



Comhairle Cathrach
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City Council

Dublin City Apprenticeship Summit

Council Chambers, City Hall
Wednesday 21st November, 2018

Outcomes Report
Dublin City Summit Series
Apprenticeship Summit



(From L-R), Natasha Kinsella, Dublin Regional Skills Forum, Dublin City Councillor, Deirdre Heney, Greg Swift, Dublin City Council, Mary MacSweeney, Dublin City Council, Richard Shakespeare, Dublin City Council & Dr. Mary-Liz Trant, SOLAS, Lord Mayor of Dublin, Nial Ring

Chaired by Councillor Deirdre Heney of the Economic Development and Enterprise, Strategic Policy Committee & hosted by the Economic Development Office of Dublin City Council

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I. Key Outcomes



(From L-R), Natasha Kinsella, Dublin Regional Skills Forum, Dublin City Councillor, Deirdre Heney, Greg Swift, Dublin City Council, Mary MacSweeney, Dublin City Council, Richard Shakespeare, Dublin City Council & Dr. Mary-Liz Trant, SOLAS.

Greg Swift, Head of Enterprise and Economic Development at Dublin City Council, summarised the Summit contributions, starting with the Lord Mayor, Mr Ring, who spoke about “grasping the opportunity to match apprenticeships with growing industries”, the SOLAS aims and 2020 targets, and new initiatives such as the “Pathways to Participation in Apprenticeship” document, “Generation Apprentice” and “Access to Apprenticeship”.

He made reference to the 70 types of apprenticeship that would be on offer by 2020, representing three times the current level, as well as apprenticeship from Levels 5 to 10 on the Framework of Qualifications. *"We're hearing that apprenticeship is a new way forward and we need a shift of emphasis."*

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He outlined the **many new fields of apprenticeship**, in addition to those associated with a craft, including logistics, technology, business, finance, food, medical and the different sectors that apprenticeship could meet as it evolves. In this regard, he reiterated the need to look at **incentives for employers** in particular but also apprentices. He said that the **National Training Fund** was raised as a topic that needed to be addressed. He referenced the *"great"* examples of new apprenticeships that had been highlighted at the Summit, namely in finance with the National College of Ireland, logistics with Freight Transport Association Ireland and the traditional crafts at Dublin City Council, saying that they showed what an apprenticeship is, what it means and how it works.

He brought up the *"big need"* for **promotion**, touching on contributor comments such as *"you earn while you learn; it's only a method of learning; learning on the job; and getting career guidance involved"*. He mentioned the **Ireland Skills Live event** in the RDS on 21st to 23rd March (2019) as something that people should go to in order to find out more about how apprenticeship works. The other thing, he noted, was the **need for information** and getting the employer involved and the new apprentices to come forward, saying that the data are there to get the message across.

When it comes to **choice**, he spoke about people coming through third level courses and apprenticeships possibly not being promoted as part of that choice. He cited the 2% **participation rate of females** as *"incredibly low"* and an obvious area for addressing along with **people with disabilities** as a largely untapped resource.

He said that the subject of **recession versus full employment** was broached numerous times, notably the experience of companies during the former when they had to halt apprenticeships. *"There's a process that needs to be addressed to make sure that continuation can happen if apprentices are laid off."*

He also emphasised the need to achieve the **balance between the process (exam) and the practicality of learning on-the-job**. He highlighted the need for a **single portal to match employers and apprentices**. Mr Swift reiterated the **high mismatch**

of skills in the over- and underskilled categories, saying that Ireland is at the wrong end of both and identifying apprenticeship as an area that could address that.

He spoke about the **need for more employers and more apprenticeships** and the many sectors that could possibly be perceived as unattractive but have good jobs available, and that how this is promoted is key.

Regarding the future, he said that it was positive to hear that the HEA, SOLAS and ETBs were working closely together in partnership. *"We need to look at the design of the apprenticeship format, the different pathways to employment to highlight that this is a new and unique way to become employed."*

The **Key Outcomes** emerging from the Summit Include:

- As the country approaches full employment, skills shortages are becoming more of an issue
- The development and expansion of existing apprenticeship programmes to include a variety of new fields could address some of the potential skills gaps
- Apprenticeships could have benefits for a variety of people including school leavers, lifelong learners, career changers and those whose jobs are being affected by automation
- Apprenticeships can also offer progression opportunities in terms of upskilling which benefit both employees and employers
- Collaboration between training bodies, education and employers has already achieved much but a ramp up in employer buy-in and support is essential
- Associated costs for employers – particularly SMEs - both in time and money are an issue
- Employment incentives for apprenticeship programmes using the National Training Fund or tax credits could be examined
- Emerging learning technologies have the potential to make formal learning more flexible
- Apprenticeships as a mainstream choice need to be promoted to upcoming generations
- A dedicated portal for disseminating information and posting opportunities would help potential employees make informed choices
- Data on qualification rates of existing apprenticeships would provide information
- Education of career guidance teachers on apprenticeships could help with their promotion in schools
- The Ireland Live Event on 21st-23rd March 2019 showcasing apprenticeships should be promoted

- Additional supports and resources should be aimed at facilitating marginalised and underrepresented groups to become apprentices which could realise significant untapped potential

From the Economic Office viewpoint, he confirmed that the **Local Economic and Community Plan** (LECP) is inviting all Summit participants to put forward ideas and suggestions to be included in the next phase of the economic plan, with consultations scheduled for 2019.

In addition to the DCC research report, Mr Swift hoped the Summit Outcomes Report would “bring the subject forward and make some of these things happen”. He thanked the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Nial Ring; the Chair, Councillor Deirdre Heney and City Hall (for the venue). He particularly wanted to acknowledge the collaboration of Natasha Kinsella (Dublin Regional Skills Forum) for her assistance in facilitating the Summit and Dr May-Liz Trant (SOLAS) for her support. He concluded by conveying his gratitude to all of the speakers and to his own office, including Mary MacSweeney, Steven O’Gara and Juliet Passmore, who wrote the Summit research paper, along with her team. Thanks also to Lesley Kilmurray for her support in preparing this report.



II. Introduction



(From L-R), Steven O’Gara, Dublin City Council, Councillor Deirdre Heney, Richard Shakespeare, Dublin City Council

Chair Councillor Deirdre Heney, Fianna Fáil, opened the Dublin City Apprenticeship Summit by introducing it as the third in a series of summits organised by the Local Enterprise Office. She attributed her particular interest in apprenticeships, particularly in the construction industry, to her remit as a local politician hearing from parents of young people working in this sector during the recession.

Learning that many of those who didn’t complete their apprenticeships (because they were either halfway through or in their third year when their apprenticeships were terminated) suddenly emigrated to Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere without qualifications, she described how *“They essentially fell off the edge of a cliff – a situation that really did and does affect Irish people”*. Comparing this to young people who attended Trinity College, UCD or other third level facilities that were not forced to close during the downturn and did not therefore have to leave their courses prematurely, she emphasised the need for a mechanism to ensure that young Irish people undertaking apprenticeships would never be put in a similar scenario again.

“Everyone needs an equal opportunity to choose whatever career they wish.”

“Everyone needs an equal opportunity to choose whatever career they wish and they shouldn’t be let down by the people of the Irish State.”

III. Opening Address



(From L-R), Greg Swift, Dublin City Council, Lord Mayor of Dublin, Nial Ring, Dr Mary-Liz Trant, SOLAS

Lord Mayor of Dublin, Nial Ring, began his contribution by noting that apprenticeships were traditionally associated with males and construction, but that it was all "*changing dramatically*". Having worked in the financial services sector himself, he expressed a particular interest in the "*stunning success*" of the financial service apprenticeships. Referring to the need to bring about a mindset change, he spoke about the huge work by SOLAS in promoting other types of apprenticeships in new areas such as ICT, auctioneering and the sciences in conjunction with reinforcing the more traditional types. He highlighted that Dublin City Council took in large numbers of apprentices this year in the plumbing, electrical, carpentry and other trades.

"Both the traditional and new apprenticeships offer a fabulous career."

He believes that Government policy is looking at apprenticeships in a more open and transparent way in terms of attracting females. While there is no bias towards third-level education in his north inner city

constituency, Mr Ring said that in Dublin generally, young people overwhelmingly think about going to college. He used the example of his own family, *"None of my four sons considered an apprenticeship, which was sad in a way, but they all thought about going on to college. Yet both the traditional and new apprenticeships offer a fabulous career."* He spoke about the recent Lord Mayor Show in London, where it was interesting to see all of the old liveries and crafts with such a *"great history"* attached to them.

With his 11-year IDA board background, he called attention to the *"dramatic"* biopharma industry, with nine of the top 10 pharmaceutical companies gradually locating on Ireland's east coast. *"I don't think we took the opportunity to match up the apprenticeships as companies were locating here over the last decade but I think that is what's happening now and what people like yourselves are facilitating."*

He emphasised that SOLAS and government policy are promoting and leading on apprenticeships and that Dublin City Council is playing its role in this. In officially launching the summit, he wished the participants a constructive morning and expressed his gratitude to the Chair and Dublin City Council for organising the event.

IV. Section 1: Setting the Scene



Dr Mary-Liz Trant, SOLAS

Dr Mary-Liz Trant, Executive Director of Skills Development at SOLAS, was speaking primarily on behalf of the Apprenticeship Council of which SOLAS is the secretariat and a member. *“In the last three to four years, the Apprenticeship Council has been overseeing what is a pretty ambitious and quite radical project of expanding apprenticeships in Ireland. With four years under our belt, what we’re doing at the moment is stepping back and reflecting on what’s happening and how we’re doing.”*

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She highlighted that there are several hard, tangible targets set out as part of the vision until 2020, fast-forwarding to ask what Ireland as a country was trying to achieve when considering the role of apprenticeships as a route to skills development in a way that has never existed. She described the planned threefold increase in the number of available programmes, resulting in 70 apprenticeships on offer compared to 25 three years ago.

While acknowledging that this was nothing like Germany or Austria, where apprenticeships are used to develop talent, she said that this was very significant

for Ireland. She explained that apprenticeships will be available in lots of vibrant and growing industry areas such as logistics, recruitment, biopharma, technology and finance, and that craft areas, such as construction and business that are the backbone of what exists in this country, would be built on. While mentioning only a few areas, she reiterated that there would be apprenticeship offerings and options for people to "*earn and learn*" and build careers through getting a job and being taken on by employers in these areas.

She confirmed that there would also be apprenticeships ranging from Level 5 up to Level 10 (PhD) on the Framework of Qualifications, offering this mode of on-the-job learning for school-leavers developing intermediate skills through to those striving for advanced skills. She referred to the work in development by the University of Limerick on the Level 10 Principal Engineer, approved by the Apprenticeship Council, as the first available industrial PhD in Ireland.

She outlined the challenge as the shift occurs in Ireland by 2020, where school-leavers, career-changers, women, men and people with disabilities will be looking at their options and thinking about apprenticeships as a way of starting, building or changing their careers. She envisages that employers will also be seeing and using apprenticeships as a major talent pipeline within their companies.

"As recently as four or five years ago, we had about 3,000 employers using apprenticeships, that's now about 5,500 and by 2020, we want to get to at least 7,000 employers using them. We're pointing out the range of ways we get our talent, with apprenticeship constituting a major one of those."

She raised the cultural and social part that "*we must grapple with and move the dial on in Ireland*" as the understanding and new narrative to elicit who apprenticeships are for, what the opportunity is, and the range of ways people can get qualifications with the apprenticeship route, be it a Level 6, honours degree or Masters level. She emphasised that it was open to everyone – people of all backgrounds, ages and abilities. As evident in the media, she said, the narrative is that apprenticeship in Ireland is very much associated with craft, with a strong track record that continues to be important, but the key is to build on this and expand it into a range of areas that are part of 21st century Ireland.

Reverting to the present and the review by the Apprenticeship Council and employer and education and training partners, she said that there would be 42 programmes on offer by the end of this year, up from 25 three years ago, including a number at ordinary and honours degree level and others in new industries such as logistics, finance, recruitment, and technology. She indicated

that the civil service and local authorities would shortly be taking on tech apprentices, asking them and other groups to start looking at apprenticeship as a way of getting their business and finance people, for example, and embracing this as a route for skills development across all employment sectors in Ireland. She referred to the 5,500 active employers, up from 3,000 three to four years ago, with over 500 taking on apprentices in the new programmes, many of whom had never used apprenticeship as a talent pipeline before.

Referring to the discussion during the week about the target number of new apprentices not being hit, the feedback shared by Dr Trant was that it was taking some time because certain companies needed to change their recruitment practices and systems *"by not necessarily looking for their 2.1 graduate any more but taking in people at intermediate level and looking at apprenticeship as advanced level development"*. She explained that this mindset shift *"takes a bit of time"*. Citing the first 500 early movers taking on apprentices on new programmes, she expects this to double, then triple, in the next one to two years. *"Those employers that are on board are huge ambassadors as the feedback is so positive from the experience they're having and as that word gets out, that will be really strong."*

While affirming SOLAS' statutory responsibility for apprenticeship, Dr Trant explained that the model is partnership-based due to close collaboration with the HEA, employer representatives, and the QQI (which has a role in validation and quality assurance), making it a very robust system in Ireland. From the education and training side, she said that there are system changes, efficiencies and innovation needed and noted that facilitating a smooth process for employers to engage with an apprenticeship, get approval, take on apprentices and to be supported in that journey is a *"work in progress"*. It is something that SOLAS is very committed to and hopes to achieve by working in partnership with all of the education and training bodies and employers.

"At the moment, the Council is meeting the employers and consortia working on the new apprenticeships to get feedback. Those sessions have been interesting as there's a really open and frank conversation about how things are going, what people see as the targets for 2020 and what additional supports they need. Overall, it's very positive but the big challenge we're hearing is the ramp-up of employer buy-in and support, to ensure that as we grow, apprenticeships are being industry-led and that employers are coming on board in their numbers and seeing apprenticeships as a viable, valid and important way of getting their skills."

"The big challenge we're hearing is the ramp-up of employer buy-in and support."

She thanked Dublin City Council, the summit organisers, and praised the commitment and support by so many of the stakeholders present in getting the project up and running and believing in apprenticeships as a "*fantastic talent pipeline*".

Dr Trant picked up on Councillor Heney's initial comments reflecting on what happened during the crash, and outlined how SOLAS put a large project in place to help the hundreds and even thousands of apprentices who were made redundant although many people were indeed "*lost*". Furthermore, she said that presently when an apprenticeship is being validated, there has to be clear arrangements in place so that if an apprentice is made redundant they can complete their qualification regardless.

She spoke about this as something that has been learnt and will most likely be put to the test at some point, even though the economy is now doing well. She sees it as an important part of making the model work and be sustainable, whereby if something happens within a work-based learning route there must be the ability to ensure that apprentices are looked after and receive their qualifications and learning.

She pointed to the feedback from the consortia that there are a lot of career-changers who would have been in industries for years without getting a formal qualification, but now, they have an opportunity as their employers are facilitating them in getting an apprenticeship contract, completing their apprenticeship and potentially moving to a new, more senior position within their companies. "*We're starting to see apprenticeship shaping up as an option for so many groups of people, not just young people and men. Also, we've just finished a review of Pathways to Apprenticeship, looking at the profile of who apprentices are, and we're setting targets and putting steps in place to really drive that.*"

V. Section 2: Outlook for Skills Gaps and Training



(From L-R), Natasha Kinsella, Dublin Regional Skills Forum, Tony Donohoe, Ibec, Dr Paul Redmond, ESRI, Dr Vivienne Patterson, HEA, Aidan Flynn, FTAI

Dr Paul Redmond, ESRI Research Officer, addressed the skills mismatch in the labour market related to apprenticeships and the construction sector in particular. He began by defining genuine skills shortages as opposed to other types of recruitment difficulties as *"the lack of suitably qualified people to fill roles that are available provided the firms are offering the appropriate pay, conditions and contracts."*

He cited several interesting reports from 2018 including one by Ciaran McQuinn of the ESRI published that day about the potential sources of future labour supply in the construction industry. As the country approaches full employment, the challenge perceived was who would fill these new roles as they become available. While underlining the importance of immigration, Dr Redmond's colleague raises the point, *"If we're relying to some degree on immigration to fill roles in order to avoid these skills shortages, the current high cost of accommodation, especially in some parts of Dublin, may act as a disincentive to this."*

As often found in literature, he continued *"When you're trying to tackle any sort of mismatch, including skills shortages, barriers to residential mobility is an issue*

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"If it's too costly to move within and even between countries, this can lead to persistent skills mismatches and shortages."

Related to this, citing the Construction Industry Federation report commissioned earlier this year to survey employers, Dr Redmond explained that, unsurprisingly, the statistics revealed that a large amount of residual uncertainty in the industry is deterring the employment of apprentices for up to four years. This is not due, he stressed, to a genuine skills shortage or a lack of qualified people but is related to the fear of uncertainty for the future and a reluctance to employ apprentices.

While admitting that the data were old and had relatively small sample sizes in specific sectors, the 2015 ESRI employee survey reported that it was not only employers who were uncertain. Employee views within construction and trades in response to the question "do you think it's likely you'll lose your job within the next year?" recorded the perceived likelihood of job loss to be the third highest in the EU after Spain and Greece, revealing that there is fear among employees too. One of the relevant recommendations read by Dr Redmond, based on the earlier report and alluded to previously, was that it might be important to have a way to promote apprenticeships as a viable option to young people while recognising the challenge given the continuing uncertainty among employers.

Speaking about other types of skills mismatches that can occur in the labour market, these are primarily related to individuals in employment with excess skills or skills underutilization (not fully used in their employment) or those who lack the required skills to do a good job (underskilling). He indicated that Ireland ranked poorly in both measures, as the fourth highest country in terms of overskilling and with the seventh highest rate in underskilling in Europe.

Addressing the causes of these in research, receiving attention recently, *"It appears that educational career choices and jobs that are more vocational in nature, dealing with specific skills, tend to be associated with lower levels of mismatch. That's a good thing because when we talk about these types of mismatches they come at a cost. If you're in a job and you feel you're mismatched, there's a cost – often profound – in terms of your job satisfaction and you can have wage penalties for the employer so there's lost productivity. In general, it can be seen as a waste of talent."*

On drilling down into the data of mismatches among construction and tradespeople in Ireland, bearing in mind that underskilling is quite high generally, the level of employees who report that they don't have the requisite skillset is very low and well below the European average, with only 3% not possessing enough skills to do the job. While cautioning this as a cursory look at broad statistics and

the need to be careful about the conclusions being drawn, he remarked that, at a glance, it was a positive outcome in that the people within the construction and trade industries feel *"pretty well equipped to do their jobs"*.

Tony Donohoe, Head of Education and Social Policy at IBEC and Chair of the Irish Government's Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, reflected on how apprenticeships are getting both political and media attention and that they are a pathway for employers to recruit and develop staff with relevant skills to address some of the issues covered by Dr Redmond vis-à-vis skills mismatch. He commented on how employers have an influence on the curriculum and on-the-job learning, while apprenticeships serve as a route to sustainable and rewarding careers for employees.

He recounted how this has been talked about for quite some time, recalling the Apprenticeship Review Group set up by the then Minister for Education, Ruairi Quinn, over five years ago after the collapse in construction. He said that it was, in some ways, an acknowledgement that this was a model that needed to be broadened into other sectors of the economy, and that it should be enterprise-led. Admitting that some stakeholders have possibly been a bit impatient with the speed of the roll-out of the new apprenticeship model, he believes that in retrospect, the challenge should not have been underestimated as it represents a major cultural and economic shift in the way business is done.

Mr Donohoe referred to the *"lazy commentary"* regarding the German, Austrian and Swiss models and stated that anybody working in the area of education policy knows that you cannot simply transpose a model from one country to another. In some of those countries, the apprenticeship system was developed over centuries and not just decades.

*"A lot of good work
being done around
campaigns such as
'Generation
Apprenticeship."*

In the context of the long-established culture within construction, he highlighted the challenge of expanding this into other areas as well as the cultural challenges around learners. *"At one level, it's very good that as a society we put a high value on education but we do tend to define education attainment in terms of CAO points and direct entry into higher education. I think there's a growing acknowledgement of that and a lot of good work being done around campaigns*

such as 'Generation Apprenticeship' and even these type of events to start showing that there are different opportunities."

Mr Donohoe wished to focus on the challenge with employers as that was his constituency, speaking of a "window of opportunity" as Ireland approaches full employment and saying that now was the time to focus employers' attention on the skills and labour market shortages evident in most areas of the economy.

He explained that it was a particular challenge as employers were not accustomed to recruiting and developing staff through apprenticeships and that many SMEs were time poor and limited in terms of resources for mentoring and developing apprentices. He said that this needed to be acknowledged and suggested helping with the cost of providing apprenticeships, especially around the current anomalies. *"Employers paying off-the-job wages of apprentices doesn't happen in the traditional craft apprenticeships but it does in the new apprenticeships – I suppose that continued in order to embed the new way of rolling out apprenticeships but I think the time has come to address that."*

Mr Donohoe's second point was around awareness, highlighting one of the more important recommendations of the "Pathways to Participation in Apprenticeship" document mentioned by Dr Trant as the establishment of a single portal where employers can go and post their apprenticeship opportunities. *"It's surprising that four or five years into this project we haven't got a single portal to market opportunities. Maybe that should've been an early priority because people talk about having a CAO system for apprenticeships but it's actually employers that offer apprenticeships and without their buy-in, you're not going to have apprenticeships,"* he concluded.

Natasha Kinsella, Manager of the Dublin Regional Skills Forum (a Department of the Education & Skills initiative bringing employers and education and training providers together to collaboratively develop skills across the Dublin Region) expressed her delight in collaborating with Dublin City Council on the event given that the Forum's work is about bridging the gap between employers and education. In the context of the landscape and skills challenges previously discussed, she reiterated the skills challenge versus the talent acquisition piece that the Forum is trying to address. She acknowledged the Forum Chair, Siobhan O'Shea, and a number of the providers and individuals present who are members of the Forum.

In terms of why and where the Forum fits in the apprenticeship space, she highlighted that Dublin accounts for 30% of the country's employment, outperforming the national average in most of the labour market indicators. *"There's still a considerable cohort*

of individuals that are completely disengaged from employment and/or educational training provision. On the other hand, there's the serious challenge to attract and retain talent across a wide variety of sectors, certainly within construction in Dublin, but also health, wholesale, retail, accommodation, food, financial and services. In terms of addressing the landscape between replacement and expansion, there is ICT and construction. So overall, the total recruitment challenge is in various sectors."

"There's the serious challenge to attract and retain talent across a wide variety of sectors."

She called attention to the fact that there has been a lot of work done, by the Forum and others, to bridge the gap between education and provision, and to try to support the provision through apprenticeships to enable the talent pipeline to be attracted. It was where apprenticeships featured strongly, she said, by way of allowing individuals to work and learn while allowing employers to build the talent pipeline for the future, an important context to note.

Speaking about the Forum's focus, Ms Kinsella emphasized the engagement and communications pieces. Based on conversations, *"The awareness about the apprenticeship offerings and potential pathways is still a particular struggle for employers as they're not quite sure how to navigate around the system"*. She referred to the "Pathways to Participation in Apprenticeship" report that identifies a field of opportunity, no longer talking about alternatives but about lots of different options to navigate through that system for both participants and employers.

"The awareness about the apprenticeship offerings and potential pathways is still a particular struggle for employers."

By way of deliverables, over the two and a half years of the Forum's existence, she spoke of a number of developments and collaborations between industry consortia to drive the development of apprenticeship and traineeships. According to Ms Kinsella, some of the examples previously mentioned are indicative of the collaborative piece between the educational providers. *"In Dublin alone, most of the provision now is progressed quite considerably, with offerings in financial services, tourism, hospitality, ICT, construction, logistics and transport, sales and retail, and the biopharma and medtech sectors."* Amidst the continuing challenge, she sees the advancement of the dialogue and support for employers as offering

the solution for the different pathways, namely apprenticeship and traineeships, to ensure the talent pipeline for the future.

On conclusion of this section addressing the outlook for skills gaps and training, the floor was opened to questions.

Ms Marion Wilkinson, Senior Policy and Public Affairs Advisor of the National Disability Authority and board member of the Dublin Regional Skills Forum wished to reinforce the work of Ms Kinsella on collaboration, acknowledging that it was not a *"perfect space"* and that more work needed to happen. She said that she would like Dublin City Council and its partners to consider the untapped workforce of people with disabilities. She suggested that additional supports would make it possible for this group to access and stay at work.

Councillor Heney picked up on Mr Donohoe's commentary in relation to supporting SMEs, describing an event held at the Mansion House the previous week, where a conversation about the bravery of entrepreneurship developed. She stressed the *"get up and go attitude"* of people who set up small businesses, representing the backbone of society, and touched on her own background of both small business and apprenticeship through her mother and late father's respective roles as a small shopkeeper and apprentice sheet metal worker, calling him *"a really fine tradesman"*, while her many siblings all set up businesses in their own right.

"We need to support bravery like those individuals show and need a situation where employers know where to go. We need to ensure that anyone who chooses the option of an apprenticeship that doesn't involve going to mainstream college courses are encouraged and given every single opportunity, because we need apprentices and all the services that are provided as a result of employers being brave and young people taking options that best suit their skills and talents."



(From L-R) Councillor Deirdre Heney, Lord Mayor of Dublin, Nial Ring, Councillor Paul McAuliffe

VI. Section 3: View from Industry



(From L-R) Dr Peter Rigney, ICTU, Brendan McCabe, Dublin City Council, Mary Tyrrell, Dublin City Council, Dermot Carey, CIF, David Tracey, John Sisk & Son, Ciaran King, King & Moffatt

David Tracey, Training Centre Manager for John Sisk & Son, thanked the event hosts for the opportunity to contribute on the topic of apprenticeships, specifically in the construction industry. He introduced himself as a former carpenter joiner apprentice of 35 years who took over the Sisk Joinery and Training Centre at a very young age. He explained that he had first-hand experience of taking in young people, mapping their progress through apprenticeships and seeing them become the next generation of site managers. He emphasized how the success of a company, big or small, is undoubtedly built on its people and that apprenticeships definitely play a significant role in this.

Mr Tracey emphasised how mapping progress during apprenticeships and how these young people become next generation foremen is so important. *"We're glad to say that we started 10 new apprentices in carpentry and joinery three weeks ago, of which one is a female, so we're encouraging more women to come into our industry. Sally-Jean is working as well as any of the lads and the buzz in the workshop is amazing while the job satisfaction is incredible."* He said that witnessing the enthusiasm of these young people learning skills from the start is so inspiring and definitely very important to the company going forward.

"We're encouraging more women to come into our industry."

While he acknowledged certain negativity about apprenticeships and the training method, he stressed that the standard-based system, with on- and off-the-job training and the part played by SOLAS, the Educational Training Boards (ETBs) and Institutes of Technology (IOTs) are all critical because they produce highly skilled and qualified people in all trades at the end of four years. As a contractor, he is aware of the skills shortage, particularly in the wet trades, such as bricklaying, plastering and painting, referring to that morning's report from the ESRI. Working with the CIF through manpower education and training, he said that they were working hard to promote apprenticeships.

Mr Tracey broached the need to connect with industry and employers and mentioned that his company was doing a lot of career events.

"One problem is getting employers on board, a lot of whom are SMEs – we have to make

changes to how these small employers can employ apprentices because it's a big commitment taking apprentices on for four years due to redundancy and other issues, so we're talking to SOLAS about ideas like apprentice sharing."

"We're talking to SOLAS about ideas like apprentice sharing."

His message to employers was to recruit more, engage more with the ETBs and SOLAS, and advocate for employment incentives. He presented the Ireland Skills Live event¹ scheduled for 21st to 23rd March 2019 at the RDS. Encouraging the summit participants to attend, he explained that this would be the first time ever that the national apprentices would compete at the one time under the one roof (they have been taking place since the 1950s in the IOTs throughout the country to poor audiences). With the CIF skills village, hero stage and 'try a trade' area, they will rally every school (students and teachers) in the country as well as career guidance counselors, parents and the "mammies of Ireland" to come to these live competitions for all skill areas. He finished his contribution by saying that ideally as many people as possible would attend what would hopefully become an annual event and praising the "Generation A" competition run by SOLAS that he feels should be supported by more employers.

Mary Tyrrell from the Performance and Development Unit in Human Resources at Dublin City Council (DCC), described her role as administering and supporting the Junior Apprenticeship Programme in DCC. By way of an overview, she outlined that provision was made for the programme in the Council's 2018 budget as managers had identified the need across the Housing and Community Services and Environment and Transportation Departments.

She explained that the programme was designed collaboratively between HR, SOLAS and the local departments, and that the public advertisement in March 2018 generated huge interest and volume of applicants. She described how the recruitment process involved a suitability assessment and interview, after which 18 apprenticeships were offered – six brick and stonelayers, four carpenters, four plumbers and four electricians.

Ms Tyrrell highlighted how the programme began on the 24th of September 2018 with an induction process for the apprentices and would be phased, with a

¹ Further information is available at: <https://www.irelandskillslive.ie/home.html>

minimum of four years (on a temporary fixed-term contract) to complete, combining on-the-job training and classroom-based learning. She mentioned that the apprentices are being monitored and assessed by their DCC Supervisor, ETB and college tutor. On successful completion, they will be qualified in their respective trades and eligible to apply for future positions at the Council (although there is no guarantee of permanent employment).

"It's been enjoyable and a pleasure to be administering the Junior Apprenticeship Programme."

Ms Tyrrell reiterated Mr Tracey's positive experience, *"The enthusiasm shown by the apprentices and the way they engaged with us as an organisation during the induction programme was wonderful. It's great to see them coming into the organisation and it created a buzz across*

the depots where they're working. We had a diverse group of successful applicants, which was very good. It's been enjoyable and a pleasure to be administering the Junior Apprenticeship Programme."



(From L-R) Brendan McCabe, Dublin City Council, Mary Tyrrell, Dublin City Council, Dermot Carey, CIF

Brendan McCabe, Area Maintenance Officer in Dublin City Council within the Housing and Community Department, introduced himself as a carpenter-joiner with responsibility for providing an in-house maintenance service to the Council's buildings and managing the apprenticeship scheme for his department. *"I*

introduced myself as a carpenter/joiner because that is what I am, what I identify myself as and 'til my dying day I will always refer to myself as this. Titles will come and go but my trade will always be with me and be part of who I am."

As a strong advocate, Mr McCabe spoke about his first-hand experience of the benefits of apprenticeships and his reason for actively working to recruit and get involved with an apprenticeship scheme for the past six years. He referred to the 18 new apprentices on the Junior Apprenticeship Programme as a "*wish come true*".

Having served his apprenticeship with DCC, Mr McCabe said that he was privileged to work with many great craftspeople from every walk of life over the past 32 years, some of whom had no academic qualifications and many of whom had left school early (after primary level). He believed that this did not in any way make them poor craftspeople and his biggest fear was losing the chance to recruit gifted people into the trades due to the amount of exams and third-level education required to complete an apprenticeship. "*Think of a scenario where water is coming through your ceiling from a leak at midnight, would you call a plumber and ask what exams they had and if they were equivalent to a QQI award or would you just want a good plumber who could fix your problem quickly and not create any others?*"

He said that while he did not know any craftsperson who boasts about having passed all their exams or gaining a Level 6 or equivalent qualification, he knew hundreds who would gladly describe what they had made or done. "*When you look at a craftsperson recalling a job or showing you previous work, you hear pride in their voice, you see happiness in their eyes and I can tell you that money can't buy this sense of achievement.*"

In bringing up the smart economy, Mr McCabe observed that it is all very well having everybody educated to a level where we can tell anyone how to do a job, but that it is pointless unless there is someone who can physically do it.

He posed the question of whether the drive to academically educate people to a higher level than before and demand higher, more recognised qualifications is preventing some capable and talented people from entering apprenticeships. He believes that this is where society is ruling out a vast cohort of people who do not like academic education, people who are not lacking intelligence. "*However, because they don't fit into our boxes of how education is supposed to work, are we leaving them behind?*"

"I feel that it's very important that we stop and look closely at how the formal educational part of the apprenticeship scheme is currently being delivered."

He gave the example of someone who does not like school but loves practical work and asked if the thought of attending college for three to five months at a time along with all the study was off-putting? He proposed looking at a return to the one-day off-the-job training or a less intense form of delivery than presently used on the basis that this might be easier to sell to a prospective apprentice. He suggested another benefit that if they found something difficult or did not fully understand something, that this one day a week might give apprentices the chance to speak with their work mentors who could possibly explain theories in a more practical sense, allowing the apprentice to process the information.

Mr McCabe adopted the small employer point of view, asking if they can afford to let one of their staff go off-the-job for three to five months when there is a project to complete? With one day a week, he submitted, if they needed to keep the apprentice to finish a job, they would only miss one or two days which they could catch up on easier than losing a week or two. He questioned if this block release is preventing small employers from taking on apprentices?

He asked if employers want all craftspeople educated to a very high level or some of them to simply work, and if craftspeople all want to attend college, study and sit exams, become site managers, supervisors etc. or if some simply want to work? *"Maybe we need to look at various levels of qualifications within each trade as a way of allowing those who just want to work to succeed, but also facilitating those who wish to further their careers."*

Mr McCabe also believes that trades and apprenticeships should be left to tradespeople and industry to design and operate as they know what they want from their craftspeople. Tradespeople have the experience and knowledge to educate apprentices and show them why things are done the way they are, as has been done – and has worked – for millennia, he said.

As part of its social obligation to citizens to provide opportunities that would not normally come their way, Mr McCabe highlighted that Dublin City Council is currently involved with an "Access to Apprenticeship" scheme in conjunction with DIT. The aim is to give young people who may not have formal educational qualifications and do not meet the minimum requirements to enter a craft, the chance to work as an apprentice for three months to see if this is a career path they wish to pursue.

He brought up an adult apprenticeship scheme run by the Council many years ago that gave some of the general operative staff the option to become apprentices and train as craftspeople. He explained that many of these people had little or minimal formal education but that their life and work experiences were immense. *"They showed me a few tricks. When on-the-job training was happening, they excelled. However, when it came to the formal off-the-job training (particularly phases four and six) these people really struggled. I saw grown men cry with the stress of study and exams."* He stated that the Council and its staff, particularly at a local level, gave every support, with some giving personal time to help these people achieve their goal of becoming craftspeople.

"When he had finished, one chap said he could never thank me, my colleagues or the organisation enough for all the help we'd given him. He told me that on the day he received his national craft certificate, his wife said that she was so proud of him and that she was happier than on her wedding day. She said that the confidence he gained, the delight in his eyes when he could do jobs for his children and the pride he showed of works he carried out on his home was something that could not be bought."

Mr McCabe recalled that this man, when asked, said that he would go through it again or recommend someone else to do it. However, he told Mr McCabe that he found all the study, lectures and exams extremely difficult and felt that he had no one in college to explain things to him in a language he understood or to demonstrate practically what things actually meant. This raised the question of whether we are now excluding these people from becoming good productive citizens with the opportunity to develop and to improve their standard of living.

In deciding on the minimum education requirement for the recruitment drive for apprentices, Mr McCabe maintained that candidates with seven "A"s in the Leaving Certificate would be of little use while those demonstrating hand-eye coordination (being able to clap their hands) and a genuine passion and vocation for a trade would thrive. Mr McCabe said that he did not really care if the apprentices got distinctions or barely passed their exams as long as they had a passion for their trade and could do the work asked of them. While he would never check their results again once he knew they had passed, he would always be looking at the quality of their work as a testament to the onsite training that the Council, its craftspeople and himself as an individual have provided for them.

"At the end of the day, the quality of work, an ability to problem solve and adapt are the most important things needed in a craftsperson, not their exam grades."

He feels that those apprentices who are keen on academic education will attend extra courses to suit where they want to take their career paths, and that these are the people who will become foremen, site managers, clerks of works, inspectors, area maintenance officers, etc. *"For others, making them happy is about the ability to produce something tangible on a daily basis, to look back at the end of the day and say "I did that", to show work they have done to their family and friends that could still be there to be admired in hundreds of years, and to get paid for achieving that work satisfaction."* Mr McCabe suggested that perhaps now was the time to look at what society actually needs from its craftspeople and not what theorists believe craftspeople really need.

"City Hall was built and maintained by proper craftspeople... It's still here and rest assured that it'll see you and me out."

He requested the group to think about the issues constantly arising with current buildings and to look at the *"magnificent building"* housing City Hall. He recounted how it has seen a rising and civil war, has so many stories and scars yet is still standing perfectly. He described how it was

designed to be functional and aesthetically pleasing, and was built with quality materials that last lifetimes and not something with a 30-year guarantee. *"City Hall was built and maintained by proper craftspeople, with no formal education or exams to their names, but with experience passed on by their predecessors rather than written down in some instruction manual. It's still here and rest assured that it'll see you and me out while many more generations will hopefully enjoy its splendour – can the same be said for our latest buildings?"*

Mr McCabe closed his remarks by stating that society needs to look at what is required from its craftspeople and where it intends to get these people from. *"For me, it has to be from those groups all around us who want to learn from work rather than learn to work."*



(From L-R) Paul Sweetman, Ibec, Carol Kenna, Ibec, David Tracey, SISK, Cllr Deirdre Heney, Dermot Carey, CIF, Natasha Kinsella, DRSE, Aidan Flynn, FTAI, Ciaran King, King & Moffatt

Dermot Carey, Director of Safety and Training at the Construction Industry Federation (CIF), opened his remarks by putting the construction industry into context with reference to the ESRI Report relating to the demand for skills. He said that the industry was worth €20 billion and growing at about 7% per annum, resulting in an increase of 18,000 employees last year with no sign of this changing and thus there is a pent-up demand for skills.

He also cited the 2016 DKM and SOLAS report that forecast a need for 112,000 people over the next three to four years. He confirmed that the construction industry has always been a supporter and promoter of apprenticeships, with about 8,000 presently, and he welcomed the wealth of work being done to promote apprenticeship through the SOLAS' "Generation Apprentice" initiative, to get young people to realise the available opportunities. He also lauded the recent "Pathways to Participation in Apprenticeship" document.

In terms of the job marketplace, Mr Carey spoke about connecting with the career guidance teachers over the past four years, seeing them as a major opportunity to market a job in the construction industry. *"Career guidance teachers have been telling us that we need to provide them with a central place that they can go to find jobs. We launched*

"Career guidance teachers have been telling us that we need to provide them with a central place that they can go to find jobs."

apprentices.ie a number of years ago and have a vacancy section but we really welcome the upcoming inclusion of the marketplace on the apprenticeship.ie website from SOLAS."

He said the CIF welcomed the widening of the offering in relation to apprenticeship and making it more attractive and acceptable to people. Saying he heard Dr Trant on the radio the previous day describing apprenticeship merely as "*a method of learning*", he believes that is what needs to be understood by people.

He spoke about the huge opportunities he sees for traineeships given one of the issues in the construction sector is the pace at which people have to be trained, alluding to the slow pace of the new apprenticeships coming online. On the other hand, companies can respond quickly and give good qualifications to people with traineeships so that route should not be forgotten about.

Speaking about areas of concern, Mr Carey reiterated some of those that Mr Donohoe mentioned, saying that when it came to choice, apprenticeships were seen as a "*consolation prize*" at the moment. He said that this needed to change and that a lot of good work was being done to this end. He identified career guidance teachers and the Institute of Career Guidance, technology teachers and SOLAS as good advocates committed to promoting apprenticeship. He reinforced Mr Donohoe and Mr Tracey's point that the key difference between apprenticeships and any other type of training is the need for employers before you can have apprenticeships.

He said that in the construction sector, 96% of companies employ fewer than 10 people, and having withstood 10 years of a very difficult economic situation, survival is still in their mentality. This was indicated by Dr Redmond as part of the findings in the CIF report. He stressed the need to bring employers on board as well as the apprentices. As Mr McCabe had mentioned, he affirmed that 22 weeks off-the-job was too much for a small employer and needed to be facilitated.

"Under the new apprenticeship regime, off-the-job training phases have to be paid for by the employer. I think this is a huge disincentive for small employers."

The other concern he raised, echoing Mr Donohoe's, was that "*Under the new apprenticeship regime, off-the-job training phases have to be paid for by the employer. I think this is a huge disincentive for small employers – it's just not going to happen. Considering that the National Training Fund is oversubscribed by €480 million, we feel that's a major mistake. That is employers' – not State –*

money so we believe there's a fund there to address that."

He spoke about "*some seriously bad decisions made in the last couple of years*", such as the introduction of student fees for apprentices in 2014, explaining that the cost eventually comes back to the employer, something highlighted in the CIF's budget submission in the last number of years as a point to be addressed. He also referred to the current attempt by Revenue to tax off-the-job payments for apprentices, concluding that the Government needed to address all of these aforementioned matters in trying to attract employers and, by extension, apprentices.

Ciaran King, General Manager at King and Moffatt, began his contribution by thanking the event organisers for the invitation to speak and saying that he was from an accountancy and HR rather than an apprenticeship background. He recalled that King and Moffatt had stopped apprenticeship training between 2008 and 2013 due to the economic downturn except for eight apprentices, something that needed addressing when he came into the company in 2013.

He described how the company changed its recruitment approach by promoting apprenticeships through the local schools and main newspapers in the border counties around Roscommon, resulting in 70 applications and the hire of 10 apprentices, including a Level 8 Quantity Surveyor and Mechanical Engineer who both qualified in the last year. This showed the calibre of people who were attracted into apprenticeship and these two individuals went on to become site managers and are now creating the culture within his company.

He emphasized the big advantage for apprentices, "*They can enter the company immediately, earn when on-the-job, get a feel for it in the first eight to twelve months depending on how quickly they get called to SOLAS, with very few dropping out at this stage, and when they go on to college they're earning straight away.*"

In reiterating Mr Carey's sentiment in relation to apprenticeship fees, Mr King pointed out that while larger employers were in a position to pay for their students to go back to college, smaller employers can't afford it and so these huge costs can be put back on apprentices, which is very discouraging. "*We regularly have people coming in about the €2,500 to €3,000 for insurance that people are having to pay to get to work so there are significant costs on young people.*"

"There are significant costs on young people."

While acknowledging the boom-bust cycle in Ireland and the uncertainty among employers and employees as previously mentioned by Dr Redmond, he believes that the opportunity to travel is immense and should be promoted within the industry. He talked about “splitting away” the [negative] attitude and association that some parents and career guidance teachers have to property developers, the construction industry and apprentices themselves because apprenticeship is so transferable. He stressed that Irish apprentices are very well recognised across Europe and the world and are building data centres across the continent for Amazon, Microsoft and Google while also working with big food and semiconductor companies.

“I think that those working in the career guidance area should be invited onto the Dublin Regional Skills Forum because they could learn a lot from sitting in the room with the ITs, SOLAS, ETBs, CIF, IBEC and the local councils and hearing what’s available from industry.”

Mr King contributed to the discussion about changing the apprenticeships and shortening the programmes on- and off-the-job. With operations in Ireland, the UK, mainland Europe and North America, his company’s view is that the electrical and mechanical apprenticeships should be left as they are, claiming that the apprentices turned out by Ireland in these trades compete very well across the world and are “*miles ahead*” of those from the UK. He admitted that the block-laying and painting areas, where Ireland is struggling to get people, possibly need to be looked at.

Referring to Dr Trant’s contribution, he said that it was great to see the growth in apprenticeships from 25 to 45 this year and 70 in a few years’ time. He believes that there are huge advantages to the one- or two day a week off-the-job for certain roles within companies as they tend to be systematic, with a process around how people deliver service and output, so people can learn “*small skills*” off-the-job.

He also picked up on the Ireland Skills Live event mentioned by Mr Tracey, confirming that his company was sponsoring the Building Information Modelling (BIM), with 3D design and construction and AutoCAD. He believes that there is scope for a one-day a week apprenticeship in this field as his company is looking to offer a service through people building on BIM in Ireland and New York and selling that through cloud services directly to clients in the US and even across the UK and Europe.

Stressing the need to focus on the recruitment process and the attitude towards it, he highlighted the many jobs and positions available where “*People are doing*

three to four years of degrees with huge college fees and they're possibly only using 10 to 15% of that when they actually come to work in the companies".

Peter Rigney, Industrial Officer at ICTU, began by picking up on the "sell it to the mummies of Ireland" phrase, highlighting that this group were presently poring over CAO forms and identifying them as an "important sell", whereby apprenticeships should play to their strengths.

"The HEA and SOLAS should publish the information about the first year and final qualification completion rates of apprenticeship."

From the data available from SOLAS (given that each apprentice must be registered), he posed the question of what percentage of apprentices completed their first year and final qualification (be it two, three or four years)? He believes that SOLAS should make that information available, as this would put pressure on the universities and IOTs in turn to do the same. He described the CAO as a market where successful participation requires full information. *"If there's one suggestion to come out of today, it's that the HEA and SOLAS should publish the information about the first year and final qualification completion rates of apprenticeship."*

Traditionally, Dr Rigney continued, apprenticeships were at Level 6. Referring to the Parliamentary questions of 25th October, one third (14) of the 41 or 42 apprenticeships are in the "new generation" and this number has gone from 2% two years ago to 10% now, which he deemed a "respectable increase".

He drew attention to the example of the Level 7 Electrical Engineering apprenticeship at the Limerick Institute of Technology, explaining that a new multinational came in and "hoovered up" engineers from everywhere. In facing a genuine problem, they chose existing electricians (through a system of block and day release) at Level 6 and gave them the study tools to go to Level 7. The advantage for the electricians concerned is that they got to be a Level 7 engineer and the companies got to work with people they know and grow their own talent.

Dr Rigney spoke about recognizing that the process of recruitment revolves around the CAO, remembering being told this by the training manager when he was promoting the recruitment of female apprentices for Irish Rail 10 or 15 years ago. *"We recognise that the idea of the portal is very good as well as disseminating information, mainly to the "mummies of Ireland", so they can make informed choices."*

He said that this would, however, involve a certain amount of displacement due to the new online apprenticeships in insurance, logistics and finance. Having seen an advert for insurance apprenticeships in the CIE companies, Dr Rigney believes that there is a role for the state sector, namely the city and county councils, to start apprentices in such areas as ICT.

He acknowledged that this may result in fewer people coming in at the traditional Grade 3 clerical admin route (due to the employment control framework equivalent), but given the weight of people employed in admin, he feels it is incumbent on the public service to start looking at putting in place apprenticeships in logistics, ICT, and possibly finance. He also brought up a possible role as an apprentice library assistant, of which the county councils are the largest overseers in the country.

"There have to be ways found to put appropriate incentives in place for employers to employ apprentices. It is also true that somewhere midway through the second year, employers begin to get a return on the labour of the apprentices, which is equivalent to or maybe a bit higher than the percentage of the rate they're paid, and this should be borne in mind."

"There have to be ways found to put appropriate incentives in place for employers to employ apprentices."

He outlined the importance of the *"earn while you learn"* concept and that it needs to be marketed and promoted. At a policy level, he agreed with Mr Donohoe that Ireland will not get the German dual system (which took 1,000 years to develop), saying that there are a lot of new apprenticeships whose possible failure was not a reason for the media to *"pillory"* the new system. It needed to be acknowledged as an experiment, he said, and not all experiments succeed if they did, *"they wouldn't be experiments!"*

The session was opened up to the floor with Jo Twomey from the Dublin North West Partnership contributing. She spoke about the Apprenticeship Fair held in Finglas and Ballymun for the past three years and her role in recruiting local schools to attend along with an information session for schools on apprenticeships. She detailed her experience that career guidance counsellors know nothing about apprenticeships, that they are a valuable opportunity for young people and that there is little understanding of the new apprenticeships. She believes that the portal will help as the guidance counsellors are overwhelmed with CAO matters and that the *"mammies of Ireland"* piece is huge.

VII. Section 4: Apprenticeships for the Future



Dublin City Council Chambers, City Hall

Jonathan Brittain, Head of Apprenticeships at the National College of Ireland (NCI), introduced the two new apprenticeships in the field of international financial services, run with industry partner Financial Services Ireland: the Level 6 Higher Certificate aimed at broad entry-level associate positions and a Level 8 Higher

Diploma aimed at specialist positions in data analytics. Having started in October 2017, and being almost halfway through the second academic year, there are no graduates at this point (given that they are both two-year programmes).

As the name suggests, they are new and different, involving a sector that has no experience of apprenticeships, so there is no proven track record to rely on. As an education provider in a new apprenticeship, Mr Brittain is continually questioning whether the apprenticeships work or not and has applied questions to this end.

Asking if they could attract people to become an international financial services (IFS) apprentice, the answer is "yes", confirming that it is "*grossly oversubscribed*" with between 400 and 500 applications each year. Asking if people stay on the apprenticeship or drop out, he attested to the high levels of retention at almost 90%, which is far higher than a comparable full-time higher education programme. Asking if people pass the course, the answer is "yes", with all apprentices staying on the apprenticeship passing first year and over 85% achieving the highest grades, which is again much higher than a comparable programme.

Pondering the pass rate and why apprentices do so well, he attributed it to the competition for places and rigorous selection process that produces only the best applicants, support from the NCI with an assigned academic supervisor in addition to a workplace mentor, and most of all, the fact that they are highly motivated students.

He said that it was also important to question the job, believing that a trial period of two years for the employer and apprentice is more than enough. Making an analogy to a relationship staying together for the sake of the kids, he questioned if both parties were staying together for the sake of the qualification. In other words, "*Will we put up with each other 'til the end of the apprenticeship when the qualification is achieved, then part company and each go separately on our merry way?*" From the employer perspective, he confirmed that they want to produce apprentices who will progress into the industry afterwards. Asking if they will hire the apprentice after the apprenticeship, it was not possible to tell with no graduates as of yet.

In response to the question about whether the young apprentice (generally early 20s) in their first full-time job wants to work in the same field after the apprenticeship (and if the job has met their expectations) and continue working for the same employer, he compared tradespeople who have a good idea about what a job is like to the new apprentices who cannot display their skills in the same way. He drew a parallel with Mr McCabe's story about craftspeople's pride in their tangible work versus the NAV of an investment fund. While this was a

disadvantage, he said that they were working hard to display the skills of the new apprenticeship, referring to Mr Tracey's mention of the Ireland Skills Live event and the difficulty of participating.

"Getting the message across in terms of what we do and produce within the international financial services apprenticeship is hard work."

What is the perception of being an associate in the investment banking sector, he asked, saying that it can be "tricky" getting this concept of being a fund accountant across to a 19-year old. *"Frequently labelled millennials, generation Z or even the snowflake generation, this age group allegedly has low levels of resilience, is easily offended and treasures work-life balance above all so what will they make of a demanding work environment euphemistically described as fast-paced, requiring people to work under pressure and meet strict deadlines?"*

Responding to the questions previously posed, Mr Brittain confirmed that 100% of the second year apprentices wanted a job in international financial services when they finished and almost all wished to remain with the same employer (a testament to the employers working with NCI). The most cited reasons for wanting to remain in the sector were job and promotion opportunities, so one could assume they enjoyed the work.

In summary, it was good news as *"Lots of people wanted to be an IFS apprentice, they were of high quality, stayed on the apprenticeship, got good results, and wanted to remain with the same employer afterwards so there is a high level of retention for employers"*. However, according to Mr Brittain, *"all was not quite rosy in the garden"* due to limited apprenticeship places. In addition to the 12 *"very supportive"* employer organisations, he called for more to come on board and to take on more apprentices. Given the 35,000 people employed in the sector, he stated that the 50 apprentices across both programmes over the two years were not enough. Directing a quote by American politician Benjamin Franklin at investment banking employers, he concluded, *"An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest"*.

Aidan Flynn, General Manager with the Freight Transport Association Ireland (FTAI), expressed his delight at being invited to present to the summit and introduced his organisation as a not-for-profit membership trade association for the Irish freight, passenger and logistics industries wholly-owned and governed by its members. He outlined its mission as helping members develop safer, more efficient and sustainable supply chains and transport operations. He said that the association is working hard to enhance the Irish freight and logistics industry's

influence and image by promoting high standards of safety, professionalism and compliance.

He spoke about the rewarding experience of being involved in training and education and particularly his chairmanship of the Logistics Associate Apprenticeship consortium over the past 12 months. He welcomed the opportunity to introduce the new Logistics Associate apprenticeship of which the association is extremely proud: it is a two-year Level 6 Higher Certificate in Logistics and the first non-craft apprenticeship to be offered by the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) and the first of the industry-led programmes to be delivered by the DIT School of Management.

Mr Flynn confirmed that the FTAI, Irish International Freight Association, Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport, Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers Ireland, Supply Chain Management Institute and an impressive list of employers are supporting the programme.

“The successful development and launch of the Logistics Associate apprenticeship programme really demonstrates what industry can achieve when working collaboratively in a short space of time”.

“This consortium of businesses and professional bodies are committed to delivering a meaningful, active programme that will deliver the skilled young people that the Irish logistics industry needs to keep moving.”

He set the scene by telling the summit that his industry is a vibrant and vital sector for the Irish economy but is faced with many challenges such as Brexit, an ageing working population and skills shortage. He said that Brexit was shining a light on the transport and logistics sector like never before as politicians and stakeholders struggle to understand the complexities of the supply chain and contemplate the enormity of the decisions to be made that will impact future trade for generations to come.

While this poses lots of opportunities for investment, support and innovative new ways of doing business, he revealed that the industry, as a career choice, often appears to be unattractive to young people. He stressed that it has been less successful than others in recruiting younger workers due to many factors, including a perception that it is made up of predominantly low-skilled jobs with long working hours. He cautioned that this perception must change and suggested investment in training and education as a solution.

He referred to the “earn as you learn” apprenticeship and traineeship plan launched by the Government in 2016 to offer career options for school-leavers

and mature students who prefer to have paid, on-the-job training while studying for a qualification rather than going to college full-time. He said that the timing couldn't have been better and it is a real challenge for his industry to become involved in providing solutions to the skills shortages that have manifested themselves over the last number of years, namely finding suitably skilled personnel.

He referred to the "Addressing the Demand for Skills in the Freight Transport, Distribution and Logistics Sector in Ireland 2015-2020" report findings that, due to an anticipated expansion in the sector and the replacement demand for those employed in these core occupations, some 13,500 to 15,500 job vacancies could become available over the 2015 to 2020 period. He stated that FTAI has surveyed its members and found that the skills shortage (across all disciplines) was the number one issue for them in 2018. In determining solutions, it is important to demonstrate the industry need while information and evidence is critical to getting buy-in from a broader cohort of industry. There is no doubt in Mr Flynn's mind that there is a commonality of issues within the industry, so encouraging engagement becomes easier.

With the economy nearly at full employment, his sector is competing for suitably skilled and committed people who will work and develop their careers within this industry. While not a new phenomenon, it is more pronounced and the industry is facing a dearth in drivers, warehouse operatives, transport planners, customs operatives, freight forwarders etc., so all areas are impacted.

"Collectively, we must consider options and opportunities to promote our businesses and attract new people. Individual businesses must nurture and develop existing staff and build loyalty within, and most importantly, take responsibility to promote their business and industry to discerning new entrants. Without a commitment like this, we will not solve the problems nor be in a position to future-proof our industry or contribute to a sustainable future that increases the numbers interested in working in our sector year-on-year."

He set out a challenge for the industry to get involved and work to provide a solution with broad appeal, as was done with the establishment of the consortium for the Logistics Associate apprenticeship. Mr Flynn explained that Declan Allen, Assistant Head of School in DIT School of Management, indicated his interest in developing an apprenticeship for the industry and in mid-2017 the consortium was formed. The group that came together balanced associations with key employers in the industry and quickly developed a consensus regarding the content, duration and level the programme should be aimed at. The apprenticeship proposal was approved for development by the Minister for Education, Richard Bruton TD, on 8th December (2017).

"Since then, it's been all hands on deck by all consortium members demonstrated through tireless commitment to our meetings and review of documentation and submissions that culminated in the validation of the programme in June 2018. It is unprecedented that a two-year Level 6 Award can be developed, prepared and made ready within 12 months."

He stated that the programme was officially launched on 26th September (2018) with 27 apprentices from 17 employers, demonstrating the diversity of sectors within the industry and representing the shipping sector, own account distribution, freight forwarding, warehousing and haulage sectors. He emphasised that its success will, over time, be dependent on the number of apprentices and employers, but without the buy-in from employers in the first instance it will not work.

He pointed out that the "Addressing the Skills Needs Arising from the Potential Trade Implications of Brexit" report published in June 2018 (following on from the 2015 Forfás report) highlights *"It is anticipated that there will be a major external shock to the Irish economy when the UK leaves the EU."* He elaborated that the publication states that the freight transport distribution and logistics labour force will require approximately 30,000 new joiners by 2025 due to natural growth and attrition, irrespective of the type of Brexit outcome.

He referred to its eight specific recommendations, one of which is to *"support the development, and promote the roll-out of and engagement with the logistics and service apprenticeship programmes"*. He said that he expects that their apprenticeship will be the start of an image change that will attract new entrants, where those seeking employment will be more knowledgeable and aware of the exciting and dynamic career paths available to them within the sector. According to Mr Flynn, the opportunity that this apprenticeship is affording the industry to put logistics on the map cannot be dismissed and confirmed that they now have a full-time project manager whose main role will be promotion and awareness-raising among secondary schools, parents of students, and employers.

"Students will now be thinking of logistics as an option when leaving school. This new awareness and the opportunities it affords will help us compete for those precious resources that are so badly needed to keep the industry ticking over and competitive. In addition, this apprenticeship offers progression and career development opportunities for existing employees, which is probably as important as attracting new entrants as it will aid the retention of staff and support upskilling. In fact, 70% of the new apprentices on the course this year were already in employment."

He said that promoting the career prospects and opportunities for new entrants into the sector is vital in future-proofing against skills shortage and an ageing workforce, and coupled with raising the standards of compliance and professionalism, will ultimately help attract more young people into the sector.

For this to continue, he said it was timely to spotlight future commitment requirements: industry must contribute and participate in making the sector attractive and it must promote a sector that looks after the welfare of employees and offers vibrant and exciting career opportunities as well as supporting ongoing professional development. Finally, school-leavers need a more holistic understanding of the sector and the type of jobs available at all levels of the supply chain. He believes that industry-led apprenticeship programmes should be supported as a feeder to developing robust and sustainable career paths within the industry.

Mr Flynn highlighted that without employers, apprenticeship programmes will not work and that there are a lot of challenges ahead in effectively communicating the benefits of apprenticeships to school-leavers, their parents, schools and career guidance teachers, and to employers themselves. He pledged that the Logistics Associate Apprenticeship Consortium will work hard with the HEA, Apprenticeship Ireland and SOLAS to promote apprenticeships and is looking forward to the challenge. He views it as a "*magnificent opportunity*" to use the new Logistics Associate Apprenticeship as a resource to help all stakeholder groups to understand more clearly what logistics and the supply chain are, and the diverse type of career opportunities that exist in the industry.

He said that the FTAI is excited about the opportunity and will work tirelessly to promote the programme over the coming years, but it cannot do this on its own, so Mr Flynn called on the Government to assist.

"It is vital for the sustainability of apprenticeships that employers are engaged and encouraged to participate."

Obviously, they will be once they understand (and experience) the benefits of mixing qualifications and training with work experience, but another way would be to support this engagement through an apprenticeship training tax credit. Incentivise, in a small way, those employers that commit to paying their staff while they learn. As per recently published reports, the freight distribution and logistics industry needs at least 30,000 new entrants by 2025, so we need employers to really embrace this now."

In conclusion, he admitted that the future of the freight distribution and logistics industry is in the hands of the industry itself.

Dr Vivienne Patterson, Head of Skills, Engagement and Statistics for the Higher Education Authority (HEA), said that she was delighted to be asked to participate in the summit and that she would focus her contribution on the future of apprenticeships in terms of some of the challenges and possible solutions. She reiterated Dr Trant's statement about taking a step back following a few years of the process, to review what has worked and to identify future challenges.

She spoke about apprenticeship being described as an alternative route to an education qualification but also a "*different pathway to employment*". Like any mainstream education qualification, she said that there have to be pathways for students to progress if that is their chosen option. Highlighting the positives from the new apprenticeship initiative, she mentioned the very close collaboration between SOLAS and the HEA, particularly between the ETBs and the higher education institutions. According to Dr Patterson, it could be improved through an increase in inter-institutional collaboration in developing these pathways, referencing the example of the Culinary Arts Apprenticeship, and also maximizing available resources over the next few years.

"We need to provide multiple entry routes throughout an academic year, not just a start in September."

She cited another challenge as the off-the-job element of the new apprenticeships that varies between one-day to a block to two days per week. "*Our own higher and further education institutions still have in their heads the idea of a traditional academic year, and while it's been progressing, it needs more work because we need to provide multiple entry routes throughout an academic year, not just a start in September but also in January, summer and so on.*"

Dr Patterson also broached the topic of emerging learning technologies helping with the off-the-job element, illustrating that online learning was proving very successful in the Insurance Practice Apprenticeship with its one-day online training within the company. "*That gives the employer a reassurance that even though the apprentices are not working, they're still in the building. It also provides a much greater national reach for an apprenticeship, and with 80 apprentices on it more or less from the start, it's been really successful. I think this needs to be looked at and developed by our educational institutions.*"

By way of the talent pipeline, she reiterated what Dr Rigney said in relation to the failure of apprenticeships in a new area not constituting a disaster, and that they are not necessarily a fit for every single sector. She suggested a more targeted

approach in developing new apprenticeships for the future, as well as identifying the sectors with a significant skills need nationally and regionally and those that are a good fit.

She recognizes that promotion is important yet difficult given the number of different groups involved, including employers, school-leavers, lifelong-learners, career-changers, and people whose careers will be impacted by automation developments. *"We have a lot of people to try to target."*

Having recently participated in the independent review of career guidance set up by the Department of Education and Skills, it was clear that the CAO website was easy to access as a one-stop-shop and that most users had made up their minds about their path already. Everything was accessible to the student, career guidance teacher and the *"mothers of Ireland"*, she said, revealing that almost 100% of survey respondents identified their mothers as the biggest influence in their choices.

"Both SOLAS and the HEA now have data analysts working within the CSO and we're collaborating on a number of projects to see...what the opportunities are for apprentices."

She also spoke about promoting apprenticeships by looking at outcomes, indicating that the higher education sector has been publishing progression rates for the past decade and is due to issue a comprehensive completion report in the next couple of weeks. *"Both SOLAS and the HEA now have data analysts working within the CSO and we're collaborating on a number of projects to see how we can look at the movement between further and higher education, what the opportunities are for apprentices, where they're finding employment and how their careers are progressing on a longitudinal basis."*

In addition to past surveys conducted six to nine months after graduation, she explained that the National Data Infrastructure along with the CSO will facilitate this by looking out over several years to see if apprentices are doing other qualifications, moving out of apprenticeship into other careers and how their salary is being affected going forward. To this end, she foresees a lot of outputs in the next year or so.

Referring to the SOLAS publication on Progression Pathways and Access to Apprenticeship in DIT (involving John Sisk & Son facilities), she described this initiative as combining access and apprenticeship and giving students from lower socio-economic ("disadvantaged") areas the opportunity to look at an array of

apprenticeships. Based on a presentation the previous day, Dr Patterson concluded, "*It was amazing to see the development of the students on this course from start to finish, the soft skills they picked up, how they developed teamwork and thought about apprenticeships in areas other than highlighted ones such as carpentry, brick-laying and plumbing. It's important to develop that on a national scale – DIT has taken the lead but they're hoping to move to other centres in Ireland.*"

On opening the summit to the floor for the last time, Dublin City Councillor Paul McAuliffe thanked the participants and organisers, commending the convening of the key players in the apprenticeship area to predict future challenges. He spoke about the Economic and Community Plan touching on the community and economic elements of the challenges for the city. He referred to the research, focus groups and engagement on the plan, with people talking about the quality of life that employment brought and employers talking about skills and education, describing this as "*two sides of the same coin, not competing interests*".



Dublin City Councillor, Paul McAuliffe

In his first job in the National Joint Industrial Council for the electrical contracting and construction industry, he observed that industries that continue to recruit apprentices are able to have predictable supplies of labour and more realistic wage structures, while the sectors that don't often go from crisis to crisis in terms of labour shortage. *"The 2028 labour shortage is already at us, we're not going to be able to solve that yet and we need to work now on the shortage that follows that."*

"The 2028 labour shortage is already at us...we need to work now on the shortage that follows that."

He spoke about the link between the flow of apprentices coming in, the stability around wages and competitiveness, and the delivery of large infrastructure projects, referencing Metro North and the likely labour shortage on that project (upon commencement).

"We need to make sure that those major infrastructure projects deliver apprenticeship opportunities."

He referred to Dr Redmond's points on the major issue of housing and its impact on the skills shortage in Dublin, affirming that this needs to be addressed. He found Mr McCabe's contribution really powerful and spoke to the experience of apprenticeship giving a sense of identity and satisfaction. He spoke about the need to work with both sides of the table in terms of supports for businesses and employers for both the new apprenticeships and traditional crafts, the idea of sharing apprentices, and the on- and off-the-job training being different in different industries. He also said that the site-by-site employment basis in the construction industry is a challenge as it undoubtedly suits in the short-term but doesn't provide for skills shortages in the long-run.

"We need to make sure that apprenticeships compete with the Level 7s – it needs to be more attractive in the next seven years to do an apprenticeship than it is to do a Level 7. It has to be done in a financial manner as the only way we're going to meet the skills shortage is by getting people not only to be in education but to be in education and employment at the same time."

He talked about structured training with an ability to earn for employees and labour supply that is predictable for the employers. Alluding to the discussion over the past week, he concluded *"Reducing personal taxation will help the workforce over the short-term but we cash in the benefit too early in my view, we need to invest in skills and long-term supply of labour to make us competitive over the long-term."*

Paul Sweetman, Director of Financial Services Ireland in IBEC, referred to the new consortia and Mr Brittain's comments, attesting to the high number of applicants for the International Financial Services apprenticeships, with 50 people undertaking it. He remarked on the high quality outputs for employers and apprentices and the dedication of the companies' brands to the programme, but he said that there is an issue with the number of companies getting involved.

"Getting the companies involved is critical and it's definitely the piece that we've noticed needs to be improved upon."

He made the point that it was not just a new apprenticeship but also a new concept for these companies and that they needed to be convinced of their value in the absence of being able to point to apprentices who had gone through the system and are now leading organisations. He explained that some of these companies are part of global systems, with headquarters outside of Ireland and a series of processes to navigate in order to even accept the apprenticeship programme. He proposed one solution as the provision of additional resources for the consortia to market to these companies as well as to potential apprentices, by taking the time and resources to set up individual meetings with them to drive the company-specific style of marketing. *"Getting the companies involved is critical and it's definitely the piece that we've noticed needs to be improved upon."*

In the final general contribution for this part of the summit, Siobhan O'Shea, recently appointed Chair of the Dublin Regional Skills Forum and Director at CPL, introduced a new initiative called "Open Doors" aimed at supporting the marginalized parts of society. She told of 15 companies that are creating awareness to activate opportunities for the long-term youth unemployed and people with disabilities along with nurturing better support for refugees and asylum-seekers. She attested to Ireland as having the lowest female participation rate in Europe and highlighted this as untapped potential and an opportunity for apprenticeships.

Ms O'Shea referred to Mr Carey's comment in relation to the National Training Fund and said that there was no vision or plan as to what is to happen, whether there is scope for upskilling, reskilling or lifelong learning. Speaking about the portal, she emphasized the lack of understanding of where career guidance teachers can go to find this type of knowledge.

In closing the Dublin City Apprenticeship Summit, **Councillor Deirdre Heney** shared her reason for getting involved and remaining in public life as a desire to do what she could to improve the quality of life for people in the city. She repeated words that sprang to mind during the summit: *"Career guidance, supporting employers, shortage of the wet trades, small employers ill affording to send apprentices off-the-job to be trained, an apprenticeship tax credit to support employers – I see this as a positive and key suggestion to take on board to prepare for the future"*.

"Ensure we listen to people who know the score and talk to those who know what is required."

Councillor Heney spoke about collaboration and referred to Mr McCabe's input to *"ensure we listen to people who know the score and talk to those who know what is required"*. In praise of having different forms of apprenticeships, she observed a recent event at which David McWilliams spoke about some secondary school pupils being good at cramming in an exam setting yet others as the ones who created businesses. She paraphrased Mr McWilliams, saying that there was a need to support this to create a better quality of life for Irish people and a country to be proud of, and to prepare for the future and events such as Brexit.

She said that she will encourage the submission of the Summit Outcomes Report to the Government to ensure the success of the summit, and indicated that she would be highly supportive of any further facilitation to progress future needs.

Appendix A: Key Facts & Figures

Dr Mary-Liz Trant, Executive Director Skills Development, SOLAS

- Review by Apprenticeship Council to establish state-of-play with apprenticeship expansion of past three to four years;
- Several hard, tangible targets until 2020 with planned threefold increase in available programmes – 70 compared to 42 in 2018 and 25 in 2015;
- New apprenticeships available in logistics, recruitment, biopharma, technology, finance, and other 21st century areas;
- Building on strong track record in craft areas such as construction and business;
- Apprenticeships ranging from Level 5 up to Level 10 (PhD) on the Framework of Qualifications;
- University of Limerick's Level 10 Principal Engineer to be the first available industrial PhD in Ireland;
- 3,000 employers using apprenticeships four years ago, about 5,500 in 2018 and target of 7,000 by 2020;
- Over 500 employers taking on apprentices in the new programmes – expectation for this to double then triple in the next one to two years;
- Need to build on narrative of the who, what and how of apprenticeships – they are open to people of all backgrounds, ages and abilities;
- Mindset change needed within company recruitment practices and systems as well as amongst career guidance teachers and parents;
- Upon apprenticeship validation, clear arrangements to be in place in case of apprentice redundancy so they can complete their qualification regardless;
- Review of "Pathways to Participation in Apprenticeship": looking at the profile of who apprentices are, with targets and steps being set.

Dr Paul Redmond, Research Officer, ESRI

- Distinction between genuine skills shortages and other types of recruitment difficulties - the lack of suitably qualified people to fill available roles once firms are offering appropriate pay, conditions, and contracts;
- ESRI Report on potential sources of future labour supply in the construction industry: barriers to residential mobility (c.f. high cost of accommodation in parts of Dublin and elsewhere) can lead to persistent skills mismatches and shortages;
- CIF report on employers: large amount of residual uncertainty (fear for the future) in the industry is deterring the employment of apprentices for up to four years;
- 2015 ESRI survey revealed fear among employees;
- Recommendation: important to have some way to promote apprenticeships as a viable option to young people while recognising the challenge given continuing uncertainty among employers;
- Ireland ranked as fourth highest in overskilling (skills underutilization) and seventh highest in underskilling (inadequate skills) in Europe;
- The more vocational educational career choices and jobs tend to be associated with lower levels of mismatch;

- Mismatched apprentices result in job satisfaction cost plus possible wage penalties and lost productivity for employers;
- Skills mismatch among construction and trades in Ireland is well below the European average – only 3%.

Tony Donohoe, Head of Education and Social Policy, IBEC

- The challenge with the speed of the roll-out of the new apprenticeship model should not have been underestimated as it is a major cultural and economic shift in the way business is done;
- German, Austrian and Swiss models cannot simply be transposed to Ireland;
- Challenge of expanding apprenticeship into non-construction areas as well as cultural challenges around learners to show different opportunities (other than direct entry into third level), c.f. good work of 'Generation Apprenticeship';
- Current window of opportunity to focus employers' attention on the skills and labour market shortages evident in most areas of the economy;
- Employers unaccustomed to recruiting and developing staff through apprenticeships, with many SMEs time poor and with limited resources – suggestion to help with the cost of providing apprenticeships, especially paying off-the-job wages of apprentices;
- Important recommendation from "Pathways to Participation in Apprenticeship": a single portal where employers can go and post their apprenticeship opportunities.

Natasha Kinsella, Department of Education & Manager, Dublin Regional Skills Forum

- Dublin accounts for 30% of the employment, outperforming the national average in most of the labour market indicators, but a considerable cohort is completely disengaged from employment and/or educational training provision;
- Serious challenge to attract and retain talent across a wide variety of sectors, including construction, ICT, health, wholesale, retail, accommodation, food, financial and services;
- In bridging the gap between education and provision, apprenticeships feature strongly by allowing individuals to work and learn while allowing employers to build the talent pipeline for the future;
- Awareness about the offerings and potential pathways is still a particular struggle for employers as they are not quite sure how to navigate around the system;
- In Dublin, most of the provision is progressing well, with offerings in financial services, tourism, hospitality, ICT, construction, logistics and transport, sales and retail, and biopharma and medtech sectors;

- Continuation of the dialogue and support for employers is the solution for different pathways (apprenticeship and traineeships) to ensure the talent pipeline for the future.

David Tracey, Training Centre Manager, John Sisk & Son

- Success of any company is built on its people and apprenticeships definitely play a significant role in this;
- Started 10 new apprentices in carpentry and joinery three weeks ago, including one female, and are encouraging more women to enter the construction industry;
- Enthusiasm of these young people learning skills from the start is inspiring and very important to the company going forward;
- Standard-based system, with on- and off-the-job training and the parts played by SOLAS, the ETBs and IOTs are critical as they produce highly skilled and qualified people in all trades at the end of four years;
- Aware of the skills shortage, particularly in the wet trades such as bricklaying, plastering and painting;
- Changes needed to how small employers can employ apprentices given the big commitment (taking apprentices on for four years), so exploring ideas like apprentice sharing;
- Message to employers: recruit more, engage more with the ETBs and SOLAS, and advocate for employment incentives;
- Ireland Skills Live event scheduled for 21st to 23rd March 2019 at the RDS: encouraging summit participants and every Irish school as well as career guidance counsellors, parents and the "mammies of Ireland" to attend (hopes it will become an annual event);
- Generation Apprenticeship competition run by SOLAS is very good and should be supported by more employers.

Mary Tyrrell, Performance and Development Unit, Human Resources, Dublin City Council

- Junior Apprenticeship Programme in DCC: provision made in the Council's 2018 budget as need identified across the Housing and Community Services and Environment and Transportation Departments;
- Designed collaboratively between HR, SOLAS and the local departments, with huge interest and applications arising from the public advert in March 2018;
- Following suitability assessments and interviews, 18 apprenticeships offered (six brick and stonelayers, four carpenters, four plumbers and four electricians);
- Commenced on 24th September (2018) with induction process, phased programme for four years minimum, combining on-the-job training and classroom-based learning;

- Apprentices being monitored and assessed by DCC Supervisor, ETB and college tutor, and on successful completion, will be qualified in respective trades and eligible to apply for future positions at DCC.

Brendan McCabe, Area Maintenance Officer, Housing and Community Department, Dublin City Council

- Strong advocate of apprenticeship with first-hand experience of the benefits (sense of achievement, pride and job satisfaction that apprentices take in their work cannot be bought);
- Biggest fear is losing the chance to recruit gifted tradespeople due to the amount of exams and third-level education required to complete an apprenticeship – society is ruling out a vast cohort who do not like academic education but are intelligent and excellent problem-solvers;
- Important to look closely at how the formal educational part of the apprenticeship scheme is being delivered and look at returning to one-day off-the-job training or less intense form of delivery as an easier sell and chance for apprentices to speak with work mentors who can possibly explain theories in more practical ways;
- Can small employers afford to let their staff go off-the-job for three to five months when there is a project to complete, and is this block release preventing small employers from taking on apprentices?
- Need to look at various levels of qualifications within each trade as a way of allowing those who just want to work to succeed, but also facilitating those who wish to further their careers;
- Apprenticeships should be left to tradespeople and industry to design and operate as they know what they want from their craftspeople;
- DCC is currently involved with “Access to Apprenticeship” scheme in conjunction with DIT to give young people with no formal educational qualifications and without minimum requirements to enter a craft with the chance to work as an apprentice for three months;
- In recruiting apprentices, minimum education requirements should be hand-eye coordination and a genuine passion and vocation for a trade - quality of work, an ability to solve problems and adapt are the most important things needed in a craftsman;
- Perhaps now is the time to look at what society actually needs from its craftspeople and not what theorists believe craftspeople really need.

Dermot Carey, Director of Safety and Training, Construction Industry Federation (CIF)

- Construction industry is worth €20 billion and growing at about 7% per annum, resulting in an increase of 18,000 people in 2017 (no sign of let-up) and a pent-up demand for skills;

- 2016 DKM and SOLAS report forecasts a need for 112,000 people over the next three to four years;
- Construction industry has always been a supporter and promoter of apprenticeships, with about 8,000 presently;
- Promotion of apprenticeship through SOLAS' "Generation Apprentice" initiative and "Pathways to Participation in Apprenticeship" are positive;
- Connecting with the career guidance teachers is a major opportunity to market a job in construction, but career guidance teachers need a central place to find jobs, c.f. upcoming inclusion of the marketplace on the apprenticeship.ie website from SOLAS;
- Huge opportunities within traineeships as companies can respond quickly and give good qualifications to people, so that route should not be ignored;
- Career guidance counsellors and the Institute of Career Guidance, technology teachers and SOLAS are good advocates committed to promoting apprenticeship;
- Key difference between apprenticeships and any other type of training is the need for employers – need to bring them on board as well as the apprentices;
- 22 weeks time off-the-job is too much for a small employer and needs to be facilitated;
- For new apprenticeships, off-the-job training phases having to be paid for by the employer is a huge disincentive for small employers – the National Training Fund can address that;
- Bad decisions in the last couple of years include the introduction of student fees for apprentices in 2014 (cost eventually comes back onto the employer) and the current attempt to tax off-the-job payments for apprentices by revenue.

Ciaran King, General Manager, King and Moffatt

- Except for eight apprentices, King and Moffatt stopped apprenticeship training between 2008 and 2013 due to the economic downturn;
- Changed its recruitment approach by promoting apprenticeships through the local schools and main newspapers resulting in 70 applications and the hire of 10 apprentices, including a Level 8 Quantity Surveyor and Mechanical Engineer, showing the calibre of people attracted into apprenticeship;
- Big advantages for apprentices: immediate entry, earning on-the-job, getting a feel for the work within the first year and earning when they go onto college;
- On apprenticeship fees, smaller employers can't afford to pay for sending students back to college and these huge costs can be put back on apprentices which is very discouraging;
- Opportunity to travel is immense, as apprenticeship is so transferable and Irish apprentices are very well recognised across Europe and the world, and should be promoted within the industry;

- Those working in the career guidance area should be invited onto the Dublin Regional Skills Forum (they could learn a lot from the ITs, SOLAS, ETBs, CIF, IBEC, and local councils about what is available from industry);
- Electrical and mechanical apprenticeships should be left as they are but block-laying and painting areas possibly need to be looked at in terms of changing apprenticeships and shortening the programmes on- and off-the-job;
- Huge advantages to the one or two day a week off-the-job training for certain roles within companies as they tend to be systematic, so people can learn "small skills" off-the-job;
- Sponsoring the Building Information Modelling (BIM) at the Ireland Skills Live event and there is scope for a one-day a week apprenticeship in this field;
- Need to focus on the recruitment process and the attitude towards it.

Peter Rigney, Industrial Officer, ICTU

- Mammies of Ireland are an important sell and apprenticeships should play to their strengths;
- HEA and SOLAS should publish the information about first year and final qualification completion rates of apprenticeship to put pressure on the universities and IOTs to do same;
- One third (14) of the 41 or 42 apprenticeships are in the new generation areas, a respectable increase from 2% two years ago to 10% now;
- Example of Level 7 Electrical Engineering apprenticeship at the Limerick Institute of Technology, where a new multinational chose existing electricians (through block and day release) at Level 6 and gave them study tools to go to Level 7 (electricians got to be a Level 7 engineer and companies got to work with people they knew and grow their own talent);
- Idea of the portal and information dissemination, mainly to the mammies of Ireland, are very good so they can make informed choices;
- Displacement due to new apprenticeships online in insurance, logistics and finance, and there is a role for the state sector (city and county councils) to start apprenticeships in areas such as ICT, logistics, and possibly finance as well as library assistant;
- Appropriate incentives needed for employers to employ apprentices, while remembering that roughly midway through the second year, employers begin to get a return on the labour of the apprentices that is equivalent to or maybe a bit higher than the percentage of the rate they are paid;
- Concept of earn while you learn is important and needs to be marketed and promoted;
- Possible failure of the new apprenticeships is not a reason for the media to pillory the new system, as it must be acknowledged as an experiment where not all apprenticeships may succeed.

Jonathan Brittain, Head of Apprenticeships, National College of Ireland (NCI)

- Two apprenticeships in the field of international financial services, run with industry partner Financial Services Ireland: the Level 6 Higher Certificate aimed at broad entry-level associate positions and a Level 8 Higher Diploma aimed at specialist positions in data analytics;
- These two-year programmes started in October 2017 (no graduates yet) and are new and different, in a sector with no experience of apprenticeships, so there is no proven track record to rely on;
- They can attract people to become international financial services (IFS) apprentices – it is grossly oversubscribed with 400 to 500 applications each year;
- People stay on the apprenticeship and do not drop out – almost 90% retention rate (far higher than a comparable full-time higher education programme);
- Apprentices pass the course – all passing first year and over 85% achieving the highest grades;
- Apprentices do well due to the competition for places and rigorous selection process producing only the best applicants, support from the NCI (with an assigned academic supervisor in addition to a workplace mentor) and because they are highly motivated students;
- A trial period of two years for the employer and apprentice is more than enough;
- Both parties are not staying together for the sake of the qualification – employers want to produce apprentices who will progress into the industry afterwards (not possible to tell if they will hire them afterwards as there are no graduates yet);
- Getting this concept of being a fund accountant across to a young age group is tricky as they allegedly have low levels of resilience, are easily offended and treasure work-life balance above all so what will they make of a demanding work environment described as fast-paced, requiring people to work under pressure and meet strict deadlines?
- The disadvantage for the new apprentices is that they cannot display their skills in the same way as tradespeople, who can point to their work, but NCI is working hard on addressing this;
- 100% of the second year apprentices wanted a job in international financial services when they finished and almost all wished to remain with the same employer due to the job and promotion opportunities and work enjoyment;
- In addition to the 12 employer organisations, more need to come on board and take on more apprentices (given the 35,000 people employed in the sector, 50 apprentices across both programmes over the two years is not enough).

Aidan Flynn, General Manager, Freight Transport Association Ireland (FTAI)

- New Logistics Associate Apprenticeship: a two-year Level 6 Higher Certificate (first non-craft apprenticeship on offer by DIT and first industry-led programme delivered by its School of Management) with 27 apprentices from 17 employers;
- Supported by FTAI, Irish International Freight Association, Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport, Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers Ireland, Supply Chain Management Institute and employers;
- Transport and logistics is a vibrant and vital sector but facing challenges such as Brexit, an ageing working population and skills shortage;
- Less successful in recruiting younger workers due to perception of predominantly low-skilled jobs with long working hours – must change this by investing in training and education;
- “Addressing the Demand for Skills in the Freight Transport, Distribution and Logistics Sector in Ireland 2015-2020” report: 13,500 to 15,500 job vacancies could become available over this period;
- FTAI member survey: skills shortage was number one issue in 2018;
- Information and evidence is critical to getting buy-in from broader cohort of industry;
- Industry must collectively consider options and opportunities to promote businesses and attract new people, while individual businesses must nurture and develop existing staff, build loyalty within and take responsibility to promote themselves and their industry to discerning new entrants;
- “Addressing the Skills Needs Arising from the Potential Trade Implications of Brexit” report (June 2018): labour force will require approximately 30,000 new joiners by 2025 due to natural growth and attrition;
- This apprenticeship will be the start of an image change that will attract new entrants as well as offering progression and career development options for existing employees – opportunity to put logistics on the map cannot be dismissed and a full-time project manager will be responsible for promotion;
- Industry-led apprenticeship programmes should be supported as a feeder to developing robust and sustainable career paths within the industry;
- Without employers, apprenticeship programmes will not work but there are challenges in communicating the benefits of apprenticeships to them, school-leavers, parents, schools, and career guidance teachers;
- Consortium will work hard with the HEA, Apprenticeship Ireland and SOLAS to promote apprenticeships and use them to help stakeholder groups to understand logistics, the supply chain and the diverse career opportunities available;
- Need the Government to assist with employer engagement – could be supported through an apprenticeship training tax credit.

Dr Vivienne Patterson, Head of Skills, Engagement and Statistics, HEA

- Apprenticeships described as an alternative route to an education qualification but also as a different pathway to employment;
- Like any mainstream education qualification, there must be pathways for students to progress in an apprenticeship;
- Positives from the new apprenticeship initiative are the close collaboration between SOLAS and the HEA, particularly the ETBs and higher education institutions, although it could be improved through an increase in inter-institutional collaboration in developing these pathways and maximizing available resources over the next few years;
- Another challenge is the off-the-job part of the new apprenticeships – need to provide multiple entry routes throughout an academic year (not just a start in September but also in January, summer, etc.);
- Online learning is proving very successful in the Insurance Practice Apprenticeship, and needs to be looked at and developed by the educational institutions;
- Need a more targeted approach in developing new apprenticeships for the future, as well as identifying sectors with a significant skills need nationally and regionally and those that are a good fit;
- Promotion is important yet difficult given the number of different groups involved, including employers, school-leavers, lifelong learners, career changers, and people whose careers are going to be impacted by automation developments;
- In promoting apprenticeship by looking at outcomes, the higher education sector has been publishing progression rates for the past decade and is due to issue a comprehensive completion report in the next couple of weeks;
- SOLAS and the HEA have data analysts working within the CSO and are working collaboratively on projects to look at the movement between further and higher education, what the opportunities are for apprentices, where they are finding employment and how their careers are progressing on a longitudinal basis;
- National Data Infrastructure and CSO will be able to look out over several years to see if apprentices are doing other qualifications, moving out of apprenticeship into other careers and how their salary is being affected going forward - a lot of outputs are due in the next year or so;
- Access to Apprenticeship initiative in DIT combines access and apprenticeship and gives students from lower socio-economic (“disadvantaged”) areas the opportunity to look at an array of apprenticeships – important to develop that on a national scale (DIT has taken the lead but is hoping to move to other centres in Ireland).

Greg Swift, Head of Economic Development, Dublin City Council

- Summarised summit contributions by highlighting that apprenticeship is a new way forward and there needs to be a shift of emphasis;
- Many new areas of apprenticeship including logistics, technology, business, finance, food, medical and others;
- Need to look at incentives for employers in particular but also apprentices;
- National Training Fund is a topic that needs to be addressed;
- Examples of new apprenticeships, namely in finance with the NCI, logistics with the FTAI and the traditional crafts at DCC, show what an apprenticeship is, what it means and how it works;
- Big need for promotion, c.f. you earn while you learn; it's only a method of learning; learning on the job; and getting career guidance involved;
- Ireland Skills Live event in the RDS on 21st to 23rd March (2019) is something that people should go to in order to find out more about how apprenticeship works;
- Need for information about getting employers involved and new apprentices to come forward – data are there to get the message across;
- People are coming through third level courses, and apprenticeships are possibly not being promoted as a choice;
- 2% participation rate of females (from the DCC research report) is incredibly low and an obvious area for addressing along with people with disabilities as a largely untapped resource;
- Recession versus full employment: a process needs to be addressed to ensure that continuation can happen if people are laid off from an apprenticeship;
- Must be a balance between the process (exam) and the practicality of learning on-the-job;
- Need for a single portal to match employers and apprentices;
- High mismatch of skills in the over- and underskilled categories, with Ireland at the wrong end of both – apprenticeship as an area that could address that;
- Need for more employers and more apprenticeships while many areas that could possibly be perceived as unattractive have good jobs available, so how this is promoted is key;
- Need to look at the design of the format, the different pathways to employment to highlight that this is a new and unique way to become employed;
- Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) is inviting all organisations present to put forward ideas and suggestions for inclusion in the next phase of the economic plan, with consultations scheduled for 2019.

VIII. Appendix B: Contributors

1. Councillor Deirdre Heney, Summit Chair and Chair of the Economic Development and Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee (SPC)
2. Lord Mayor of Dublin, Mr Nial Ring
3. Dr Mary-Liz Trant, Executive Director of Skills Development, SOLAS
4. Dr Paul Redmond, Research Officer, ESRI
5. Mr Tony Donohoe, Head of Education and Social Policy, IBEC
6. Ms Natasha Kinsella, Manager, Dublin Regional Skills Forum
7. Mr David Tracey, Training Centre Manager, John Sisk & Son
8. Ms Mary Tyrrell, Human Resources, Dublin City Council
9. Mr Brendan McCabe, Housing Maintenance Manager, Dublin City Council
10. Mr Dermot Carey, Director of Safety and Training, Construction Industry Federation
11. Mr Ciaran King, General Manager, King & Moffatt
12. Dr Peter Rigney, Industrial Officer, ICTU
13. Mr Jonathan Brittain, Head of Apprenticeships, NCI
14. Mr Aidan Flynn, General Manager, Freight Transport Association Ireland (FTAI)
15. Dr Vivienne Patterson, Head of Skills, Engagement & Statistics, HEA
16. Mr Greg Swift, Head of Enterprise and Economic Development, Dublin City Council



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