

**Oireachtas Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, and Taoiseach  
Opening remarks by Eamonn Crowley, Chief Executive, Permanent TSB**

**Wednesday 23 June 2021**

Chair and members of the Committee,

Thank you for your invitation today. I am joined by my colleagues Patrick Farrell, Retail Banking Director; and Kevin Hewston, interim Chief Operations Officer.

This is my first appearance before the Committee since being appointed Chief Executive of the Bank in June of last year.

Firstly, I would like to assure the Committee that I will always listen to Committee members and give you whatever assistance I can; and that I want Permanent TSB to bring vigorous competition, better service, better products and better value to Irish customers and small businesses in communities across Ireland. I want to build a sustainable bank for the future and at the centre of any sustainable business is the responsibility it has to its customers.

As soon as I took up my position I set out a new Purpose for Permanent TSB. This is centred on building trust with our customers and connecting with the Bank's community heritage, which has evolved over the past 200 years from our unique roots in communities throughout Ireland as the former Irish Permanent building society and the former Trustee Savings Banks.

I set out this Purpose because I want Permanent TSB to be known for having a strong sense of social purpose and one that plays a broader role in Irish society. And because I strongly believe that maximising the return for customers leads to maximising the return for shareholders over the long term. At the heart of growing a truly sustainable business is the fair treatment of and good returns for customers, acknowledging the requirement to make a return on capital so as to be financially sustainable.

While we still have more work to do to further build trust with customers and I acknowledge there are legacy issues from the past, we are taking steps in the right direction, and over the last year we have put our purpose into action with a number of measures, including:

- Keeping all 76 of our branches open throughout the pandemic;
- Committing to maintaining our existing branch network, and in addition to the €30m investment over the last 5 years, we have committed to investing a further €5m over the coming year in refurbishing and maintaining branches to make sure they remain an attractive place for our customers to do business;
- Significant cuts to our mortgage interest rates, both for new and existing customers;
- Greater fairness in our mortgage pricing with a shift towards offering the same rates to both new and existing customers;
- Supporting customers who were affected by the pandemic with over 13,000 payment breaks to give these customers valuable breathing space at a time of significant upheaval. We continue to work closely with ca. 1,000 customers who require ongoing support;

- Supporting the provision of affordable and social housing with a partnership between the Bank and the O’Cualann Co-housing Alliance, in which the Bank provides financial and operational support to O’Cualann;
- Achievement of the Business Working Responsibly Mark, which is the leading standard for CSR and Sustainability certification in Ireland;
- Announcing plans to hire over 180 new staff with a particular focus on IT skills, to complement a €150m investment in our IT systems and digital banking capabilities; and
- Announcing a major initiative to grow our presence in the SME lending market, which included teaming up with the State’s Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland, to provide more than €50m in new low-cost lending to small businesses.

But perhaps the single biggest example of our commitment to making things better for customers, our communities and the wider economy is our announcement in February that we are in discussions with NatWest to acquire certain elements of Ulster Bank’s retail and SME banking business.

This shows our ambition to become Ireland’s best personal and small business bank, a bank with deep roots in Irish communities that can bring even greater competition to customers at a time when customers need competition more than ever.

If we are successful in agreeing commercial terms, Permanent TSB will be a bank with more customers, a larger footprint, greater reach and a greater ability to bring new and better products and services to retail and SME customers.

However, before I conclude my opening remarks I must offer you an apology in respect of the level of detail I can go into at this stage about our discussions with NatWest. I hope you will appreciate that both sides have agreed to conduct these negotiations in the strictest of confidentiality and I must also respect our disclosure obligations as a company that is quoted on the Dublin and London stock exchanges.

What I can say is that I have been greatly encouraged at how constructively both sides are approaching these discussions.

It is my aim that we will reach an agreement that will benefit customers and create value for the State through its shareholding in the Bank.

Finally, I would like to reaffirm our commitment to continuing to support customers as we exit the Covid-19 pandemic and demonstrating our purpose of building trust with customers.

With that I will conclude my opening remarks. Thank you.

ENDS