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01/2021

NETWORK MAGAZINE



TIME TO RETHINK
OUR BUSINESS
MODELS

Andrea Molloy

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**Fingal Network Magazine
is published by Fingal Chamber.**

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TWO YEARS OF OPPORTUNITY



Without question, 2020 and 2021 will be remembered as the two most challenging years for Irish businesses within living memory. But many people in business – and I hope very many – will also recall them as two years of opportunity.

“How can we make this happen?”

This is the time when we get the chance to review and rethink our business models, to challenge our assumptions about even some of the underlying fundamentals of our businesses, and to prepare the ground for new efficiencies and new levels of service for our customers.

As someone with over three decades in the hospitality industry, 20 of them spent at Dublin Airport, it has been a privilege and a huge pleasure for me to work in four and five star hotels in both the City Centre and the outskirts of Dublin. And over that time I have become convinced that if there is a single key to creating a sustainable business it's to be found in one word: “resilience” – the ability to overcome setbacks. I'm a great believer, therefore, that we need to remain optimistic, yet realistic, and to always look at how we might turn

a negative into a positive. So for me the answer is never simply “no,” it's always “how can we make this happen?”

I'm not suggesting there are going to be perfect solutions to every problem. Often there are difficulties and hardships – and sometimes high prices have to be paid and pain endured. But I am clear that we can achieve far more working together than when we try to struggle on alone.

Being part of the Fingal Chamber of Commerce is something that has come naturally to me. Since my earliest days of working in the region I've found that attending Chamber events has helped me meet new people, keep abreast of what's really going on in the business community and enjoy the very real and tangible benefits of networking with my peers. Having observed all the great work done by the Chamber for its members, as the years went by it seemed a natural progression for me to lend my support and step up to the Chamber Council.

Working together as a business community

And over these years I have consistently seen that it's by working together as a business community that can achieve so much more than we can individually. This is the true nature of synergy. By lending practical support to each other, as well as combining our efforts in areas of mutual interest, we play a meaningful role in the creation of a sustainable future for everyone in the Fingal region.

Reflecting this strong sense of community I am particularly proud that the Council has been able to develop a new Community Fund, details of which you will find in the news section of this publication. Targeted at supporting community-led initiatives in such areas as the environment & sustainability, health & wellbeing, social inclusion and community development, this highlights the practical role that local businesses play within their communities – we truly are “in this together”.

The Chamber also plays a valuable role in providing training and retraining opportunities for members and this is also highlighted in this issue.

In helping you, our members, navigate these stormy seas it is critical that we listen carefully to you so that we understand your real concerns and your real issues. The new Chamber Strategy 2021-2023, which is currently out for consultation with members, is an example of this discussion process. The document

includes updates to the Chamber's vision, mission, aims and objectives and we welcome your thoughts and feedback on it.

This need for discourse is also true at a national level, of course. As the third largest Chamber in Ireland we have a voice in the national debate, ensuring that our concerns and priorities are understood at the highest policy setting levels. Our CEO Anthony Cooney, for example, sits on the board of Chambers Ireland, where he chairs the CEO's forum, affording us a useful finger on that particular pulse. And while we may not be able to meet up in person these days, our extensive range of online events makes sure we keep in touch. The attendance of the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Leo Varadkar, as guest speaker at one such recent Chamber event, for example, makes sure we are both heard and heeded by key decision makers.

This year will hopefully bring some element of recovery in our businesses. But we need to play our part in this by continuing to raise key agenda items at both local and national levels. To date, for example, Fingal Chamber has been very active in advocating for the waiver on commercial rates. Now we need to ensure that an extension is granted until at least the end of June to support our region's businesses.

Funding support

We also need to secure an expansion of payments to the existing financial supports currently in place. Wage supports and grant payments are helping qualifying businesses, but too few now qualify due to the narrow application criteria. Above all, we also need to advocate strongly for interest free funding to support the survival plans of SMEs and to ensure the future reopening of business in Fingal and elsewhere in 2021.

To state the obvious, the road ahead is not going to be easy and nobody is under any illusions about that. But it does have to be travelled and I am certain it will bring fresh opportunities as well as challenges. As I said earlier, whatever the problems we face today, our response should always be one of collective optimism.

Andrea Molloy

President

‘WE NEED TO DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY AND TO DO DIFFERENT THINGS’



Even for someone like me, who has been through a couple of serious recessions in my working life, the business environment created by the Covid-19 pandemic is new territory.

The “on/off” nature of this pandemic has made life difficult for every business, but the impact has been most profound on some of Fingal's key sectors such as retail, tourism and hospitality, and aviation.

Despite the continued climate of uncertainty, however, some things are abundantly clear. One is that its members need Fingal Chamber now more than ever. But the corollary of this is that we need to be doing things differently and doing different things.

It is hard to envisage, for example, that we will see a return to “normal” five-day week working environments anytime soon, certainly for office workers. It is far more likely that as people are permitted to return from home to collective workspaces many employers will adopt hybrid approaches. This could involve, for example, a staggered approach with staff members perhaps doing three days in the office and working in

collaboration with others at home. For this group of employees, aspects of their work will change, and they will need broader and better skill sets to adapt to those changes.

Employees in the hard-hit retail sector, too, will also need to adapt. Employers will need to upskill their sales staff to meet the competitive threat posed by the inexorable rise in online shopping. It is important to recognise that, even before the arrival of Covid-19, more and more customers were choosing to shop online, not because of price but for convenience. Retailers must counteract that by enticing their customers in, offering a better experience that ultimately delivers improved footfall and greater spend per customer.

Our Chamber has a vitally important role to play in helping employers of all kinds rise to the challenges of their sectors and we are doing this in part through our strong collaboration with Skillnet Ireland.

As a Chamber we, too, must practice what we preach. Our networks and events business will be totally different. I think it will be later this year before we even see person-to-person networking events with much reduced numbers. However, in the meantime, we are using technology to host virtual networking events. To deliver quality services we have already broadened our depth of talent in the communications and event management areas.

We are also continuing our productive collaboration with Fingal County Council and with the Local Enterprise Office. As well as participating in the COVID-19 Fingal Community Response Forum we are also committed to several other important initiatives.

The Local Area Business Forums, for example, held in partnership with Fingal CoCo, provide a valuable opportunity for SME business owners/managers and corporate executives to engage with the local authority on a range of business-related matters. Webinars specific to three localities – Balbriggan/Rush-Lusk/Swords; Blanchardstown/Mulhuddart/Castleknock; and Howth/Malahide – will each feature presentations from the Council's senior executive team of Chief Executive AnnMarie Farrelly, Director of Economic, Enterprise, Tourism & Cultural Development, Emer O'Gorman.

These presentations will be followed by Q&A sessions. This series of events cover three localities twice per

year and provide a great opportunity to share news, views, and insights with each other.

We will also continue our close contacts with government at national level. Following successful events attended by Minister Simon Coveney; and the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise & Employment, Leo Varadkar, we have more events with government ministers planned for 2021. Indeed, the Minister of State for Employment Affairs and Retail Businesses, Damien English, was a speaker our recent “Customer Experience & Retail Event” on the 16th of February.

I mentioned above about the need for the Chamber to do different things and this new publication is one such initiative. In it we hope to convey some of the vibrancy to be found in this up-and-coming business locality. The expansion of MSD's activities, which has led to the creation of 350 new jobs, the continued success of two leading privately-owned agri-businesses despite Brexit and Covid-19, and the exciting international business location being developed at Dublin Airport Central are all testament to this bright future covered in this first issue.

We also look at the thinking behind Skillnet Ireland's activities with the help of its Chief Technologist Mark Jordan, while our own Fingal Chamber Skillnet Network Manager Feargal Malone details exactly what is on offer. We will be delighted to get your feedback on this issue. Please tell us what you find helpful, what you would like to see more of – and do not spare the rod on what we could be doing better!

Anthony Cooney

Chief Executive

FINGAL BUSINESS NEWS

Fingal comes of age

The adoption of a new name, Fingal Chamber, marks Fingal's coming of age as a distinct and cohesive economic and social entity. When Swords & District Chamber of Commerce and Dublin 15 Chamber came together nine years ago it was felt the name was not sufficiently recognised as a location in its own right at that time. This is no longer the case and the Chamber's membership has therefore decided to align its identity more closely with that of the local authority area in which it operates. 6.1.21

Quicker broadband roll-out needed to support remote working plan

Chambers Ireland has welcomed the publication of the National Remote Working Strategy and its commitment to an acceleration of the National Broadband Plan, investment in remote hubs, a review of tax treatment and the introduction of legislative changes on rights to request remote working. Chambers Ireland has championed the benefits of flexible and remote working in recent years. It says the experience of the pandemic makes it more important than ever to ensure rapid delivery of high-speed broadband throughout the country. 15.1.21

Businesses need longer, broader COVID supports



Chambers Ireland believes the three month extension to existing pandemic financial supports announced in February will not be long enough and has called on the Government to "leave incremental half-measures in the past, and start afresh with an expansive, data-driven plan to support business through the impact of COVID-19".

Chief Executive, Ian Talbot, said: "The extension of existing financial supports is good news, as it reduces some of the uncertainty for businesses. Yet, right across our network, there is the very real concern that Government is still failing to engage with the reality of the situation facing our local economies."

Since the start of the year, CI has been warning that existing financial supports are insufficient and that too many businesses are ineligible for them. "There is growing frustration throughout the business community regarding the COVID-19 communications and guidance. Trust is easily lost, and hard earned," Talbot warned. 23.2.21

COVID decimates Dublin Airport traffic

Passenger numbers at Dublin Airport declined by 78% to 7.4 million last year due to the impact of the pandemic. More than half of those who travelled through Dublin Airport in 2020 did so in January and February, with the number of passengers in the first two months of the year up 2% to 4.1 million. But between March and the end of December passenger numbers fell by 89% to 3.3 million. The last time Dublin Airport had fewer than 8 million passengers in a calendar year was in 1994. 19.2.21



2,000 take part in Virtual Local Enterprise Week

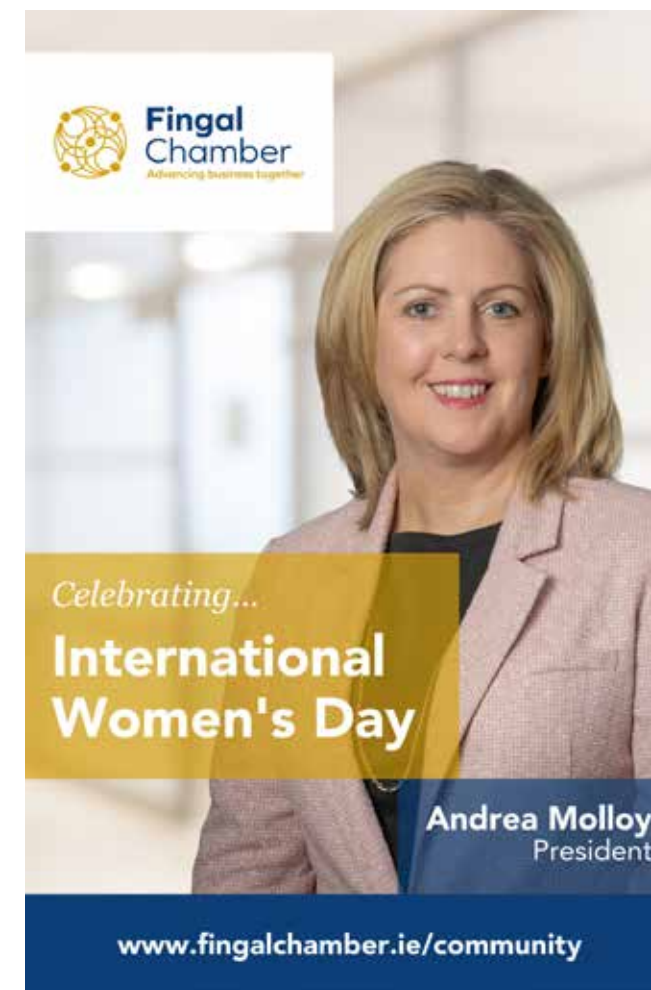
Over 2,000 budding entrepreneurs and business owners took part in Fingal Local Enterprise Office's first "virtual" Local Enterprise Week. Supported by Fingal County Council and Enterprise Ireland, LEO Fingal hosted 11 events for local businesses as well as 10 Spotlight events open to businesses across the country. An annual initiative by the country's 31 LEOs, the more than 270 online events, under the theme of 'Making It Happen,' attracted over 10,700 bookings nationally. Head of Enterprise in Fingal, Oisín Geoghegan, acknowledged the support of the local partners for this year's event – Enterprise Ireland, Fingal Chamber and Technological University Dublin. 8.3.21



Chamber drives gender equality

In a message to members to mark International Women's Day this year Fingal Chamber President Andrea Molloy highlighted the Chambers commitment to, and tangible evidence of, driving gender parity. In 2019 Fingal Chamber signed up to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and selected gender equality for particular focus. It cemented this commitment last year by establishing a new Community Committee.

In her message Andrea Molloy noted: 'In Fingal Chamber's 27-year history it has elected 15 different people from our member businesses to become President. Women have accounted for 30% of the Presidential-terms. Excitingly, a positive trend has emerged: a woman has now served as President in six of the last 10 years. Furthermore, the current Fingal Chamber board has equal representation of men and women.' 8.3.21



Commission approves €55m Irish aid for tourism

The European Commission has approved a €55 million Irish 'umbrella' scheme to support companies active in tourism or in directly related sectors. The scheme was approved under the State aid Temporary Framework in the context of the coronavirus outbreak. The scheme is intended to help businesses cope with the sudden liquidity shortage they are facing and to continue their activities during and after the outbreak. 8.3.21

Council seeks public input into new Development Plan

Fingal County Council is seeking public input into its new Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029. As the first step in a two-year process, the Council has prepared a Strategic Issues Paper outlining topics it believes the new plan should address under seven themes. Now it is inviting responses to the paper from individuals businesses, community groups and other interested parties. This eight-week public consultation ends on May 12. Further details can be found at <http://www.fingal.ie/strategic-issues-paper>. 12.3.21

€15m for Fingal walking and cycling projects

The NTA has committed €14.87 million to progress 23 walking and cycling infrastructure projects in Fingal. It will support a mix of continuing and new projects, including the Royal Canal Cycle Route, Harry Reynolds Road Cycle Track, Donabate Estuary walking and cycling route and the Broadmeadow Way. These projects are part of a wider sustainable transport infrastructure programme to tackle climate change. The full list of Fingal County Council projects set to receive funding can be found at www.fingal.ie 15.2.21

Ireland needs a National Action Plan for Trade

The EU's new Trade Strategy has a strong emphasis on empowering SMEs to trade internationally and commits to increase efforts to enforce trade rules. Emphasising the need for the strategy to be delivered at member-state level, Chambers Ireland Chief Executive, Ian Talbot has called on the Irish Government to publish a National Action Plan for Trade. This plan should also include an awareness-building campaign to improve the capacity of SMEs to engage with EU Free Trade Agreements, he added. 8.2.21

Council launches Sustainable Business initiative aimed at SME sector

Fingal County Council has launched a Sustainable Business initiative to encourage SMEs across the region embrace sustainable measures in their businesses and to provide a set of practical tools and resources to help them do this. The Council is also running a competition to inspire businesses on their sustainability journey with an opportunity to win a Sustainability Assessment & Action Plan from Balbriggan based Patel Tonra Ltd. Environmental Solutions. The closing date for entries is Friday, May 28th 2021. Further details can be found at www.fingal.ie/sustainablebusiness. 22.2.21



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MSD'S NEW SWORDS BIOTECH PLANT ON TARGET FOR FULL PRODUCTION

In February three years ago MSD announced plans to develop a new biotechnology facility in Swords. Despite the pandemic, it is up and running on schedule, already making product and now preparing to go into full-scale production later this year.

"Construction on the site started in August 2018 and only two years later manufacturing of the first commercial scale test batches begun, setting new records in both safety standards as well as speed of project execution along the way – truly unprecedented in the industry for this type of a project," according to MSD Biotech Dublin Plant Manager Mick Flanagan.

The strategic significance of MSD facility has not been lost on others. Last October, for example, the Manufacturing Leadership Council, a US-based international group named the plant its 2020 Global

Biotech Factory of the Future in the Engineering and Production Technology Leadership category.

Constructed on the site of a former facility off Drynam Road, the new MSD Biotech facility is set to play a pivotal role in the manufacture of the company's biopharmaceutical medicines. This includes therapies in the important new area of immunology, positively impacting patients in Ireland and around the world.

"Some activity on the site had to cease for a few weeks at the end of March 2020, but "despite

everything, we managed to reschedule the project and in the end we only had a small delay," MSD's Engineering Director at the site, Niall Sugrue, told Fingal Network Magazine. The projected 350 new jobs at the facility have already been delivered, with a large proportion of the people recruited living in Swords and other nearby locations, he added.

Established in Ireland over 50 years ago, MSD Ireland is one of the country's leading healthcare companies and employs over 1,700 people across four sites in Tipperary, Cork, Carlow and Dublin, as well as operating a substantial human health and

animal health businesses. Its Irish sites manufacture approximately half of MSD's 20 largest selling products, which are exported to over 60 countries around the world.

The design philosophy underpinning the new Swords project has been to maximise the sustainable reuse of the existing buildings, infrastructure, plant and equipment already available at the site. MSD Biotech was effectively fast-tracked by refurbishing and repurposing existing buildings and by the off-site construction of pre-fabricated modules to reduce construction traffic and the complexity and duration of the new build. The total gross floor area of the new facility is almost 44,000 sq. m., about 40% larger than the pre-existing facility.

Mick Flanagan and his site team are understandably proud that MSD decided to locate a new

manufacturing facility in Ireland. The move is a testament to country's success in developing global scale biopharma capability and support infrastructure. "The talent of MSD's Irish employees and the high standard of our existing operations are two further factors which contributed to this decision," he points out.

And at the time it was announced IDA Ireland CEO Martin Shanahan acknowledged that: "MSD's decision ... greatly strengthens Ireland's position as a global destination for manufacturing excellence in biopharmaceuticals ... [and] underpins MSD's commitment to Ireland." With great insight, the President of Fingal Chamber at that time, Jock Jordan, noted: "The development of the new state-of-the-art facility for the production of these critically important medicines puts the Swords plant at the heart of MSD's global manufacturing network."

The decision is also very good news for the wider community of Fingal. As well as providing high quality employment opportunities, over the last five years MSD has consistently ranked as one of the top five business contributors in Ireland. With impeccable "corporate citizen" credentials, over that period its employees have volunteered well over 1,400 hours to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Business in the Community projects.

With the support of the company, MSD employees have helped over 500 local projects and contributed some €6 million to a range of worthy causes, working with chosen partners over prolonged periods to ensure that each project has significant impact – a commitment to responsible citizenship which is ongoing, Flanagan added.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION: THE PANDEMIC'S IMPACT, THE SUPPORTS, AND THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

In this Roundtable discussion, the first in a regular series, four members of the Chamber take stock of the impact of the pandemic on business across Fingal, suggest a range of additional initiatives they think the government should consider to support business and share a wealth of experience and advice about what business can and should be doing now to prepare for recovery.

Q1 How badly do you think businesses across Ireland, and within Fingal in particular, have been damaged by the pandemic?

"There is no doubt that the pandemic has disproportionately affected certain industries, none more so than hospitality and tourism. That said, it is different from the economic crisis a decade ago as people have money and as soon as the world becomes safe there will be a return to social spending," says **Ronan Galligan**, a Director of the Michael JF Wright Hospitality Group.



"The previous model of social experiences will change, I believe, for some time as social space will be a big factor in hospitality in the new world. How badly damaged businesses in hospitality and tourism have been depends greatly on how solid their business foundations were at the outset and how they have been able to deal with the likes of banks, finance companies, investors, landlords, creditors etc.

"Businesses that could successfully manage all those relationships will survive. Unfortunately, despite the range of supports to help businesses, a significant number of good vibrant businesses pre-pandemic will not open their doors again.

Sinéad Kavanagh, Managing Director of Eirebus, agrees that the impact has been greatest in certain sectors, including tourism, hospitality and passenger transport, all of which have been decimated by ongoing restrictions.

"Speaking for my own business, during level 5 lockdown, Swords Express has been carrying only 10% - 20% of the passengers that we would have carried pre-Covid and the inbound coach touring arm of our business completely ground to a halt in 2020, with 2021 also looking bleak for businesses operating within the tourism industry."

She points out that while some companies in the sector have been able to generate revenue from domestic tourism and staycations, businesses that are dependent on revenue generated from international tourism really suffered in 2020 and

"Re-examine all previous practices to look for better, more efficient way to deliver the service ... envisage what social experiences will look like in the recovery and adapt your service to meet that demand,"

Ronan Galligan, Director, Michael JF Wright Hospitality Group.

will continue to do so during this year – although she hopes there will be the start of a slow recovery in the latter part of the 2021 tourism season.

"As people are now used to working from home, it's very likely that work patterns will change permanently, which will damage many small businesses, including pubs, cafés and restaurants who may have been reliant on the office trade at lunchtimes and in the evenings," she also points out.

John O'Donoghue, the General Manager of Shannon Heritage, also acknowledges the disparity of the impact depending on the nature of the business. "Although some businesses in the region have performed well in 2020, most business sectors in the Fingal region have been hit severely by the impact of the pandemic. For most businesses' growth has been replaced by the overwhelming need to survive.

"Cash flow to keep the business ticking over is a major concern and various Governments supports have helped. The stop/start nature of the Government restrictions make this an even more challenging prospect. Getting back to business normality will be essential in the second half of 2021."

His own sector however, Tourism & Hospitality, has been devastated, he says, 'and regrettably some business will not reopen. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a catastrophic impact on the global airline industry. International tourism and business travellers have all but disappeared."



"Self-assessing where your business lies within a market is a rarity for a busy business. One thing the pandemic has offered us is the time and the ability to relook, replan and make those changes,"

Lorraine Heskin, CEO, Gourmet Food Parlour.

O'Donoghue believes initiatives such as Fáilte Ireland's "make a break for it" campaign succeeded in driving the domestic audience and that a continued focus on the domestic market in 2021 will be essential as the economy rebuilds. "When we emerge from the pandemic businesses need to be fit for purpose and ready to take advantage of the economic upturn. This preparation should be taking place right now," he says.

Lorraine Heskin, CEO of Gourmet Food Parlour, says the pandemic has opened "a pandora's box of challenges," some of which have been positive and others difficult to figure out. Ultimately, for our business we rely on customer footfall so the pandemic forced us to provide an e-commerce solution moving our business online and providing delivery to a new platform of customer whilst maintaining and nourishing our existing customer base.

"As a business it is difficult to deal with a force of nature that potentially puts your business at risk, you naturally enforce a layer of protection around you and press the fight or flight button to work even harder to survive. Fingal has been affected in terms of hospitality and tourism, both sectors having ground to a halt. We look forward to rebuilding it all together when it is safe to do so."

Q2 What additional initiatives do you think the government should consider to support business recovery over the next two to three years?

Sinéad Kavanagh of Eirebus believes the Government should give their backing to bank repayment moratoriums to prevent businesses entering forbearance. "This will take immediate pressure off the businesses that are suffering from a lack of cashflow due to ongoing restrictions," she says. "This vital support would be cost neutral to the Government and would be a lifeline to many businesses operating in Fingal and throughout Ireland. There should also be an extension of the wage subsidy scheme beyond the

31st of March 2021 until a satisfactory vaccine rollout has taken place across the country."

Bank debt is also an issue highlighted by Gourmet Food Parlour's **Lorraine Heskin**. "For some businesses who have warehoused debt it is going to be a challenging few years ahead to work on rebuilding the business and covering all the additional outlays that inevitably have built up throughout the pandemic. The government should aim to understand the needs of businesses specifically affected as a result of the pandemic and work with them to manage their business into a profitable and realistic trading environment. This could come in the way of achievable grant supports or specific sector supports weighted on the business size."

John O'Donoghue of Shannon Heritage is concerned that the various PUP and Employment Wage Subsidy schemes due to expire at the end of March need to be extended to the end of June at a minimum. Continued commercial rate reliefs and additional VAT reductions in targeted industries should be considered, he suggests, as well as incentives for businesses to employ additional staff.

O'Donoghue also notes the banks are reporting that as a society we are saving more than we ever have, with as much as €120 billion in savings and deposits in various institutions. "These are 'forced savings' arising from fewer spending opportunities. Many of us will also remember the impact of the last recession and feel the need to build a nest egg." Against this background Government will need to be creative and drive consumer confidence.

"A significant spike in consumer spending in the second half of 2021 could spark a faster recovery rate. The 'Stay & Spend' tax credit initiative to encourage the public to spend in the hospitality industry in the shoulder months has had limited impact and should be replaced by a more direct mechanism. Each household or adult in the country should be issued with a spending voucher redeemable over a fixed period in targeted industries. As cash circulates businesses will benefit and tax and

vat revenues increase," he says.

Ronan Galligan of the Wright Hospitality Group shares many of the concerns raised by the other contributors to the Roundtable. "The government must look at the VAT rate for hospitality and tourism," he says, "and commercial rates must be shelved for at least two years."

He also calls on the Government to put pressure on insurance companies to come to the table and agree settlement terms for business interruption claims. "They should also introduce a charter with financial institutions and landlords to assist businesses to stay alive and not fall into default on lease agreements.

"Getting people back to work in hospitality and tourism is critical and must be underpinned with a government supported programme. An assisted programme to help business provide a safe environment for socialising should be considered."

Q3 What can and what should businesses be doing now to prepare for that recovery?

John O'Donoghue has a compendium of sound advice to share on this topic. "Now is the time to review your operation and ensure it is streamlined and working efficiently," he says. "Review your costs. Is there a blend of office and working from home that will allow you to reduce your office space and reduce rent?"

"Can you buy better? Leverage your purchasing power, no matter how big or small that is. Review all spend lines in your P&L – from stationary to utility costs. High value items can be traded through 'reverse auctions'. In simple terms you can publish your requirements on an electronic platform where all suppliers are invited to quote. Even a basic tender or spending review will typically deliver savings of at least 10% and often up to 30%. Larger business should consider B2B e-commerce platforms.



"As we are operating in such uncertain times, businesses must control costs and remain fluid and mobile to ensure they are able to react quickly to the ever changing situation,"

Sinéad Kavanagh, Managing Director, Eirebus.

"Be smart in how you market yourself. Don't just throw money at every channel. Get advice on what's right for your business. Ensure your website communications and social media are effective. The tone and messaging needs to be right and the target market appropriately identified.

"Leverage business and community networks. Speak to similar businesses and explore how you can work together. Groups such as Fingal Chamber will help you to do this and support you in every way possible. Log on to the Fingal County Website and see what they have to offer. Networking and leveraging your contacts is more important now than ever. Community spirit and willingness to help each other is alive and well.

"Ensure your staff are up to speed, energised and ready to hit the ground running. Can you utilise the free Government training initiatives? If you have budget log on to Skillnet Ireland see what they have to offer.

"And don't forget to check-in on yourself. Set your goals & objectives and ensure your mental wellbeing is resilient and fit for the journey ahead."

Ronan Galligan acknowledges that most businesses have been simply trying to stay alive during the third and hardest hitting lockdown. "Stopping and starting has not been helpful for businesses in their efforts to maintain all the integral business relationships with no money coming in. Projecting cash flows when things are changing on a weekly basis is extremely difficult and recovery is something a lot of businesses will not

experience without the support of banks, financial companies, investors, landlords, and creditors," he says.

But for those businesses that have maintained their relationships good robust cash flow projections are required. "Re-examine all previous practices to look for better, more efficient way to deliver the service. Hospitality and tourism will not be the same as before so it is critical to envisage what social experiences will look like in the recovery and adapt your service to meet that demand.

"People retention in hospitality and tourism has been almost impossible. Those businesses that managed to hold onto their key people must develop new teams and embrace a cohort of young people who have not worked either before or during the last 12 months. We have experienced a very difficult 2020 and 2021 will bring significant challenges but that what business is about. Lets hope that we are facing these challenges in a safer environment."

Lorraine Heskin is another strong advocate of not wasting the opportunity afforded by the pandemic to undertake a business review. She says: "Now is a great time for businesses to reevaluate their short to medium-term plans, assess the market and its potential as it currently stands and also where it is steering for the future.

"Self-assessing where your business lies within a market is a rarity for a busy business. One thing the pandemic

has offered us is the time and the ability to relook, replan and make those changes we have wanted to make for some time but had never really had the luxury of time to do so. I for one am grateful for the time now to work with the Gourmet Food Parlour team and really plan and reassess our business goals for 2021 and to advance our brand even further into Irish food market."

Sinéad Kavanagh puts a strong emphasis on training for the future. "Businesses should focus on training their staff in Covid safety measures and ensuring compliance with regulations to ensure the safety of customers and staff as we enter the recovery phase," she says.

"As we are operating in such uncertain times, businesses must control costs and remain fluid and mobile to ensure they are able to react quickly to the ever changing situation. In our own business, we have implemented extra deep cleaning measures on our vehicles and are adapting to the 'new norm' as work patterns change so that we can continue to provide a robust service to the community of Fingal."

Swords Express is primarily a commuter driven service and we anticipate that many people will not return to a five day office week for the foreseeable future, so we will closely monitor demand. But we do hope to continue to offer a cost effective, quality service in line with an ever-changing workplace dynamic.



"Leverage business and community networks. Speak to similar businesses and explore how you can work together. Groups such as Fingal Chamber will help you to do this and support you in every way possible,"

John O'Donoghue, General Manager, Shannon Heritage.



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ADVOCACY & REPRESENTATION

Fingal Chamber has a strong-track record of lobbying and representation successes, delivering positive change for Fingal and its businesses.

Being a member of Fingal Chamber enables businesses to engage in matters that can impact their business through forums and consultations, and influence decision-makers through lobbying and advocacy support.

As a non-governmental institution, Fingal Chamber has no direct role in the writing and passage of laws and regulations that affect businesses. It does however, lobby in an attempt to get laws passed that are favourable to businesses and society.



Fingal Chamber is the only Chamber in the area that represents business at the county, national and European levels, and we work with Government Ministers, MEPs, the Mayor, Fingal County Council and local representatives to develop pro-business and employment initiatives.

Fingal Chamber does not lobby from the sidelines or shout needlessly in the media. Rather, we seek to build our reputation and relationships with policymakers, to make them sympathetic to the needs of Fingal businesses.

We ensure that decision-makers realise the important contribution of businesses, large and small, to society and the need to sustain it, by promoting a positive environment for enterprise.

Fingal Chamber is represented on the following bodies:



- Fingal Local Community Development Committee
- Fingal County Council Strategic Policy Committees
- Economic, Enterprise and Tourism Development
- Transport and Infrastructure Management
- Housing
- Planning Strategic Transport and Infrastructure Development
- Fingal Covid-19 Community Response Forum
- Chambers Ireland Board
- Greater Dublin Chamber Alliance
- Fingal Tourism Stakeholder Group

A recent example of our work in this area is summarised below:

Fingal Chamber North Runway Submission

Dublin Airport a critical piece of national infrastructure. Politically and economically, Brexit heightens its importance in connecting Ireland to the world, while Covid-19 demonstrates how important Dublin Airport is for integrating us into global trade networks.

The North Runway expansion gives us the capacity to reach further out into the world. It will allow our tourism trade to grow in the wake of the Covid-19 collapse in international tourism. It will also open trading opportunities in new partner countries increasing growth.

North Runway was granted planning permission in 2007, subject to 31 planning conditions. Two of these conditions would severely reduce the future operational capacity of Dublin Airport at peak periods. If unchanged, these two conditions would significantly affect the operation of the airport and its key airline customers and would damage the entire Irish economy.

The daa submitted a planning application to Fingal County Council in December 2020 regarding these problematic planning conditions associated with North Runway.

In January 2021, Fingal Chamber made a written submission to the planning authority noting 7 business community concerns, and supporting what we see is a fair, sensible, and balanced proposal for all stakeholders which will safeguard Ireland's connectivity to global markets.



YOUR CHAMBER COUNCIL: PAT O'CONNOR

'WE NEED TO LAY THE FOUNDATIONS FOR FUTURE RECOVERY'

Pat O'Connor has represented the Technological University of Dublin and its predecessor, the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown, on Fingal Chamber's council since 2013. In the current challenging environment he believes the Chamber has a particularly important role to play in helping small businesses, in particular, to recover and to become vibrant and sustainable in the future.

A Northsider by birth, Pat took a degree in Business at the College of Commerce, Rathmines before going to Thomond College in Limerick to train as a secondary school teacher. From there he went straight into teaching in Senior College Dun Laoghaire, one of the early post-leaving cert colleges established out of the technical school system.

He worked there for 14 years, during which time he qualified as accountant and worked part-time for a small practice in the town. His first child, Lucy, who now works with Fairtrade Ireland, was born in 1995. In September 2001 he joined ITB as a lecturer and in 2004 he completed an MSc in Management and Application of Information Technology with DCU in 2004. The following year he was appointed Head of ITB's Business Department.

With an ambition to become a head of school, in 2007 he decided to undertake a doctorate. Those plans, however, were put on hold for two years as the family expanded with the arrival of twins Luke and Charlie. But in 2009, with the support of his wife Anita, he began a doctorate with the University of Manchester. Their youngest child, Hannah, arrived in the middle of this in 2011, and he completed the programme in 2015 with a dissertation on "Academic identity in the Institute of Technology sector".

In 2010 he was appointed Head of the School of Business and the Humanities at ITB. It soon become one of the biggest schools in the Institute of Technology sector, with over 2,000 students, at which point it was decided to split it into two separate schools. To many people's surprise, O'Connor opted to head up the Humanities School. "I saw, and continue to see, more opportunities and more of a challenge there," he says.

Following publication in January 2011 of the "National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030", which ultimately led to the establishment at the start of 2019 of the Technological University Dublin (of which ITB became a part), O'Connor has been closely involved in the organisational design and development of faculties and schools in the new university.

Cautioning against an over-emphasis on the academic aspect of higher education often found in traditional universities, he argues persuasively for increased openness to new apprenticeship models beyond the traditional craft areas commonly found in Ireland.

He also sees a real benefit in programmes that put a significant emphasis on placements. "In many of our Humanities programmes up to a third of the students' time is spent on placement, with significant placements in second and third years. It means our students are very focussed and vocationally aware of the jobs they are eventually going to make their careers in and it also makes them work ready," he points out.

Reflecting his strong community orientation, since 2014 O'Connor has been a member of Fingal Local Community Development Committee, which he chaired from 2016 to 2019. Through the LCDC he has been involved in developing the Local Economic and Community Plan and the development and roll out of the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Plan, while as Chair of Dublin Rural LAG he was involved in the provision of LEADER funding to rural areas of County Dublin.

On his involvement with Fingal Chamber O'Connor says: "At the time I was asked to represent ITB I was Head of Business School and Humanities and it was a very positive development for me to interact with people in the chamber, to see some of the issues it was trying to address and, indeed, to contribute in various ways towards the achievement of its objectives."

Over recent years, he says, the Chamber has become even more focused and has strengthened its connections with Fingal County Council. He is also pleased to have been involved recently with Kevin Smith, Anthony Cooney and Adeline O'Brien in helping to develop a clear strategic plan for the Chamber.

"It provides a focal point for everyone – from very large businesses and organisations to very small businesses. It also promotes and advocates for small businesses as well as providing opportunities for businesses of all sizes to interact and develop. One of the aspects of civic society



is that you need a successful business community and economic environment. I think this strategy will help us work towards that in Fingal."

Looking ahead, O'Connor says: "We need to upskill and develop new skills and to re-imagine what the economy and what society is going to look like after the pandemic. I think from a Chamber perspective we need to anticipate how we can help small businesses to recover and to become vibrant and sustainable in the future."

Something you might not know ...

Pat O'Connor is a big music fan. "When I was younger I played trumpet in the Youth Wind Ensemble and the Youth Jazz Orchestra. I've played with various bands over the years, including Kodaline and the Essential Big Band, and when I was in college I frequently worked with musical societies." In college he was also a keen soccer and GAA player and he now coaches under 13s with Hartsown Huntstown FC, where his two boys and their younger sister, Hannah, all play.

The O'Connor family (from left): Luke, Anita, Hannah, Lucy, Charlie and Pat.





A MESSAGE FROM FINGAL COUNTY COUNCIL

FINGAL'S SUPPORT TO BUSINESSES WILL CONTINUE THROUGH COVID-19

2020 was a year unlike any other as the COVID-19 pandemic swept across the world with Fingal, like many other parts of Ireland, feeling the full brunt of its impact. Citizens lost family members, friends, neighbours and colleagues to COVID-19. Some lost their jobs or were laid-off for long periods. Everybody saw their normal way of life change dramatically.

Growing together

Our businesses also suffered. Some, unfortunately, closed permanently while many had to stop temporarily. A lot saw their turnover dramatically reduced and were left frustrated at the stop-start nature of the lockdowns as the nation battled to flatten the curve and reduce the number of infections and deaths. It's been a tough year.

In **Fingal County Council** we take great pride in the relationship we have built with the business

community in Fingal over the past **27 years**. Making Fingal a great place to do business is one of the cornerstones of our vision for the county.

Our **6,600 rate-payers** represent a mix of many sectors and range from large multi-nationals to small and medium sized enterprises. Major industries include Pharmaceuticals, Technology, Aviation, Hospitality and Agriculture. The retail offering features everything from large shopping centres to corner shops and artisan producers. Global brands exist alongside family businesses. Together they have combined to make Fingal one of the main drivers of the national economy.

New range of initiatives

From the moment the pandemic swept onto our shores we, as the local authority, knew we would need to support our rate-payers and do what we could to help keep them afloat through lockdowns, restrictions and reduced trade.

Over the past 11 months, mainly through our Economic Enterprise Tourism and Cultural Development Department and our Local Enterprise Office but also through other departments, we have delivered a wide range of initiatives to stimulate the

Fingal economy and help our business community through this crisis.

We worked throughout the year with the business community to re-imagine and design our towns so that citizens could feel comfortable and safe whilst shopping and going about their business. This included pedestrianizing shopping streets where the paths were too narrow to facilitate social distancing, the introduction of parklets to enable restaurants and cafes provide outdoor seating and the installation of public signage promoting public health guidelines.

We also helped deliver the message that Fingal was open for business. Visit Fingal was a nationwide radio and digital campaign encouraging people to come to the county for a staycation or day trip. The Fingal In It Together for Christmas campaign called on the people of Fingal to shop local, either online or in person, and we also helped create a festive atmosphere on our shopping streets with Christmas trees, lights and music.

The Fingal In It Together Charter

The Fingal In It Together Charter, which was created in partnership with the Fingal Chamber and other business organisations, was another successful

initiative. It invited businesses to sign up and work together to deliver a **safe experience for customers** while collaborating to promote each other.

There was also financial support. With the support of Government, the Council has been able to provide a rates waiver worth **€81million** to eligible businesses and also paid out almost €30million in Restart Grants.

The Local Enterprise Office pivoted from helping start-ups to saving businesses. It provided education, advice and grants to businesses across the county at a time when they were reeling from the blows that the pandemic had thrown.

As well as assisting business, the Council also had to help our communities. The Fingal Community Call Forum was set up almost overnight to co-ordinate the work of the many agencies, organisations and volunteers who did so much to minimise the effect of the pandemic on our vulnerable and older citizens.

Our Elected Members have also played an important role over the past 11 months. Their meetings are now conducted online and important decisions can still be made, ensuring services and projects which improve our county continue to be progressed.

In November, our Councillors agreed an ambitious budget of €286m for 2021 which allows for the continued provision of key services whilst also allowing for a level of enhancement in a number of key areas. It represents an increase of €17m from 2020 and is the equivalent of €966.78 per head of population in Fingal.

A month earlier, Councillors approved a Capital Plan worth €767m with the three-year rolling programme containing 233 individual projects to be delivered throughout the county. Those plans include key initiatives such as the €146m which has been allocated towards Active Travel and Greenway infrastructure as we look to put in place a legacy for future generations.

The passing of the Budget and the Capital Plan by our Councillors delivered the positive statement needed



during a crisis because it injects the confidence necessary to face the future. Optimism about what lies ahead has been further boosted by the arrival of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Fingal County Council will continue to support our business community throughout this pandemic and then, when the time comes, we will be there to help them grow and prosper again.

**Comhairle Contae
Fhine Gall
Fingal County
Council**



AnnMarie Farrelly
Chief Executive of FCC



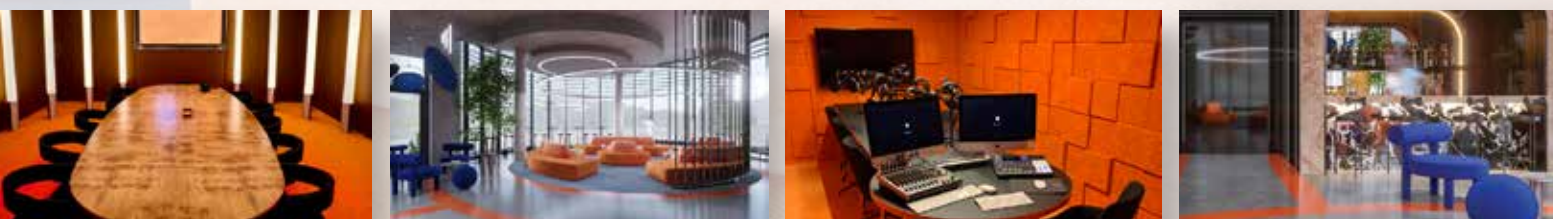


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FIRST LANDINGS BY SONICA

Sonica was born out of the desire to deliver Founder and Skerries native, Donnacha Neary's definition of 'Uncompromising Excellence' when it comes to commercial construction.

Since 2013, the leading Irish construction company has been the embodiment of Donnacha's uncompromising belief that **client service** and **end-product quality** are the only metrics that matter. Sonica has quickly emerged as a fast-growing full-service specialist contractor in Ireland with a significant back-catalogue of works completed for some of the world's biggest brands and companies, including the likes of **HubSpot, Huawei, and Salesforce**.

Sonica has just launched '**First Landings**', a destination and business incubator like nothing you have seen before. While not only Sonica's HQ, the impressive building spanning **30,000 square** feet of collaborative space also acts as a hub of support and encouragement for the best start-ups. The space is aimed at creating a community of 'Landers' where people and new companies can thrive.

Land & Expand

At its core, **First Landings** is a state-of-the-art facility for companies to 'Land and Expand' their business in Ireland and kickstart their journey. It will offer Ireland's FDI's and start-ups an opportunity to land and expand their business in a collaborative environment, with the support to develop and access the latest technology with the help of Sonica's Design and Build Team. The intention is for Sonica to become a true partner through every stage of a business's development. From engaging with clients as a new entrant to the market and providing

a supportive base their business grows, to Sonica **sourcing, designing and fitting** out their first office location – all while still supporting their remote working requirements with access to First Landings.

Not just another remote working facility, First Landings combines all of the amenities that emerging businesses today demand in order to thrive, attract and retain talent, and is built to support technology and the new online environment – all in one location.

Hub and Spoke

There are several unique aspects to First Landings. While there are **many remote workspaces in Ireland**, there are few locations in the greater **North Leinster** area that can provide an environment to host startups and offer a "Hub and Spoke" model as First Landings. First Landings' Hub and Spoke model is aimed at Sonica's clients that require that hub from home. From individual desks and pods to executive suites and meeting rooms.

Latest in technology

The collaborative space is a high-spec home with access to a range of technological amenities such as a 125-seater auditorium, EMPIRE, with one of the largest LED screens in the country and a Dolby 7.1 surround sound system for the highest acoustic performance. A Virtual Reality suite allows businesses to present their designs to Clients in an augmented reality world and the in-house podcast studio acts a recording studio for audio recordings, with the flexibility to livestream to global audiences. The studio has the **latest in technology** and Rode equipment to produce the best in live audio recordings and postproduction.

First Landings also houses executive meeting and collaboration areas which are all video conference

enabled for ease of connectivity to team members working from home. Additionally, the lounge and bar area is the perfect location to close out the week with colleagues or invite guests to spend some down time with the team. With access to a secure car park and free WiFi, the hospitality area is the perfect location to negotiate or celebrate with the next customer.

The new working environment

The collaborative space has also been designed for the new working environment with non-touch facilities throughout, from entrance and egress, to hot beverage facilities. Wide corridors allow social distance for teams on the move, and the latest technology in-room and desk booking systems enable full traceability.

There are few locations in Dublin that can host guests and foster collaboration like **First Landings**, cocooned in the beautiful surroundings of Skerries and just 20 minutes from Dublin Airport. Join the team at First Landings and experience a new era of working for yourself. Contact the team at: enquiries@firstlandings.ie

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UPSKILLING IN FINGAL

For over two decades Skillnet Ireland has been helping Irish businesses develop skills, primarily through its web of 73 Skillnet business networks. But in a rapidly changing work environment, adaptability has become a key requirement, as its Chief Technologist, Mark Jordan, explains in an interview with Fingal Network Magazine. He also discusses the organisation's role in national policy implementation and why he believes increased collaboration between government, industry and the education sector is more essential than ever.

"In response to the challenges presented by the pandemic we've been focused on creating opportunity. We're developing ways to help the hardest hit sectors and displaced workers to pivot, both intra and inter-sector. We're want to provide a clear pathway to where the future opportunities will be, ensuring businesses and individuals have the skillsets they need to compete for these opportunities," says Mark Jordan, Chief Technologist at Skillnet Ireland.



"Developing skills for the future, particularly in the digital space, is going to be a big challenge for us, perhaps our biggest ever, because the pace of change is so rapid," says Jordan. "Currently, we are seeing change and displacement in a lot of sectors, such as the food and hospitality sectors. We're focused on identifying the gaps between the skills workers already have and those they will need in any adjacent sectors where there are opportunities. Through our Skills Connect programme

we help workers make that transition, through upskilling and the support of mentoring and work placement opportunities."

The new Skills Connect programme reflects the ongoing evolution of Skillnet Ireland, which was created 22 years ago to support businesses and deliver skills training in the workplace and to develop the concept of life-long learning within the Irish economy.

Using an industry-led cost-share model, with employer PRSI contributions channelled back to industry through the National Training Fund, for many years Skillnet Ireland has delivered a wide range of upskilling initiatives to SMEs in partnership with industry bodies and other enterprise groups. Some of these Skillnet business networks focus their efforts on a particular sector, such as retail, manufacturing, technology or medtech. Others, including the Fingal Chamber Skillnet, have a geographic focus.

Each Skillnet Business Network supports the development and delivery of short, medium and long-term development programmes, while at a national level Skillnet Ireland also engages in collaborations with higher education and other associations. Last year the organisation and its 73 network partners provided approximately 8,500 individual training activities to 70,000 employees in 18,000 companies.

In recent years the knowledge, expertise and experience built up over two decades has been further tapped with Skillnet Ireland working with industry partners and other domain experts, to launch new initiatives in key emerging areas such as digitalisation and the greening of the Irish economy, as well as dealing with the hopefully one-off impacts of Brexit and COVID-19.

Its new Future Dynamics programme, for example, is focused on the development of innovation and new skills into emerging learning spaces, particularly around future technology. Its Industry Insights series, meanwhile, is a research offering through which Skillnet Ireland explores the future world of work and learning. "We're challenging our business partners to tell us what's happening in particular sectors," says Jordan. "We want to know what the short, medium and long-term plans for the sector and what that sector is going to look like in 1, 3 or 5 years so we can put the plans in place to meet those business needs as we evolve through the recovery cycle."

Skillnet Ireland has also developed a particular focus on helping SMEs, defined as businesses employing between 5 and 250 people, become more competitive and productive. These include its successful MentorsWork programme delivered in partnership with SFA. "The aim is to engage with leaders of SMEs through various programmes to help them develop their strategy creation

skills, how to foster resilience within their organisations, how to scale and to deploy the types of technology that allow them to focus more on costs and profit. It's really focussed on whatever they need to become more competitive," Jordan says.

"With well over 180,000 SMEs in the country that's a big focus for us going forward. This is more of a framework we can offer them to transform, to change legacy processes and mindsets through mentoring and the curating of programmes. It's definitely a huge undertaking for us."

As part of its Strategy 2021-2025, Skillnet Ireland has big growth ambitions. "Our goal is to go from supporting a workforce of some 70,000 participants to 100,000 and to go from 18,000 businesses up to 30,000 and to really have exponential growth in innovation projects."

Triple helix

To achieve this Skillnet Ireland is involved in aligning Government policy with industry needs and facilitating collaborations with the third level education system – a process it calls the "triple helix" for shorthand. "We sit in the middle of this triple helix and forge innovative partnerships that deliver business value" Jordan explains. "For example, the Government has called for widespread adoption of AI in Irish businesses and sees an opportunity for Ireland to become a centre of excellence in the AI space. So, we've worked very closely aligning that policy requirement with the needs of business, and curated programmes with a number of the Irish universities to further that aim.

"We did the same for blockchain and the Internet of Things, and we're also progressing that further into data analytics and data science, including developing programmes right up to PhD level with partners like Science Foundation Ireland.

"Right now, we are keeping pace and continuing to improve our ranking against European peers in terms of our focus on digital talent development and technology adoption.

"It's one of the reasons why we're looking at prioritising initiatives that prepare businesses for digital transformation and the need to compete globally. And through our research mechanism we've a better sense of what the future world of work will look like."

Jordan says Skillnet Ireland is also keen to strengthen its collaborations with its network partners, including the chambers of commerce in general and Fingal in particular. "There are a lot of core businesses, a lot of SMEs and multinationals, operating in North Dublin and I think fostering the collaboration with the Fingal Chamber Skillnet will yield benefits for many businesses. There's a lot of opportunity for us to grow into together."



"WE WANT TO UNDERSTAND YOUR BUSINESS AND YOUR TRAINING NEEDS"

The Fingal Chamber Skillnet training network continues to go from strength to strength. Last year the number of member companies that engaged with us trebled and, at well over 500, the number of employees participating on our courses more than doubled. The quality of that training, too, is highly rated by participants who have given it a combined 94% 4/5 star rating.

Since it was established in 2019 Fingal Chamber Skillnet training network has trained hundreds of participants in hundreds of companies to acquire new skills in a wide range of areas. These range from IT, remote working and time management to credit control, sales, LEAN processes and people management, including. They have been of benefit to employees at every level within participating companies, including the most senior executives.

So we have achieved a lot already. However, given the challenges presented by Brexit and COVID-19, there is obviously a lot more we could and should be doing. We can only achieve that with the support of the Fingal Chamber's membership.

First and foremost, we need to develop an even better understanding of what is happening for you, what are the immediate skills your employees to develop to ensure your business can survive and prosper in the years to come? We need to understand your training and upskilling requirements for 2021 and for the years beyond that.

The sooner we can identify the key requirements, the better able we will be to ensure that we can offer a tailored programme of courses that will meet those various needs. Our goal is to help transfer best practice into the Fingal region, working collaboratively with members to achieve that.

We are here to assist in training planning, design and delivery and to subsidise the course costs through Skillnet funding. But most importantly we want to create a learning network where all member company participants can come together in a subsidised and shared-cost training network environment.

We are currently rolling out our training dates for 2021 and you can view these on our website: fingalchamberskillnet.ie/training or at: fingalchamber.ie/events. If you are arranging training for your business or have particular suggestions for training programmes in 2021, please email us at: skillnet@fingalchamber.ie and we will be happy to schedule your required courses.

Here are two new offerings for 2021 which we believe will be of great benefit to a wide range of people and businesses across Fingal.

Skills Connect

Through the new Skills Connect programme, we now provide upskilling to those who have been displaced from employment due to Covid-19 and are actively seeking a new career. We can provide full funding for training through our Career Transition Programme leading to full-time employment placement for our participants. For more information and to express your interest in the programme visit: fingalchamberskillnet.ie

Future Dynamics

This initiative will help participants explore the training solutions that will shape the future of your business. We invite submissions from our member companies with training suggestions appropriate to this area of training development. It may be a new system you want to develop within your business, such as automation, and for which there is no existing training programme. Please send your submissions to: skillnet@fingalchamber.ie

If you would like to discuss any aspect of your future training needs or to tease out your ideas with us please don't hesitate to drop us a line or simply pick up the phone. We look forward to hearing from you!



Feargal Malone - Network Manager, Fingal Chamber Skillnet



INDUSTRY REVIEW: TWO FINGAL FARM FAMILIES FLOURISH IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY

Fingal's farmers have a well-earned reputation for resilience. This is exemplified by the continued success of two of its long-established families – the Hoeyes, who have built a multi-faceted food business that employs 400 people, and the Keoghs, who have diversified into a complementary food manufacturing enterprise and employ 120.

Both demonstrate how, with the right mindset, it is possible to flourish even in the teeth of adversity. Michael Hoey and Tom Keogh spoke to Fingal Network Magazine about the challenges, which have led them to where they are today and explain why, paradoxically and perhaps perversely, COVID-19 has been good for their business.

Over many centuries North County Dublin has been a place where fruit and vegetable growers have put the region's fertile soil and benevolent climate to good use feeding the capital's hundreds of thousands, then millions, of people. But time, and the past three decades in particular, have wrought big changes in this traditional industry.

The centralisation of food purchasing, initially by large supermarkets, brought a sharp decline in a supply chain that revolved around thousands of individual store-owners purchasing fresh produce delivered by growers to the city's wholesale markets every morning.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s producers of brassicas and other vegetables felt the chill winds of cheap imports from abroad, frequently sold below cost, which made it difficult, then impossible, for many of them to produce at a profit. Around the same time, increased affluence brought about radical changes in consumer preferences. People were travelling more and experimenting with different foods at home while dietary trends, such as the low carb Atkins Diet, took their toll on fresh potato sales. In just one decade, between 2002 and 2012, Ireland's consumption of potatoes halved.

Country Crest

It was against this background that in 2005 brothers Michael and Gabriel Hoey revived an industry that had become almost obsolete in Ireland, the commercial growing of onions. Their new state-of-the-art onion grading, packaging and primary storage facility, which is still the only one of its kind in the country, involved a €4 million investment.

Twelve years earlier these fourth generation members of a family which had begun farming in North County Dublin over a century ago had established Country Crest to grow and pre-pack fresh potatoes for the retail sector. Then in 2008 they established a prepared foods division, focusing on quality vegetable accompaniments, which ultimately led to the creation of Ballymaguire Foods, which today produces a range that includes soups, sauces, meals and meal accompaniments.

Six years ago Country Crest invested in an on-site cattle-feeding unit to guarantee traceability, which is an integral part of its ethos across all divisions. In 2016 it added sweet potatoes to its catalogue of products, which it imports directly from a growing partner in North Carolina and grades and packs in Lusk for the retail and prepared foods sectors.

Also staunch champions of sustainability, in 2009 the Hoeyes constructed an 80 metre on-site wind turbine which supplies over 60% of their energy needs, going on to pick up the 2011 Bord Bia Food & Drink Industry Sustainability Award and became a pilot company for the State agency's Origin Green Sustainability Development Programme. In 2017 the company completed its initial five-year Origin Green charter and became the first company to launch a second five-year plan, focusing on waste management, energy management, biodiversity and CSR.

When the pandemic hit last year it arrived at a particularly busy time, says Michael Hoey. "March/April is crop planting time. But we have an excellent team and as an essential food provider we've done everything we possibly can to keep the virus outside the gates. We were quick to introduce tight new protocols, including 24-hour security on the gates, employee temperature testing controls on every door to ensure continuity throughout the working day and mandatory sanitising and wearing of face masks – if you're not wearing a mask the door won't open.

"As a result of these measures, and with the full co-operation of our team, we've been really fortunate



in that we've been able to continue our business with no fall off in production."

Panic buying saw a spike in orders at the end of March last year but it then levelled out and has been "pretty normal" ever since, with the losses in sales to trade buyers, such as restaurants, offset by gains from people eating at home.

"People aren't buying fancy things, they've gone back to the staples, more honest-to-goodness food, and they're more interested than ever in traceability. Overall we've seen an 8% to 10% gain in sales compared to the previous year."

The arrival of vaccines obviously brings increased hope for the future. But Michael Hoey still has concerns about what comes next. "The big challenge, as I now see it, is that even though everyone here has the security of a wage coming in, the pandemic is understandably taking a toll on people's mental health," he says.

Brexit, too, has created problems for many business sectors, including agri-business. But here Michael Hoey remains optimistic, with plans in place to deal with some of the major challenges.

"Over the last couple of years we've been planning for Brexit. We knew it would create hiccups for us and our total focus has been on making sure our customers wouldn't suffer," he says. "We buy ingredients across Europe and Brexit has resulted in delays of trucks coming through the UK. But we have retained the services of freight forwarding company in Dublin to look after the complexity of the paperwork and all in all that seems to be working quite well.

"Many of the machines we use are manufactured in the UK, but as part of our Brexit planning we built our

own parts store, we carefully reviewed what parts we needed in recent years and developed our own stock of parts to make sure production won't be disrupted by machine downtime. It's a significant extra cost but well worth of it for the peace of mind it gives us."

Keoghs Farm

Also very much a family affair, the Keogh family has been farming in Fingal for at least 200 years. There are now five family members, spanning two generations, active in the business. They farm 400 acres of potatoes and are involved in branded fresh potato packaging, supplying about 10% of national production. In 2011 they launched a snack food business, Keoghs Crisps. This has about 10% of the Irish crisp market and exports to 20 countries around the world. More recently it has launched a popcorn offering.

"When I was a small child potato was just one product in a large portfolio we grew here that included sprouts, carrots, cauliflowers, tomatoes and grain. While those have gone by the wayside, the soil and the climate here in North County Dublin is perfect for potatoes and, with a good reputation for producing a high quality product, that is what we have focussed on," explains Keoghs Crisp's managing director Tom Keogh.

"Things were definitely in a state of flux when my generation came into the family business in the early 2000s," he says. "We had to move from just supplying local wholesalers to meeting the demands of supermarket groups and that was a big learning curve for us because it required a completely new skill set."

The Keogh's first put their toe in that water with Superquinn back in 2004 and from there they started to develop the retail side of the business, recruiting growers from around the country to supplement their own output.

Much like wine, the taste of a potato is strongly influenced by the soil and climate in which it is grown, says Tom Keogh. These differences are reflected in national preferences, so when he began to look for export opportunities in 2007/2008 his thoughts initially turned to the 42 million Irish-Americans on the US East coast. With a potential distributor lined up, he set about trying to overcome the red tape preventing the import of his fresh produce into the country. It was an inspector in the USDA Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service in New Jersey who triggered his first "light bulb" moment. "Mr Keogh, why don't you cook your potatoes? If you do that you won't have to talk to me." The notion of crisp production was born.

Around this time the "premiumisation" of produce was also beginning to emerge. "That trend of treating yourself with premium products and better quality food was really in its infancy. It had started in a small way in snack foods in the UK and we saw

its potential for us, because we believed our story here on the farm would resonate with consumers," Tom Keogh says. This was also just at the early stage of the development of social media and through it, supported by a re-branding, the Keoghs told the story of their family and products.

"Nowadays you'll find pictures of farmers everywhere, but I'm pretty certain we were one of the very first people to put a farmer's picture on a bag of fresh produce in a supermarket. I remember being very uncomfortable about it – but we were at the leading edge in terms of a change in consumer perception and we obviously used our family brand for the potato crisps when that came around."

It took four years to bring the project from initial idea to product on the shelves as the Keoghs acquired the knowledge, skills and funding they needed to establish a completely new business. They ended up building a factory on the farm and launched the product in 2011.

"My initial plan was to sell hand-cooked crisps at farmers' markets for the first three years. But when we hit the market a couple of things went our way. Number one was the quality. We were a small, agile business supplying an extremely fresh, great tasting product. We'd taken a completely different approach to seasonings, using Atlantic salt produced by O'Neills on the Beara Peninsula and cider vinegar from David Llewlyn five minutes down the road, for example."

Ireland was also in the depths of recession and taking on staff at a time of high unemployment generated enormous public goodwill for the small Irish start-up. Fortune also smiled on them in export markets, with a number of key overseas buyers following through with orders.

"In the early days we were learning our trade and a bit like a rabbit in the headlights in some ways. If someone asked us to supply them, we said 'yes', whether they were in Hong Kong or New York. But that wasn't the most profitable way of going about things and with the benefit of the sales information they were providing we began to focus and develop some of these markets.

"There was obviously huge potential in America and we pushed forward there about two years ago. We also had a lot of success in the Middle East, in Dubai, and we're also the crisp provided to Emirates Airlines First Class service."

The nearby UK market was an obvious area of opportunity and Keoghs Crisps was in talks with a number of potential buyers when the Brexit vote took everyone by surprise in 2016. "It put everything on hold for us," Tom Keogh says. It is only now, five years later, that it has commenced its first UK listing, with Waitrose. "It was difficult and frustrating. But the issue was uncertainty and there was little we could do until that was resolved."

Commenting on the impact of COVID-19 on the business, Tom Keogh counts himself lucky that the business is in the sectors it is. "Many business have been decimated but, depending on what part of the food sector you're in, things have gone well. About a third of all food is consumed out of the home and our business was a direct reflection of that – that business just literally disappeared. But this has been more than offset by the growth in in-home consumption, giving a net gain on snack foods. In terms of fresh food it's been fantastic for potatoes. Having had a pretty tough time for 30 years, in 2020 we've seen an increase in potato consumption of 27%."

Like Country Crest, adaptability has been a key element in maintaining the Keogh's business in the face of COVID-19. "We put in all the facilities needed to comply with the regulations way back in March 2020. What seemed completely unrealistic on a Monday was the new norm by Friday and we were just getting on with things.

"Huge changes were needed to protect the staff because we have no choice in the matter, it's a labour-intensive system and we need people to produce our products. We were very lucky in that we have a fantastic business culture here and when people see a challenge coming at them, they really put their shoulders to the wheel. They stayed responsible."

Tom Keogh also shares Michael Hoey's optimism about the future. Later this year the Keoghs plan to open a new potato factory to supply the Irish retail market. "Currently we're working out of a factory that my grandfather built in the 1950s, so the new plant is a huge investment for us. On the snack food side of things we've a nice portfolio of new products launching this year. We've some new flavours coming to market and we're beginning relationships with some new retail customers overseas, which is really exciting. So it's looking good and hopefully that continues – all still within a family business."





CORPORATE FEATURE: COVID-19 PRESENTS NEW LEGAL CHALLENGES FOR BUSINESSES

COVID-19 is already presenting new legal challenges for businesses and employers in a number of key areas, including employment law, data & privacy and landlord and tenant matters, says the corporate law practice BHSM LLP. In an interview with Fingal Network Magazine two of its principals – Mark Homan, Managing Partner, and Richard Lee, Head of Employment – provide practical advice on how to avoid the potential pitfalls in these areas.

"As a result of COVID-19, issues such as remote working, revised work safety protocols and the impact of the vaccinations and return to work are only some of the employment related issues faced by business owners in Ireland over the next few years. The fallout from COVID-19 will undoubtedly create employment related challenges for employers and employees into the future," says BHSM's Head of Employment, Richard Lee.

Since early last year the firm has experienced a surge in enquiries from clients needing advice, often at very short notice, on the dos and don'ts of managing employees during a national emergency, which included laying off employees where required,

the introduction of short time working, temporary closures, redundancies and the legal ramifications of COVID-19 on such issues as annual leave, payment of wages and other terms and conditions of employment.

"Putting processes in place to facilitate and manage new emerging workplace environments (to include remote working) will become the norm" says Lee. "The issue of remote working has already been considered in the Workplace Relations Commission with a claimant successfully bringing a claim for constructive dismissal following a refusal of the employer to consider a remote working proposal. We will inevitably see an increase in employment related litigation as a result of the pandemic and, with this in mind, employers really should consider and review their employment practices because the workplace is changing for the foreseeable future, possibly forever."

Lee also counsels caution in respect of existing employment contracts and policies and procedures. "It is crucial that employers ensure that they actually have contracts of employment in place for all employees. It is a legal requirement and you would be surprised at the number of businesses we encounter that don't meet their statutory requirements on contracts, policies and procedures. In addition, we would recommend that contracts and policies are reviewed and updated regularly to take account of updates in employment legislation and to ensure that these documents are fit for purpose, particularly in the midst of a pandemic."

Procedures in relation to workplace investigations, disputes and disciplinary matters require similar attention, Lee says. "Those procedures need to be robust and clearly set-out to employees. If this is not done, employers are immediately on the back

foot in respect of any employment related claims brought by employees. It is therefore advisable that employers review their employment related documentation and seek legal advice prior to rolling same out to employees."

BHSM advise that companies should review their employment policies and contracts on a regular basis and at least every two years. There are a number of good reasons for this advice, Mark Homan emphasises. "The employment law legislation landscape is changing rapidly, and even more quickly with COVID-19, which means that policies can become out-of-date within a very short period."

Another factor is the individuality of each business. "The difficulty for employers is that their policies and procedures are usually unique to them and these change as they grow. What suits a business when it's just starting out, can look remarkably different



Mark Homan



in five years time and employment documentation needs to be updated to account for that. If you don't think about it until a claim comes in, that's far too late," Homan says.

Like any service, frequent review need not be an elaborate and expensive affair, he adds. "Frequent reviews might be as simple as just touching base with your legal support; it's a health check. The time and money spent reviewing HR policies in a systematic way can result in tremendous savings compared to dealing with a future issue down the line, like unfair dismissal, discrimination or equality claims. The cost of review can pale into insignificance compared to the ultimate cost of a claim."

Privacy & Data Protection

Compliance with data protection legislation is another important area that businesses need to be sure they are on top of, says Homan. "Companies need to have their privacy policies fully up-to-date and in line with GDPR. It's become such a prevalent area of law in its own right that we now have a specialist department working alongside the employment department to deal with it.

"That legislation was first introduced in 2018 and



since then the whole area has been changing at 100 mph. Businesses are still grappling with it and you'd be surprised at the number which haven't brought their policies up to date. It's not at the forefront of their thinking – but it should be, because the regulations are strict in terms of GDPR breaches and reporting them. Failure in relation to GDPR can land businesses in big trouble, so that needs to be looked at in tandem with the employment issues," Homan says.

Property

Landlord and Tenant issues is the third area which has resulted in a considerable increase in client instructions as a result of COVID-19. "This has affected both sides of the contract, whether a business is receiving or paying rent. We're advising business in relation to bespoke strategies around that, including developing appropriate pre-litigation strategies, as well as acting in litigation itself," Homan says.

"Here, too, the value of getting ahead of the issue is evident for either landlord or tenant. Based on the problems that we have seen to date it, is clear that for any business which is impacted by the COVID-19 restrictions there is merit in getting their leasing documentation reviewed and in putting together quarterly and yearly projections on rental payments – be that as an expense or an income."

BHSM – A fast growing legal practice

BHSM is a fast-growing, full service corporate law firm based in Dublin. Founded in 2012 as Baily Homan Smyth McVeigh, in less than a decade it has grown to a team of over 40 partners, solicitors and support professionals. Its main practice areas are: Corporate, Banking & Finance, Employment, Litigation & Dispute Resolution, Real Estate and Insolvency & Corporate Restructuring and it also has a private client offering. It has become widely recognised for its service provision in these core areas and in other niche sectors such as Life Sciences and the legal areas of Employment Law and Data & Privacy.

The firm, which will celebrate 10 years in business in 2022, works with clients across the full spectrum – from innovative start-ups and fast-growing indigenous medium-sized companies to large multinationals, with a depth of experience in such business areas as finance, agriculture, renewable energy, retail and hospitality.

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Richard Lee - BHSM's Head of Employment



MY WEEK IN WORK: LYNDSEY DAVEY

Celebrated Dublin senior ladies' footballer, Lyndsey Davey, has just picked up her sixth LGAA All-Star award. The Skerries Harps player has been on winning Senior All-Ireland teams five times in 10 years, most recently in 2020, and captained Dublin in 2015. But she has had to juggle her footballing commitments with a demanding job as a Dublin Airport Firefighter.



We asked Lyndsey to talk about how she manages this, (in conversation with John Stanley). Since childhood, I've always wanted to work in the emergency services, either with the ambulance service or in the fire brigade. I can't tell you why exactly. I didn't have any connections with the emergency services, I had no relatives already involved. But I do think that I liked the idea of being able to help someone when they're in most need, I suppose, even if it's just providing comfort and talking to them.

When I left school in Skerries in 2008 Ireland was in recession and there was a freeze on all emergency services recruitment. So I decided get a bit of life experience until opportunities opened up again. I was already heavily involved in football at that time and I went to DCU, where I took a degree in business, played a lot of football, did some J1 travel and went to New York.

When I finished my degree in 2012 there was still no emergency services recruitment and I got a job in the Finance Office of the GAA in Croke Park. I was perfectly happy there – but I was always keeping an eye open for when the recruitment would start again. And when Dublin Airport Authority became the first to advertise an opening in 2015 I applied immediately.

I love my job because there's such great variety in it. You never know what you're going to be dealing with on any given day. Obviously, we specialise in aviation emergencies but we also deal with fire alarm activations, car accidents/fires and medical emergencies – anything in the terminals that need

to be attended to. We also do a lot of work on the airfield, including runway inspections and wildlife management –birds can be a big hazard for aircraft. Like every organisation, we've had to learn to adapt to the COVID situation and overcome the challenges it presents. As an emergency service we've been working throughout the pandemic and dealing with it as best we can.

After my initial training as a firefighter I was trained as an Emergency First Responder. But as well as being a fire service for the airport we also provide an ambulance service, which means we have paramedics in our station, too. I started my paramedic training last September with Dublin Fire Brigade. It's a two-year programme and I'm currently doing my internship for that now.

Our days and nights are split up during the course of the month and it averages out at about seven days and seven nights per month. We work 12-hour shifts, with day shifts running from 7.00am to 7.00pm and night shifts from 7.00pm to 7.00am. There's a variety of tasks to be done and depending on what's scheduled for any given day we could be doing some training as well. It all depends on the rostering and the priority of the job. But we're kept busy. Twelve hours might sound like a long shift but I can promise you boredom is never a factor!

Playing football at inter-county level is also a serious commitment, there's no question about that. If you are going to engage in anything at that kind of level you have to give it your all or there's no point in doing it. So it requires a great deal of training, it could be

four or five times a week, and trying to fit that in around 12 hour shifts can be difficult.

But I've been blessed with the support I've had from the different crews I work with. You start by looking at your shifts and your training schedules to see where they overlap. Then you make any adjustments you can to make it work – and I rely a lot on my colleagues for that. They'll swap shifts with me; someone might stay back for a couple of hours after their shift, or come in early, to cover for me while I'm training. Obviously you then pay them back, but I can honestly say that if it weren't for everyone I work with being so good to me it probably wouldn't be possible for me to have kept playing at this level. I've been really lucky to have their support.

COVID has presented challenges for us, too, as footballers. It created a lot of unpredictability last season, we didn't even know at times if it would be going ahead. Then, when we did get back, we had to adapt to new ways of doing things in the dressing room, travelling to matches and even out on the pitch. One of the big differences, obviously, was the absence of spectators at the matches.

But we also have to recognise we've been very lucky. While everyone else was in lockdown we were still able to go training, so we were in a very unique



situation. Then to get over the line and win the finals was a lovely way to end a difficult year for us. You could say we've been blessed.

I've been asked on a number of occasions what my plans are for next year. But no one knows what is happening at the moment with regards to the season ahead, so I haven't made a decision at the moment.

Right now I'm just focused on work, including my paramedic internship, and during the pandemic that is my main focus to be honest.

Do I have any words of advice for young people? If you find something you're passionate about and you have a drive to do it you should give it your all and go for it.



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CYBER SECURITY ADVICE FOR SMES

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITH DAVID MCNAMARA, MD OF COMMSEC

Q. With the increased threat of cyber-attacks, what steps can SMEs take to better understand how secure their business is?

Although many companies have steadily improved their risk management and IT security, they still face the challenge of cybercrime, which has increased by 400% since the beginning of the COVID 19 crisis. First they need to review their policies and procedures for IT security and regulatory compliance; this is required as technology changes. Threats increase so there needs to be a constant review to ensure the policies and procedures are valid and effective. We help SMEs to attain recognised cyber security standards like Cyber Essentials.

Q. What can SMEs do to minimise the risk of IT security threats?

Every business should look to ensure that their staff are trained to be aware of the possible IT security

threats, this can be done by using end user IT security awareness training which is now easy to setup and is not expensive. Secondly we strongly encourage businesses to maintain yearly penetration tests of the IT systems and this can be supplemented by regular vulnerability scans that will help with improving the security of their IT systems and reduce risk. This can be complemented by maintaining a process to patch the various IT systems to the latest versions.

Q. Looking ahead, what are the next steps for SMEs to take to maintain good cyber security?

In the longer term, to protect against the ever-evolving threats and the rise of cybercrime, they should consider the use of a managed IT security monitoring service, to help protect themselves from phishing and ransomware attacks which are becoming more widespread across all industries. These services are now available for different sizes of organisations and are much more affordable than before. A managed security monitoring system will help every company to keep their IT systems secure, with policies and procedures in place, so that in the event of an attack – the service provider has the authority and access to take remedial action and shut down the cyber-attack quickly.

Q. What advice would you give to a business looking to improve their IT security?

They should look to work with an organisation who specialises in IT security and governance and has the skills and expertise to help them to improve their IT security and reduce their risk. Security is much more than having a firewall and anti-virus on the user laptops! There are also benchmark standards that they can align to or get certified with, such as Cyber Essentials or ISO 27001.

Q. Is this level of IT security protection available to all sizes of organisations, even those with limited resources and budgets?

Yes, even relatively small businesses can now benefit from the latest IT security services as these are far more affordable than in the past. CommSec have developed a suite of services to suit any budget and we can work with you to ensure you have the best security within your budget and requirements.

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David McNamara

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DUBLIN AIRPORT CENTRAL – CAPTURING THE ZEITGEIST

Offering 500,000 sq. ft. of high spec Grade A office space in five buildings, Phase 1 of Dublin Airport Central will go a long way to addressing a 20-year infrastructural deficit in the Fingal region. But DAC is far more than a commercial property play for the DAA.

The huge campus has been designed to meet the needs of companies that want national and international connections, the right working and living environments for their staff and the space to grow. And based on the level of interest and commitments to date, DAA appears to have anticipated the zeitgeist of the post-pandemic corporate world.

“We’re not competing with the southside of Dublin or even other regions of Ireland, we’re competing with Frankfurt, Paris, Madrid and London,” says Lorcan Tyrell, Head of Development at Dublin Airport Central. “Many airports around the world have positioned themselves as locations for regional and international headquarters of multinational businesses and we are elevating Ireland onto that platform.”

It’s an approach which is already proving its worth, with Irish consultancy ESB International and the US food giant Kellogg’s soon to be joined there by many other large international companies – as well as Fingal Chamber.

Work began in 2015 with refurbishment of the 50 year-old, 80,000 sq. ft. former Aer Lingus headquarters achieving Ireland’s first LEED Platinum standard for offices. This project, Block 1, became ESB International’s new headquarters the following year. The arrival of the second customer (DAC prefers to think in terms of customers rather than tenants) illustrates the vision behind the entire development.

Michigan headquartered Kellogg’s is a century-old business best known for breakfast cereals. But in recent years it has both diversified its offering and expanded significantly across Europe. The DAC team was aware that company, which had located in North County Dublin in 2003, had wanted to consolidate its various European administrations in one place but found this near impossible.

“We’re not just another property developer, we won’t be flipping this on to a pension fund the day after we sign a lease – we’re here for the long haul.”



Paul Byrne



Lorcan Tyrell

“For Kellogg’s to pick DAC was a huge bonus. Their story really validated our offering and proved that Dublin is the perfect gateway between the two continents.”

“So we sold them on the idea that if you cannot put all your people under one roof, you can still provide them with a location which everyone can access with ease,” recalls Tyrell.

“For such a huge multinational as Kellogg’s to pick DAC was a huge bonus for us,” Byrne adds. “Their story really validated our offering and proved that Dublin is the perfect gateway between the two continents.”

Airport cities

This success was no lucky accident, however. The DAC team had spent many years researching other examples of ‘airport cities’ to come up with a compelling offering. As Tyrell explains: “We’re not flying the DAC flag on our own, it’s the region that we’re selling. It’s the supply chain within Fingal and the services located here that really make this appealing.”

The pitch to multinationals is further boosted by Fingal’s demographics, with the youngest and fastest growing population in Ireland and half of all the undergrads at third level in the area studying STEM subjects. “This is hugely appealing to the companies we’re seeking to attract here,” Byrne says.



Fingal also has a surprisingly healthy pipeline of new housing compared to the rest of Dublin and the country as a whole. "Taken together with the amenities of the airport and in the region, Fingal is an exceptionally attractive place in which to live as well as to work," he adds.

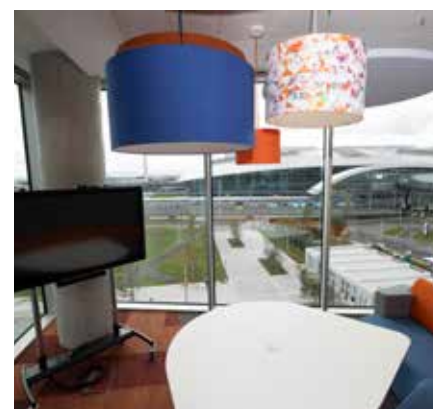
The flexibility of the DAC offering is another strong selling point. "You can take a space for four people on our campus. But if in five years time you need space for a thousand people, as many of these companies will, we're in a position to deliver you a tailor made building within 12 to 18 months." A recently completed 1.25-acre park complements the office accommodation and has been carefully designed to allow the work environment extend into the outdoors – when Irish weather permits.

Post-pandemic solution

"Without realising it, we devised a 'post-pandemic solution' well before the pandemic started," says Tyrell. "We saw the opportunity to create a flexible structure enabling people to work in different buildings, and even outdoors, within a campus. We were promoting the idea of co-locations rather than one big headquarters long before the arrival of COVID-19 and I think that's a model which is going to be increasingly prevalent in the future."

Completion of the 110,000 sq. ft. Block 2, which is where Fingal Chamber's new offices will be, was

"We're in discussions with well over a dozen companies on space throughout the campus."



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FINGAL INDEPENDENT

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Sports - Contact Marcus

Email: mcavaroli@drogheda-independent.ie

Editorial - Contact John

Email: editorial@fingal-independent.ie

Fingal's Only Regional Newspaper
At the heart of the community

NEW MEMBERS



effector.ie



Five Tips To Maximise Your Membership

1. Activate your profile in the members area (MIC).
2. Connect and interact with us on social media.
3. Use the promotional avenues to announce news, special offers, job vacancies, or upcoming events.
4. Upskill yourself and your workforce with subsidised enterprise-led skills training courses through the Fingal Chamber Skillnet.
5. Attend Chamber events, many are free for members, so keep an eye on the events calendar and your email inbox for upcoming events and invites.



WE LOVE TO FEED THE HUNGRY

We're passionate about food, our service and where our food comes from! That's why we work closely with local suppliers to support the future of our Local Food Heroes whilst maintaining the integrity of our food provenance. We have a range of in house brands curated with a focus on specific demographics, these work alongside our chef network development team to allow us the flexibility to be a suitable catering partner for any client.

We aim to disrupt the status quo of contract catering by creating experiences that offer the look & feel of the High Street for our clients.

CLEANING

We understand how many businesses & the environment in which they now operate have changed. What may have been a suitable cleaning schedule in February is now defunct with a strong need for innovation, accountability & professional expertise.

We can conduct a fresh site survey with analysis of your bespoke needs & make critical suggestions to ensure the frequency of cleaning, techniques used & chemicals implemented utilise your budget effectively so you can spend it where it matters.



LOOKING AFTER YOUR TEAM WITH SAFE VENDING SOLUTIONS

We understand the necessity in keeping teams happy & comfortable, whilst also adhering to social distancing measures.

We can provide safe contactless vending solutions for a wide variety of snacks and cold & hot drinks. We can supply social distancing material such as floor markings, stickers & informative collateral to ensure measures are adhered to when using vending solutions.



CREATIVE FINGAL: FINGAL SET TO BECOME THE ARTS CAPITAL OF IRELAND

In early 2020 the Fingal Academy of Music moved into its new campus to some of the most historic buildings in Balbriggan, Co. Dublin. At the same time the organisation changed its name to the Irish Institute of Music & Song to reflect both its current activities but more importantly, its vision for the future.

In 2021 the Irish Institute of Music & Song (IIMS) will complete phase 2 of its extensive campus. This will include a state of the art **400 seat concert hall**, with meeting rooms and digital/virtual facilities unmatched by any performing venue in Ireland. This will be in addition to the already completed phase 1, which boasts luxury accommodation in Bedford house & Bedford Hall (Georgian and Victorian houses), student accommodation in Bedford Chambers, medium sized conference/performance space ("The Square"), rehearsal rooms and La-La-La café & restaurant. All the facilities are located within the tranquil campus home to the largest guitar in the

world (unofficially) and "An Crann Ceoil" a musical tree sculpture by award winning sculptor John Hayes.

The IIMS currently delivers bespoke Workplace Wellness programmes to top international firms globally which include EY, DLA Piper. The Workplace Wellness programme includes music and leadership workshops, workplace choirs, public speaking and executive leadership days. Part of its mission is to make Fingal the arts capital of Ireland and we would like to reach out to local Fingal businesses to see how we might collaborate in building impactful CSR programmes that benefit both the business and the community.

In January the IIMS welcomed two of the leading stars from the U.S musical Hamilton to the campus as part of the Artist in Residence programme. During this time the IIMS connected the stars with local schools and businesses delivering inspiring talks and workshops. In 2021 the IIMS will launch accredited level 7 courses and expects to expand this further with level 8 & 9 courses in 2022. As part of this it will welcome international students and groups to Fingal to take part connecting Fingal with the world. If you have a business in Fingal and want to be part of the most exciting arts project to ever take place in Fingal please contact us and we will be delighted to give you a tour of our campus.

Contact: michael@irishinstituteofmusic.com



MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Fingal Chamber membership enables members to:

- Influence decision-makers through lobbying and advocacy support
- Engage in matters that can impact their business through forums and consultations
- Connect and build business relationships through an extensive networking and events programme
- Upskill their workforce through bespoke and subsidised training delivered by Fingal Chamber Skillnet
- Access information on business supports and stakeholder notices via weekly email updates
- Promote and enhance their business profile through member-exclusive channels
- Export globally with certification from our knowledgeable and efficient international trade team
- Expand their business in new markets with inward and outward trade delegations
- Develop their knowledge of business topics and trends with informative business briefings
- Support and contribute to community projects and activities via the Fingal Chamber Community Fund
- Showcase and celebrate success with the Fingal Business Excellence & CSR Awards

TESTIMONIALS



"Bank of Ireland has been a long-term member of Fingal Chamber and we have always found their networking events a great forum for meeting other local businesses and building contacts. The committee ensures there is a wide range of events in various locations, so there is something for every member. I find the speakers are of high calibre, very engaging and give great insights into the opportunities and challenges the business community face."

Deirdre Kane, Manager, Bank of Ireland, Swords



"Country Crest has been a member of Fingal Chamber for many years and has benefited in many ways from this membership. Networking with like-minded businesses and people has enabled us to look outwardly at how businesses adapt and prosper within Fingal and Ireland. Being a part and taking part within the Chamber is hugely important to us and we value our membership greatly."

Tony Doyle, Commercial Manager, Country Crest



"We have participated in the Chamber Networking and Skillnet network training events that Fingal Chamber have provided. We have found that they cover an expansive subject matter, reduce the costs through Skillnet subsidy and learning in a network environment, and are able to adapt to our business training requirements."

Richard Sloan, Managing Director, Sonas Bathrooms



"We are long-standing members of Fingal Chamber of Commerce as the chamber offers a great range of benefits to its members. In our experience, the regular organising of networking events and information briefings is a useful tool in forging new contacts and facilitating new business with other members. Making a sale may not always be possible but the ability to contact a member and seek their advice on a subject matter is an invaluable resource. I strongly recommend that you join the Chamber and be part of an organisation that works to promote business in your region."

Michael Kennedy, Managing Director,
Michael Kennedy Insurance Group

Fingal Chambers Partners



Refer a Colleague or Business

To support our work and allow us to keep producing our programmes and events, and to enhance the opportunities within the network, please consider recommending Fingal Chamber membership to those in your network you feel may be interested.

If you refer a colleague or business to us and they sign up, we will send you a €50 cash card as a token of our appreciation.

RECOMMEND



Find out more at:
fingalchamber.ie/recommend



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