

Winter 2021

# CU Focus



Tribute to former ILCU President Mr Gerry Thompson (1957 - 2021)



# Editorial

## Welcome to the Winter edition of CU Focus

Normally, at this festive time of year, we feature a Christmas theme on our front cover. However, we thought it right and fitting, on this occasion, to depart from tradition with a front cover photograph of our Past President and League Board Director Gerry Thompson who sadly left us in October. Gerry's loss has been felt right across the credit union movement and there are fitting tributes to him from Roscommon Credit Union and from our President Helene McManus in this edition. We also have a tribute to Donal O'Driscoll, CEO of Access Credit Union, who sadly passed away in September.

This edition of CU Focus includes, not just one, but two articles featuring An tUachtarán Michael D Higgins. An tUachtarán welcomed a delegation from the League, led by President Helene McManus, to mark International Credit Union Day in October. This was followed by a visit by An tUachtarán to Comhar Chreidmheasa Chorca Dhuibhne in November. We are grateful to An tUachtarán for his continued promotion of the credit union movement and his public support as evidenced in his recent well publicised comments in an exchange of views with a former Taoiseach.

Credit unions have once again come top of the pile in the annual Customer Experience Awards for a world record seventh year in a row. This is no mean achievement and its significance should not be underestimated by credit union staff and volunteers. You can read more in this edition as to why this award keeps coming credit unions' way.

Also included in this edition is a report on the "The Borrowers" Northern Ireland, which aired on BBC NI in October. Our report includes insights from Loan Officers and from the members who featured in the three episodes telling us why the credit union is so important to them.

The new ILCU Technology Advisory Service, which will provide strategic advice and guidance in the areas of technology, digital and data analytics to credit unions, is outlined on Page 16. This service, which will launch in January, will be of great benefit to credit unions who are embarking on a digital journey with their members.

Finally, in our last edition of 2021, we would like to take this opportunity to wish all our readers a happy, healthy, and safe Christmas, even as the pandemic continues to impact our day to day lives. While we won't be able to celebrate in our usual festive way, let's make the most of being with our families and close friends.

Nollaig shona dhaoibh!



**Main Cover Image:**  
Mr. Gerry Thompson

**Editorial Committee:** Helene McManus, Vanessa Foran and Paul Bailey.

ILCU ISSN 1649-377X. **ILCU Board:** Helene McManus, President, Michael Byrne, Vice President, Margaret Heffernon, Treasurer, Martin Busch, Christopher Collins, Martin Dolan, Vanessa Foran, Joe Mulvey, Charles Murphy, Eamonn Sharkey, Patrick Sheehan, Jim Toner. **Supervisory Committee:** Michael Cogley, Patricia Doherty, Seamus Kilgannon

**Contributions may be submitted via email to [ilcucommunications@creditunion.ie](mailto:ilcucommunications@creditunion.ie).**

Design & Print: **Outburst Design**. Please mark submissions for the attention of the editor, CU Focus Communications Department. The views expressed in this issue of the CU Focus are not necessarily the views of the Irish League of Credit Unions. Advertising: The placement of an advert does not imply endorsement of the product or service advertised, either by the magazine or its publisher. The CU Focus will not knowingly carry false or misleading advertising. Articles The CU Focus would like to hear your news and views. Send in any newsworthy stories or photos. The CU Focus tries to publish all appropriate information submitted, but may be precluded by space constraints.

**Published By Irish League of Credit Unions 33 – 41 Lower Mount Street Dublin 2 Tel: 353 (0)1 614 6700 Fax: 353 (0)1 614 6701 Email: [info@creditunion.ie](mailto:info@creditunion.ie) Website: [www.creditunion.ie](http://www.creditunion.ie)**





12

**04 Magnificent 7!**

*Credit unions claim the top sport in the CXi awards for the seventh year in a row*



15

**06 MYCU Launch**

*A new credit union debit card and current account has been launched by CUSOP*

**08 The Borrowers**

*We hear about The Borrowers series*

**12 President Michael D Higgins**

*ILCU delegation visit to Áras an Uachtarán and his visit to Comhar Creidmheasa Corca Dhuibhne*

**15 Gerry Thompson**

*ILCU President and Roscommon Credit Union tribute*



24

**16 Technology Advisory Services for credit unions**

*New services to provide strategic advice and guidance in the areas of technology, digital and data analytics.*

**18 Central Register of Beneficial Ownership of Companies and Industrial and Provident Societies**

*Credit Union Compliance Centre gives an update on the 'CRBO'*



35

**24 ILCU Foundation**

*News and updates including a look back at the first ever credit union Step Up challenge*

**32 CU Stories**

*Stories from credit unions around the island of Ireland*

# MAGNIFICENT 7!

**Credit unions maintain top spot for Best Customer Experience for an unprecedented seventh year in a row**

**For an unprecedented seventh consecutive year, credit unions have claimed the top position for the best customer experience in Ireland at the official CXi awards. Credit unions are also the only brand to have maintained a constant presence in the Top Ten since the survey began, a testament to the consistency of their CX excellence.**

The Customer Experience Insight (CXi) Report is published annually by the CX Company based on a survey carried out on their behalf by Amárach Research. Over 28,000 experiences were evaluated using the CX Framework, including value, channel usage, how important employees are to the customer experience, and net promoter score (NPS) which measures the loyalty of customers to a company.

Speaking after the announcement, ILCU Head of Communications, Paul Bailey said, "Credit unions keep topping the CXi poll every year for one key reason - they treat their customers as members. They understand their members' needs at different stages of their lives and tailor their services accordingly. Best in class customer, or member, experience happens organically with staff not even realising they are ticking all the emotional drivers on which CX is measured. Credit union values and ethos are not just words hanging in a picture frame on the wall of the credit union office - they are put into action on a daily basis by friendly, understanding and people focused staff. This is why credit unions have topped the CXi poll for the seventh year in a row."

Michael Killeen, Chairman of the CX Company said, "The fact that credit unions have topped the poll again this year comes as no surprise to us in the CX Company. Year on year, we have seen the credit union tick all the

emotional drivers which are so important for customers. Not only do they meet their members' expectations, they continue to exceed them. The achievement of seven in a row is unparalleled anywhere in the world where Customer Experience is measured and it will be some time before this record is broken."

*Credit unions keep topping the CXi poll every year for one key reason - they treat their customers as members*

## The Top Ten CXi League Table 2021

There were seven new entrants in the top 10 who have jumped an average of 20 places each to get there. There are four sectors represented, three were there last year (Financial, Retail and Supermarket) and Restaurants are a new entrant. The only three brands to maintain their position at the top of the league table are Irish Credit Union, McCauley Health and Beauty and Shaws Department Stores.

Irish Credit Union are the only brand to have remained in the top 10 since the survey was started in 2015 and have retained their number one spot for an amazing seventh year.

1 <sup>st</sup>		<b>IRISH CREDIT UNION</b> Financial Sector	7.77 Cx Score out of 10	↔ No change
2 <sup>nd</sup>		<b>SMYTHS TOYS</b> Retail Sector	7.37 Cx Score out of 10	↑ 30 places
3 <sup>rd</sup>		<b>HICKEYS PHARMACY</b> Retail Sector	7.27 Cx Score out of 10	↑ 15 places
4 <sup>th</sup>		<b>BUTLERS CHOCOLATES</b> Restaurant Sector	7.19 Cx Score out of 10	★ New Entry
5 <sup>th</sup>		<b>MCCABES PHARMACY</b> Retail Sector	7.16 Cx Score out of 10	↑ 18 places
5 <sup>th</sup>		<b>LLOYDS PHARMACY</b> Retail Sector	7.16 Cx Score out of 10	↑ 41 places
7 <sup>th</sup>		<b>NESPRESSO</b> Retail Sector	7.10 Cx Score out of 10	↑ 32 places
8 <sup>th</sup>		<b>MCCAULEY HEALTH AND BEAUTY</b> Retail Sector	7.07 Cx Score out of 10	↓ 2 places
9 <sup>th</sup>		<b>BOOTS</b> Retail Sector	7.04 Cx Score out of 10	↑ 3 places
10 <sup>th</sup>		<b>SHAW'S DEPARTMENT STORES</b> Retail Sector	7.00 Cx Score out of 10	↓ 8 places
10 <sup>th</sup>		<b>ALDI</b> Supermarket Sector	7.00 Cx Score out of 10	↑ 8 places





## FINANCIAL SECTOR

Slipping from 3rd to 5th in the sector rankings in 2021, the Financial sector has seen some significant changes this year resulting in a drop in its CX score of -5.6%. Many have had to adapt processes and ways of working which has resulted in both positives and negatives for customers. One thing remains remarkably consistent and that is the Irish Credit Union who remain at number one for the seventh year running and are the only one brand in the survey to have been in the Top 10 since the survey started in 2015. An Post Money, Revolut, AIB and EBS all made it into the top 100 with An Post Money making the biggest movement, up 40 places to 20th.

One of the biggest drops in scores for the Financial sector was You Make It Easy (-7.0%) indicating that whilst much investment has been put into digital, it doesn't always improve the customer experience and can cause issues if the technology doesn't work. This is further reflected in the drop in score for You Fix Things, which at -8.8% is the biggest year-on-year decrease of all the Emotional Drivers. Being able to effectively resolve customer issues is becoming an increasingly important element of CX and one that all sectors need to focus on. It is interesting that both KBC and Ulster Bank, in the year they announced plans to leave the Irish market, saw big decreases in their scores for I Trust You with 7% and 12% drops respectively.

Despite all the challenges faced by finding different ways of interacting with customers during COVID, the top three brands in the Financial sector managed to exceed expectations for many of their customers. Irish Credit Union led the way with 36% of their customers feeling they went above and beyond for them, followed by 22% of An Post's customers and 21% of Revolut's customers.

*Extract from Cxi Ireland Customer Experience Report 2021*

## Financial Sector - 1st place

Credit Unions have topped Ireland's CXi league table for the last seven years for one key reason - they treat their customers as members. When someone joins a credit union, they are not just joining any financial institution. They are joining a social movement which provides relevant financial services to people in

their local communities. As such, credit unions get to know their members deeply as if they are members of their own family. They fully understand their needs at different stages of their lives and tailor their services accordingly. World class member experience happens organically with staff not even realising they

are ticking all the emotional drivers on which CX is measured. Credit union values and ethos are not just words hanging in a picture frame on the wall of the credit union office - they are put into action on a daily basis by friendly, understanding and people focused staff. This is why the credit union is now recognised as a world leader in CX Excellence across the globe.

*Extract from Cxi Ireland Customer Experience Report 2021*

*This is why the credit union is now recognised as a world leader in CX Excellence across the globe.*

# CREDIT UNIONS MOVE INTO A NEW ERA WITH THE MYCU DEBIT CARD

**A new credit union debit card and current account has been launched by CUSOP, the associated payment company of the Irish League of Credit Unions. The MYCU Mastercard Debit Card and Current Account are now available to over 400,000 credit union members across Ireland.**

Credit Unions offer an unparalleled customer experience for their members and have been voted the best customer experience for the 7th consecutive year, by the CXi Awards. The MYCU Debit Card and Current Account offers members the opportunity to complete and manage all of their day-to-day banking requirements with their credit union whilst delivered with that personal, local customer experience unique to credit unions.

President of the Irish League of Credit Unions Helene McManus, commented that the MYCU Debit Card is vital for the future of Ireland's credit unions: "People in Ireland massively embraced debit cards and online banking from day one and it makes sense that their local trusted credit union can now offer this level of convenience and access to their finances."

The MYCU Debit Card is part of the Mastercard network and can be used at millions of locations worldwide. The debit card allows members to access their account worldwide.

Sonya Geelon, County Manager for Mastercard Ireland commented: "We are proud to be partnering with CUSOP on the MYCU Debit Card and helping to bring safe, simple and secure payments to all their customers. With a Mastercard debit card customers have the choice of how they wish to pay, whether in person or online, and with the peace of mind that no card is more widely accepted around the world."

The card is visually striking, with a vibrant, modern and contemporary look. It is designed as a vertical card which reflects how cards are inserted into card machines and used to tap and pay. It has unique printing on the card, it doesn't have the traditional embossing style so there is no indent effect on the reverse of the card.

Uniquely, the card also has an added feature, a semi-circular indent on one side to assist members who may be visually impaired.

Dermot Griffin, CEO CUSOP commented that: "CUSOP, as an associated company of the Irish League of Credit Unions, are the leading payments partner for credit unions in Ireland. We are delighted to partner with industry experts such as Mastercard, FIS



*Ed Farrell, CEO, Irish League of Credit Unions, Helene McManus, President, Irish League of Credit Unions and Dermot Griffin, CEO, CUSOP (Payments) DAC*

and Railsbank technology (UAB Payrnet) to bring the MYCU Debit Mastercard to credit unions. The MYCU Debit Card and Current Account has been designed by credit unions for credit union members. The introduction of the MYCU service enables credit unions to provide a full suite of day-to-day banking services to their members, it offers real choice and competition within the financial services market."

Helene McManus added: "The Irish League of Credit Unions is committed to supporting the development and enhancement of new technologies and payment services for credit unions in Ireland. Given the withdrawal of major financial institutions from the Irish market and the reduction in local branches of the remaining banks, credit unions, more than ever, are being relied upon to provide an alternative local service and with the introduction of the MYCU Debit Card and

Current Account we are proving to members that we continue to be here for them when they need us."

The service is rolling out to 16 of the largest Credit Unions in the country covering 44 locations nationwide with several more Credit Unions due to launch the service in the coming months.

*Mastercard is a registered trademark, and the circles design is a trademark of Mastercard International Incorporated. The MYCU Debit Card is issued by PayrNet UAB pursuant to license by Mastercard International Inc. Terms and conditions apply.*

*UAB PayrNet is authorised by the Bank of Lithuania under the Law on Electronic Money and Electronic Money Institutions (ref LBO01994). PayrNet UAB is a wholly owned subsidiary of Railsbank Technology Limited and provides regulated financial services to Railsbank customers.*



# Credit Unions move to a new era with the MYCU Debit Mastercard®

Complete your range of banking services with the MYCU Debit Card and Current Account

To find out more:

call CUSOP on  
**01 6146980**

email us at  
**info@cusop.ie**

visit  
**www.mycu.ie**



# THE BORROWERS

Households across Northern Ireland tuned in to BBC1 NI this Autumn to catch the Alleycats Production 'The Borrowers', which focussed on the stories of people borrowing with their local credit union. The BBC were keen to focus on credit unions in rural areas, and having explored a number of options, selected W.B.R. Credit Union Limited in Warrenpoint, and Ballymena Causeway Credit Union Limited in Ballymena to feature in the series.

Throughout the course of the three episodes, the series shared stories of borrowers that the credit union had helped in a range of different ways, from support for growing their business, medical expenses, car loans, and of course, small loans to help those struggling to make ends meet.

Filming for the series was originally to begin in March 2020, and was delayed, along with most other plans, due to the Coronavirus Pandemic. But, with the blessings of modern technology, and an easing of restrictions, remote cameras were set up in both credit unions to capture the loans officers at work.

The Borrowers was an invaluable opportunity to highlight the many ways in which credit unions support their members, raising the profile of the movement across Northern Ireland, and helping to change perceptions of who borrows from a credit union, and for what purpose. It cemented the credit union's commitment to a personal, friendly approach, and really highlighted the relationship members have with the staff, and the commitment staff have to helping those members when its needed most.

With a wealth of experience between them managing the loans for their respective credit unions, our four loans officers soon got to grips with filming, and despite being a daunting experience to begin with, they really enjoyed filming the series, and the chance to feature on the show, and share the work that the credit union does.



Shannon



Charles

Shannon and Charles, Loans Officers with Ballymena Causeway Credit Union Limited



Louise



Mark

Louise and Mark, Loans officer from W.B.R Credit Union Limited





*“The best place to come to is the credit union, apart from being the cheapest, you’re dealing with people. Friendly people who want to help you.” – Jimmy*

Acting Credit Manager Charles from Ballymena Causeway Credit Union told us:

“It was a great experience to see how a TV programme comes together. The Borrowers is a show following the experiences of people taking a loan with their local credit union. We were delighted to be chosen to feature in the series. It was good to see some of our members get the chance to tell their amazing stories, with everyone who watches the show. Some of the stories will make you laugh

and others will bring you to tears. We deal with so many different members, and I wish more had got the chance to share their stories with everyone.”

Credit unions lend for all manner of reasons, and the series really highlighted the wide range of reasons that borrowers had to get in touch. With loans from £100 - £80,000, the episodes and members’ stories showed how whether a small or large loan, it was invaluable to them to help with their circumstances.

*“Everything we do and everything we talk about is to try and get the loan approved, to try and do what we can for the member, because that’s what it’s all about at the end of the day” – Charles*

#### **SERIES RECAP:**

##### **Episode 1**

In the first episode, loan officer Shannon Gordon from Ballymena Causeway Credit Union met with personal trainer Mark who was looking for a loan to extend his gym. Mark pulls out all the stops to make his case and convinces Shannon to try some exercises in the office.

Loan officer Charles Allen also from Ballymena Causeway interviewed a footballer team-mate Mark, who wanted to get a loan out to pay for laser eye surgery. Charles also met with beauty therapist Erin who was in for car loan after having some very back luck with cars in the past year.

“Everything we do and everything we talk about is to try and get the loan approved, to try and do what we can for the member, because that’s what it’s all about at the end of the day”, Charles said.

In WBR Credit Union, loan officer Louise White welcomed local entrepreneur Brendan Carty who was seeking additional funds to expand his distillery business in the Mourne Mountains.

Louise assured Brendan “It’s great to support local business, the credit union is there to support local businesses and to help them whenever they can”.

##### **Episode 2**

In episode 2, Shannon processed a car loan application for an elderly borrower who much preferred to deal with the credit union because he liked the fact

# THE BORROWERS



*"I just really feel that my business can grow and I know that the credit union can help me" – Natasha.*



*"I just want to continue on with the dream we had envisaged" – Niamh.*

he's dealing with real people.

"The best place to come to is the credit union, apart from being the cheapest, you're dealing with people. Friendly people who want to help you", said Jimmy.

Local entrepreneur Pamela was in with Charles to request a loan for a new refrigerated van for her food business.

Mark O'Gorman, loan officer with WBR met with a local artist who wanted to expand her art business to textiles and a local teacher who was looking to invest in a wood fire stove. Louise met with local businessman Mark who requested a large loan to grow his electrical contracting business.

*"I love to tell people their loans are approved, that's what the job is all about, that sense of reward" – Mark*

### Episode 3

Episode 3 features some poignant stories and really highlights the many ways in which credit unions support their members.

In WBR Credit Union, borrower Laura tells loan officer Mark about her events business, which she established just before the pandemic but had to put on hold before she really got started.

"Without the help of the credit union, this wouldn't have been possible for me and I'm hoping this is the start of something very exciting for my business", said Laura.

Natasha was in with Louise and she was looking to get a loan to get her own gym space set up. She had been doing online fitness videos during lockdown from her sitting room and knew that with her expanding business she needed bit more space.

After going through a tough time in her personal life, Niamh is keen to keep her business dream a reality and speaks to Louise about getting a loan to expand the stock in her shop.

Niamh explained to Louise "I just want to continue on with the dream we had envisaged", said Niamh.

In Ballymena, Shannon met with Neil, who needed a small personal loan to pay





*“When you’re walking into the credit union, it’s like calling into your neighbours on a ceili, because you know everybody in there” - Brendan*

off some bills. She heard his incredible life story, and how he has remained resilient and kept a positive attitude throughout.

Neil said to Shannon “Enjoy life because you never know when it can change”

The final episode was dedicated to the memory of Neil, who sadly passed away in August 2021.

Speaking about the experience, W.B.R. Credit Union CEO Alan Griffin said:

“We were privileged and proud to be selected to be involved in “The Borrowers” TV programme. This allowed us the opportunity to showcase the ethos of our Credit Union. It has been a huge promotional feature for us at WBR Credit Union Ltd and it created great excitement and buzz around our common bond area

and beyond. We have already seen an increase in our membership, loan book, reactivation of dormant accounts and our social media interaction following the screening the 3 episodes. The show has highlighted the need for credit unions within our local community for both personal and corporate accounts. I would welcome everyone within our community to contact our premises to take advantage of becoming a member to avail of the benefits and the services we offer.

“I would like take this opportunity to say a special thank you to all of our staff who were involved, especially Louise & Mark for their input and professionalism throughout the process.”

Paul Patton, Manager of Ballymena Causeway Credit Union said of their experience:



*“Without the help of the credit union, this wouldn’t have been possible for me and I’m hoping this is the start of something very exciting for my business” – Louise.*

“We have really enjoyed featuring in The Borrowers series, and have seen a hugely positive response from our members and the local community. It was an invaluable opportunity to show how credit unions help their members in all different ways, and really highlighted the personal and professional service we offer. It has created a real buzz in the local community, and a renewed sense of pride for staff and volunteers.”

The series has been extremely well received, with heartwarming responses to episodes each week on social media, and very positive feedback from credit unions and their members. We look forward to seeing if The Borrowers series 3 can make it onto screens – watch this space! *The series is available to view on BBC iplayer until October 2022.*

# President Michael D Higgins welcomes ILCU delegation to Áras an Uachtaráin

To mark International Credit Union Day, President Michael D Higgins invited a delegation from the Irish League of Credit Unions (ILCU) to visit with him at Áras an Uachtaráin. ILCU President, Helene McManus was accompanied by Vice President Michael Byrne, Treasurer Margaret Heffernan, and ILCU CEO Ed Farrell. The ILCU also invited Michael Branagan, CEO at Community Credit Union in whose common bond Áras an Uachtaráin sits, to accompany them.



ILCU delegation meets President Higgins at Áras an Uachtaráin

As the movement celebrated the 73rd International Credit Union Day this year, the representatives from the ILCU spoke to President Higgins about the importance of the movement for generations of Irish people, and how the ethos of the movement is grounded in the not-for-profit, member owned philosophy and centred on people helping people.

Speaking to President Higgins, ILCU President Helene McManus detailed how important the credit union has been in the lives of many, as a voluntary, community based, democratic movement. Helene also described how credit unions are a social movement with a financial purpose, not a financial institution with a social programme.

International Credit Union Day 2021 is a celebration of the impact credit unions have made - and continue to make for their members. It is also a chance to

celebrate the lives and communities that have been improved by the movement. Community, commitment and positive economic and social change are just some of the ways that credit unions differ from traditional for-profit banks and other financial institutions.

ILCU Treasurer Margaret Heffernan spoke to President Higgins about the impact of credit unions, not just on the island of Ireland, but across the world. The work of the ILCU International Development Foundation across Sierra Leone, the Gambia and other regions has ensured that people across the

world have access to equitable and affordable finance.

As a long-time supporter of the credit union movement, and a member of St Anthony's & Claddagh Credit Union in Galway, President Higgins spoke of the importance for the movement in continuing to provide equitable financial services and products for members, for generations to come. He also highlighted the benefits of cooperative movements to the whole of society and the role credit unions, as financial cooperatives, can play in helping to solve the housing crisis.

---

*International Credit Union Day 2021 is a celebration of the impact credit unions have made - and continue to make for their members. It is also a chance to celebrate the lives and communities that have been improved by the movement.*



# President Higgins visits Comhar Chreidmheasa Chorca Dhuibhne in Dingle, Co. Kerry



President Michael D Higgins visiting Comhar Chreidmheasa Chorca Dhuibhne

**President Michael D Higgins has always spoken very highly of the Credit Union movement in Ireland and Comhar Chreidmheasa Chorca Dhuibhne decided to write to him recently to thank him for his continuous support and to invite him to visit them in Dingle, Co. Kerry.**

Little did they expect that he would accept their invitation but they were delighted and honoured to receive a reply from the President's office confirming his intention to visit their Credit Union during the weekend of the Dingle Literary Festival.

Speaking at the Credit Union visit, Manager Micheál Ó Cinnéide said they were honoured to welcome the President and his wife Sabina, and he thanked him for his continuous support of credit unions nationwide.

"We invited the President to call into us to thank him for the support that he has shown for the Credit Union movement on many occasions. We were delighted when he accepted this invitation and I think it is an acknowledgement and an endorsement from the President of Ireland of the importance of credit unions to Irish communities. This importance is not just of economic value but includes our contribution to the social development of our community."

At the forefront of the President's mind was his support for the expansion of credit union services and he believes that credit unions should be able to offer a wider range of services.

He also spoke of the importance of the social and cultural benefits of credit

unions and he emphasised the importance of the provision of services in Irish, praising Comhar Chreidmheasa Chorca Dhuibhne, a Gaeltacht based credit union, for their bilingual services, stating that the use of Irish in everyday life was vital to the survival and growth of the language.

Ba mhór an onóir do Chomhar Chreidmheasa Chorca Dhuibhne an tUachtarán agus a bhean Sabina a bheith ina dteannta sa Daingean le déanaí.

Léiríonn an chuairt seo, an meas atá ag an Uachtarán ar ghluaiseacht na gComhar Chreidmheasa agus tugann sé aitheantas do Chomhar Chreidmheasa Chorca Dhuibhne as ucht na seirbhísí dátheangacha a chuireann siad ar fáil don bpobal.

# CREDIT UNION (AMENDMENT) BILL 2021

**On the 21st October 2021, Marian Harkin, TD brought forward the Credit unions (Amendment) Bill 2021 to the Oireachtas proposing that the regulation of credit unions by the Central Bank would be done in an appropriate way to protect the community-based volunteer ethos of the movement.**

In her speech, Ms Harkin outlined the three objectives of the Bill including the amendment of the objects of Credit Unions to include 'the provision to its members of additional financial services as are for their mutual benefit', the establishment of a Credit Union Policy Committee and that the Central Bank obtains the consent of the Minister for Finance when prescribing the minimum regulatory reserve requirement for Credit Unions.'

Ms Harkin commented that at present The Credit Union Act largely limits the role of Credit Unions to accept savings and provide loans. She argued that the additional list of services which a credit union can provide, which is approved by the Central Bank, subject to certain conditions, is outdated in the changing world of financial services provision.

The Bill proposal would allow a credit union to provide a greater range of financial services to its members, e.g. current accounts where certain conditions are met.

The purpose of a Credit Union Policy Committee would be to review the impact of Central Bank policy on Credit Unions and provide feedback to the Central Bank on their policy development process.

The third objective of the Bill would be to provide for miscellaneous matters relating to Credit Unions. These include that the consent of the Minister be required by the Central Bank when prescribing the minimum regulatory reserve requirement for Credit Unions, that the Central Bank have regard to amendment of a common bond of other credit unions and ensure there is no overlap, and that the Central Bank administers the system of regulation and supervision of credit unions in an appropriate manner.



Marian Harkin, TD

---

## *The Bill proposal would allow a credit union to provide a greater range of financial services to its members*

Ms Harkin concluded her speech by saying "Credit unions are 'not for profit', member owned financial institutions and run according to a volunteer ethos. This must be recognised and taken into account by the Central Bank."

The Second Stage of the Bill was taken in Private Members' time on the 3rd November. During the debate, Minister of State Department of Finance with responsibility for Financial Services, Credit Unions and Insurance, Seán Fleming, agreed that the government would allow the Bill to proceed to Committee, but critically added by way of amendment the caveat that this would not happen for another nine months, which allowing for a summer recess, is a calendar year. The Bill was passed by 66 votes for and 60 votes against.

Minister Fleming commented during the debate "Today's Bill assigns the Minister a role in setting a strategic plan

for the sector, with the Central Bank reporting annually to the Minister on this plan. The Minister for Finance, Deputy Donohoe, and I believe it is not appropriate for the Minister for Finance to set out a strategic plan for the development of the movement. This is a matter for the movement itself and it needs to step up and increase its lending, reduce fragmentation and develop more collaborative projects. It is not for the Minister to decide on an appropriate future. We can assist and support but it is a matter for the credit union movement, in the first instance, to decide on its future."

The government voted for the Bill as amended and the opposition, including the Bill's sponsor Deputy Harkin, voted against. The outcome of the vote means that the bill is ordered to be read a second time on the 3rd August 2022.



# REMEMBERING A DEAR FRIEND, COLLEAGUE, BOARD DIRECTOR AND PAST ILCU PRESIDENT



*Gerry will be greatly missed by all who had the privilege of knowing him, a true gentleman with a love and commitment of the credit union movement.*

**Roscommon Credit Union along with fellow credit unions across the Country, lost a true friend, a gentleman and colleague with the passing of Gerry Thompson, on Saturday, October 23rd, 2021 following a short illness bravely borne.**

Gerry will be fondly remembered by his credit union family for his passion and commitment to the development of the credit union movement, and his strong belief in the power of community. An advocate of all things credit union, he was steeped in the movement, holding local, regional, and national roles. A fierce advocate of the ILCU Foundation having served for over 10 years on the Board, sharing his wealth of credit union experience with local and international partners over the years.

Gerry's first introduction to Credit Union life was with his late father who served as a founding Director of Lanesboro Ballyleague Credit Union. It was during his formative years and visiting the Credit Union with his late father that Gerry found a deep interest and love for the Credit Union movement and he later went on to become a Director of the same Credit Union.

As a Director of Roscommon Credit Union, he derived most satisfaction from serving the people of Roscommon with enthusiasm and total dedication for many

years. We were extremely proud when Gerry was elected by the national Credit Union movement as President of the Irish League of Credit Unions in April 2019. Gerry proved to be a more than worthy President and true friend to the movement during his reign, which was sadly cut short by the COVID-19 pandemic and the onset of his illness.

Gerry's love and commitment to the Credit Union was only surpassed by his love and dedication to his family, whom he spoke so often and lovingly about. His colleagues here in Roscommon and friends from around the country had the pleasure of meeting his first grandchild on the night we celebrated his appointment as President of the ILCU, a very proud time for Gerry himself.

Gerry will be greatly missed by all who had the privilege of knowing him, a true gentleman with a love and commitment of the credit union movement. His belief in the power of co-operation was second to none. He had a great sense of humour, a quick wit and was a charming man, who was most certainly in a League of his own. We at Roscommon Credit Union feel the immense void left by the passing of Gerry Thompson.

It will be hard to forget someone who gave us so much to remember.

## Tribute to

## Gerry Thompson

by Helene McManus, ILCU President

On October 23rd, 2021, our fellow ILCU director, colleague, and friend, Gerry Thompson, quietly closed the door of life and peacefully departed, having fought a brave battle with cancer. He left this world from the comfort of his home where he shared so many happy years with Martha and their children Caoilfhionn, Cliodhna, Gráinne and Cormac, the family he so loved. While everyone will miss Gerry's physical presence, his approach to life, to helping others in whatever way he could and to always doing what was right, will live on in the memories of those of us who had the good fortune of knowing and working with him.

Albert Einstein is quoted as saying "The value of a man should be seen in what he gives and not in what he is able to receive." Gerry was known, locally, nationally and internationally, as a person who gave – he generously gave much in the way of his knowledge, his expertise and his skills. He was always concerned with improving the lives of others, whether that was in his own community in County Roscommon, or in the organisations and committees that he was involved with. His sincerity, commitment and allegiance shone through and that, together with his sense of humour and thoughtful demeanour, gave valuable life to his years.

As a Director and Past President of the Irish League of Credit Unions, Gerry worked with passion, integrity and energy while demonstrating leadership throughout. He was a strategic thinker and contributed much to the development of the League by way of initiatives he brought forward, with many being implemented during his time serving with the League Board. That work continues today. We will remember Gerry from all the days gone before that we were privileged to share with him.

**Tá Gearoid inár gcuid smaointe.**

# TECHNOLOGY ADVISORY SERVICES FOR CREDIT UNIONS

After a year of engaging with credit unions, regulators and other industry stakeholders, strategic analysis and independent industry research, we are now launching a new Technology Advisory Services for credit unions. These services will provide strategic advice and guidance in the areas of technology, digital and data analytics.

## A. How did this story begin?

One of the five goals in the ILCU strategy 2020-2025 is to 'Source and deliver quality products and shared services sought by credit unions'. A sub-goal within this is to "Investigate the demand for, and potential to deliver, IT services for credit unions".

In Q4 2020, the ICT (Information, Communication and Technology) Strategic Analysis initiative was kicked off to explore what are the current and future IT needs of credit unions, with a view to determining the opportunity for the League to support credit unions to better leverage technology and digital to achieve your business goals. A focus group, representing the diverse nature of credit unions in the League, was mobilised to give input and direction.

The best way to understand these needs was to ask you what you wanted. Towards the end of 2020, a survey was conducted of all League credit unions to understand your needs on **Technology, Cost Optimisation and Service Excellence**.

We had a great response with 100 credit unions responding with a good spread across asset size (35 large, 34 mid-size and 31 small credit unions) with a good geographical spread (38 from Ulster, 33 from Leinster, 17 from Munster and 12 from Connaught).

The results of the survey were reviewed extensively by the focus group. A wide range of stakeholders were also engaged. These included regulators, credit union technology suppliers, CUSOP, Payac, other shared service providers, CUMA, WOCCU and other Leagues and industry bodies in the US and UK.

**Two working groups**, composed of credit union staff, were mobilised to develop the work. The groups contributed generously with their time, energy and enthusiasm. An **Independent Review Group, comprised of Credit Union CEOs, challenged and endorsed the findings and recommendations**.

## B. What were the main findings from the analysis?

- Credit unions deliver excellent customer experience in branch and are Ireland's most trusted financial service provider. The credit union strategy is to build on our excellent reputation for member experience in the physical channels and deliver an equally good digital experience.
- Increasingly, members and the next cohort of potential members have heightened expectations of a smooth and seamless digital customer experience when dealing with their financial services provider.
- Whilst part of a wider cooperative group, there is limited structured collaboration or knowledge sharing amongst credit unions.
- Some credit unions feel that there is not a good understanding of the capabilities of their current core banking systems and future roadmaps and what this means for their credit union.

## C. What does the future Digital Credit Union look like?

It is clear that Digital is transforming the way financial services are being delivered. We anticipate that the future digital credit unions will:

- take an "outside in" perspective – "walking in the member's shoes" - taking the member or prospective member's perspective in developing and delivering a great digital experience to its members
- have data analysts who use data & analytics to understand its members as members choose to engage with the credit union at any time of day or night through digital channels, rather than coming to the branch
- have digital marketing analysts who use email marketing and digital marketing campaigns to raise awareness of the credit unions

products and services and ultimately grow the loan book

- have tellers that use video and web chat to engage with members who don't come to the branch anymore
- integrate with others in the Digital economy (partner companies offering adjacent products & service) using Open Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) to their credit union core banking system.
- have a web and app capabilities to accept new members and originate loans
- use open banking to get system access to retrieve a member's bank statements and possibly open finance to get system access to retrieve a member's utility bills.

A snapshot of the capabilities of the future digital credit union, mapped against the digital sales funnel, is included (opposite).

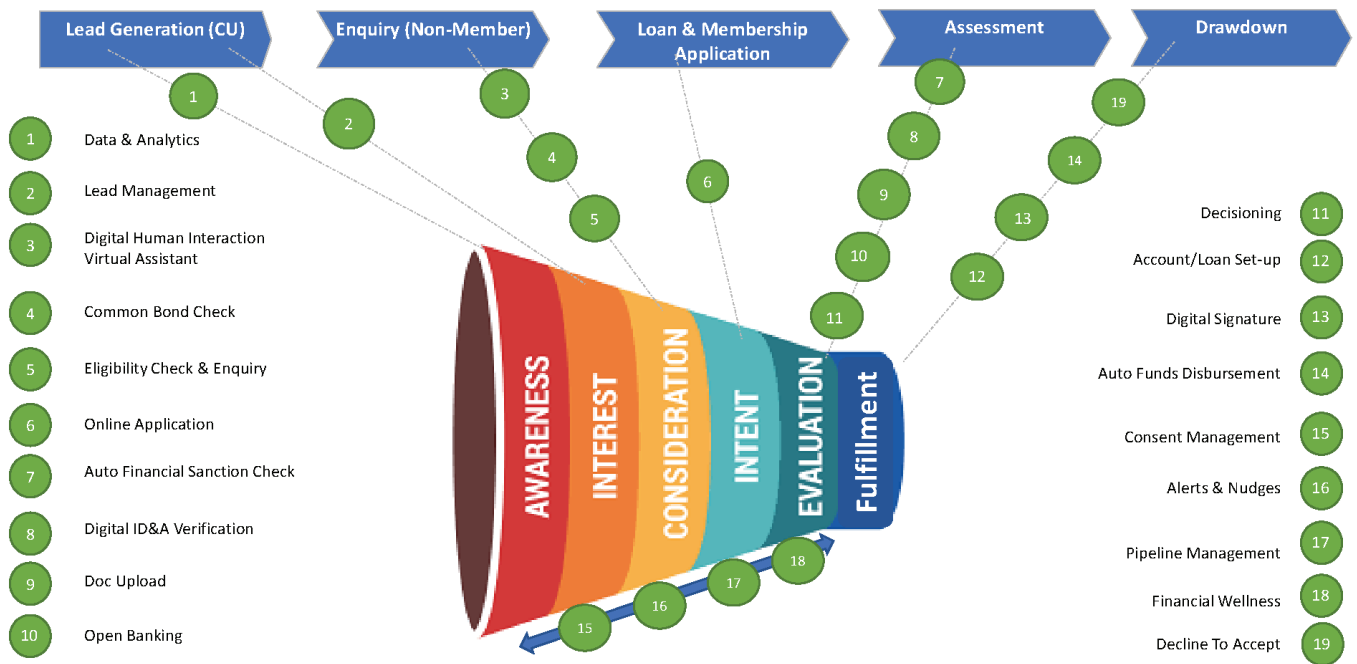
Some of these capabilities are already in place in different credit unions.

Recognising the new levels of specialist knowledge needed in a Digital world, one of the key recommendations was the establishment of a Technology Advisory Service covering the areas of Technology, Digital and Data Analytics. This includes the development of a knowledge base covering technology utilisation, standards and industry best practices, supporting stronger collaboration amongst credit unions, improving operational resilience and enhancing digital lending capability. This Advisory Service will work closely with the User Groups to provide advice and direction for technology strategy for credit unions and increase the knowledge and understanding of credit unions of their existing capabilities and what's coming in future roadmaps.

The findings and recommendations were presented to and endorsed by the League Board in May and a subsequent plan to mobilise the Technology Advisory Service was presented to and endorsed by



## Future Digital Credit Union Sales Funnel: Capabilities Needed



the League Board in September.

### D. So what's next?

We are now in the Mobilisation phase for the new Technology Advisory Service, aiming to be operational from January. It will be staffed with experts in the areas of Technology, Digital and Data Analytics. We are currently recruiting for these skills. We have also recently mobilised a Technology manager working group initially from twelve different credit unions across the country to tap into the latent technology expertise that exists within the sector. We also want to develop communities of best practice in the areas of Digital and Data Analytics.

The end state vision for this service is 'a rising tide lifting all boats' by supporting credit unions to better leverage technology and digital to achieve your business goals.

The ambitions for the year 1 services have been defined together with the User Group Chairs. These new services are designed to support and complement what the user groups already do. In the first year, the services are targeting four main benefit categories:

i. Grow Lending: improve the use of digital and data analytics to help

- credit unions grow the loan book
- ii. Manage operational risk/compliance: help credit unions manage cyber risk in a more consistent way and streamline engagement with the regulators on new regulatory asks
- iii. Achieve Economies of Scale: help credit unions understand and optimise their technology infrastructure footprint
- iv. Future Proof Credit Union Technology: work with user groups and infrastructure providers to understand current capabilities and the business possibilities available from future roadmaps

To support delivery of these benefits, there are three main categories of services planned. These are:

1. Technology Advisory Services:
  - Promote effective utilisation of technology and digital by credit unions and their members.
  - Support development of credit union ICT strategy which enables greater consistency and standardisation in the use of infrastructure by credit unions.
  - Introduce and promote standard approach to manage credit union cyber risk.

2. Digital Enablement Services:

- Provide a toolkit to credit unions to review their own member experience and provide a broad understanding of the key features, benefits and usage of various digital marketing techniques and strategies in a straightforward, actionable manner.
- Help credit unions "Grow the Loan Book" by providing direction on what types of campaigns should be run, what should be measured and tracked and how to do this.

3. Data Analytics Enablement Services:

- Provide a clear definition of the management information and reporting needs and datasets needed to grow the loan book and convey to credit unions.
- Build engagement with regulators to support a streamlined process with clear roles and responsibilities for future requests from the regulators.

Work has started in defining these services. They will be launched on a phased basis over the coming year, with the first services launched in January.



## Central Register of Beneficial Ownership of Companies and Industrial and Provident Societies

The Credit Union Compliance Centre (CUCC) hosted a webinar in September for subscribing credit unions on the Central Register of Beneficial Ownership of Companies and Industrial and Provident Societies which was presented by Registrar of Beneficial Ownership, Maureen O'Sullivan. The Central Register of Beneficial Owners, which is also referred to as the "CRBO" and "RBO", must be consulted when determining the beneficial ownership of applicable accounts at onboarding stage. The RBO went live in July 2019. The requirement to check the register where applicable commenced in April 2021.

The RBO register contains beneficial ownership details of companies and industrial and provident societies. Companies and industrial and provident societies are obliged to submit a register of beneficial ownership to the RBO as well as maintaining their own internal beneficial ownership registers. Credit unions will find details of beneficial ownership of private limited companies, public limited companies, designated activity companies ("DAC"), companies limited by guarantee and private unlimited companies as well as beneficial ownership information on industrial and provident societies. Any changes to beneficial ownership must be notified to the RBO within 14 days.

It is important to note that limited partnerships and business names are not incorporated legal entities for the purposes of the Register of Beneficial Ownership. Credit unions will not be able to find beneficial ownership details of companies which are not incorporated in the Republic of Ireland and will have to consult the register of beneficial ownership in the home country of the company.

### What is Beneficial Ownership

Beneficial ownership is defined by Section 26 of the Criminal Justice (Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing) Act 2010 (as amended). A beneficial owner is any natural person who owns more than 25% of a legal entity's shares or voting rights. Where the natural person does not



*A beneficial owner is any natural person who owns more than 25% of a legal entity's shares or voting rights*

have shares or voting rights, beneficial ownership or control can be held through a shareholders agreement, the exercise of dominant interest or the power to appoint senior management. Beneficial owners can be different from legal ownership. Legal ownership can be held by both natural persons and other legal entities. However, beneficial owners must always be individuals.

### Credit Union Obligations

As a result of the transposition of the 4th and 5th Anti-Money Laundering Directives by the Criminal Justice (Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing) (Amendment) Acts 2018 and 2021 and the requirements for more transparency of beneficial ownership, credit unions, as designated persons, are obliged to obtain information about the beneficial ownership of companies and industrial and provident societies at account opening stage and then consult with the register to verify the beneficial ownership

information provided. Credit unions must check that the information recorded on the register matches the information provided by the incorporated body.

Furthermore, credit unions are required to maintain a record of how they verified the beneficial ownership of an account and any findings or discrepancies found. Credit unions can ask to see the internal register of the company or industrial and provident society as part of customer due diligence obligations ("CDD").

Credit unions have an obligation to report any discrepancies they find in the information accessed on the RBO register. Credit unions should provide this information by filing a Discrepancy Notice with Form DN2 for designated persons. This is discussed further below.

Credit unions can submit a non-compliance form, Form NCN, to the RBO where they have checked the register and no details have been found. However, it is important to note that newly incorporated





*Credit unions have an obligation to report any discrepancies they find in the information accessed on the RBO register*

companies and industrial and provident societies have 5 months from date of establishment/incorporation to submit beneficial ownership details.

Credit unions must appoint an RBO Liaison Officer as a contact point for communications with the RBO and to oversee discrepancy reports raised, and are also reminded to have regard to the beneficial ownership requirements set out by the Central Bank in the revised AML/CFT Guidelines.

### Information

Credit unions and other organisations which have a business relationship with the company or industrial and provident society and have CDD obligations fall under Tier 2 access which is a restricted access permission to the information. Members of the public can also view the register under Tier 2. Tier 1 access provides unrestricted information but this is limited to Gardaí, the Criminal Assets Bureau, Revenue Commissioners and other investigative

bodies such as an inspector appointed under the Companies Act (as amended).

Credit unions have access to the following information:

- First name and surname
- Month and year of birth
- Country of residence
- Nationality of each Beneficial Owner
- Statement of the nature and extent of interest or control

PPSNs or other tax identification numbers are not viewable by either Tier 1 or Tier 2 access groups. This information is only obtained by the RBO to verify the existence of a beneficial owner against Department of Social Protection records.

### Discrepancies

As mentioned above, if credit unions find any discrepancies in the information on the register and the information provided when conducting CDD checks, they must report the discrepancy to the RBO "in a timely

manner". During the webinar, the Registrar clarified what does not constitute a discrepancy:

- Where there is a difference between legal owners recorded on the CRO register and beneficial owners recorded on the RBO register
- The use of different versions of a name such as using an Irish name in some documentation and the English version in other documentation and where all other information is correct
- An individual's middle name being used in some documentation but not in others and where all other information provided is correct
- Where the RBO entry uses an individual's marriage name or maiden name
- Where a shareholder has 25% of the shares and is not registered as a beneficial owner with the RBO - this is because the threshold for a beneficial owner is 25% of the shares plus 1 and not 25%.

### Retention of Records and Enforcement Action

The RBO retains information provided on the register for a period of 10 years from the date on which the company or industrial and provident society has been wound up or dissolved.

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Registrar has not yet brought any enforcement action against required legal entities for failing to provide details of their beneficial owners. To date, 87% of companies and 71% of Industrial and Provident Societies have complied with the filing requirements.

Credit unions can find more information and guidance about the RBO at <https://rbo.gov.ie> and can keep up to date with information by following the RBO on Twitter and on LinkedIn.

**For further information about this or about our compliance advisory service, please contact the Credit Union Compliance Centre (CUCC) at [compliance@creditunion.ie](mailto:compliance@creditunion.ie) or by telephone on 01-6146711.**

## 'Tis the Season for Lending ...

Looking ahead to the Christmas and New Year, lending needs from members will likely increase across multiple loan products. With this in mind, we wanted to remind you of the lending supports provided by the Learning and Development Department, many of which have been developed in response to the opportunities and economic conditions of 2021/2022.

Earlier this year our CU CPD Webcast, "Personal Lending – Assessing Creditworthiness" presented by Seamus Madden covered:

- Responsible lending
- Methods to assess creditworthiness
- Establishing repayment capacity for personal loans
- Establishing repayment capacity for loans to the self-employed

For anyone who missed this or wants to recap, it can be accessed through our eLearning suite of courses available on CU Learn and is a good way to account for 1 hour CPD on the topic of Lending.

We have also introduced a selection of in-depth lending courses for the 2021/2022 season that cover both personal and business lending. These are based around modules that can be selected for your needs and include the following topics:

- Personal lending for staff
- Personal lending for larger loans
- Personal lending to a sole trader
- Personal Lending to higher risk groups
- Preparing for Business Lending
- Business Lending – Lending to the SME
- Business Lending – Underwriting for Larger Loans

The modular approach gives you the opportunity to target the specific areas where you feel you can enhance your knowledge based on ongoing and developing business in your credit union.

We have aligned all these courses with the Loans ASAP model. But what is this?

The ASAP in Loans ASAP stands for Attitude, Strategy, Implementation and Persistence. This new training programme focusses on the four ASAP factors that can influence the development of credit union business. The training is suitable for credit union management, lenders, business development officers and front-line staff. The programme is outlined in a recorded webinar which is available on Watch Back: Webinars page within the Affiliate Area of [www.creditunion.ie](http://www.creditunion.ie)





To give more context of the relevance of ASAP to your business the factors are described as:

- Attitude** The importance of attitude; how it is formed, and what can shape it on a day
- Strategy** Day-to-day strategy planning – who am I going to speak with today?
- Application** Looking at skillsets including prospecting, approaching, presenting, negotiating and closing conversations
- Persistence** Tips to help us keep going with our objectives, plans, behaviours and overcome obstacles.

All our courses are also available for “in-house” delivery by virtual live training via Zoom and we will begin a limited return to in-house in-person delivery where guidance and restrictions allow in 2022.

The Central Bank conducted a survey on MCC qualifications in 2021 held by credit union officers in preparation of a Minimum Competency Code (MCC) review, it is likely that credit union officers engaged in lending activity will be required to hold an MCC recognised loans designation from 2022. Many learners are already on the journey through our modules and programmes with the

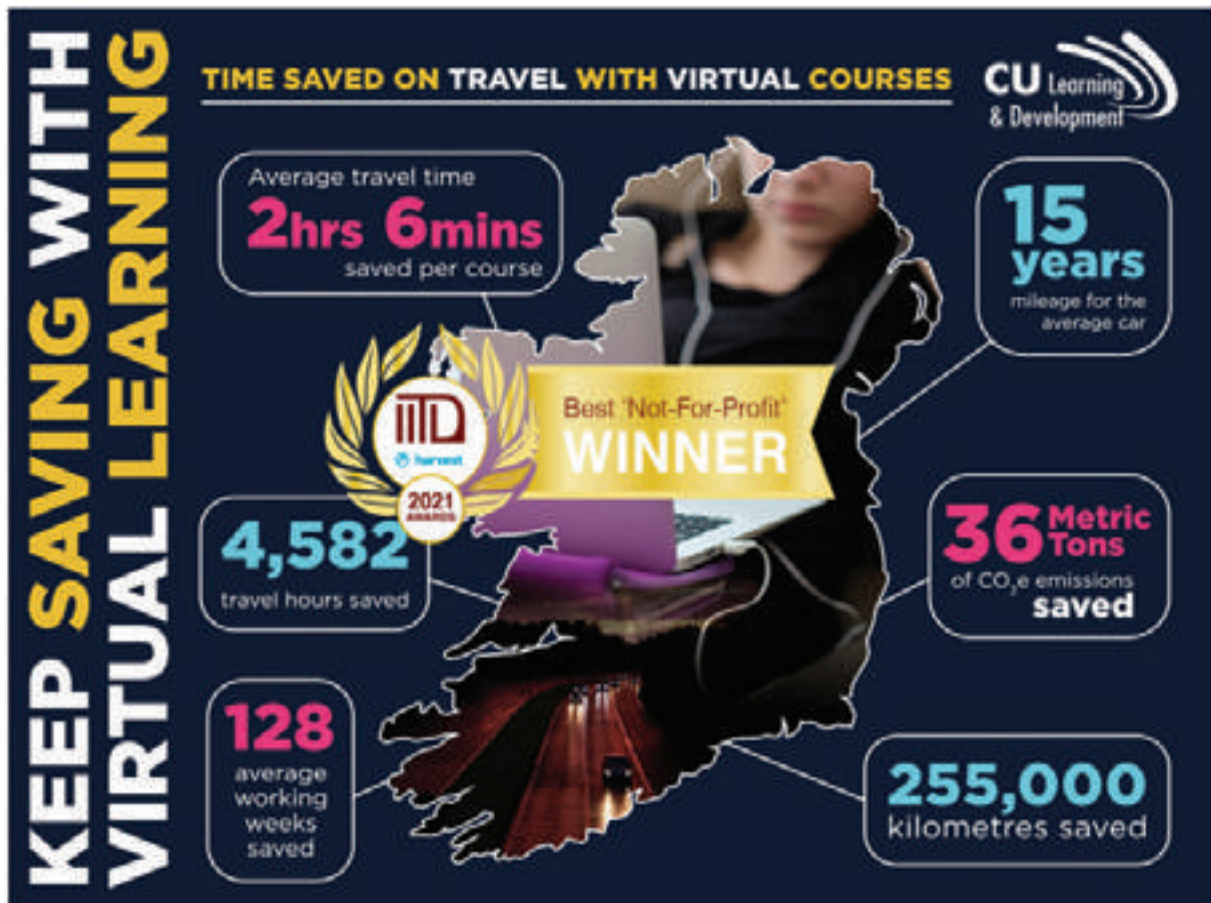
National College of Ireland. Further opportunities to enrol will be available in November and December to for programmes beginning in spring 2022.



### ... and Saving in all Seasons

Together right across 2021, we have continued to save while learning virtually. Our savings are up from 2020 with growth in time saved across the movement enabling greater efficiency is meeting our training, work and volunteer commitments. Noteable, and in light of COP26 and the Central Bank’s communications on expectations relating to the climate, environmental, social, and governance (ESG) issues, the credit union movement can demonstrate continued and increased saving on carbon emissions.

In 2020 we saved 20 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions from training travel, this year we have jumped up to 36 tons for 2021/2022, while next year collectively the movement will continue to have a positive environmental impact as emissions savings associated with the CU Greener Homes initiative take effect as more retrofit and improvement works are completed.



# Putting the Action in Research: the Swoboda Research Centre

You may have heard that there is now an Ireland-based research centre dedicated to credit unions: we ask why was this set up, and what does it do?



Ralph Swoboda RIP,  
Former Chair



Nick Money,  
Director of Development



Dr Paul A. Jones  
Director of Research

## How did the Centre start?

Ralph Swoboda, Dr Paul A. Jones and Nick Money, met with a group of credit union CEOs to discuss the establishment of Ireland's first research centre dedicated to credit unions. The **Centre for Community Finance Europe**, now the **Swoboda Research Centre**, was officially launched in 2017 to serve credit unions in Ireland and Great Britain by delivering evidence-based, action-orientated research. Sadly, Ralph Swoboda, co-founder and chair, died on 13 September 2021, and in November 2021 the organisation was re-named the Swoboda Research Centre in his memory.

## Why did these CEOs think this new organisation is needed?

"I and many of my CEO colleagues recognised the need for new ideas and new evidence coming into the sector, to help us develop our credit unions," says Michael Byrne, CEO of Core Credit Union and a non-executive director of the Centre. "We have benefited from the contributions of several academics over the years, but we need more and we want it delivered in our language and in a way that we can quickly understand and use it."

Ralph Swoboda was the ideal person to drive this concept, with an extraordinary international credit union career, and at this time running a software business serving many forward-looking credit unions in Ireland. As CEO of CUNA (the trade association for USA credit unions) in the 1980s, Ralph had co-founded the eminent Filene Research Institute, to provide an independent voice in debate with policymakers and regulators.

## 'What does the Centre do?'

The Centre publishes research with immediate and practical relevance to Irish credit unions. The focus is on papers having a strong orientation to action, with conclusions and recommendations aimed at credit unions' leaders rather than academia. The

Centre's first paper reviewed the Irish credit union business model, offering robust analysis and recommendations that stimulated debate. Over 20 papers have followed on a range of subjects, including how to implement revolving credit in Ireland, lessons from credit union mortgages in the US, sustaining credit union values and most recently the impact of rapid savings growth. All these reports are currently available to all, at no charge, on the website [www.swobodacentre.org](http://www.swobodacentre.org). There is a pipeline of upcoming research projects on a range of topics, and member credit unions' input is sought for new ideas and priorities.

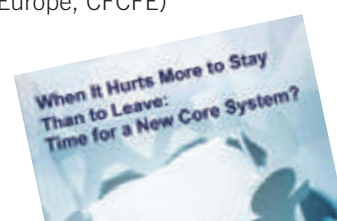
The Centre holds two conferences a year, and its next one will be in Dublin in spring 2022. "The conferences involve a broader range of participants and I find the range of perspectives and international experiences really interesting", comments David McAuley, CEO of Donore Credit Union CEO and Centre member. Researchers also present at online and offline workshops and seminars.

## 'How do credit unions get involved?'

The Centre is funded by the subscriptions of its 60+ member credit unions and respected sector suppliers. "We're very proud of our credit union-funded model," notes Nick Money, a Centre director, "but we are always keen to expand membership, as the extra money goes straight into research activity and widens our engagement with the sector. If anyone is interested in finding out more, whether about becoming a member or how to contribute to our research agenda, please contact me at [nick.money@swobodacentre.org](mailto:nick.money@swobodacentre.org)."

## SWOBODA Research Centre

(formerly the Centre for Community Finance Europe, CFCFE)





# *Join the* **SWOBODA RESEARCH CENTRE**

(formerly known as the Centre for Community Finance Europe, CFCFE)

**Over 60 leading Irish and British credit unions are already supporting applied research that benefits your credit union and the wider movement**

Research, conferences,  
webinars, networking

Independent

Not-for-profit

Founded Dublin 2016



**By credit unions, for credit unions**

To see our research, our members, to join, or for more information, visit [www.swobodacentre.org](http://www.swobodacentre.org) or email Nick Money, [nick.money@swobodacentre.org](mailto:nick.money@swobodacentre.org)



# Step-Up CU Challenge

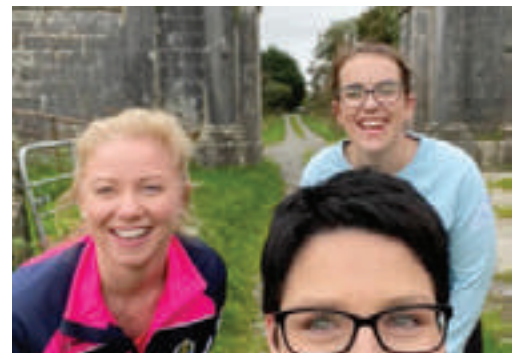
From the 11th to 20th October we challenged staff and volunteers from the Irish Credit Union movement to join together to 'virtually' walk/run from the League's office on Mount Street, Dublin to the Foundation's field office on Fort Street, Sierra Leone.

This was our first-ever fundraising event, a joint initiative with the League, to raise awareness and funds for the continued development of the credit union movement in Sierra Leone. We were delighted with the response and thank you to everyone who got involved - 463 people registered for the Challenge and we had 53 teams participating. It was great to see credit union staff and volunteers from across the island of Ireland get out and get their steps up over the 10 days, and people really did 'Step Up' to the Challenge.

The goal of the event was to walk 10 million steps – this was achieved within five days – a testament of how credit unions always go above and beyond. In total we walked over 36 million steps, which equates to over 27,000km. We walked enough steps to go to Fort Street in Sierra Leone, back to Mount Street in Dublin and then back to Sierra Leone again! Next year we'll have to set a bigger challenge.

The total amount raised exceeded €30,000. This money will support our continued efforts to support the development of the credit union movement in Sierra Leone including training staff and volunteers to provide much-needed access to affordable and ethical savings and loans, and empower members to be financially included.

A huge thank you to everyone who was involved, whether you walked 100 steps or 1 million steps, we were delighted that you stepped up for Sierra Leone! We received lots of photos from people who participated, thank you, we really hope you enjoyed taking part. And to everyone who donated to the Challenge, thank you, for helping us to help others.





CU CHALLENGE

# STEP UP THANK YOU!!

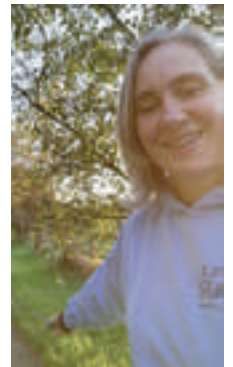
How many?  
**463 registered**  
**53 teams**

How far?  
**36,562,491 steps**  
**27,861 km**

How much?  
**>€30,000**




International Development  
**FOUNDATION**  
TOGETHER BUILDING FINANCIAL INCLUSION





## News and Updates

It has been a busy few months in the Foundation, and we continue to provide remote support to our local partners. The following are some updates from our ongoing projects in September and October.

### Sierra Leone

- George Ombado, Executive Director of ACCOSCA, visited Freetown in September to meet with key stakeholders, including the Governor of the Bank of Sierra Leone. The two-day visit centred on a stakeholder meeting and a workshop for credit union leaders. A meeting took place with representatives from the Central Bank to discuss the financial cooperative sector, and the Governor of the Bank informed the group that he himself was a member of a credit union when he lived in the US.
- The FIRSL project came to an end in September and the next three year project 'Step-Up' began on the 1st of November. This project is also co-funded by Irish Aid and the Foundation and the project activities will build on the FIRSL project.
- We road tested the new core credit union curriculum and this will be rolled-out as part of the new Step Up project.
- Audits were undertaken in a number of credit unions and with restrictions lifted across the country a number of credit unions were in a position to hold their AGMs.

### Ethiopia

- The Improving Rural Financial Inclusion through Financial Cooperatives (IRFITCO) project which was started in March 2017 to enhance financial inclusion of rural poor in Ethiopia by strengthening financial cooperatives networks had its final closing workshop in September.
- Capacity Building and Training is ongoing for the two newly established regional apex bodies.
- The Prudential Inspection Directive was approved and adopted by the Ethiopian Cooperative Commission (formerly FCA), and training is being rolled out. The Foundation has supported the development of the directive and will continue to support the roll-out

We wish you a safe and peaceful Christmas and New Year and we look forward to meeting with you in 2022.



*NaCCUA Chair, Foundation GM and ACCOSCA CEO meet with Prof Kalfala M Kallon, Governor of Bank of Sierra Leone (Central Bank) and his deputies*



*Mr Aga presenting on facilitation skills and training methods for Addis Ababa SACCOS Federation Board and SACCOS members*



*FCA delegates participated in the Regulators Roundtable in Nairobi, hosted by ACCOSCA.*



## Credit Union Donations

Thank you to the credit unions who have donated to our work so far this year. The continued support of Irish credit unions helps us to support credit union development to provide much needed access to formal financial services for people in low-income developing countries. At present our credit union donations are down 30% on last year – we understand it has been a challenging year and we ask all credit unions to consider making a donation to our work in the spirit of cooperation among cooperation. Together we are all playing a role in building financial inclusion for people who need it most.



Laura McNerney, Niamh Darcy and Vanessa McBarron with a donation from Athery Credit Union.



Larkhill Credit Union Manager Damien Brady presents donation to Alan Moore Foundation CEO.

## Remembering Gerry Thompson



We were all saddened by the recent passing of Gerry Thompson. Gerry served on the Foundation Board for 10 years. As an advocate of all things credit union, he understood the importance of our work in supporting credit union movements in low-income developing countries and indeed he shared his wealth of credit union experience with our many local partners over the years. He continued to support the Foundation's work when his tenure on Board ended. We received many messages from our local partners expressing their sadness at Gerry's passing and acknowledging the good work he did supporting their efforts to develop their respective credit union movements. Condolences to Gerry's family, his friends and all in Roscommon Credit Union - he will be sadly missed.

*"He will be remembered for many things, but in The Gambia he will be remembered for his tremendous work on the shared branching. He visited the Gambia when it was really tough but he led us to think through a more sustainable solution".*  
Baboucarr Jeng, former GM of National Association of Cooperative Credit Unions for The Gambia



Keep up to date with our work on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. For more information on the Foundation contact Ashley on 01 614 6739 | email [aharte@creditunion.ie](mailto:aharte@creditunion.ie)

# Legislative Update



## **Beneficial Ownership Register to commence PPSN Collection**

In August the Central Bank outlined that Beneficial Owner PPS number details would be collected in Q4 2021. The collection of these details is owing to a legislative requirement to verify the identity of beneficial owners reported to the register. The collection of Beneficial Owner PPS number details will now be collected from Q2 2022. The Central Bank continues to liaise with the Department of Social Protection in relation to validation of PPS numbers. Further detail, including specifics on timeline, will be communicated to eligible entities in Q4 2021. This will include guidance pertaining to the collection, validation and storage of this data. In advance of the Q2 2022 timeline, CFVs should ensure that they will be in a position to provide Beneficial Owner PPS number details to ensure compliance with the legislation. For Beneficial Owners who do not hold a PPS number, a process will be in place whereby, they will be obliged to provide a Declaration as to Verification of Identity, to be verified and witnessed prior to submission to the Bank. A CBI reference number will be provided for Beneficial Ownership filing purposes on receipt of complete documentation in this regard. Further detail on this process will also be provided in Q4 2021.

## **The Central Credit Register and Guarantor Credit Reports**

As credit unions will be aware, the Irish Credit Bureau (ICB) ceased its credit reference service on Friday, 1st October 2021. As a result, it is no longer possible to use that service in order to obtain credit reports in respect of prospective borrowers or guarantors to loan applications.

Meanwhile, credit unions remain obliged to make an enquiry on the CCR regarding loan applicants in the course of considering loan applications for €2,000 or more. The CCR however has now made it clear that making an enquiry in respect of a prospective guarantor to a loan application is not currently possible (although it is something that the CCR is looking to facilitate in the future). Credit reports can be applied for by individuals free of charge and can be processed at [www.centralcreditregister.ie](http://www.centralcreditregister.ie). Our understanding is that current waiting times for credit reports following an application is 2-3 days.

## **Communication from DPC on registration of a DPO**

In recent months, credit unions across the country have been receiving letters from the Data Protection Commission (DPC) seeking clarification as to whether the credit union has appointed a Data Protection Officer (DPO) to be responsible for data protection compliance within the credit union.

### **Requirements to have a DPO**

Article 37 (1) of the GDPR states that the controller and the

processor shall designate a data protection officer in any case where:

- (a) the processing is carried out by a public authority or body, except for courts acting in their judicial capacity;
- (b) the core activities of the controller or the processor consist of processing operations which, by virtue of their nature, their scope and/or their purposes, require regular and systematic monitoring of data subjects on a large scale; or
- (c) the core activities of the controller or the processor consist of processing on a large scale of special categories of data pursuant to Article 9 or personal data relating to criminal convictions and offences referred to in Article 10.

Below we address how to respond to the DPC, depending on your credit union's circumstances.

### **Where your credit union has not appointed a DPO**

Due to the fact that credit unions do not appear to fall explicitly within scope of Article 37 of the GDPR, many did not appoint a DPO, but rather appointed a Data Protection Lead or other similar role. Essentially, this latter position in many credit unions appears to carry out all the functions of a DPO (as required by Article 39 GDPR), but does not carry the statutory title.

If it is the case that your credit union did not appoint a DPO, then the credit union should respond to the DPC as soon as possible to explain the reason for same. Please note that the DPC has accepted the rationale that due to the nature and scale of the business, and the fact that membership is limited by the common bond, the credit union does not fall within scope of Article 37. If the credit union has appointed a person with responsibility for data protection compliance (in lieu of a DPO), then this should also be communicated to the DPC as part of the response.

Separately to the DPC correspondence, from an accountability perspective, the credit union should satisfy itself that the decision to not appoint a DPO remains aligned to the nature of its data processing. It might be noted that the DPC states on its website that data controllers can also voluntarily decide to appoint a DPO.

### **Where your credit union has appointed a DPO – register this with DPC**

If your credit union has appointed a DPO, then it is imperative under Article 37(7) of the GDPR that the credit union publishes the contact details of the DPO and fulfil the registration requirements of the DPC (<https://forms.dataprotection.ie/register-a-dpo>).

If you have any queries in relation to this, please do not hesitate to contact the Legal Department.



# Legislative Update



## **Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Amendment) Bill**

Northern Ireland law in respect of gambling is contained in the Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (the 1985 Order). The 1985 Order regulates a wide range of betting, gaming, lotteries and amusement activity in Northern Ireland. This includes:- betting in bookmaking offices and on tracks; the use, supply and maintenance of gaming machines; gaming in bingo clubs; small scale amusements with prizes; and lotteries other than the National Lottery.

The 1985 Order has remained largely unchanged since it was enacted thirty-five years ago. As a result, gambling legislation here has not kept pace with industry and technological changes. As well as being outdated, the current law is complex and inflexible, even with minor amendments requiring changes to primary legislation.

Following a consultation process in early 2020, the Communities Minister introduced amendments to the 1985 Order before the Northern Ireland Assembly on 14 September 2021.

In an explanatory and financial memorandum published alongside the amendment bill, the Department for Communities said: “The overarching objective of the bill is to address a number of specific anomalies with regard to the current regulation of land-based betting, gaming, and lottery and amusement activities. It is also designed to strengthen existing regulatory protections for operators and consumers as well as young people and those who may be vulnerable to gambling harm.”

This Bill is intended to amend certain provisions of the 1985 Order in relation to: - the opening days of licensed bookmakers’ offices and bingo clubs; the requirements around membership of commercial bingo clubs; the rules on society lotteries; qualifications and other requirements for the grant of certain licences, certificates and permits; the operation of promotional prize competitions; the definition of ‘cheating’; and the enforceability of gambling contracts.

It will also remove the £1 cap on the price of a ticket for society’s lottery and explicitly remove free to enter prize competition arrangements from the definition of a lottery. Back in August, the Department of Communities made an amendment (via a Statutory Rule) to The 1985 Order to allow for the sale of a lottery ticket or chance by means of the internet.

# UPDATED WORK SAFELY PROTOCOL - REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

**Following on from the Irish Government's announcement on the 19th October 2021 with regard to Ireland's plan for a further re-opening of the economy, an updated Work Safely Protocol COVID-19 National Protocol for Employers and Workers (the Protocol) was published on the 21st October 2021 which is the fourth revision of the protocol. This follows on from the 3rd updated version issued on 16th September 2021.**

The Protocol sets out the minimum Public Health infection prevention and control measures required to be taken by employers and workers, in every place of work, to prevent and reduce the spread of COVID-19.

While it had been hoped that the public health measure to "work from home, where possible" would be removed after October 22nd, it is now envisaged that as a result of the current deteriorating public health situation and advice from NPHE, that the working from home guidance will remain in place until Spring of 2022.

## **The updated protocol advises that the return to physical attendance in workplaces should continue to take place as follows:**

- ✓ on a phased and cautious basis appropriate to each sector, and
- ✓ that attendance is for specific business requirements. (The interpretation of this will depend on specific circumstances of each workplace and should be informed by consultation with workers)
- ✓ a cautious and careful return to workplaces should take into account appropriate attendance levels, with the use of staggered arrangements such as non-fulltime attendance and flexible working hours.

The protocol emphasises that each workplace will still be required to nominate a lead worker representative "to work with the employer to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in the workplace". Employers are being encouraged to consult with employees and can use the extensive new Returning to the office checklist No 9 which has been produced by the Health and Safety Authority and can be accessed here.

## **Key updates included in the protocol versions 16th September and 21st October include:**

**Guidance Note dated 20th October from the LEEF Consultative Group** which has been incorporated into the Protocol can be accessed here.

## **List of updated symptoms associated with the Delta variant of COVID-19 as follows:**

Common symptoms of coronavirus include:

- a fever (high temperature - 38 degrees Celsius or above),
- a new cough - this can be any kind of cough, not just dry,
- shortness of breath or breathing difficulties,
- loss or change in your sense of smell or taste – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal,
- runny or blocked nose,
- nausea, vomiting or diarrhoea,
- aches and pains or tiredness,
- sore throat, and
- headache.

## **Additional information regarding ventilation, and vaccinations.**

### **Ventilation**

The protocol highlights the importance of maximising ventilation in areas where people are in close contact. Dilution of indoor air by opening windows and doors or using mechanical ventilation systems can lower the airborne concentration of the virus. Reoccupying workplaces should not, in most cases, require new ventilation systems but improvements to ventilation will help increase the quantity of clean air and reduce the risk of exposure to the virus. Ventilation should not be seen as a replacement for the



other infection prevention and control measures such as hand-washing, surface cleaning, respiratory etiquette, physical distancing, wearing masks/face coverings and vaccination.

### **Vaccinations**

It reinforces that the decision to get a vaccination against COVID-19 is voluntary and employees may make their own individual decisions in this regard. It refers to the advice from the Data Protection Commissioner whereby the processing or requesting of information on an individual's vaccination status is generally not appropriate, with certain exclusions. However, employers are encouraged to provide advice and information on the vaccination programme so that employees have the



necessary information to make an informed decision, especially for those whose first language is not English.

The protocol advises that, irrespective of the vaccination roll out, Public Health infection prevention and control measures (such as physical distancing, hand and respiratory hygiene, face coverings/masks, increased ventilation), and working from home as much as possible to facilitate reduced numbers in workplaces, should remain in place.

It is also stressed that the continued public health requirements for self-isolation/restricted movements for those

with symptoms (who should immediately seek a test); those with positive test results; and close contacts of confirmed cases, unless fully vaccinated with no symptoms, all remain in place.

#### SUMMARY

In conclusion, employers and workers should continue to adhere to the requirements set out in the Work Safely Protocol and ensure that their COVID19 response plan and workplace risk assessments are kept up to-date.

The Government's decision to keep the 'work from home' advice in place after

22nd October, means that many employers may delay plans to return all staff to the workplace, until at least Spring 2022.

It should also be noted that the Government has called on employers, in consultation with their employees, to start to develop or finalise their long-term arrangements for blended or remote working having regard to their operational requirements and in line with Public Health advice. This would also be in line with the government's preparation for the upcoming promised legislation in respect of the right to request flexible working.

## Coronavirus Employment-related Update – Northern Ireland

The NI Executive has recently published its Autumn/Winter Covid-19 Contingency Plan for Northern Ireland which is accessible here . It provides a summary of the rules that are being removed and the provisions that will be retained to manage the pandemic.

Key aspects of the plan focus on measures that will continue to be retained as follows:

- the retention of a legal requirement for face coverings in crowded indoor settings;
- the retention of a focus on flexible and hybrid working to reduce the number of social contacts that take place in work settings – recognising that employers are well placed to engage with their workforce on the model that best suits their business;
- The continued legal requirement for risk assessments to be carried out in certain settings and for visitor and attendee details to be recorded to support the work of the Test, Trace and Protect system.
- The baseline measures reflect advice from SAGE that early 'low cost' interventions may forestall the need for more disruptive measures at a later stage.

In the event that case numbers rise sharply or hospital pressures become unsustainable the Autumn Winter paper

identifies a number of potential contingency measures which include

- more focused communications to emphasise the risk and the need for everyone to act immediately;
- The potential to deploy COVID status certification in higher risk settings if considered appropriate and necessary;
- A strengthening of arrangements for self-isolation for close contacts; and
- A re-imposition of a legal requirement for minimum social distancing in prescribed settings.

#### How to maintain a safe place of work:

While many restrictions are being lifted, the HSENI, in association with the PHA, has produced useful advice and guidance for employers regarding working safely during the coronavirus pandemic available at the following link: Working safely during the coronavirus pandemic

Other useful sources of information regarding the most up to date advice for employers on Coronavirus: Workplace safety guidelines is available at NI Business Info.co.uk website link here

#### Coronavirus (COVID -19) risk assessment and review

Employers are required to review their risk assessments regularly, especially in

response to the changes arising from the Coronavirus, (COVID -19) pandemic. The HSENI example workplace risk assessment shows the kind of approach that an employer would be expected to take when carrying out a risk assessment for Coronavirus (COVID -19).

This risk assessment tool should be used as a guide to help focus on:

- The additional hazard that Coronavirus, (COVID -19) introduces into your business
- The steps an employer needs to take to control the risks.

Click on link to download: HSENI example workplace Coronavirus (COVID – 19) risk assessment template

Finally, we acknowledge that matters relating to COVID-19 and its prevention within the workplace is a constantly evolving topic. The ILCU HR department is available to discuss any specific queries you may have on this topic. Contact Details:

Margaret Davern, HR Adviser  
mdavern@creditunion.ie  
+35316146974

Maura Behan, HR Executive  
mbehan@creditunion.ie  
+35316146941

## Omagh Credit Union Ltd, donate £9,000 to local primary schools

Omagh Credit Union Ltd recently held a presentation evening in The Mellon Country Inn to present local primary schools with £500 each towards school funds.

Catherine Loughrey, Manager of Omagh Credit Union, who addressed the school principals, said “Omagh Credit Union are always looking for ways to help in our community and a request for a donation from one of the school’s started the discussion, how could we help?

We have worked closely with our primary schools for many years, through the Schools Savings Scheme, the Primary School Quiz and the ILCU Art competition which extends into our post primary schools. Unfortunately circumstances within the last 20 months, have not allowed us to provide those services the way we would like. In turn, we realise the schools are not in a



position to raise much needed funds in the way they were accustomed to. The decision was made to donate £500 to each of our local primary schools in Omagh and Newtownstewart, 18 schools in all, totalling £9,000.

A huge part of our ethos at Omagh Credit Union and every Credit Union is financial education for everyone in our community. We want to ensure that future generations are financially educated and

empowered. Teaching children the value of money is a real benefit to them in the future and habits learned from an early age last a lifetime. We want to encourage the development of regular saving habits during Junior Savers Week, and want to encourage all children to join us here at the credit union and open their very first savings account!”

*Principals representing, All Saints, Christ The King, Gibson, Gillygooley, Omagh County, St Ronan’s, St Brigid’s, Sacred Heart, St Eugene’s, Naiscoil nagCrann, St Patrick’s, Model and Arvalee. Schools who also received cheques but unable to attend are Dunmullan, Holy Family, Omagh Integrated, St Mary’s and St Conor’s. Representing Omagh Credit Union Ltd, Ethna Coreless, Catherine Loughrey, Michael Brogan, Colm Broderick and Brenda McCallion*

PHOTO CREDIT: KATRINA TAGGART PHOTOGRAPHY

## Palmerstown Credit Union delighted to welcome Minister for Finance Paschal Donohoe and Emer Higgins TD

The visit was arranged on the 23rd November by the Dublin Mid-West TD to showcase the credit union and all its initiatives. The Minister was particularly interested to learn about the challenges and concerns faced by members and the credit union during the pandemic. Patricia Quinn, Lending team, enlightened the delegation in the various innovative member engagements undertaken in 2020-21 e.g., courtesy visits, postcard mailshot of local service cards and launch of online lending. The Minister was curious about financial difficulties faced by members during the pandemic. Kenneth Shiels, Credit Controller, laid out the steps



taken by the credit union to assist vulnerable members during these troubled times.

Financial literacy amongst youngsters was of particular interest to the Minister and Lakshay Seth, Marketing Officer, highlighted the key platforms and

strategies used to engage with members such as social media, colourful outdoor banners, improved online services, increased number of third level Bursaries. Our enthusiastic Youth Committee played its part delivering bespoke “Money

Smart “financial literacy program for secondary schools and creating “Local Heroes “fund for local youth.

The Chairperson, John Murphy, briefed the Minister on the success of our Community Fund, which in the absence of dividends, has distributed funding of circa €98,000 since 2020 in the locality to schools, various environmental groups, sports clubs and the Order of Malta. This along with the other initiatives outlined above has ensured that Palmerstown Credit Union has played a significant part in mitigating the impact of the pandemic among its members.



## Bishopstown Credit Union Officially Opens their Head Office Branch in the heart of Bishopstown



**Bishopstown Credit Union is delighted to have officially opened their Head Office branch on the Curraheen Rd on Friday September 17th, officially re-establishing their presence right in the heart of Bishopstown. Bishopstown Credit Union was founded in 1967 and operated originally from the crypt in the church at Dennehy's Cross.**

The new building located on the Curraheen Road was opened to the public in June 2020 but due to Covid-19 and the associated Public Health restrictions, the official opening was postponed until September of this year. The President of the Irish League of Credit Unions, Ms Helene McManus was present and cut the ribbon to officially open the Curraheen Road branch. The Lord Mayor, Cllr. Colm Kelleher was in attendance and commended all those involved for opening a superb new branch right in the heart of Bishopstown. Speaking to the assembled group, the Lord Mayor expressed his continued support of the credit union movement.

Speaking at the launch, Chairman of the Board Raymond O Connor said "Today marks an important milestone for us and we are sure it will be here to serve the community and our members for generations to come. We believe that the premises is a symbol of confidence in the development and evolution of a



Credit Union Service to the area.

"We see Bishopstown as a prime location, with many businesses and services growing and developing here. We are in the heart of the community and believe that we have a key role to play in financial services for individuals, community associations and businesses."

The ceremony was attended by an array of guests including representatives from Cork Credit Unions, Cork Chapter, Community groups, Munster Agricultural Society, Colleges, Bishopstown Credit Union Board of Directors, staff, volunteers and local businesses.



## Great sadness at the passing of our former CEO, Donal O'Driscoll



### **Access Credit Union recently suffered a great loss with the passing of our former CEO, Mr Donal O'Driscoll.**

Donal led the Credit Union for over twenty years, overseeing many positive changes as the organisation went from strength to strength.

From the inauguration of the Community Awards in the early 2000s, which paid tribute to the excellent community work undertaken locally. A highlight was the night the late John Hume was guest of honour at the awards ceremony.

Donal also oversaw the development of the new building on Main Street in Skibbereen, a massive task at the time. Officially opened in 2010, Donal was passionate about this project. He saw the need for the increased space and infrastructure to develop the Credit Union's capacity to meet the future needs

of its members.

And perhaps one of his most fondly remembered times was the use of the Credit Union building to support Gary and Paul as they rowed into history, competing in the Rio Olympics in 2016. The Credit Union was packed to capacity with cheering supports, and it was televised to the nation.

The merger with Bandon Credit Union was another key moment in the development of Access Credit, uniting two communities into one strong Credit Union.

Away from work, Donal was a devoted family man. Time with his wife Catriona and his two sons Diarmuid and Daniel were always his most important priority. He also had a great interest in sport. He played for and subsequently trained many Ilen Rovers teams at his local GAA club.

The Credit Union's current CEO Elma Casey has described Donal as a 'real

visionary' with a passion for life. 'He was a true gentleman. He instilled his dedication to work tirelessly for people and the community into all of us in the Credit Union.

Donal was a real leader,' Elma said. 'He was always encouraging and supporting us to grow and develop. Donal was full of fun and had a fantastic sense of humour.

He was constantly looking for ways to improve the Credit Union, and helping people was always his top priority. He valued people and treated everyone with great respect and dignity.

He will be fondly remembered as a man who knew the value of hard work and prized his family above all else. He was a true friend to all who knew him, a visionary with an acute intellect.

His passing is a massive loss to his family, friends, community and the Credit Union. Rest in Peace, Donal.'



# W.B.R Credit Union's 'Donate 4 Donut' fundraiser a huge success

W.B.R Credit Union recently hosted a 'Donate 4 Donut' fundraiser to raise vital funds for the Southern Area Hospice Services. The 'Donate for Donut' fundraiser took place on Friday, 10th September at the W.B.R Credit Union office in Warrenpoint. W.B.R Credit Union were delighted to have local donut venue Friscos providing individually boxed donuts on the day. Alan Griffin, Manager from W.B.R Credit Union said "We are delighted with the success of our 'Donate 4 Donut' fundraiser and very proud that we raised £670 on the day. The Southern Area Hospice



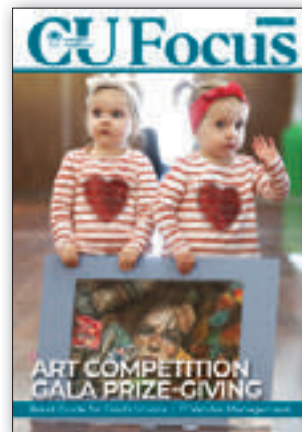
W.B.R Credit Union Manager, Alan Griffin and Assistant Manager, Miriam Cole presented Bernie Byrne Fundraising Officer Southern Area Hospice with a cheque for £1,170. L-r Alan Griffin, Bernie Byrne S.A.H and Miriam Cole

Services are a very worthy cause and provide invaluable care and support to patients in the community. W.B.R Credit Union understand the difficult

period charities have had with fundraising efforts and so as an organisation we wanted to boost our contribution and made an additional donation

of £500 bringing our final total of £1,170 to support the local services of the Southern Area Hospice Services"

## Focus on the Future



Next year will mark the 16th year of CU Focus and with that comes an opportunity to reflect on the key objectives of the magazine going forward.

As a quarterly magazine, CU Focus' objective has been to provide wide-ranging and diverse articles, news & events updates and commentary on all to do with the credit union movement.

As we move towards a more digitised world and a more heightened awareness to reduce our carbon footprint, we are

starting the process of how best to improve CU Focus and ascertain its reader's needs. We are conscious of global sustainability efforts and although it might only be a small contribution, not printing thousands of copies every quarter will ensure we reduce our carbon footprint.

As a first step, we want to get some feedback from our readers as to the magazines viability, whether a print version is still popular or if there is an appetite for a fully digitised offering.

We will also be issuing a survey to credit unions early in the new year to determine more specifics on the future of CU Focus.

We would welcome any feedback from readers on the issue and let you have your say on CU Focus.

**Feedback can be emailed in to [ilcucommunications@creditunion.ie](mailto:ilcucommunications@creditunion.ie) or posted to CU Focus Editor, Irish League of Credit Unions, 33-41 Lower Mount Street, Dublin 2, D02 Y489**

# METALWORX

## SECURITY SOLUTIONS

### Credit Union Security Specialists

Metalworx Security Solutions specialise in the manufacture and installation of a wide range of bespoke Credit Union security products. Our comprehensive product range can cover any required security level at the most competitive prices.

With over 26 years of extensive knowledge and commitment, we can guarantee an incomparable service to our clients.



Glazed Security Screens & Secure Meeting Lobbies



High Security Cash Drawers & Steel Security Personnel Doors



For more information visit [METALWORX.IE](http://METALWORX.IE)  
Contact our sales manager on 086 411 4353