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8 September, 2026

Welcome to the SFA ezine.

In this edition we are highlighting the announcement of VITHIT's Gary Lavin as the Special Guest of the SFA Annual Lunch 2026, the launch of the SFA National Small Business Awards and much more.

*For this edition we have a total of **eight articles and two recommended events**. Please click **Read in web browser** on the top right corner to make sure you see all of them and enjoy your read.*

Director's Note



I am delighted to share with you that the founder of the global drinks brand, VITHIT, Gary Lavin will be our special guest at the annual SFA Annual Lunch on November 6th in the Mansion House. Join over 400 of your peers for some networking and to hear my fireside chat with Gary in his first public appearance since exiting has internationally best-selling beverage company for €75 million. Last week the SFA launched the applications process for the SFA's National Small Business Awards with awards patron, An Taoiseach Micheál Martin, TD. Applications are open until the 23rd of October, and further details can be found on www.SFAAwards.ie and below.

With the looming threat of an increase in the National Minimum Wage in the forthcoming Budget, the SFA will be meeting with Minister Peter Burke and his officials next Wednesday to relay our deep concerns about how ANY increase will impact on small businesses. The SFA has already communicated its opposition to this increase in a letter to the Minister. I also took the opportunity to convey that message to the Taoiseach last week and he was very receptive to our concerns. Given the recent publication of the Cost of Business Advisory Forum's report which lists 63 recommendations designed to reduce costs, any such increase in the National Minimum Wage will undo all the work that SFA and others have done to develop these recommendations. Coupled with that, on Monday, the SFA will be publishing its pre-budget submission which will detail key policies designed to reduce cost and administrative burdens. Given the importance of this topic to you, our members, you can expect more frequent direct updates on this issue, similar to what you received yesterday.

VITHIT founder Gary Lavin to be special Guest at SFA Annual Lunch



We are thrilled to announce that Gary Lavin, one of Ireland's most dynamic homegrown business leaders, will be our Special Guest Speaker at the upcoming Small Firms Association (SFA) Annual Lunch on November 6th at the Mansion House.

This is an unmissable opportunity to hear from a visionary Dublin entrepreneur who has successfully navigated the highs and lows of the modern business landscape.

Reserve your spot

Applications for the SFA National Small Business Awards 2027 are OPEN!



Your Hard Work Built It. Now Let Ireland Celebrate It. You've poured long nights, relentless grit, and boundless passion into building your business. Now, let Ireland recognise your journey. Officially launched by Taoiseach Micheál Martin, the SFA Awards celebrate the true backbone of our economy. Applying isn't just about winning a trophy; it's an investment in your story. Finalists unlock a prize package valued at €50,000 - including expert management masterclasses, national media exposure in the Irish Independent, and much more. It is 100% free to enter for companies under 50 employees. **Apply by 8pm on Friday, 23 October**.

Choose a category to enter

Labour Court Overturns Award in Employee's Post Maternity Redundancy



The Labour Court recently overturned a WRC award of €27,500 in a case involving an employee whose role was made redundant while she was on maternity leave. The decision highlights the importance of demonstrating a genuine business need for redundancy and shows how following the correct redundancy process can help safeguard a business against potential claims.

MEMBER ONLY: Read full article

National Enterprise Strategy Consultation



The Government has launched a public consultation for its long-awaited National Enterprise Strategy 2035. The strategy is for long-term industrial policy, economic growth, and job creation for the decade through 2035. Developed by the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment (DETE) to supersede the White Paper on Enterprise 2022–2030, it adapts Ireland's enterprise model to evolving global trade patterns, rapid technological shifts, and net-zero requirements.

Read full article

Auto-Enrolment Pension Opt-Out Window Now Closed



The first opt-out window for Ireland's MyFutureFund auto-enrolment pension scheme has now closed. Figures suggest strong participation levels, highlighting the potential long-term impact of auto-enrolment on retirement savings and reinforcing the importance of employer compliance.

MEMBER ONLY: Read full article



Join now and get TWO MONTHS OFF your membership fee

SFA IN THE MEDIA

'Avalanche of regulations is crippling business' – small firms demand action @Sunday Independent

MentorsWork opens final 2026 intake for SMEs in Mayo @Con-Telegraph

Mentoring programme aims to unlock SME growth potential @ThinkBusiness

Small businesses in Limerick are being celebrated @Live95

Call for content: Better Business Magazine



The SFA is currently seeking content for the news pages of the Autumn edition of Better Business magazine. If your company has any company news that it wishes to promote, such as award wins, product launches, mergers, acquisitions, or significant company milestones, please contact us via link below. The deadline for content is **Wednesday, 30 September. This is free for all SFA members** but news will be included on a first come, first serve basis.

MEMBER ONLY: Submit your news

European Chemicals Agency Consultation



A public consultation has been launched by the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) on a scientific report concerning occupational exposure limit (OEL) values for toluene (EC No. 203-625-9).
The consultation provides an opportunity for interested parties to submit comments, data, and scientific evidence to support the Committee for Risk Assessment (RAC) in developing its opinion on appropriate occupational exposure limits for toluene.
The deadline for submitting comments is 3 October.

Read full article

Survey for Employers for Change Toolkit development



Employers for Change's new Disability Inclusion Manager Toolkit is now in the data-gathering phase, aimed at being built on what people experience at work.

The toolkit will be freely available to managers in all Irish workplaces. To make this happen, they need to hear from you.
The survey closes on Friday, 11 September.

Read full article

UPCOMING EVENTS



SFA B2B & Networking Event

Thursday, 8 October 2026 | 10:30AM to 1PM | SFA, 84/86 Lower Baggot Street, D02 H720

Designed specifically for small business owners seeking to expand their networks and grow their businesses, this event offers a valuable opportunity to connect with fellow entrepreneurs, share insights, and explore new business opportunities.

Celebrating the launch of the 23rd edition of the SFA Awards, previous SFA Awards winners **James Lawrence from Lawrence Engineering, Ciara Troy from Oishii Foods** and **Donna Reilly from Donna Reilly People & Wellness** will be sharing their experience and expertise in a candid fireside chat with SFA Director, David Broderick. We will be confirming our main speaker soon.

Register now to secure your spot and network with fellow business owners.

This event is open to members & non-members.

Register now



AI in Action: Ibec event with Henna Virkunnen, Executive Vice President of the European Commission.

Friday, 11 September 2026 | 2 to 4PM | Ibec Head Office, 84/86 Lower Baggot Street, Dublin 2, D02 H720

As part of its ongoing work on Ireland's EU Presidency, Ibec is hosting an event with Henna Virkkunen Executive Vice-President of the European Commission for Technological Sovereignty, Security, and Democracy.

The purpose of the event is to promote the strong digital performance of Ireland, and other EU digital frontrunners as key to helping the EU strengthen its digital and AI leadership. It will reinforce that the EU must intensify investment in digital infrastructure, innovation and adoption, to build digital capacity and support a digital ecosystem in Europe, while remaining open and globally connected.

Registration is open from 2pm and guests must be in their seats by 2.30pm sharp.

MEMBER ONLY: Register now

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Contact us today via 01 605 1776 or book a meeting with a member of our team via this link to make sure you are availing of everything that is available to you. We are here to help and will be delighted to guide you through our resources.

WE VALUE YOUR FEEDBACK

We hope you have enjoyed your read and, as always, we'd love to hear from you about any queries you may have, issues you wish to have raised with Government or other stakeholders and your ideas on how we can improve the business environment for us all.

Please contact me on tel: 01 605 1530 or e-mail: david.broderick@sfa.ie, check our LinkedIn or visit our website.

Kind regards,

David Broderick
SFA Director

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