategically align wage costs with sales percentages, enabling the creation of budgeted schedules that minimize the risks of overstaffing or understaffing and identifying peak operational times and areas for improvement.

3. Seamless Payroll Reconciliation

Improve your payroll processing and embrace efficiency with Gig Grafter, ensuring accuracy in pay and substantial reduction of administrative burdens. Our innovative system links your rota seamlessly to the punch clock, automating the approval of clock records based on your unique payroll rules.



Whilst holiday accrual calculations run in the background, saving you the headache of manual calculations.

Adopting time-saving solutions isn't just about optimizing specific tasks; it's about igniting a ripple effect across your entire business. From quicker decision-making to increased employee morale, the impact of time savings extends far beyond the surface, fostering a culture of agility and adaptability.

With Gig Grafter's workforce management platform, you can streamline everything from rota planning to payroll, giving you more time to focus on what matters – your business.

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THE LEGACY CASK PROGRAM – COMPLEXITY POURED INTO A PROMISE FOR TOMORROW

In the tapestry of Hinch Distillery, Dr Terry Cross OBE stands as the visionary captain, steering against the tide to craft an enduring legacy.

From his teenage adventures at sea to building empires amidst the chaos of 1980s Belfast, Terry's journey has defied the ordinary. Now, with "The Legacy" program, Hinch invites you to be a part of this extraordinary tale. For £4950, whiskey aficionados can own a cask, letting it mature within the sophisticated surroundings of Hinch Distillery. As time weaves its magic, the spirit and the cask collaborate to create your Hinch Future Perfect.

Hinch Distillery is at the forefront of the Irish whiskey renaissance, and The Legacy Cask Program is a chance for you to be part of the unfolding narrative. It's not just an investment; it's an opportunity to play a role in the creation of something extraordinary.

The demand for Irish whiskey

has grown by a staggering 21.5% in recent years and as one of the few distilleries in Northern Ireland, Hinch Irish whiskey is an investment in sophistication, uniqueness, and rarity amid a perfect storm of growth, and potential.

At the core of Hinch whiskey lies the pulse of its custom-crafted copper stills, setting the stage for excellence. With grand ambitions propelling it to the forefront, Hinch has earned its place among the best, and this journey of evolution persists.

With demand currently exceeding supply, the time to invest in Irish Whiskey is now and owning your own Hinch cask is a simple way to share in the excitement surrounding the Irish Whiskey industry and play a part in shaping the narrative.

How does it all work? The Legacy Cask Program releases a limited number of unique single malt Casks each year. After a minimum of five years, these numbered and dated casks become available for you to continue maturation, sell or bottle. It's a legacy worth treasuring, a chance to hold in your



hands a piece of the Hinch story.

As Hinch Distillery advances, The Legacy Cask Program offers your exclusive entry into its future. Seize this distinctive opportunity to invest in the essence of tomorrow.

For more information contact: Casks@hinchdistillery.com

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THE TIME FOR RETAILERS TO ADOPT RENEWABLES IS NOW

Northern Ireland's retailers have the potential to slash electricity bills, boost their environmental credentials and secure future energy supplies by adopting renewable energy technologies, according to the new head of Strategic Power Connect (SPC).

Liam Faulkner, who took up the role of Chief Executive Officer at the company earlier this year, said soaring costs across the retail sector mean adopting renewable technologies should now be a vital focus for operators in the race to protect and grow profits in the future.

"It's a compelling argument," he said. "The biggest unknown for many retailers is the cost of energy so the most obvious way around that obstacle is to install your own energy source.

"Taking away the unknown factor in your business makes planning for the future easy, it de-risks your business and it provides the solid platform that many operators need to invest."

He said any concerns around the cost of installing renewable energy generation on site are now redundant given the unique funding models available.

Take, for instance, SPC. It designs and installs onsite renewable energy systems – wind or solar – to enable major energy users to reach their sustainability goals. Crucially, it offers a fully funded model where users can avoid upfront capital costs, as well offering an outright sale option.

Users can secure energy supplies at a set price through a Power Purchase Agreement – ensuring costs can be managed and energy price spikes avoided. It also ensures security and provenance of supply by producing energy onsite and removing reliance on the grid.

Perhaps most pertinently, customers – the retailer's most important stakeholder



group – are becoming increasingly environmentally aware and high street names are taking note. However, going green does very much involve making green at every point in the supply chain and in every part of the retail business.

Greener premises, that are powered by renewable energy, will attract more footfall and help bricks and mortar retailers to compete better against their online rivals.

SPC's offering means retailers operating from owner managed premises can easily adopt renewable technology with no upfront costs. Those operating from shopping centres or other tenanted premises can also signpost landlords to the SPC model to ensure they are able to take advantage of the security of supply, price and ESG credentials it offers.

Liam's view certainly comes from a background of deep experience.

Most recently, Liam was chief executive officer of Naturgy Ireland and a member of the



European energy supply management committee within the Group. Naturgy was a challenger energy brand within its core markets, which Liam grew through diversification and the development of new products and markets. Previously he worked for O2 Ireland, Royal Bank of Scotland and Deloitte and holds a Masters in Business Administration from London Business School.

His appointment marks the next stage of growth for SPC as it plays a central role in global decarbonisation by helping large energy users to access affordable renewable energy.

SPC was founded by Paul Carson in reaction to growing concern for energy provenance, ESG and climate change. It is part of the Strategic Power Group which also houses Strategic Power Projects, an all-Ireland renewable energy company established by Paul to support ambitious government plans to reduce emissions through the development of large-scale solar photovoltaic and battery energy storage systems.

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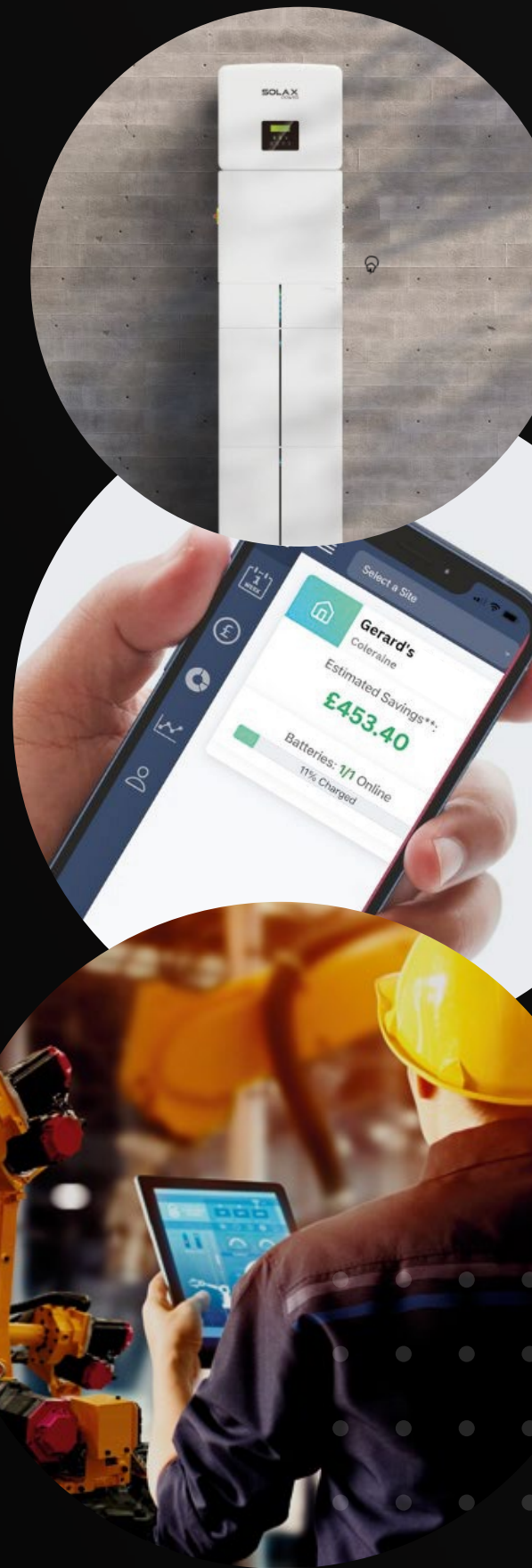


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