



# Retail Forum Working Group Minutes: Future of Retail – Digitalisation and Skills

**21 February 2023**

## Meeting 5

### CHATHAM HOUSE RULES APPLY

**Attendees:** Appendix A

**Minutes:** The minutes from this meeting are to be agreed under Silence Procedure and will be available on [www.enterprise.gov.ie](http://www.enterprise.gov.ie)

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#### **Item 1: Welcome**

The Chair welcomed the Group and the new members of the Group – Digital Business Ireland, Eason Group, Kilkenny Group and .IE

#### **Item 2: Presentation on Careers Portal**

Eimear Sinnott of Careers Portal gave a live demonstration of the functionality of the Careers Portal website. In existence since 2008, in 2022 it had 2.3 million visitors to the website. Providing 'sector profiles', it provides information to six communities on the careers available to them in different sectors. This presentation supports Action 9 of the Work Programme - *Promote retail as a career of choice* by offering an approach to retailers to profile the sector to a large audience of potential employees.

#### **Item 3: Presentation on Kilkenny Group's Digital Journey**

The Kilkenny Group presentation demonstrated best practice in online selling. Brian Howe presented on the Group's Digital Journey from 2020 to now, including how its ambition to scale its online presence in overseas markets is happening by using localised websites. The use of virtual reality and an omnichannel approach is also helping increase its e-commerce success. Supports like the Online Retail Scheme were vital for Kilkenny Group's digital transformation who were awarded funding under three Calls of the Scheme. Building digital skills capacity is key to achieving success. The involvement of external digital expertise has proven to be the approach taken by the Group to upskill employees.

*Action 12 Consider how retail businesses with demonstrable and proven potential can develop and grow capacity to trade online.* The Kilkenny Group demonstrates an approach to online selling that can be considered by other retailers.

#### **Item 4: Presentation on Eason's Digital Journey**

Lisa O'Brien presented on Eason's Digital Journey. The presentation highlighted the increase in e-commerce activity since the Covid-19 pandemic. A recipient under the Online Retail Scheme, the Eason Group continues to build digital skills internally. Staff have received training in Google Analytics 4 and Search Engine Optimisation. Contracting external expertise/specialists to deliver in-house digital training in key areas is how the Eason Group approaches upskilling employees. The presentation demonstrated Eason's three-prong approach to Eason's E-commerce Strategy with investment in digital capacity

building key. With a goal to improve lead-times across their top selling range, Eason are investing in e-commerce led warehousing.

Eason Group are an example of how digitising business processes can enhance the consumer experience. This aligns with Action 14 of the Work Programme: *Assist the retail sector to identify future trends and developments in relation to digitisation of business processes.*

#### **Item 4: Working Group Actions – Follow up**

The Group was advised that they would be contacted regarding the work programme actions following the meeting. As highlighted above, both companies who presented pointed to the engagement of external digital consultants as the approach they take to provide digital training to their employees.

To ensure that employees are digitally adept, identifying the correct expertise to provide the training can be a challenge for retail employers. Action 10 of the Work Programme *Ensure there is adequate provision of digital training available to the retail sector for its continued development* is pointing to the need for a way to easily identify external experts to carry out this training. Further consideration to be given to how best to implement this action.

#### **Action:**

- Copy of Eason presentation to be forwarded to Working Group members.
- Update on Retail Forum Work Programme Actions to be circulated
- Date of next meeting of WG to be shared.

**Retail Section  
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment  
24 February 2023**

## Appendix A

### Retail Forum Working Group: Future of Retail – Digitalisation and Skills

#### Attendees

Organisation	First Name	Surname
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Chair)	Deborah	Dignam
Digital Policy Unit DETE	Marc	McEntegart
Chambers Ireland	Shane	Hughes
CSNA	Vincent	Jennings
Retail Excellence	Duncan	Graham
Eason	Lisa	O'Brien
Kilkenny Group	Brian	Howe
Digital Business Ireland	Ross	Elwood
.IE	Oonagh	McCutcheon

#### Apologies

Organisation	First Name	Surname
Kilkenny Group	Marian	O'Gorman
Easons	Liam	Hanly
Digital Business Ireland	Lorraine	Higgins
.IE	David	Curtin
ICTU (Mandate)	Gerry	Light

#### Presenters

Organisation	First Name	Surname
Careers Portal	Eimear	Sinnott
Eason Group	Lisa	O'Brien
Kilkenny Group	Brian	Howe