

# The Plan

*NIIRTA's Economic Programme  
for Government 2016-2021*

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“Small shops are the lifeblood of local economies and provide a lifeline to local residents, their survival is vital. If we care about our communities, and the local, independent retailers that give them their character, then it’s our responsibility to support them - not just by signing petitions and joining campaigns, but with our cash.”

*Rt. Hon David Cameron MP, Prime Minister*

## Introduction

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This is our Economic Programme for Government, setting out policy priorities for the new nine Executive departments.

NIIRTA is not focusing on problems, but on practical policy solutions.

We are the first business organisation to produce a plan for all nine departments to get Northern Ireland working again. While retail and town centres are at our core, this is a plan for our economy as a whole.

Retail is the largest sector of our private sector economy. We are driving the debate on the future of our town centres, digital high streets, and also as a key partner for growth in a new 21st century private sector-led Northern Ireland.

Our vision of 21st century town centres is of them reclaiming their rightful positions and roles as places which serve their communities, visitors, businesses and key stakeholders, with a quality of experience that encourages them to keep coming back, and staying longer.

NIIRTA has welcomed the 'Fresh Start' agreement, announced in November 2015, and looks forward to the next Executive Programme for Government adopting a more outcomes-based and inclusive approach.

We look forward to the feedback on our proposals.

Glyn Roberts  
Chief Executive

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## Foreword - The importance of the Retail Sector

The fortunes of the retail sector can both rise and fall with economic conditions.

Having endured over five years of stagnation and contraction between 2008 and 2013 many retailers are now extremely grateful for recent improvements in consumer purchasing power and confidence levels. In both 2014 and 2015 retail sales across the UK increased annually by around 4 per cent and 5 per cent respectively. This fairly healthy rate of growth reflects both pent-up demand and improving economic circumstances.

In Northern Ireland retail accounts for approximately 14.5 per cent of economic output and around 16 per cent of all employment. This is a labour intensive sector and an important part of the economy with roughly 140,000 full and part-time workers. Beyond employment, the retail sector is also recognised as an integral part of a region's character. Dynamic cities, thriving towns and villages rely on their retail outlets to provide atmosphere, a sense of community and perhaps a degree of uniqueness for attracting tourism and investment.

Some high streets in Northern Ireland have weathered the storm much better than others, but a number of high-profile shop closure announcements during late 2015 indicated that retailers are not out of the woods just yet. The ever-changing customer landscape in terms of buyer-behaviour, customer preferences, Internet sales, the drive for convenience, price competition and even demographics, means that the retail environment is an increasingly challenging one.

However, Danske Bank indicators suggest continued economic growth in the local economy during 2016 and 2017, which augers well for retail sales. In addition, low inflation

in the year ahead should translate into rising disposable incomes for households and this should tempt consumers to dip into their wallets, especially in the first half of the year. But of course retailers want to ensure that in the longer-term Northern Ireland will achieve higher levels of sustainable economic growth so that they have the confidence to invest, attract new staff and succeed both on the high street and online.

Continued improvement in the local labour market is a prerequisite for sustainable levels of retail sales growth and therefore any policy levers to boost job creation in the years ahead will be important. In addition, the persistent promotion of local tourism and the attraction of international sporting and cultural events will all play an important part in supporting the local retail sector. Furthermore, targeting foreign direct investment and the building of cross-border trade and tourism links with our neighbours in the Republic of Ireland are important policy initiatives that will serve this sector well in the longer-term. Essentially, supportive business conditions across the whole Northern Ireland economy should ensure that retailers have a much more stable platform on which to build their own long-term future.



Angela McGowan

Chief Economist  
Danske Bank



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## The Executive Office

*“This will be the most extensive reorganisation of the departmental system since 1999. It provides an opportunity for a leaner, more joined-up administration, with improved cohesion between, and within, departments. This should mean ultimately greater efficiency in our administration and improved service to our citizens.”*

*First and deputy First Ministers March 2015*

## Setting the Context

Previous Stormont administrations do not have a strong track record of joined-up and collective cabinet responsibility. The silo approach adopted by Ministers in their departments has to end and the new Executive must be delivery focused and operate as far as possible as a normal government.

The new Executive Office, headed by the First and deputy First Ministers, has a crucial role in policy coordination and delivery of the Programme for Government.

All the parties, which are entitled to seats in the new Executive, must agree a new radical and strategic focused Programme for Government before departments are allocated.

## NIIRTA Policy Recommendations

- Because of its coordinating role, the Executive Office should take over the implementation of a comprehensive **Better Regulation Strategy** across every government department with a 'one-in, one-out approach' to any new regulation.
- The new Better Regulation Strategy should include **yearly targets** for each of the nine departments, to remove unnecessary red tape and review impact analysis of new regulation on business.
- As recommended in the DETI Red Tape Report, the First and deputy First Ministers should appoint a '**Better Regulation Champion**' to work across departments to challenge bad practice and ensure better regulation targets are met.
- The Executive Office should establish an independent **Commission** to objectively examine what further powers could be devolved, to give the Executive greater economic levers to further move the economy forward. This would be similar to the Smith Commission in Scotland.
- NIIRTA welcomes the new Civic Panel proposed in the Fresh Start Agreement and recommends that it be tasked to create a new Social Partnership strategy between the NI Executive, Private Sector, Trade Unions and Community Sector.
- The First & deputy First Ministers should establish an Executive subgroup to work with the Treasury, local Councils and key stakeholders to bring forward **City Deals** for Derry/Londonderry, Belfast, Armagh, Lisburn and Newry.

- Given that Northern Ireland has fallen way behind the rest of the UK in relation to the number of **Enterprise Zones**, the Executive Office should lead discussions with the UK government to rectify this. Enterprise Zones have been proven to play an important role in boosting local economic development and spending with retailers.

- NIIRTA suggests that the following areas be given priority for Enterprise Zones:

- Derry-Strabane
- Soon-to-be former JTI and Michelin sites in Ballymena
- Cardiff City Centre Enterprise Zone model for Belfast City Centre
- Examine feasibility of Cross Border Enterprise Zone in Newry

- As part of the **North-South Ministerial Council**, the NI Executive and Irish government should hold at least one annual roundtable meeting to discuss economic challenges with the two Economy Ministers and key business organisations.



## Department of Finance

### Setting the Context

The Department of Finance has, over the past Assembly term, delivered a great deal of reform of business rates by introducing the Small Business Rate Relief and Empty Premises Rate Relief schemes and by freezing the regional rate.

While these reforms are welcome, we need the new Executive to put a radical reform of business rates at the core of the new Programme for Government.

Retailers are united in the view that the business rates system is no longer fit for purpose in the 21st century. The system needs to be fundamentally reformed to flex more closely with changes in the economy and occupation of non-domestic property. We want to see the system reformed so it is fair for all businesses, internationally competitive and can be a tool to reward investment.

*“As politicians, we need to watch what is happening in the real world when we set our local taxes and decide on our policies, so that we do not kill the golden goose and hurt our businesses. It is a delicate balancing act that we are all involved in”*

*Arlene Foster MLA, Minister for Finance, November 2015*



# NIIRTA Policy Recommendations

• The Small Business Rate Relief scheme should be increased from **£15k NAV to £18k NAV**.

• While we support the extension of the Small Business Rate Relief scheme, we would be open to a more **targeted town centre rate relief** scheme.

• Introduce **revaluations** to every three years, ensuring that rate bills more closely reflect changes in the property market and wider economy.

• The **Empty Premises Rate Relief** scheme should be extended and its qualifying period reduced from 12 to 6 months.

• The Empty Premises Rate first year 50% rate reduction should be extended further to year two with a **25% rate reduction** to provide further support to the new business.

• Introduce a system where **rates income** fluctuates with economic cycles.

• **Charity Shops** should be required to pay rates of 20% of their rateable value. This new income should be redeployed to support the extension of the Empty Premises Rate Relief scheme.

• Focus the relief system on rewarding investment, by providing time limited exemptions for new store developments and letting businesses offset their **capital investment** against their rate bills.

• Vacant property rate should be increased from 50% on a graduated basis of 10% per year and extra income should be invested in the proposed **Capital Allowance Rate Relief scheme**.

• Remove more businesses from the rating list altogether to reduce the burden on the Valuation Office Agency to complete valuations and process appeals, and

to exempt the smallest properties from business rates altogether and requiring others to pay a small flat rate charge.

• Establish a **Rural Retail Rate Relief scheme** to support the vital role independent retailers play in villages.

• Reform the **Business Rates Hardship Fund** to ensure it is easier for businesses to claim in the event of flooding or disruption, as a result of major roadworks or public realm changes.

• Review the valuation scheme in sectors where **rental value** is not fit for purpose, for example, in forecourts (which pay high rates) and online distribution centres (which pay low rates).

• Land and Property Services must provide **full transparency** on the valuation calculation to business owners on any future rate revaluations.

• Existing large out-of-town superstores with free car parking should pay a rate surcharge for this competitive advantage, which will be redirected into maintaining town centre car parks and keeping their charges low.

• NIIRTA calls upon the Department of Finance to introduce a **Green Energy Rate Relief scheme** for small retailers. This would enable retailers to install energy efficient refrigeration, lighting and heating and to offset the investment in their rate bill. This scheme would support investment in Green technology, support new employment in the sustainable energy sector and reduce energy bills for independent retailers.

• Department of Finance to examine ways to give the eleven Councils **flexibility with rate relief** to target urban dereliction and for support packages for new Foreign Direct Investment.



*“The Executive must articulate and implement a rolling 20-year shared Vision & Strategy for Economic Development. The vision and strategy can be renewed and updated through each Programme for Government period. There must be full integration between the strategy for the economic development and the Investment Strategy”*

*Assembly Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment 2015*

## Setting the Context

NIIRTA has long called for a single Department for the Economy, creating a one-stop shop for economic development. Connecting enterprise and skills is essential if we are to move towards the new private sector-led Northern Ireland.

As the largest sector in our local economy, retail has a key role to play in making that step change.



## Department for the Economy

# NIIRTA Policy Recommendations

- A Junior **Minister/ Assembly Private Secretary for Entrepreneurship** and Skills is appointed to give priority to these key policy areas and give support to the Economy Minister in advancing the economic agenda.
- Given the huge role retail plays in supporting local employment, the Department for the Economy should conduct a **Retail Policy Review** to examine ways to support further growth in the sector.
- As many NIIRTA supplier members are manufacturers, we fully support the need for a **Manufacturing Strategy** for Northern Ireland.
- NIIRTA strongly supports the devolution of Corporation Tax to the NI Executive, as more Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) will lead to more jobs, which will be a big long-term boost to our local retail sector. We welcome the **2018 date and rate for Corporation Tax**, to provide the step change our economy needs.
- Establish a **Working Families' Support Scheme** that helps employees with young families stay in work with 30 hours a week free childcare.
- Further Education colleges can support the retail sector by working in partnership with retailers to develop entrepreneurial skills to support the sector's growth. A new **professional and vocational route**, running parallel to academic, from school right through to university, must be created.
- NIIRTA will work with the Department for the Economy and the FE sector in developing a new **Level 3 Retail Apprenticeship**.
- The **Apprenticeship Levy** should be devolved to the NI Executive to ensure the funding is directly passed to the six FE colleges and that further social clauses could be added for new companies which take advantage of the 12.5% Corporation Tax rate.
- Given the economic benefit to Northern Ireland of the UK remaining in a reformed, re-focused and **competitive European Union**, local political parties should support the UK remaining as a member of the European Union in the forthcoming referendum.
- Given the importance of **Grade A office space**, the Economy Department needs to put in place a strategy to address potential lack of supply to provide suitable accommodation for new Foreign Direct Investment in, or within close proximity to, town centres, thus boosting potential retail footfall.
- The Economy Department, working with the eleven Councils should establish **Local Growth Partnerships** to assist in delivering economic development. The Growth Partnerships should include key representatives from Council, Chambers of Commerce, Prince's Trust, Tourism NI, local FE colleges and Invest NI.
- NIIRTA supports the NI Executive targets of Northern Ireland moving into the top five group of **European Innovation Regions** and increasing employment in the knowledge economy by 15,000. The retail sector and town centres have key roles to play in achieving these targets.
- The retail sector should be represented in the proposed Innovation Council for Northern Ireland as outlined in the **Northern Ireland Innovation Strategy**.
- The Department for the Economy must make the **high cost of business** their top priority by commissioning independent research into the problem and ensure practical solutions are identified.
- Following its cross border retail research, NIIRTA and its ROI counterpart Retail Excellence Ireland, will establish a **North-South Retail Forum**, comprising of the key retail organisations across the island to discuss areas of common interest and policy development.

## Department for the Economy NIIRTA Policy Recommendations

- NIIRTA wants to see any future employment law have a proper impact assessment on how it will affect our economy and our small employers in Northern Ireland. We want to see employment law that is both business friendly and family friendly and which can be both fair to employee and employer alike and end the 'one size fits all' approach.
- We recommend that the Minister for the Economy convenes a Ministerial Advisory Group on Employment Law, made up of business and trade bodies who represent small businesses and retailers, who could advise on the likely impact any new employment law would have on the local economy and make recommendations.
- Many NIIRTA members have Post Offices within their shops. Post offices are the natural home for all forms of central and local government services and there is evidence that this can save money, improve public access and increase income and footfall for post offices. Executive Departments need to give **Post Offices more services** and responsibilities to secure a strong network across Northern Ireland.



## Department of Education

### Setting the Context

Independent retailers' greatest frustration with the primary and secondary education system is the failure to deliver young people who are 'job ready' with the necessary basic numeracy and literacy skills.

NIIRTA wants to see an increased focus on ensuring that young people leave school with, at the very least, the basics in literacy and numeracy and the skills, attitude and work ethic to make a positive contribution as employees in Northern Ireland's independent retail sector. We also want to make the independent retail sector a more attractive career option for young people, whether it be as part-time workers, full-time employees or, indeed, as the retailers and employers of the future.

As a sector, we welcome efforts to bridge the link between school and the world of work for young people and we already play a huge part in this through offering part-time employment and work experience opportunities.

We want to see it made easier for small retailers to provide such opportunities for young people and, indeed, for retailers to be more actively involved in the running of schools in the communities they serve.

As Skillsmart Retail say in their report 'Skills Priorities for the Retail Sector' (January 2010): "A successful independent retailer of the future will be required to have a well developed strategy, a business plan, people management and customer handling skills. It is also a characteristic that managers and proprietors will need to have a range of practical skills around visual merchandising, facilities management and increasingly, website development."



“Getting education right for everyone, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, is critical and having an agreed purpose for educational outcomes will do much to enhance the life chances of all our young people.”

CBI NI Report - Punching Above Our Weight 2015

## NIIRTA Policy Recommendations

- Department of Education to establish a **numeracy and literacy taskforce** chaired by a leading member of the business community and including key players from across the education sector. This taskforce would identify solutions to address the problem of poor numeracy and literacy within a six-month timeframe.
- **Level 3 Professional and Technical qualifications** should be on par with A-Level academic route.
- **Entrepreneurship** to be made a compulsory module from aged 14 -18.
- Compulsory **work experience** for all pupils at key stages 4 and 5.
- NIIRTA welcomes ongoing changes to careers advice and wants to see a greater promotion of opportunities within the retail sector and a stronger focus within schools on careers education and on promoting entrepreneurship. NIIRTA is ready to play its part in helping schools link more effectively with the world of work and in helping pupils understand more fully the skills involved in running a small business and the importance of small retail businesses to Northern Ireland's economy.
- All governing bodies of schools should include at least one local businessperson and urge the new Education and Skills authority to launch a recruitment campaign for **Business Governors**.

“Integrating employers into the provision of careers advice, giving young people better information about the jobs market, and raising the standard of work experience are also vital steps in motivating our young people and aligning the education system more closely with the needs of the economy”

CBI NI Report - Punching Above Our Weight 2015







Photos courtesy of AECOM

## Department for Communities



*“Town centres are economic drivers and socio-cultural melting pots that can dictate whether our economy thrives or fails. They are focal points for commerce, public services, transport, leisure and many other activities. Their evolution will help us meet the challenges of tomorrow with confidence by supporting a collaborative, participatory and ultimately sustainable economy, something recognised as sorely lacking in light of the recent global financial crisis”*

*Association of Town and City Centre Management Manifesto 2014*

## Setting the Context

The Department for Communities, amongst its many functions, brings together two key areas, Arts and Town Centre Regeneration, which are critical for the future of our economy.

NIIRTA recognises that cultural festivals, events and venues have a key role in helping to regenerate our towns and cities, reviving the evening economy and restoring civic pride. Belfast Culture Night 2015 attracted 65,000 people to the city centre for 200 free family events, contributing to an estimated £2.5m spend in the city.

21st Century town centres must encompass a complete community hub solution incorporating health, housing, education, arts, entertainment, business/office space, manufacturing and leisure.

Northern Ireland has nearly twice the UK average of town centre shop vacancies and it must ensure that turning this problem around is a central priority.

# NIIRTA Policy Recommendations

• The Department should work with Councils and the private sector in establishing **Town Centre Retail Incubator Units** in vacant shops to encourage start-up retailers and provide affordable rents and marketing support for the first year. Ballymena Business Centre has already established a Town Centre Enterprise Hub in Church Street and the Department for Communities should be replicating this model throughout all town and city centres.

• The Department and Councils should develop plans for Digital Town Centres that include '**networked high streets**' which puts libraries and other public spaces at the centre of each community, based on the technology that exists today and will develop in the future.

• NIIRTA campaigned for the successful introduction of **BIDs** (Business Improvement Districts) and welcome the successful votes in Belfast, Newry and Ballymena. The Department for Communities needs to proactively work to ensure that **BIDs** are established across as many towns and cities as possible in Northern Ireland.

• The Department should establish a **Northern Ireland Town Team** to coordinate town centre regeneration policy. Membership of this would include Departments for Finance, Economy and Infrastructure, the eleven Councils and retail and hospitality business organisations.

• The Northern Ireland Town Team should have a central role in drawing up a comprehensive Town Centre **Shop Vacancy Strategy** for our town and city centres.

• A target date of 2019 should be set for the full **devolution of regeneration powers** from the Department for Communities to the eleven Councils.

• The MAC, Lyric Theatre, Grand Opera House, the Crescent Arts Centre and An Culturlann in Belfast, and the Playhouse, Culturlann Ui Chanain and the Waterside Theatre in Derry have been key projects, enriching the cultural fabric of our major cities and generating footfall for local retailers. NIIRTA supports the

**Arts Council Five Year Strategic Plan** for the Arts and commits to a greater partnership with Arts groups.

• Reinstate Arts funding to at least the **2014 level of 13p per person per week** – current spend in the Arts in NI is just 11p per week. The Arts delivers large returns to society and to the economy for a relatively small amount of public investment. The Department for Communities should prioritise funding to culture schemes which directly support footfall in town centres and high streets and that give the highest investment return.





## Department for Infrastructure

*“The new Infrastructure  
Department must be the premier  
driver of Northern Ireland’s need  
to further develop its infrastructure  
offering to enhance its global  
competitiveness”*

*Construction Employers Federation 2016 Manifesto*

## Setting the Context

Investing in our infrastructure is a critical challenge for the NI Executive. Unless Northern Ireland has a 21st century infrastructure, which supports the growth of our towns and cities, then our potential for sustainable economic growth will be severely limited.

The potential advantages of a 12.5% corporation tax rate will be lost unless all parts of Northern Ireland have an infrastructure that reflects increasing industry needs.

This new department also has a key role in shaping the future Strategic Planning Policy (SPPS) and needs to be a strong watchdog over all planning responsibilities at local government level.



# NIIRTA Policy Recommendations

• Immediate infrastructure priorities including the **York Street Interchange, A6 and Great Victoria Street Integrated Transport Hub** must be progressed rapidly. These critical projects will support improved connectivity of Belfast and Derry/Londonderry.

• NIIRTA welcomes the commitment on moving forward with the **A5**, as stated in the Fresh Start Agreement and believes that its completion date of 2019 must be strictly adhered to.

• The Irish Government and the NI Executive must urgently address the journey time of the **Belfast-Dublin Enterprise** and work to modernise and improve the service.

• A Junior **Minister for Transport/Assembly Private Secretary** should be appointed to give priority to this vital area and assist the DfI Minister in this important policy area.

• **Free first one hour on-street** car parking in the thirty towns should continue and DfI should consult and give serious consideration to offering the same schemes to city centres in Belfast, Newry and Lisburn.

• DfI should give priority to more bus lanes, well-designed bus stops with sufficient shelters, efficient services that run on time and enhanced provision of suitable **park and ride sites** to enable convenient passenger transport into the heart of town centres.

• Give greater support to the work of **Sustrans** to encourage town centre shoppers and workers to walk, cycle and use public transport where possible. Safe, efficient access/cycleways should be developed to make cycling the low-cost, fast and efficient way to access the city centre. There should be quality routes with sufficient and safe bike parking.

• **Devolve on-street car parking** to Councils by 2021 to give them more responsibility to develop the potential of their town centres.

• **Responsibility for local roads should be devolved to Councils** by 2021, giving them a wider role in improving infrastructure.

• NIIRTA welcomes the establishment of a **National Infrastructure Commission** to plan long-term economically sustainable projects for the whole of the UK. The Minister for Infrastructure from the Northern Ireland Executive should nominate a member to this Commission.

• The Infrastructure Minister, working with the UK, Irish and American governments should organise a major **NI International Infrastructure Investment Conference** to identify models of modernisation across the world, to examine possible funding options and set new priorities for Northern Ireland.

• The Heathrow link not only transports tourists and business passengers, it also transports freight. Heathrow is the UK's largest port, with 26% of all UK exports by value travelling through the airport, and a significant number of imports too. Without a road or rail connection available, the air link is a vital link in the supply chain connecting Northern Irish exporters and their clients, which is why the Minister for Infrastructure should urge the UK government to **green light the third runway at Heathrow**.

• The Infrastructure Minister should process all outstanding **Article 31 Large Retail Planning Applications to determination** to enable greater certainty. This will act as a catalyst for significant city centre regeneration schemes and investment decisions.

• NIIRTA welcomes the strong **Town Centre Retail First** element of the new Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) and the Minister for Infrastructure must be prepared to lead by example on the sequential approach and protection of town centres. The DfI must ensure the retail policies are updated and revised to support town centre growth and that they are being applied in an appropriate and consistent manner by local government in dealing with retail planning applications.

• Give planning permission to the **North-South Interconnector**, which will make our electricity network stronger and more secure. It will also allow for more competition, which should bring prices down for NIIRTA members.



# Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs

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## Setting the Context

NIIRTA members source almost 100% of their meat and poultry from local farmers/processors. We have always strongly encouraged our members to sell milk, meat, poultry and other products at a price that is fair to both the farmer and consumer.

NIIRTA is committed to supporting local producers and our members have been the route to market for many successful local companies, for example, Mash Direct's very first retail contracts were with two of our members in Dundonald.

We have also established our own suppliers' forum, bringing together our wholesale, retail and supplier members to ensure effective communication.

DAERA needs to do more to improve communication and partnership across the entire agri-food supply chain in Northern Ireland.





*“The ever-increasing global demand for food provides great opportunities for our producers. The local market is still the key market outlet for many of our producers and I am pleased that NIIRTA has launched a Suppliers’ Forum to further cement linkages with the supply chain”*

*Michelle O’Neill MLA, Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development*

## NIIRTA Policy Recommendations

- DAERA Minister should chair a strategic focused **Supply Chain Forum**, comprising of key players from farming, processing, production and retail. This body would have a limit of fifteen members and draw a comprehensive plan to address key challenges and ensure that the supply chain works for all involved.
- The **Rural Needs Bill** must reflect the community and economic importance of rural retailers in villages and to overall rural infrastructure.
- NIIRTA fully supports the **2016 Year of Food and Drink** and an effective legacy plan must be produced to ensure long-term economic growth for the agri-food sector.
- Working with the Departments of Infrastructure, Communities and local Councils, DAERA should produce a comprehensive **Village Regeneration Strategy**.
- NIIRTA supports the Agri-Food Board report **Going For Growth** - increasing sales by 60% to £7bn; employment by 15% to 115,000 and most importantly, 60% total added value of products and services from local companies.
- NIIRTA opposes the introduction of a (Bottle) **Deposit Return Scheme** for Northern Ireland. It has no proven benefits but would again place a financial and administrative burden on independent retailers and be a disincentive to investment.
- There should be appropriate **reimbursement** for independent retailers administering the Carrier Bag Levy.
- As is the case elsewhere in the UK, Northern Ireland retailers should be able to determine which **local projects** are funded from the proceeds of the carrier bag levy. Currently there is no consultation at all.
- DAERA must ensure any future **Climate Change Bill** must not increase the red tape burden or additional cost to NIIRTA members.

# Department of Health

## Setting the Context

NIIRTA and the Ulster Chemists' Association enjoy a strong working relationship and have signed a memorandum of understating to promote the local pharmacy network and the good health of our local communities. Our pharmacy members play a key role in NIIRTA.

One of our leading wholesale members has signed up to a new campaign to install AEDs (Automated External Defibrillators) outside their stores, which has full support from Dr. Michael McBride, Northern Ireland's Chief Medical Officer. This will be Northern Ireland's largest external network of lifesaving devices.

The network of community pharmacies across Northern Ireland provides a comprehensive range of accessible healthcare services to patients in both urban and rural settings. It is an integral part of the community with 123,000 adults (9% of the NI adult population), both healthy and sick, visiting NI community pharmacies every day. Community pharmacies not only dispense medication but also promote self-care, a healthy lifestyle and provide essential support to the elderly and housebound, from compliance aids to community health initiatives.

The community pharmacy is a main-stay of the high street, and a major employer in Northern Ireland, offering good quality employment with flexible working hours. Community pharmacies directly employ an estimated 4,000 staff in addition to the employment within the pharmaceutical supply chain and other ancillary businesses. As local businesses, pharmacies plough resources back into their communities, supporting them to thrive in difficult economic times.




## NIIRTA Policy Recommendations

- Integration of **community pharmacy's** role within the health and social care system.
- Development of working relationships within **primary care** between general practice and community pharmacy.
- Development of local **regional commissioning** and provision of services through community pharmacy.
- Development of the **minor ailments** and other public health services through community pharmacy.
- Implementation of **IT solutions** to allow information sharing within the health and social care system.
- Continued support for **Essential Small Pharmacies** which serve rural and disadvantaged areas.
- Improvement in town centre planning & provision of free car-parking to support access to pharmaceutical care.
- NIIRTA commits to working with the Department of Health to ensure healthy eating options are promoted and fully support the **Change 4 Life Campaign**.

*“Community pharmacies sit right at the heart of our communities, and are trusted, professional and competent partners in supporting individual, family and community health”*

*NHS Confederation paper 'Health on the High Street' 2013*



*“Business crime – in whatever guise, whether cybercrime, fraud, counterfeit currency, intellectual property crime, shoplifting, theft or criminal damage - cannot be tackled by the business community or the criminal justice system working in isolation. Partnership working is essential if sustainable solutions are to be developed”*

*David Ford MLA, Minister for Justice, December 2015*



## Department of Justice

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### Setting the Context

Policing and Justice is a key concern for both large and small retailers in Northern Ireland. Whether it is ATM robberies or antisocial behaviour, crime against businesses is having a negative impact on our economy.

Business crime, including retail, is still too often dismissed as a low-level or victimless crime. This needs to be addressed quickly at a time of increasing crime. Local shops are often situated in the heart of housing estates or villages and an incident of theft or vandalism against that premises will have the same impact as a crime against an individual in the area.





## NIIRTA Policy Recommendations

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- A **Comprehensive Business Crime Strategy** is urgently needed from the DoJ and specific targets for police response times to businesses crime.
- **PCSPs** should have at least one business representative.
- NIIRTA recommends a tougher approach in sentencing those involved in **violence against shop staff**, particularly in relation to asking for proof of age.
- Police are obliged to record where crime occurs in retail premises and to include this in **monthly criminal mapping**.
- Police are given the powers to deal with **antisocial behaviour** and the causes of delinquent behaviour that may manifest in theft or vandalism to businesses.
- NIIRTA believes the development of the **Retail Crime Watch Initiative** will help with crime against business issues and must be marketed effectively to retailers throughout Northern Ireland.
- The Policing Board should set business and retail crime as a **Key Performance Indicator** for the PSNI.





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