



British Irish
Chamber of Commerce



Policy Review 2017

Sectoral Committee Review

The Agri-Food Committee

The Agri-food Committee made a submission to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine regarding the impact of the UK referendum on membership of the European Union on the Irish Agri-Food & Fisheries Sectors. The Committee also participated in the Chamber Conference 2017. The Paper is available to read [here](#). The Committee also participated in the COBCOE Roundtable organised by the Brexit Committee. The Committee will be organising a Seminar as part of the Chamber's rejuvenated Conference Programme for Thursday 28 February, Intercontinental Hotel Dublin.

The Culture Arts Sports and Tourism (CAST) Committee

The Culture Arts Sports and Tourism (CAST) was established in March 2017. The Committee organised a policy seminar entitled 'Culture, Arts, Sports and Tourism: A Post-Brexit Vision to 2020' on Thursday June 29, in the Intercontinental Hotel. The event report is now available [online](#) and in hard copy. The Committee also developed its [policy paper](#) for the consideration of the Irish Government for the 2018 budget.

The Energy and Environmental Committee

The Energy and Environmental Committee developed a 'Principles' based paper to plot the course for the British Irish Energy sector post-Brexit. The Paper is available to view [here](#). On Friday February 2, the Committee will host a joint-event with Energy UK, sponsored by SSE on 'The Future of the UK-Ireland Energy Relationship' in the British Academy, London. To book, please see [here](#).

The Financial and Professional Services Committee

The Chamber co-hosted a seminar with McCann FitzGerald entitled 'Financial Services: Pre and Post Brexit Formulating a Unified Response' - [here](#). The Financial and Professional Services Committee has held numerous meetings with officials in the UK and Ireland and recently held a private in-camera dinner with Minister D'Arcy on the future of the Irish Financial Services sector.

The Higher Education and Research Committee

The Higher Education and Research Committee released its Pre-Budget Submission on 'The Challenges and Opportunities for the Higher Education and Research Sector' is available to read [here](#). The Committee is currently preparing for a conference in the UK that will look at developing a UK-Ireland Higher Education and Research partnership.

The Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Committee

The ICT Committee held a stakeholder roundtable in July, following which the Committee developed a comprehensive [policy paper](#) in advance of Budget 2018. Outgoing Chair Pat Flood, Eira, has stepped down after as Chair. For the past number of years Pat has been the standard bearer for the ICT sector in the Chamber, he was instrumental in the Committee's establishment and was the lead on its policy paper. Everyone in Chamber is grateful for his service and wishes him all the best for the future. Jeanne Kelly, LK Shields has taken over as Chair and will be leading the Committee's preparation for the ICT Seminar on Tuesday February 27 in the Intercontinental Hotel Dublin.

The Infrastructure Committee

Established only in September, the Committee has already developed an Infrastructure Priority Paper for policy stakeholders in the UK and Ireland. This Paper has been submitted as part the National Planning Framework and is available to view [here](#). The Infrastructure Committee is developing the agenda for the Conference Seminar for Monday February 26.

The Life Sciences Committee

The Life Sciences Committee in conjunction with the South Wales Chamber of Commerce (SWCC), Life Sciences Hub Cardiff organised a trade delegation from Ireland in the Life Sciences area to visit Wales on June 20th to learn about opportunities available in the Life Sciences Sector between Wales and Ireland. Recently the Committee alongside the Brexit Committee hosted a briefing by the Irish EMA bid team. A Life Sciences delegation from Wales will be visiting Dublin in January – full details will be available from the Chamber's website from the first week in January.

The Small Medium and Enterprises (SME) Committee

The Committee in conjunction with London and Partners and Enterprise Ireland and supported by Grant Thornton and AIB organised a two-part SME – Tech event in London in March. These events allowed Irish tech companies the opportunity to hear from leading experts about the opportunities available to them by investing in London and the UK more generally, while the evening event allowed UK companies the chance to hear from Irish experts about the opportunities available in Ireland. In May the Committee hosted a SME Consultative Forum, with a keynote address from Minister Breen. The Committee has also produced a comprehensive Policy Paper on Brexit, available [here](#). The Committee is currently organising various trade missions to the UK in 2018.

Brexit Review

This year saw the British Irish Chamber secure its position as the leading voice on Brexit across the UK and Ireland space. The year also saw the Brexit Subcommittee, established towards the end of 2016, formally begin its work guiding the Chamber's Brexit work under the Chairmanship of Pat Cabbage from VW Ireland. The Subcommittee met quarterly to discuss objectives for the Chamber to achieve on Brexit and to contribute to the policy direction of the Chamber on this vitally important topic.

Key projects undertaken by the Chamber this year as part of its Brexit programme include the publication of the *Greater Dublin's Greater Than Ever* [brochure](#) along with the production of an accompanying [video](#); the publication of the [Frontline Project](#) in conjunction with the Brexit Border Blog and Chambers Ireland; providing the Irish business voice into the pan-European project lead by COBCOE that resulted in the publication of [Brexit - the Voices of European Business](#); and participation in the nationwide Brexit Roadshow run by Bank of Ireland at which the Chamber presented its [Brexit Toolkit](#) designed to provide businesses with practical advice and steps that they can take now to help prepare for an uncertain future.

In terms of the Chamber's policy work on Brexit, the Brexit Subcommittee voiced its key concerns around the possible outcomes from Brexit and the impact these could have on the UK and Irish economies when it published its [Asks for the EU-UK Negotiation Process](#) earlier on this year. The document was shared widely with government officials and formed the basis of discussion for a meeting of the Council of the Chamber with senior Irish officials in Iveagh House last May.

This piece of work also lay the foundations for the Chamber's key publication on Brexit this year. [How to Make Brexit Work for All: Big Principles for a Strong Brexit Partnership](#) was published in the final week of November and put forward a framework for a UK-EU trading relationship post-Brexit that acknowledges the UK's wish to leave the EU, but also aims to protect the important trade between the UK and Ireland that sustains over 400,000 jobs directly and an even greater number indirectly.

The *Big Principles* were drafted after extensive consultation with the Chamber's Brexit Subcommittee and its sub-groups, and with the nine sectoral committees of the Chamber over many months which resulted in in what the British Irish Chamber of Commerce believes is a politically ambitious but technically achievable solution to the trade issue. The proposal for the UK and EU to form a new 'Customs Arrangement' would eliminate the need for a border on the island of Ireland and addresses concerns about border and customs checks at UK ports. It also best serves the interests of those trading in the UK, Ireland and the EU, while limiting the number of compromises required from the British Government or the EU.

Since its publication, the Chamber has undertaken an intensive round of engagement with ministers, parliamentarians and officials in both the UK and Ireland and further afield in Brussels. On the day of its publication the paper was shared with all Oireachtas members, including Ministers of key Brexit departments. The effectiveness of this engagement was evidenced when the Taoiseach [made reference](#) to the *Big Principles* during Leader's Questions on the day after its publication.

On the Wednesday after the paper was released, the Chamber went to Belfast for a series of political meetings, briefing on the contents of the paper and how our proposal could ultimately ensure that trade would be able to continue both north-south and east-west without border checks or additional restrictions, should it be adopted.

The following week, a delegation from the British Irish Chamber of Commerce was in Brussels for a series of meetings and engagements to discuss our proposals and to hear insight and the perspective of those closest to the negotiations on how it was felt negotiations are progressing and to gauge how our proposal would be received by the EU. The Chamber delegation met with MEPs; members of the Article 50 Taskforce; the Council; Commissioner Hogan's Cabinet; Head of Cabinet for Manfred Weber EPP; Julian King, Security Union Commissioner; and Joost Korte Deputy Director General of Trade, European Commission. The delegation also called in on the Northern Irish, Welsh and Scottish offices based in Brussels. The delegation received a detailed briefing from the Irish Permanent Representative following the agreement reached with the Commission and the UK Government on Phase 1 of the negotiations. The Chamber hosted a networking event with EU and Irish based stakeholders in Brussels in the offices of McCann FitzGerald with keynote addresses from David Brück, Deputy Director, Brexit (EU-UK Negotiations) Unit, the Irish Permanent Representative and Robert Madelin, Chairman, Fipra International. In general, the delegation found that EU stakeholders were in principle supportive of the Chamber's paper. The view from Brussels is that the transition period must be longer than 2 years to agree a comprehensive trade agreement. There was consensus from those met that the ultimate red line for the EU would be maintaining the integrity of the single market – there will be no fudge or compromise on this.

Finally, the Chamber spent three days in Westminster meeting with MP's, Shadow Cabinet members and UK officials discussing the paper and its contents. Meetings were held with key figures from within the Department for International Trade and DExEU in addition to opposition Brexit spokespersons Keir Starmer (Labour) and Tom Brake (Liberal Democrats); the shadow trade team; and the Chair of the International Trade Committee.

In addition to the individual meetings, the Chamber also held a briefing session in Portcullis House within the heart of Westminster on Wednesday 13th December. The session was attended by a cross section of MPs and Lords from all four regions that make up the Westminster Parliament. A summary of the contents of the paper was followed by a detailed Q&A session with all those in attendance welcoming the publication of what they viewed to be the first paper of its kind on the topic.

Next year will see the Chamber step up its engagement on Brexit with key stakeholders across Ireland, the UK and the EU. Using the *Big Principles* as the basis for this engagement, the Chamber will submit the paper to relevant committees in Westminster, the Oireachtas and the EU Parliament for consideration. We will also be undertaking a programme of engagement with the European embassies and like-minded business groups who might also support the ideas put forward in this paper. Finally, we will be increasing our engagement with the devolved administrations, to whom we will submit our paper and make ourselves available for detailed briefings on the topic.

The above, in addition to the Chamber's normal day to day work on Brexit, will ensure that 2018 will be yet another busy and successful year for the British Irish Chamber of Commerce.