

**Mr. James D Kennedy – Chairperson Designate**  
**National Standards Authority of Ireland**  
**Appearance before the**  
**Joint Committee on Business Enterprise and Innovation**  
**Tuesday 27th March 2018 @ 4:00 p.m.**

**SUBMISSION**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

I come from a background in the Medical Devices and Pharmaceutical industry at a National, European and Global level. Coupled with this I have served on the Board of IBEC and as President of the Chambers of Commerce of Ireland. This range of experiences has provided me with an insight to the requirements for standardization and the role that NSAI plays in ensuring the Irish companies, both large and small, not only implement standards in their organisations but also contribute to shaping the international standards of the future for their industries.

From my perspective NSAI has an excellent reputation and record, well beyond that of its size, in the international standardization community. This is attributable to the highly qualified, dedicated and long-serving staff who are committed to ensuring that NSAI is a leading provider of world-class standards, certification and measurement services which facilitates trade and support a sustainable economic environment. In fact, NSAI hosts 4 of the 5 primary technical pillars (i.e. Standardization; Metrology; Legal Metrology; Conformity Assessment) identified as prerequisites for an efficient trading economy.

The organisation has a strong governance culture and operates to high standards, is independently accredited by third parties in respect of key services and has also achieved ISO9000 Quality Management certification in areas not covered by accreditation.

Much has been reported about the challenges that Ireland and Irish business faces during the current economic recovery and the evolution of a post-BREXIT environment. Standards presents one important way to tackle the challenges and take advantage of opportunities that may arise. It is in this environment that I see standards, conformity assessment and metrology as crucial supports to business. NSAI is committed to providing the key components of the trade infrastructure which enables industry and the consumer to go about their business with an "assured confidence".

As is the case across the public sector NSAI will face many challenges during the coming years as it continues to evolve within the reality of continued constraints on public bodies. However, in conjunction with the Board, Management and Staff of NSAI I would be proud to contribute to the organisations role in supporting Government Programmes, innovation and a sustainable economic recovery.

It is an honour for me to be considered for this position and please be assured that I will give the role my full attention to assist NSAI to achieve its potential ensuring that measures and standards benefit society and give Irish enterprise a global advantage.

## **INTRODUCTION**

I wish to thank the Committee for consideration of my nomination as Chairman of the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI). I am honoured by this opportunity and in the short period since receiving notification of this nomination I have taken steps to engage with Department for Business Enterprise and Innovation (DEBI) officials and NSAI management in respect of the expectations not only of the Chairperson but of the authority itself.

From my background in the Medical Devices and Pharmaceutical industry at a National, European and Global level I have an awareness of the requirements and experienced the significant benefits accruing to organisations from the application standards in a business environment. In addition, my tenure on the Board of IBEC and as President of the Chambers of Commerce of Ireland have provided me with an insight into the issues facing Irish businesses as they position themselves in the evolving economic climate.

## **NSAI**

My initial discussions have identified that NSAI has strong Vision, Mission, Values and a Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020, approved by the Minister. I would like to take the opportunity to commend the work of the outgoing Chairman - Ms. Julie O'Neill and the Board Members on the strength of this plan, which will guide my Chairmanship, if ratified.

In addition, NSAI is a contributor to the *2018 Action Plan for Jobs Programme (APJ)* and *Enterprise 2025 Renewed* with a role in the following actions;

- Enhancing supports for companies engaged in Research, Development and Innovation.
- Roll out of a Workplace Innovation Toolkit.
- Position Ireland to the forefront of sector specific standards (including in relation to medical technologies, chemicals, food and energy) to stimulate innovation, certainty and international reputation; as well as to manage potential consequences arising from Brexit.

In the context of these initiatives, it is important to note that NSAI is not a job creation agency but a key element in the trade infrastructure that underpins our economic activity.

I am advised that NSAI has strong performance, operating and governance structures aligned to the delivery of its statutory and strategic objectives and the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016.

## **CHALLENGES**

The improving economic conditions and preparations in anticipation of a post-BREXIT environment will provide challenges for the NSAI in the coming years. I understand that the Department is working closely with management to ensure alignment of both NSAI and Departmental objectives, including;

- Targeting and refocusing standards development activities to strategically support priority sectors identified as key to economic development, such as the Medical Devices sector.
- Ensuring that NSAI services contribute to BREXIT solutions that minimise disruption to Irish business and enhance opportunities for entry to international markets.
- Structuring the organisation to delivery at maximum potential for Ireland and Irish Businesses.

- Enhancing Ireland's reputation as a country of choice with a robust trade infrastructure which supports the technical requirements of business.

As a non-commercial body, NSAI's own resourced income continues to be the predominant source of funding with 75% of operating costs met from certification and other fees charged by the authority. With increasing costs and an ongoing programme of staff investment this model is under increasing pressure and I have noted that it is 2020 before management is projecting a return to an operating surplus, which is a key objective for the Board.

As with the wider business community BREXIT will present unique challenges for NSAI, the European and International institutions where we represent Ireland. With support from the Department NSAI is assessing and positioning itself for the evolution of a final BREXIT position. I believe that the services provided by NSAI will contribute to the Government's planning and business supports to ensure Irish business will emerge even stronger in a post-BREXIT environment.

### **CHAIRMAN'S ROLE**

My approach to the position of Chairman is one of consultation and working with the Minister, Board, Department of Business Enterprise and Innovation, primary stakeholders (incl. Government Departments and Agencies) and management to ensure that the strategic direction and operations deliver against the strategy, requirements of legislation and national objectives within a strong governance framework.

I also see a responsibility for championing the future role of NSAI, ensuring that its services are utilised and leveraged within the strategies of Government Departments. In this context, I would welcome the opportunity to present to the committee, on possibly an annual basis, regarding the activities of NSAI if you would consider that beneficial.

### **CLOSING**

Within the technical and quality infrastructure that is Ireland's trading economy NSAI has an important role to play. If my nomination is confirmed, I will be proud to contribute to that.

Should the Members have any questions I would be willing to take them, to the best of my ability and current level of knowledge about NSAI.