

Jonathan Earl takes over as Waterford Chamber President

Jonathan Earl, owner of B2B Communications, was elected President of Waterford Chamber at the 232nd AGM in the Granville Hotel on Monday night last, May 27th. Jonathan has been involved with Waterford Chamber since joining the retail committee in 1996, became a director in 2000 and subsequently returned to directorship in 2014. He is chair of the Chamber's Connectivity, Infrastructure and Development Policy Advisory Panel and the Chambers Ireland representative on the Programme Monitoring Committee of the Ireland-Wales Programme.

Addressing Waterford Chamber members, he said: "In the 25 years I've worked in Waterford I have witnessed significant changes in our city and county. Waterford has emerged from being an industrial city to a post-industrial climate with the evolution of our tourism offering, service industry and the growth of our tech, pharma and life-science sectors." Mr Earl continued: "In the last 15 years I've been fortunate enough to work with all sectors and all sizes of business. B2B Communications has tracked the changes in industry in Waterford and the South East. Ours is a business which is a weathervane for consumer and business confidence, and we've seen how within certain sectors Waterford's self-assurance has grown. This needs to spread across the whole of Waterford and the Chamber has a role in this evolution.

"I have spent my adult life attempting to interpret and communicate messages, and today I find myself in a role, in an organisation, in a City where now more than ever a confident, consistent and positive message is required." "We all have our roles to play, Waterford Chamber, Waterford City & County Council, businesses, home grown or foreign direct. We have all chosen to live, work and do business here." He added: "Waterford has a proud business tradition, but in recent decades has lost its confidence. Over the last few years there has been significant investment in Waterford, hundreds of millions and there are hundreds of millions more to be invested over the next number of years. This is a time to restore that confidence, but as with life, its cannot be restored from without, confidence must come from within.



Kathryn Kiely hands over the chain of office to incoming Waterford Chamber President Jonathan Earl. | Photos: Gerry O'Carroll Photography

"Waterford Chamber will play its part, but it requires a consistent, confident message from all stakeholders, large and small. And it requires partnership and collective responsibility from within for confidence and success to be restored." Outgoing President Kathryn Kiely thanked Chamber members, staff and fellow Chamber Directors for their support. "During the year what was particularly striking to me was the willingness of members and business leaders to participate and give of their time, be it on voicing their views directly to Government, engaging in a dialogue on the role of regional cities and their vision for Waterford, mentoring future business leaders and participating in a series of workshops to help shape the development of Waterford Chamber's Strategic Plan (2019-2022). I would like to thank all our members for their continual engagement, sharing of ideas, experiences and knowledge."

She told members: "Through this process, informed by members, we have set out our values as an organisation and strategic

objectives for the coming four years. Our members are at the heart of what Waterford Chamber is about. We represent a diverse range of business sectors and organisational profiles from the individual entrepreneur to large multinationals. We are ambitious for our city and Region and are collaborative in our approach advocating on behalf of our community and enhancing our capacity as a City Region. We are progressive and innovative in the priorities we set and the programmes we plan." Chamber CEO Gerald Hurley re-iterated this by reporting that Chamber is performing better than it has in years, confirming that membership was growing and Chamber is in a very solid position to develop going forward.

Speaking at the AGM, Mr Hurley said: "On a day when we are all talking about the local and European elections and eager to hear the mandates that follow, it is fitting that this evening we also launch our own Strategic Plan for the coming years." Working collectively has never been more important, whether it is with our members, stakeholder groups or with our elected officials, as we all strive for the same vision - to ensure a vibrant economic environment for the Waterford we choose to love, learn, work and do business in. "Our mission is clear - to be the voice of business in Waterford, dedicated to supporting, promoting and advocating for our members while being the catalyst for creating a vibrant and sustainable economy. In an ever-changing landscape, we must all do our part, starting by getting the message right."

As the meeting concluded, Danette Connolly (Home Instead Senior Care) and John McSweeney (AIB Bank) were deemed elected as Deputy President and Vice-President respectively.