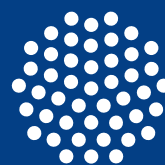


Issue 11 | Spring 2023



RetailNI

Standing up for
Independent Retailers

The Retailer

The Magazine for **Retail NI**



Retail NI
Inaugural Supplier
Showcase

INSIDE

Blue Lobster Found
Introduction to LRA
ATM Thefts

Page 16
Page 19
Page 28



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Message from the President

Welcome to the Spring Edition of The Retailer.

Signs of spring are beginning to appear and at the time of writing there is a glimmer of hope that devolution could be restored. The Windsor Framework was signed off at the beginning of March by the UK and EU. Here at Retail NI we have called for all political parties to take positive steps to ensure Stormont gets back up and running as soon as possible as a non-functioning executive and lack of budget continues to have serious repercussions on our industry.

We were delighted in February to welcome Steve Baker MP Minister of State for Northern Ireland to our inaugural Supplier Showcase. He along with 150 members, stakeholders and industry representatives, delegates had the opportunity to meet with over 33 local suppliers exhibiting their products and services.

Trade NI's Annual Reception at the House of Commons Terrace will be held on Tuesday 23rd May 2023 followed by a reception at the Irish Embassy. Keep an eye on your emails as invitations will be sent out in the coming weeks.

Rising interest rates, increased energy cost and , difficulties recruiting staff are still creating a perfect storm but together we have a louder voice, and we will continue to fight for the best interests of our membership.

If you have any questions, issues or problems please do not hesitate to contact one of the team, Glyn Roberts 07515 710 517 or Joelene 07542 845 834, they are there to help.

Peter McBride



NICHOLL OILS

NICHOLL OILS TEAMS UP WITH EVERUN TO CREATE NI'S LARGEST EV CHARGING NETWORK



Below - Margaret Gallagher, Hugh Nicholl, Andrew Johnston & Eimear O'Reilly at Nicholl Auto 395 Greysteel

Northern Ireland renewables experts Everun are joining forces with Nicholl Oils to develop the country's largest electric vehicle charging network.

Speaking of the partnership Hugh Nicholl of Nicholl Oils said: "Nicholl Oils have always been at the forefront of changes within the industry with a blended approach of having traditional fuels, synthetic fuels and now electrification in our product mix.

Eimear O'Reilly, head of projects and planning at Everun explained: "For Everun it was important to find a partner whose values align with our own. "By working together with Nicholl Oils we have the opportunity to build upon their last 60 years of impeccable customer service and help take it to the next level within the renewable energy space."

Retail Petrol and Wholesale Manager at Nicholl Oils Margaret Gallagher said the investment shows a commitment by the company to ensure they are continually offering customers the best service possible. She added: "The addition of an EV charger service on our forecourts consolidates our commitment to provide customers with a reliable and dependable service, delivering on quality and price."

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Retail NI Chair with Minister Steve Baker and Glyn Roberts

RETAIL NI SUPPLIER SHOWCASE & SUPPLY CHAIN FORUM

Retail NI has launched a new Supply Chain Forum to connect and promote trading opportunities with local producers, manufacturers and suppliers with its independent retail and wholesale members.

The new Supply Chain Forum was officially launched at Retail NI's Supplier Showcase event, which took place on Thursday 23 February at PwC, Belfast.

Supported by key partners United Wines, McCausland Car Parks and Voice for Locals, the event aimed to

promote and celebrate the huge contribution local producers, manufacturers and suppliers make to its members and the wider local economy.

Attended by more than 150 members, stakeholders and industry representatives, delegates had the opportunity to meet with over 33 local suppliers exhibiting their products and services and hear from Retail NI



Chief Executive Glyn Roberts, with a special address from Minister of State for Northern Ireland Steve Baker MP.

Commenting on the success of the event, Minister of State for Northern Ireland Steve Baker MP said:

“Northern Ireland’s amazing local produce is creating opportunities for growth for NI manufacturers and producers, playing a key role in boosting its economy.

“Thanks to Retail NI’s showcase, I’ve had the opportunity to meet many of these fantastic local suppliers, discussing some of the opportunities and challenges that they are facing.

“Local business is right at the heart of NI’s potential, and the government will ensure NI continues to be a great place to do business.”

Launched as the first in a planned series of in-focus events hosted by Retail NI this year, the new showcase series is an important and valuable platform for members to help grow and move their businesses forward.



Glyn Roberts, Retail NI Chief Executive, said:

“I’m delighted that our first dedicated showcase event has been a huge success, delivering further support for our network of supplier members and shining a spotlight on the enormous contribution that local businesses make up this sector.”

“For the past fifteen years, Retail NI has been supporting local producers with their route to market with our Retail and Wholesale members. We are passionate about supporting local and those businesses that make up the supply chain.”

“With the hundreds of suppliers joining Retail NI in recent years we now represent businesses from across the supply chain who provide goods and services to our retail and wholesale members.”

“The launch of the new Supply Chain Forum which will build upon this and serve as a key connector and ensuring that our supplier network continues to grow, develop and deliver even further for the industry and for Northern Ireland.”

“We are also in discussions with the local office for the Department of Business and Trade to explore how we can support our supplier members with international trade opportunities.”



Interview with a Supplier

CHRIS O'REILLY

Who in the business world do you admire the most?

Elon Musk – he is a visionary and a risk taker and never afraid to speak his mind.



What do you do when you are not working?

I like to walk as much as I can, I enjoy sea swimming, cooking and I have three children so I like to spend as much time as I can with them.

What is the biggest misconception people have about you?

That I am always serious!

Who are your biggest role models in life?

Growing up my Mum was my biggest role model, she raised my brother and I alone and I take a lot of my drive from her example over the years.

Describe your job in 3 words

Challenging, rewarding, a rollercoaster

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

Hopefully we can continue growing the business in these challenging times. As retailers I believe that we need better access to labour, staffing remains a key concern and filling vacancies is proving very difficult, more needs to be done by the government to help ease the labour shortages.

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

Treat everyone as equal and with respect, everyone has a part to play in making a business successful no matter what position they hold.

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

I wanted to be a solicitor, it seemed like it was a very important job.

If you could only invest in one area or service in your business what would it be?

People, you cannot achieve anything without good people around you.

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RETAIL ROUNDUP

REGIONAL RATE FOR BUSINESSES FROZEN

Retail NI has welcomed the announcement that the Northern Ireland Secretary Chris Heaton-Harris has frozen the Regional Rate for Businesses. Retail NI strongly lobbied the Secretary of State on this highlighting the disastrous effect a rise in the Regional Rate would have on already struggling businesses.



CEO meeting with Foreign Secretary on Windsor Accord

THE WINDSOR FRAMEWORK - A NEW WAY FORWARD

Retail NI have responded to the EU-UK Agreement

Retail NI Chief Executive Glyn Roberts said:

“On an initial analysis, this new agreement represents welcome progress towards providing the stability and certainty that our retail, wholesale and supplier members are seeking. The technical detail of this agreement will need to be studied further and, following consultation with our membership, we will be able to comment more definitively.

“In the interim, what is blatantly evident, is that the agreement needs to work, not just for all the businesses in our local supply chain, but also for local consumers. Ongoing engagement between the business community and the EU and UK Government will be critical as the implementation process of this deal begins. It is



imperative that the NI Executive and Assembly is now restored to deal with the huge economic challenges that lie ahead. Northern Ireland needs a working Government.”

RETAIL NI URGE SECRETARY OF STATE TO INTERVENE ON RATES RELIEF SCHEMES

Retail NI has written to the Secretary of State to urge him to intervene before two important Rates Relief Schemes, which require a technical vote in the Assembly, are due to fold by the end of this month. The **Back in Business Rates Relief Scheme** which gives new start independent retailers 50% discount for the first two years of trading and the **Rural ATM**

Rate Relief scheme are both crucial for many independent retailers.

Retail NI Chief Executive Glyn Roberts said:

“Both of these schemes are in place to support independent retailers and small business owners and require an annual vote in the Assembly to be renewed. With the Assembly not sitting both schemes will fold which will have implications for new start businesses and rural retailers providing a much-needed service to the community.”

“With dozens of ATM raids on our members (with one last Friday) and substantial rural bank branch closures in the last few years, this has resulted in a huge reduction in ATMs. Our members stepped in to provide ATMs to their local communities and the Rural Rate Relief Scheme assisted them to do so.”

“If that scheme falls at the end of the month, we could see dozens more rural ATMs closing, putting further pressure on people on benefits and pensioners who use cash to budget. Access to cash will be severely limited in many rural areas.”

“The Back in Business scheme provides much needed support to many new independent retailers in the vital first two years of trading. Without this scheme we are concerned that further barriers will be put in place for new start-up businesses.”

“Given the importance of both these schemes and with no immediate prospect of the Assembly meeting before the end of this month, we have asked the Secretary of State to renew both schemes through the House of Commons.”



Meeting with SDLP Leader Colin Eastwood MP



Meeting with new Sinn Fein Finance Spokesperson Colum Gildernew MLA on Business Rates



Meeting with the Alliance Party Leader Naomi Long MLA at the Retail NI Office



Meeting with DUP Economy Spokesperson Jonathan Buckley MLA

Ministerial Meetings

RETAIL NI MEET SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT

Retail NI met with Mark Harper MP Secretary of State for Transport last night.

There was good engagement and useful discussion on improving Northern Ireland's air connectivity and the need for more public and sustainable transport options for consumers to access our high streets.



Mark Harper MP Secretary of State for Transport & Glyn Roberts Retail NI CEO

First Community Store Launch

Another success story for Nearby as the first community store launch took place on Friday 27th January with a great turn out for the stores customers.

Nearby Kearney's Randalstown have been operating for over 25 years and since opening under the Nearby brand, it has already created a positive impact on the local community. We caught up with store managers Karen Kearney & Paddy McLaverty who had this to say;

"The launch day was a very successful day which created a great buzz and atmosphere. We were delighted to see a lot of the local community involved in this event and lovely to see some new faces appear as well. The Community Day was fun filled and a superb way to kick start a promotion week with many fantastic offers running in store. Nearby Kearney's would like to thank all our customers for their continued support over the years."

Kearney's display a wide variety of grocery lines across chilled, fresh, frozen with their very own Kearney's range providing a popular addition with tasty lasagnes, cottage pies and chicken dishes to name a few. The store also boasts having a Paypoint, lottery points, home delivery and a wide variety of home fuels.



Left – Damian Campbell (BDM @ S&W Wholesale)
Middle – Karen Kearney (Store Manager @ Kearney's)
Right – Paddy McLaverty (Store Manager @ Kearney's)

Throughout the afternoon there was a great atmosphere, with customers calling down to store to pick up their Nearby filled goodie bags packed with merch and treats. There were also balloons for kids, hampers, and vouchers all to be won on the day.

There was an instore raffle running for one week where customers who spent £10 in store were entered into a draw to win one of three Kearney's hampers, or one of three Nearby vouchers. There were also fantastic deals running all week in store across popular grocery lines and their Kearney's fresh range.

"It was a really enjoyable day filled with excitement for the community of Randalstown. A new store offering brings a sense of excitement for what lies ahead for the brand. With Kearney's being at the heart of the community this was an excellent store to kick off 2023 for the brand. I am excited for what's coming next for Nearby." Sara Fearon, Brand Marketing Officer said.

At Nearby, we provide the support and market knowledge that your store needs to thrive in today's market. If you are passionate about your customers, products & the future of your store then get in contact with us today.

Local SPAR store welcoming the new year with anniversary celebrations

SPAR Sion Mills is starting off the new year by celebrating 30 years serving their local community.

John and Donna McKenna have owned the store for 15 years, but it has been in the family since its opening in 1993, first owned by John's sister and brother-in-law, Anne and John Doherty.

At that time, the store opened with just two employees, and the team has since grown to 28 colleagues from the local community.

Over the years the store has had four extensions to enable them to bring an impressive offering to the area, including a wide range of locally sourced produce, an expansive range of fresh groceries, Irvines butchery and delicious hot food for those on the go. Food to go is complemented by a full Barista Bar Coffee offering, ice cream from the Mauds counter and a refreshing Frozen Fanta machine.

The store is at the heart of the community, with John and Donna being local to the area, they strive to provide top quality products and services for their shoppers.

Most important to John and Donna though, is the warm welcome and friendly service they and their team provide for every shopper, John commented, "We love being part of the everyday lives of those in the local community and enjoy chatting to all our customers, who we have gotten to know so well over the years.

"We can't believe it's the 30-year anniversary of the store and we are looking forward to many more years serving this wonderful community."



John and Donna McKenna with Justin Hayes, Regional Sales Manager at Henderson Group and Shane Crossan, Business Development Manager at Henderson Group

Being central to the community, John and Donna also feel it is important to give back and have raised money for charities, both local and further afield, including the Society of St Vincent De Paul and Concern Worldwide. They also show support to the local Sion Mills Community Association, a voluntary association, also formed in 1993, which shows support to the children and senior citizens in the Sion Mills area.



NFSP Calls for Fair remuneration for Postmasters in Northern Ireland

Neglecting the costs of essential services: why postmasters need fair remuneration.

For many people, the local post office remains their only connection to Government and community services. Like every other business, the postmasters and postmistresses who run these local branches are wrestling with uncertainty, impacted by the cost-of-living crisis, rising energy bills and declining footfall. In addition, local post office branches in Northern Ireland are facing significant issues, unique to post offices. Issues that in many cases can be avoided.

While Northern Ireland's £600 energy pay-out scheme proved a welcome relief to many people, the pay-out process caused significant challenges for Post Office workers. The scheme was welcomed by residents, but its implementation caused delays and frustration for customers. Some failed to bring the necessary documentation. As a result, some Post Office colleagues needed to hire security to control queues, and many experienced unacceptable levels of abuse.

Despite these challenges, the payment per transaction that Postmasters received for providing the service on

behalf of the Government was also a concern. Some offices reported processing nearly 500 transactions in a day, only to end up losing money after accounting for the costs associated with providing the service.

This highlights the problems that arise when negotiations between the Government and the Post Office fail to consider the costs of the workers who provide the premises and staff necessary to offer these services. In a recent letter to Postal Affairs Minister, Kevin Hollinrake, the

National Federation of SubPostmasters (NFSP) called for postmasters in Northern Ireland to be treated as a special case and properly remunerated for the additional costs associated with providing the energy pay-out scheme.

This situation underscores the importance of fair negotiations and a recognition of the costs involved in providing these essential services. Without proper consideration of these factors, postmasters may be left struggling to provide the services that their communities rely on without proper remuneration. This has resulted in around eight post offices closing each week in the UK.

Postmasters in Northern Ireland also faced significant losses



due to the cyber-attack on Royal Mail's systems. The attack halted the international parcels service, resulting in lost trade and lost return customers throughout the UK. According to the NFSP's monthly member surveys, International Parcel Sales are consistently among the best-selling products across the UK but took a dramatic nosedive in January and February.

However, much of the damage could have been prevented in Northern Ireland if Royal Mail's processes distinguished between NI's unfettered access to the European Union under the NI protocol and the UK's third country status. As a result, many parcels were left sitting in depots at Heathrow airport when they should and could have been delivered on time.

This all adds up to a concern among postmasters, that Government and Royal Mail are taking Post Offices for granted, and not properly accounting for challenges they face when being asked to provide essential services. Without a fully engaged, properly funded post office network these services may disappear for good.





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“THE IMPORTANCE OF BRAND EXPERIENCE IN RETAIL”

**NIAMH HIGGINS,
MANAGING DIRECTOR TAPCREATIVE**

A brand lives in consumers' minds, and customer perception can make or break it. As a result, ensuring a consistent and quality experience across communications, your physical store environment, and digital touchpoints is a key challenge for many in 2023 and beyond. The current landscape is portrayed as unsettling, with consumers having higher expectations while showing less brand loyalty. Studies claim that 71% of consumers switched brands at least once in the past year - is it time to re-evaluate the experience you are offering?

More than ever, it is essential to have a firm grasp on and be able to communicate what it is that sets you apart from others. What kind of experience do you want to deliver for your consumer - what makes you unique, stand out and connect more meaningfully? How you want them to feel emotionally. Enter the science of brand experience.

Brand experience, or BX, is consumers' tangible and emotional experience while interacting with your brand. Influenced by all the brand-related stimuli that are part of the brand identity, communications, physical and digital environments, activation, and innovation. BX has emerged as a means of bringing together all of the currently disparate arms of driving brand performance. One which delivers consistently across both communications and

customer experiences, whether they are in person or online. And while shopping online has advantages, the in-store experience remains unique as a place to cement and bring alive your brand experience.

As humans, we crave in-person connection and always will. Therefore, despite it being cited that 53% of customers prefer to purchase online versus in-store, shoppers still want a memorable in-store experience. However, it is no longer enough for a store to simply be a place of transaction; it must also serve as a destination. A place that creates a narrative with touches and stories that personalise the brand and where connection can thrive.

Here are some ways this can be achieved. Create compelling in-store events encompassing different store touchpoints that, importantly, centre on your customer's values, needs and experiences they crave. Or building opportunities for social interaction and community connection that shifts beyond the transaction. Using the physical retail space to offer workshops, classes, and host talks creates a hub and sense of belonging where people can gather and purposefully dwell.

Embracing phygital, digital technology can and should be employed to enhance moments of connection along the in-store journey. However, not as a replacement for human interaction but more to amplify your brand's unique attributes. Design the journey first, then decide how technology can improve it. Getting



Niamh Higgins MD
TapCreative

TapCreative.

creative with post-purchase experiences can drive longer-term connection. For example, shareable videos and animated content on personalised product care or interests.

At its most basic level, superior brand experience makes your brand more distinct and memorable than others. It builds mental availability with consumers long before they become active customers, such that when the purchase trigger is activated, your brand is top of mind. It builds emotional connection and drives loyalty. And emotionally connected customers are more valuable than highly satisfied customers or even those who perceive a brand or retail space to be differentiated.

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Menopause Leave

In England Ministers rejected a proposal from MPs to introduce a large-scale menopause leave pilot, rejecting calls to be formally recognised as a protected characteristic. While rejected, this doesn't negate the fact menopause is a real condition that does and will affect half the population at some stage in their working lives.

Employers have a responsibility to ensure anyone struggling with menopausal symptoms receives the same support and understanding as any other health condition. Steps employers can take:

1. Educate managers about menopause and how to support employees experiencing symptoms.
2. Informal one-to-ones provide the forum for a conversation about any changes to someone's health situation, including menopause.
3. Risk assessments to minimise or where possible remove workplace risks for people experiencing menopausal symptoms. – identify risks/ barriers that exist that make the employees fulfilment of duties and responsibilities more difficult.

Domestic Abuse Leave

In 2022, the Northern Ireland

Assembly passed the Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) Bill. Employers are encouraged to be proactive about

their policies by introducing and implementing reasonable measures to prepare for the eventuality of this legislation. What will the bill state?

- The legislation will provide employees who are victims of domestic abuse with a day one right and entitlement to 10 days' paid leave.
- The leave is intended to be used for employees to deal with issues relating to abuse such as, obtaining legal advice and seeking welfare support as well as finding alternative accommodation for themselves or other family members (not an exhaustive list).

Employers should implement a Policy for their organisation. Key considerations are:

1. Response – If an employee discloses their experience of domestic abuse, reassure them you understand how this could affect their work performance and outline what support can be offered.
2. Training managers – To recognise signs of domestic abuse, encourage them to actively check in with employees. Managers should facilitate discussions of abuse to identify the relevant support employees could need.
3. Seek appropriate help – Establish roles and responsibilities of managers or HR in response to domestic

abuse issues. Signpost local support services for employees to avail of.

Carer's Leave Bill

The Carer's Leave Bill is one employers should look for in 2023. Recently backed by government in Great Britain and it is expected to be extended into Northern Ireland at a later date. The Carer's Leave Bill makes provisions for five days' unpaid leave for dependants with long-term care needs and would be a day one right for all employees. Long-term care needs are defined as "An illness or injury that requires, or is likely to require, care for more than three months", "A disability for the purposes of employment legislation, or "Care for a reason connected with old age."

Currently employees may be allowed reasonable time off in emergency situations to look after a dependant however it is the employer's discretion as to how much time is reasonable and if the employee will receive pay.

Here to help

Should you need support developing the above policies within your organisation, please contact Jenni Barkley on **07513478696** or by email **jenni.barkley@thinkpspeople.co.uk**.



Fibrus Networks

Retail NI Broadband Partner Fibrus Offering NO price Hikes Guarantee to Combat 'Cost-of-Doing-Business' Crisis

Northern Ireland full fibre broadband provider Fibrus is continuing its rapid roll out with a competitive and flexible range of business broadband products which aim to fight the ever-rising cost of doing business for the retail sector.

During a time of ever increasing overheads, Fibrus guarantee locked-in prices with no mid-contract price hikes or annual CPI increases and no connection fee.

Targeted at smaller businesses with under 10 employees, Fibrus Business Broadband will allow companies to "save money with confidence", according to Chief Financial Officer Colin Hutchinson.

"It's a fact that SMEs are the backbone of Northern Ireland's economy, which is why it's incumbent upon us to support them as they continue to face unprecedented business and inflationary costs.

"With no connection fee and a contract which won't be subject to mid-contract CPI increases or price jumps at the end of its term, we believe this is an opportunity to provide a sense of financial stability at a time where there is generally little certainty," he said.

"That's part and parcel of why we are bringing this to local businesses," added Mr Hutchinson.



"Fibrus is a local company and we understand the issues facing local business people.

"It's essential that our SMEs are given the support they need to grow and thrive, particularly in the current economic climate."

Glyn Roberts, Chief Executive of Retail NI has welcomed the news. The trade body is partnering with Fibrus to highlight the opportunity the new broadband offer will provide businesses.

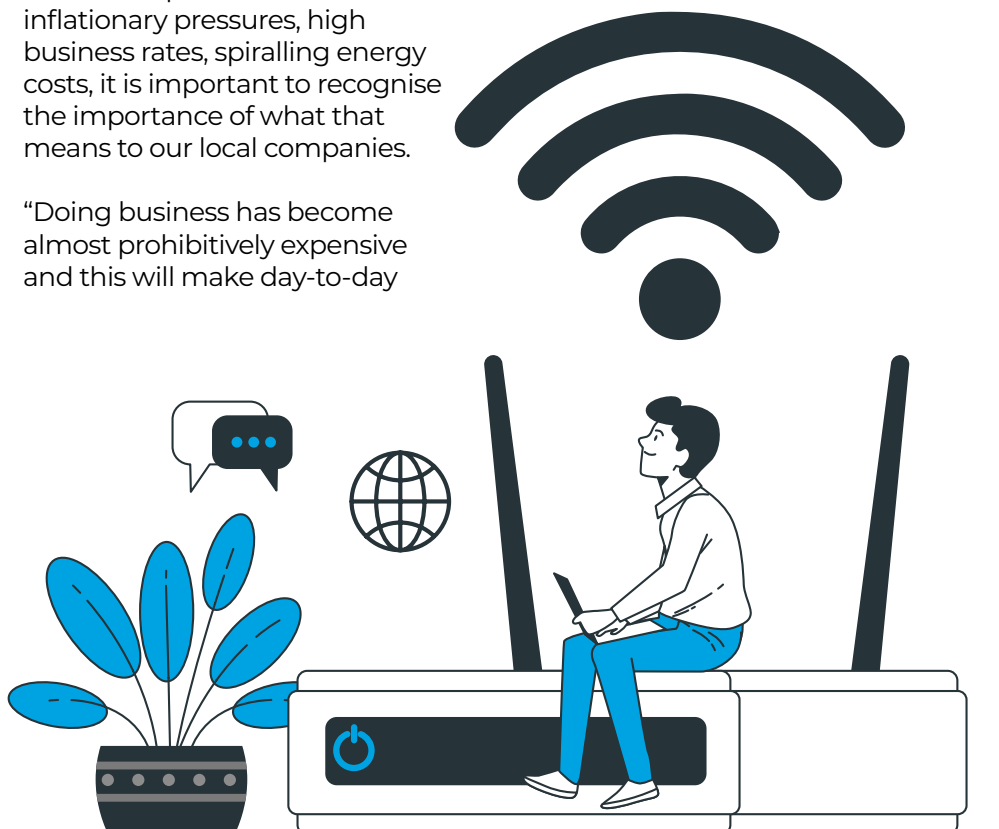
"Amidst unprecedented inflationary pressures, high business rates, spiralling energy costs, it is important to recognise the importance of what that means to our local companies.

"Doing business has become almost prohibitively expensive and this will make day-to-day

operations easier and therefore more efficient.

"Any savings in the current climate must be welcomed, so we're looking forward to developing our relationship with Fibrus for the good of our members, and their customers," he said.

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SEA FRESH 1 IN 2M CHANCE

Stuart Brown, 28, from Bangor, Co Down, said he could not believe his eyes when he pulled one of his lobster pots up onto the deck of his boat the Huntress last Friday.

"We were sitting in about 50 to 60 feet of water and the fourth pot came up," he recalled. "I sort of saw it, but I think I thought, 'it's just a lobster'. You could hear the tail going. "I slid the pot down to the crew man who lifted it out and he made a comment: 'That's very blue. "I looked at him and said: 'Yeah, no problem.' But then I did look at it again and said: 'That's too blue.' "You would get lobsters out there that don't look normal, they'd be a bit browner or redder, just something different with them, but nothing that extreme.

"I looked up Google to see how rare it was, and it was one in a two

million chance of catching it." The pot had been lying in the waters close to Blackhead Lighthouse on the northern shores of Belfast Lough.

The experienced skipper, who has been fishing since the age of 11, said the bright blue lobster was just below the allowable size to keep, so, after taking some pictures of the rare crustacean, he had to release it back into the water.

"I've never seen one - other fishermen I've spoken to who are a lot older than me, they said the same, that they haven't seen any ever, so it's a surprise to everybody it's came in on the east coast," he said.

"It's still out in the lough somewhere, swimming about as happy as can be. Hopefully if someone else does

catch it, they'll return it as well."

Mr Brown is a shareholder in Co.Down seafood wholesaling business Seafresh, which sells crabs and lobsters throughout the UK and continental Europe.

He said the blue lobster has now been added to the list of "weird and wonderful things" he has seen while out at sea.

"You just never know what's going to come up," he said.



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SUPERVALU AND CENTRA RAISE A PHENOMENAL £200,000 FOR ACTION CANCER

LOCAL STORES SMASH FUNDRAISING TARGET



Desi Derby Director of Marketing for SuperValu and Centra, meets Action Cancer ambassador Sinead Hoben at the charity's mobile detection unit the Big Bus.

SuperValu and Centra are celebrating after raising a staggering £200,000 for their long-term charity partner Action Cancer, following a year-long programme of fundraising activity.

Caring customers donated generously to a range of fundraising initiatives, supported by SuperValu and Centra retailers and their staff, who are committed to helping the charity keep its mobile detection unit the Big Bus on the road, saving lives across Northern Ireland.

Desi Derby, Director of Marketing for SuperValu and Centra commented on the fundraising total: "Over the past few years, we have been faced with one challenge after another – first the pandemic and now the cost-of-living

crisis. But against the odds, and thanks to the ongoing commitment of our retail partners and staff, our colleagues, and of course our loyal and generous shoppers, we have raised the most we have ever raised in one year, bringing our overall contribution to Action Cancer to £3.7 million.

Gareth Kirk, Action Cancer CEO, added: "The £200,000 raised in 2022 is incredible, a huge Action Cancer thank you and gratitude to all at SuperValu and Centra and its amazing customers, who despite the current financial situation, have once again given so generously.

"SuperValu and Centra are our longest and one of our most important partners. Their support makes it possible to operate the Big Bus and its services - our partnership works so well because of our shared Values – planning hand-in-glove, making a difference to the

lives of local people and communities."

In 2023, Action Cancer's 50th Anniversary Year there are exciting plans for services onboard the Big Bus, made possible by the ongoing commitment of Musgrave NI.

Action Cancer Ambassador Sinead Hoben, from Newry, who has availed of the free breast screening service onboard the Big Bus, and whose cancer was detected by the charity, shares her experience:

"Since turning 40, I have routinely gone for breast screening appointments at Action Cancer, both onboard the Big Bus and at Action Cancer House. Following my fifth screening in March 2019, at the age of 48, I received a letter from Action Cancer saying the mammogram had picked up something and needed further investigation." After attending a breast clinic at her local hospital, Sinead discovered she had breast cancer.

"Because I had been going for regular screenings, the cancer was detected early, and I did not need radiotherapy or chemotherapy. I am living proof that the early detection screening at Action Cancer saved my life. I'd definitely recommend women in their 40s and over the age of 70 to make an appointment on the Big Bus today."

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An Introduction to the Labour Relations Agency by Don Leeson, Chief Executive

This article, the first in a series of articles on topical employment matters, introduces the Labour Relations Agency to you.

The Labour Relations Agency is a publicly funding, independent body. It works to promote the economic success of organisations through good employment relations through a range of free, confidential services. It also helps employees understand their employment rights. As such, we act with complete impartiality between employers and employees.

The Agency's website (**www.lra.org.uk**) provides comprehensive guidance on employment law and good practice. It is structured around the employment life cycle: from starting employment or a business becoming an employer for the first time, through to the employment relationship ending; and all issues that might arise in-between.

Where employers or employees require further information on their particular issue, the Agency provides a telephone advice line, handling thousands of calls each year. Call this Workplace Information Service on 03300 555 300, anytime during normal office hours, where highly knowledgeable colleagues are available to listen to the issues you face and provide expert guidance. Given our absolute commitment to impartiality, we cannot advise you on what to do; we will instead inform you of legal requirements and best practice, so that you can decide on the best course of action for your business.

The Agency is perhaps best known for its work to resolve workplace conflict. Conflict takes many forms and costs employers and our economy considerably. Recent research commissioned by the Agency suggests this cost was as much as £1 billion last year.

We provide services to resolve collective disputes, often pay disputes between an employer and its recognised trade union. Unfortunately, this service has been in great demand in recent months as surging price rises and a competitive labour market has created a perfect storm for employers. Given the confidentiality of the service, and frustratingly for my colleagues, you will not hear about the Agency's successes, but rest assured nearly all collective disputes are resolved with our facilitation.

On an individual level, anyone wishing to pursue a legal case against an employer must first consider the option of conciliation to resolve their dispute. This Early Conciliation service recognises the importance of resolving disputes as quickly as possible before parties' positions become entrenched, avoiding costly and stressful litigation. If Early Conciliation is unsuccessful, because the parties don't wish to engage or are unable to reach agreement, our conciliation service remains available to the parties in dispute throughout the Tribunal process. Again, this service is highly successful – fewer than 10% of cases lodged at the Tribunal ever result in a hearing.

But, of course, the best way to resolve a dispute is to prevent it



Don Leeson, Chief Executive LRA

happening in the first place. The Agency seeks to help employers avoid disputes through a range of advisory services, including webinars and guidance on best employment practice. These deal with explanations of the law in specific areas through to thought leadership on contemporary issues that matter to employers and employees alike. Recent guidance includes hybrid working, menopause in the workplace, and supporting employees experiencing domestic abuse.

Expect to read more about some of these issues in future articles.

Fundays

FunDays is a social support group for families, set up nine years ago by a few local mums who have children with additional needs and who 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 cookery 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

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**



provide drinks and snacks for all the parents and children to give them the chance to stop and chat.

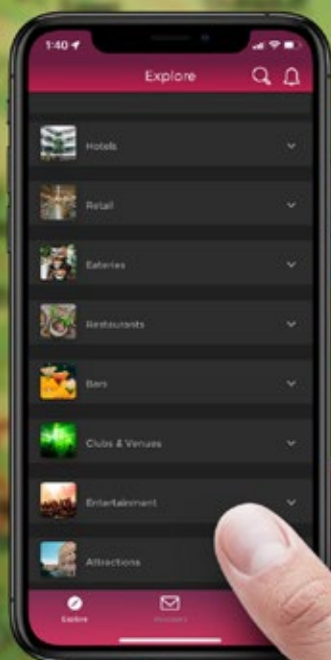
The group is enjoyed by many families who find it challenging to locate organisations and activities that cater for the whole family, no matter their age or ability. As there is a real lack of any similar environment





Roam

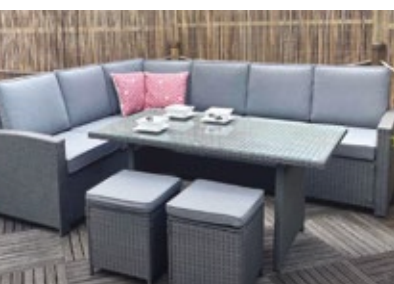
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HLA - SUPPLY CHAIN AND LOGISTICS

Northern Regional College are the only FE college offering a HLA in Supply Chain and Logistics.

What is a Higher Level Apprenticeship (HLA)?

A Higher Level Apprenticeship is a nationally accredited work-based programme at a higher level (Level 5). It is designed to meet the needs of employers for higher skill levels and leads to qualifications equivalent to university. Students on all HLA programmes are currently employed and this work-study mode has been identified as vital to developing the employability skills of employees.

Employability

The Higher Level Apprenticeship will last for 2.5 years whereby the apprentice will attend college one day a week and their place of employment 4 days a week. An apprentice is paid a wage, usually above minimum wage and they are permitted study days and study leave. Both the College and the employer provide a mentor to assist the apprentice with their 'on the job' training and the college mentor will also assist with the learning and personal development aspects of the HLA.

Recognised Qualification

Foundation Degree in Supply Chain & Logistics validated by Ulster University.

Employer Benefits

As an employer within the supply chain and logistics sector, your business can reap the benefits of providing a work



placement for apprentices while they complete a recognised qualification at Northern Regional College. This opportunity is also open to your existing employees.*

Benefits include:

- Skilled employees – access to skilled employees as well as means of upskilling existing staff members.
- Stronger business and professional training – transfer knowledge and build relationships with the College.
- Value for money – fully-funded qualification – Foundation Degree in Supply Chain & Logistics (supported by the Department for the Economy).

* Existing employees are only eligible to undertake a HLA if they are moving to a new job role. They must undergo an extensive initial assessment to identify existing competences and knowledge, which should be detailed on the Existing Employee Application Form. To be eligible a person must, as a minimum, meet each of the following criteria:

- Have attained the minimum school leaving age; (16 as at 1st July prior to the start date of the programme). Achieved 64 UCAS points, GCSE (or equivalent)

Maths & English. Or provide evidence of industrial experience to meet the criteria for approved prior learning.

- Be a new employee in, or about to take

up a permanent remunerative employment offer, including a specific start date and documented evidence from the employer of the actual job offer, or an existing employee in a new job role that requires a substantial amount of learning and skills development commensurate to the apprenticeship pathway.

- Be employed by a company with a permanent base in Northern Ireland, and be contracted to work a minimum of 21 hours per week

- Have the potential to successfully complete the requirements of the appropriate Higher Level Apprenticeship;

The apprentice may start their employment up to a maximum of 6 months prior to the commencement of their off-the-job training. However, only those who are assessed as capable/committed to achieving the full requirements of a HLA should be enrolled on to the programme.

Contact: For further information contact: Gerry Drake - Gerry.drake@nrc.ac.uk

NORTHERN
Regional College **nrc**

RETAIL NI MEETING WITH PSNI ON ATM ROBBERIES

With over a dozen ATM robberies and attacks on Retail NI members since Christmas, a Retail NI delegation will be meeting senior Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) Officers on Wednesday 29th March 2023.

Retail NI Chief Executive Glyn Roberts said:

"These ATM robberies are attacks on local independent retailers who provide a valuable community service. We would urge all businesses who have ATMs to be vigilant and ask members of the public with any information on the recent robberies to contact the PSNI.

"There is now a perfect storm of problems around rural ATMs. In addition to the robberies, because the Assembly is down, many of our

rural members will this week lose rate relief on their ATMs. This will cost tens of thousands on top of their already expensive rate bills.

"With so many bank branch closures, our members provide an invaluable service to many communities to access cash with their ATMs. Unless we see a crackdown on the robberies and a restoration of the ATM Rate Relief, many rural areas of Northern Ireland could see dozens more ATMs closing. This will put further pressure on people on benefits & pensioners who use cash to budget and rely on ATMs to access



Glyn Roberts CEO

cash in many rural areas will be severely limited."

Following the meeting Retail NI are encouraged at the progress that has been made to date



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ATM Thefts Causing Problems for Retailers

Following a number of thefts from ATMs across the country, detectives from the Police Service of Northern Ireland are asking members of the business community to be vigilant.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland's lead for Business Crime, Chief Superintendent Darrin Jones said: "This year alone, there have been 14 attacks on ATM right across Northern Ireland. These are crimes that strike right at the heart of rural communities and can have a damning impact on livelihoods of both customers and business owners. We are 100% committed to putting a stop to this crime.

"Retailers across Northern Ireland should review their security measures following this recent spate of ATM thefts. Business should clearly define the boundaries of their premises with gates, fencing, landscaping and clear signage; to outline they are located on private property. The installation of both security lighting, alarms and CCTV equipment should not only be installed but also checked on a regularly basis. If you see anything suspicious, either during business hours or afterwards, please contact us immediately.

"If you see or hear anything that doesn't seem quite right, for example, if you see vehicles or people loitering in areas close to ATMs, when shops are closed, call us on 101. Likewise, if you hear machinery late at night or in the early hours, please pick up the phone. If you think a crime is in progress please dial 999 immediately.



**Chief Superintendent
Darrin Jones PSNI**

"The 14 ATMs in question, and the recent attacks, have some elements in common. Almost all are within a rural or semi-rural location. Furthermore, most of the attacks have taken place in the early hours of the morning.

"While some of the attempts have been unsuccessful, all have resulted in some degree of criminal damage to the machine or surrounding property. These targeted attacks don't just have a severe financial impact, they rob the whole community of a service upon which they're totally reliant.

Chief Superintendent Jones continued: "We have a dedicated team of detectives working across Northern Ireland specifically focusing on this crime, but we rely upon your help. Your support could make all the difference.

"The best way to tackle this type of crime is through prevention and to implement proactive measures to keep your business secure. Restrict roof access by removing vulnerable features such as low walls and never leave ladders lying around. Install security grills and shutters, as well as briefing all staff of workplace security procedures. Identify any features in your premises that could provide cover for intruders and remove or improve them. Examples include recessed doorways, concealed yards, landscaping and poorly lit areas.

"Never count money in public view or fill ATMs in opening hours and ensure minimal cash is kept inside your business. If applicable, use signs to clearly state that there is minimal cash on premises/ limited cash in tills/ATMS - out of hours. For example: 'time delay safes are used' or 'no money is left on the premises' or 'employees cannot open the safes'

"If you have any concerns around your security measures or require crime prevention advice or guidance, please contact police on **101**. Alternatively, information can be provided to Crimestoppers anonymously on **0800 555 111** or online at **www.crimestoppers-uk.org**.

"By working in partnership with retailers across Northern Ireland, we believe this will help bring those responsible for this type of crime before the courts."



Police Service
of Northern Ireland

NI WATER ANNOUNCES 13.4% RISE



NI Water has announced that from 1st April 2023, non-domestic water and sewerage charges will rise by 13.4% on average.

NI Water Director of Finance, Regulation & Commercial, Ronan Larkin, commented:

“We are aware how challenging the environment can be for local businesses within the economy right now. In previous years, we have been able to limit the non-domestic price increase to strike a balance between generating sufficient income and minimising the impact on business customers. Whilst NI Water has again absorbed as much cost as possible, the company is facing significant financial pressures from rising energy prices and other cost increases.

“We have worked hard to ensure most of our customers will see their bills rise by less than inflation.¹ Specific bill changes operate according to a formula agreed with the Northern Ireland Utility Regulator.

“It is well documented that NI Water needs to receive full funding to ensure we continue to deliver a water and sewerage service that represents good value for money. The revenue from bills will help support necessary investment in our infrastructure, benefitting

the local economy and environment. However, even with full funding and bill increases, historic underinvestment will take in the region of 12 to 18 years to remedy.

“Measured customer bills will rise by 12.7%, while unmeasured and trade effluent bills will rise by 13.7% and 15.5% respectively. This compares favourably with other utilities across Gas and Electricity sectors.

“NI Water is mindful of the impact of price rises, it is therefore important that customers who may need extra help with their bill communicate with us as soon as possible. Our billing team will be on hand to offer guidance, including payment breaks or longer repayment plans.

“We have enhanced our online self-service portal with a smarter navigation to help provide a better experience when paying a bill, managing account(s), or viewing water consumption details.”

Leaflets will be mailed to non-domestic customers to notify them of the forthcoming pricing changes and how they will be applied.

Help for Non-Domestic Customers

Non-domestic measured water and sewerage customers who pay rates on their premises continue to benefit from a domestic allowance (up to 200m³ of free water and 190m³ of free sewage).

Customers wishing to apply for the domestic allowance should contact NIW directly.

Non-domestic unmeasured water and sewerage

Unmeasured bills are based on the NAV of the customer's property. Approximately 70% all unmeasured customers have an NAV of £8,000 or less. For 2023-24 these customers continue to be charged at 50% of the full charge with their water and sewerage components capped. Please refer to section 4 of the NI Water Scheme of Charges for full details on Unmeasured water and sewerage charges.

Cost of Living – Changes to Recovery Sequencing

In response to the Cost of Living Crisis NI Water has made changes to its recovery strategy. Customers can access further information about our charges on NI Water's website at www.niwater.com.

Anyone with questions about their bill or our charges can phone our Billing Enquiries Team on **03458 770030**.

REVAL2023 VALUATION LIST PUBLISHED

Land & Property Services has announced the publication of the new valuation list for non-domestic properties, which will come into effect on 1 April 2023. The valuation list will be used to calculate business rate bills that will be issued from the start of April 2023.

Business rates are charged on most non-domestic premises, including shops, offices, warehouses, factories, hotels and pubs as well as utilities such as gas, water, electricity and wind farms.

The new valuation list is the result of a large scale exercise to revalue all 75,000 non-domestic properties known as Reval2023. This is the third revaluation for businesses in eight years and is a response to calls from business ratepayers here for more frequent revaluations.

Angela McGrath, the Commissioner of Valuation for Northern Ireland, said: "I would like to thank all the business owners who participated in Reval2023 and provided LPS with the information to update property rental values. This revaluation will maintain fairness in the rating system as businesses will pay rates relative to the 2021 rental value of their premises instead of the 2018 value. Around 64% of non-domestic properties will see no change or their rateable value decreasing under Reval2023.

"I would encourage any business owner who has not yet viewed their new valuation to go online and do so. Ratepayers in shops, offices, warehouses and industrial properties can see a full breakdown of how their value has been calculated, as well as viewing information for similar properties both in their local area and across Northern Ireland."



Around 75% of non-domestic properties here are entitled to some form of rate relief, such as Small Business Rates Relief, Industrial De-Rating or Sport and Recreation Relief.

View the 2023 Valuation List at: <https://valuationservices.financeni.gov.uk/Property/Search>

If ratepayers are unable to access the required information online they can contact LPS on telephone number **0300 200 7801**.





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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



REMEMBER: Mystery shopper visits are carried out in support of preventing underage sales. If your store doesn't correctly ask for ID on 3 separate occasions, you could lose your terminal.

Rules & Procedures apply. Players must be 18+.