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Homegrown businesses in Ireland, North and south, face a myriad of challenges. These include geopolitical, environmental and economic uncertainties in addition to impact of digital disruption, skills shortages and the evolving needs of the workforce – and all while they continue to grapple with inflationary pressures.

Government-backed organisations such as Invest Northern Ireland and Enterprise Ireland provide valuable support to businesses, with a focus on export-oriented companies and high-potential start-ups, both of which are seen as vehicles to boost the economy of the island of Ireland.

Businesses across Ireland have been navigating the post-Brexit landscape, while businesses in Northern Ireland are also dealing with challenges and opportunities presented by the Northern Ireland Protocol – now the Windsor Framework – which

provides access to both the British and EU markets.

This represents a significant opportunity for businesses in Northern Ireland, but it also introduces complexity and uncertainty in completing transactions across borders.

One key strand of Government support for businesses in Northern Ireland has been the establishment of the Trader Support Service. This is aimed at helping companies to contend with changes in the way goods move under the Windsor Framework.

Thousands of businesses have registered with the free-to-use platform since its launch in 2020. This service is due to end after December 2024, however, and this is something the recently restored Northern Ireland Executive must lobby the British Government to retain so that businesses in Northern Ireland can continue to avail of it beyond the end of the year.

As a relatively small practice, we at SMCG Ltd have found that the professional network built over time with colleagues in the profession, along with professionals in other industries, has been a source of great support.

This is reflective of the ethos and culture prevalent in Irish society down through the generations to “help your neighbour” even though they may also be a competitor.

It is even more imperative, therefore, that the governments in the North and south proactively address the challenges facing our community of SMEs on the island of Ireland.

This requires a strategic approach, avoiding reactionary politics, and fostering an environment that encourages business investment and provides critical infrastructure for homegrown