

# Convenience Champion of the Year



Philip Keegan, vice president; Joe Tierney, president; Vincent Jennings, chief executive and Gus O'Hara of the CSNA

A new award this year was the 'C-store champion of the year'. This award was to be presented to someone who had achieved something for the trade through their personal endeavours during the past year. **Fionnuala Carolan** spoke to the winner.

**T**he deserving winner on the night was the CEO of the Convenience Stores and Newsagents Association (CSNA) Vincent Jennings. Jennings has been with the CSNA (formerly the IRNA) for three years, becoming CEO in July of this year but has been involved in the grocery business for over 30 years having once owned a forecourt in Limerick.

He has worked tirelessly on behalf of the members of CSNA over the year on various issues. One such issue concerned Repak and the issue over membership obligations and packaging waste weights. Now many retailers

have no obligation to join unless they see fit.

## Working for the members

On winning the award Jennings said he was delighted and that he felt the award was a testament to the fact that the CSNA was an independent body working solely for the good of its members.

In relation to the very recent amendment by the Office of Tobacco Control, Jennings says that the CSNA supports the decision of the Government to abolish ten packs of cigarettes but in turn the retailers need to be shown some leeway with the law. He suggests a penalty point system if a retailer is prosecuted for selling cigarettes to minors.

He says, "We believe that if a retailer is selling cigarettes to minors he/she should be prosecuted. We do not accept that a retailer cannot be formally cautioned, or have 'penalty points' put on their tobacco retailers licence. We believe that the pre-determined maximum amount of points, within a specified time frame, which, if breached could allow a judge to remove the right of the retailer to sell tobacco products for a period determined by the judge, having heard the evidence, pleadings and any mitigating factors should be put in place."

## Expensive freesheets

Another major issue he is taking up on behalf of his members is concerning the handout of freesheets in stores as they take up valuable shelf space but don't benefit the retailer in

any way. In some instances distributing free sheets in store results in lost sales as people take these instead of buying a tabloid or a local paper. He makes the point that an editor on a free sheet is paid, his/her staff are paid, revenue is made from ads but retailers are the only part of the chain that is expected to do it for free. With margins so tight, retailers cannot be expected to be the bearer of these publications but that the publishers should pay for them to be distributed.

## Battery power

There are plenty of issues within the trade that Jennings is tackling on an on-going basis and there is much to keep him busy throughout 2007. The Battery Directive recently introduced by the European commission states that retailers will have to accept used batteries and have a place where customers can come in and deposit them.

Jennings believes this should not be the sole responsibility of retailers and it should be tackled like other recyclable goods by providing public bring banks.

He also plans to come to an agreement with the newspaper and magazine distribution companies over the amount of papers and magazines they receive. Every week retailers have to contend with huge amounts of extra stock that they don't want and can't sell. Jennings believes that it's just not good enough.

*ShelfLife* would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Vincent on his win.