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## **6% growth in pub sector as UK customer impact across the country compiled**

AIB, the leading provider of finance to Ireland's pub sector has reported a 6% increase in turnover in card sales for the sector for 2017\*. AIB has released its 2018 Pubs Outlook, which also finds a 6% increase in spending by UK visitors to Irish pubs in the 12 months to the end of October 2017, despite a decline in visitor numbers from the UK.

The report utilises data mined by AIB Merchant Services\*\* from card usage information, which finds that UK customers make up 6.1% of Dublin market customers, while 16.4% of total sales in Donegal come from the UK market.

Food was a key driver of growth for the period, with food service in pubs reaching a market size of €982m in 2017, up 3% year on year. Irish publicans are accepting card payments in growing numbers, with some city centre pubs now achieving 80% of their turnover from credit and debit cards according to Visa.

David McCarthy, Head of Hospitality & Tourism, AIB Retail & Business Banking said "As the leading provider of finance to Ireland's pub sector, we back our customers to achieve their ambitions every day. Strong economic growth, customer sentiment, falling unemployment and a record year for tourism means that the Irish pub sector is performing strongly and there is a sense of optimism within the sector that we haven't seen in many years."

AIB Merchant Services have provided county by county data on where has the most UK visitors as a percentage. David said "We can see that the overall risk of Brexit on the pub sector is not excessive and the market actually grew over the past 12 months despite a decline in UK visitor numbers. Some pubs do have a higher level of exposure to UK visitors and they need to be mindful of the implications of further Sterling devaluations and any potential future travel restrictions post Brexit"

Ross Murray is managing director of the Murray Pub Group which includes Murray's Bar & Grill, The Living Room, Fibber Magee's, Jimmy Rabbitte's Speakeasy and is developing the Camden de Luxe complex. He shared his view on the licensed trade in the Outlook Report. "In the old days pubs just sold beer and spirits and barmen chopped a few lemons. People are not as brand loyal as they were. Customers, particularly younger customers, expect and want a lot more and we have to cater for them. If we don't, then somebody else will."

**ENDS**

\*Data extrapolated from AIB Merchant Services for the 12 months to the end of October 2017.

\*\*AIB Merchant Services is one of Ireland's largest providers of payment solutions, with extensive operations in Ireland and Britain, and with card processing capabilities throughout continental Europe.

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