



# Places Matter

Chamber Guide to Best Practice in  
Local Economic Development

Autumn 2020



**Chambers  
Ireland**  
Advancing business together

**an  
post**

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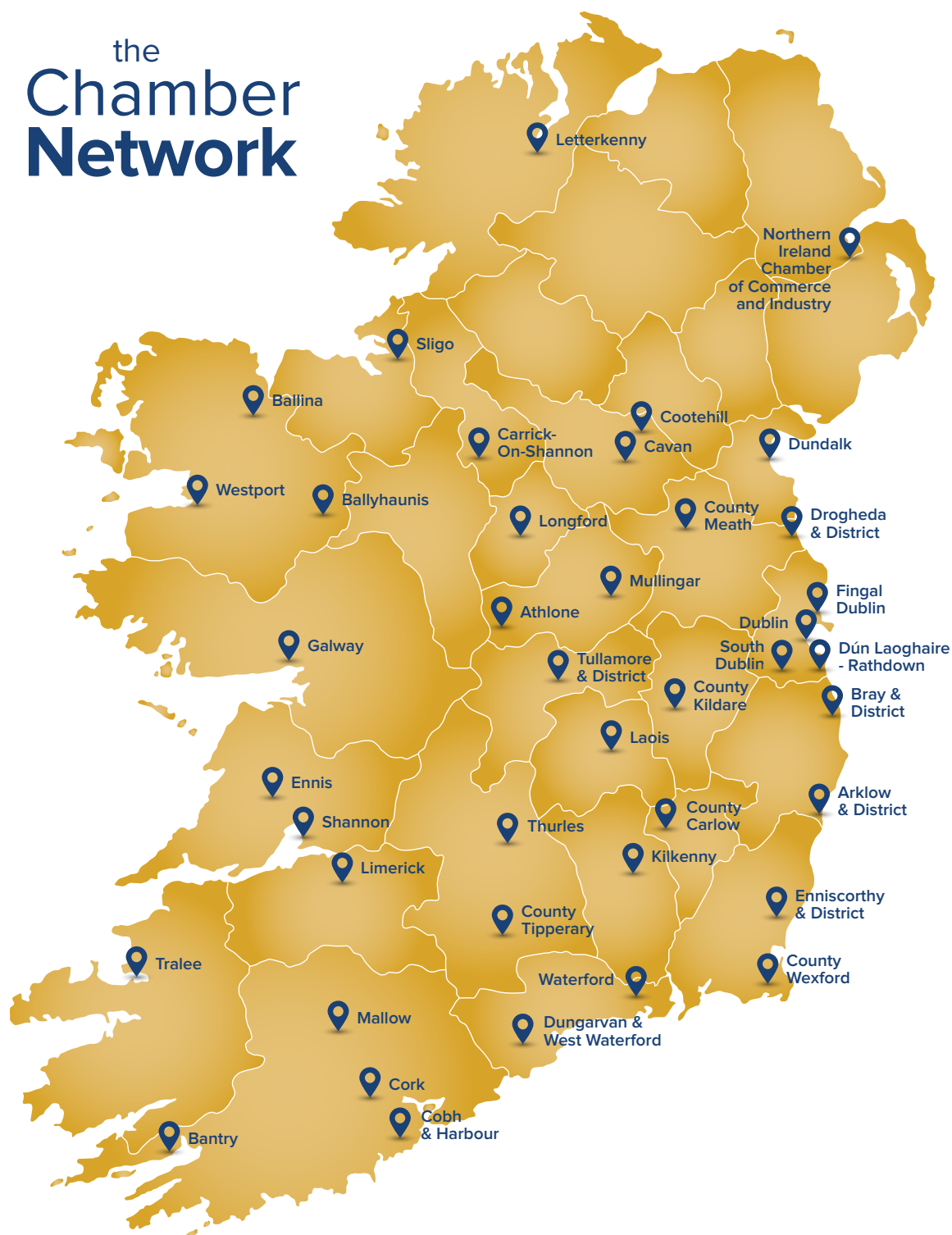
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# the Chamber Network





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# Foreword

## By Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O'Brien, T.D.

Local Chambers of commerce throughout the country play an important role in stimulating and promoting business and employment, and have a strong track record of working with Local Government in this regard. This is mirrored at national level by Chambers Ireland which has consistently taken a keen interest in Local Government, helping to foster productive collaboration between local authorities and the business sector to promote quality and good practice in local government. A prime example is the annual Excellence in Local Government Awards initiative, which Chambers Ireland and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage have jointly sponsored for more than ten years.

The concept of producing a document highlighting initiatives to support local economic development fits very well with this approach. There are numerous initiatives in which Local Government, with funding from national government, including my Department, is engaged to assist businesses to grow and stimulate employment. This is particularly important during the current Covid-19 crisis and the current 'Resilience and Recovery Plan 2020 - 2021 for Living with Covid-19' commits the local authorities to working with key stakeholders to develop local area economic sustainability initiatives to support local business.

It is important to achieve regional and local balance in economic development, whether in the context of Foreign Direct Investment or developing indigenous enterprise. Following local government reform in 2014, Local Government plays a lead role in working to achieve this balance, particularly through regional strategies and local economic plans, while overseeing local enterprise offices. Local enterprise offices have played a critical part, making a significant contribution to ensuring that small businesses receive the very best advice and support to assist in meeting the challenges and opportunities they face.

A key objective of these activities is to realise the potential of all cities and towns nationwide. Major urban centres such as Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford need to become true regional economic powerhouses, alongside Dublin. In the case of other urban areas, the actions to be implemented under the Local Economic and Community Plans will be critical to ensuring that our provincial towns can act as vibrant economic hubs for their hinterlands. In addition, the 'Town Centres First' initiative in the Programme for Government – Our Shared Future will bring focus to the regeneration of our towns and villages.

This is the second edition of this booklet on local economic initiatives and, no doubt, it will evolve and develop in the future, taking account of the increasing role that local authorities and local chambers play in economic development.

I look forward to future editions highlighting good practice in this regard and in providing practical advice both for local authorities and Chambers nationwide on ways to maximise the benefits of mutual collaboration.

**Darragh O'Brien T.D.**

*Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage*



# Foreword

## Ian Talbot, Chief Executive of Chambers Ireland

Chambers Ireland is committed to making communities across Ireland better environments to live, work and do business. Our broad geographical reach means that we are uniquely positioned to understand the needs and concerns of over 8,000 Irish businesses and to represent their views. In doing so, we put 'Place' at the core of everything that we do, so that we can develop sustainable, prosperous, and open places of businesses where local economies in all parts of the island thrive. A key requirement is to maximise the potential of all cities and towns by ensuring a balanced, sustainable recovery in which no region is left behind.

Chambers across Ireland are equally committed to this goal as we are acutely aware that thriving local economies support thriving local communities. That is why on the fourth anniversary of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2019, all affiliated Chambers across Ireland announced that they had signed a pledge giving their commitment to supporting the SDGs. Focusing initially on 5 of the 17 Goals, we commit to championing these in all the work that we do to promote decent work and economic growth, sustainable cities and communities, support innovation and infrastructure, advancements in gender equality and progress in the area of climate action.

Ireland is entering a challenging phase in its economic history. Having largely rebounded from a period of deep recession, our recovery has been characterised by economic growth that has been uneven across all regions of the country. Many businesses have had to re-engineer their operations to survive the last economic crisis and are now faced with an even more challenging environment to negotiate over the coming months and years. This same level of resilience from all stakeholders will be needed in the wake of Covid-19 as businesses grapple to adapt to the 'new normal' with support from Local Government, its agencies and Chambers to support and provide for the economic and social needs of all businesses.

The purpose of this guide is to assist in ensuring inclusive and sustained growth post-pandemic. By learning from the best examples of collaboration between Chambers, Local Government and Local Enterprise Offices we can help transform local areas both economically and culturally as we move into a post-pandemic phase.

With this guide, Chambers and their local partners will have a ready resource to assist them in devising new ways of driving local economic growth and developing new economic strategies.

**Ian Talbot**

*Chief Executive*

*Chambers Ireland*



# Overview

Chambers across Ireland have always played a key part in driving business growth and development of local economies, working in partnership with the County and City Management Association, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, the network of Local Authorities, and Local Enterprise Offices to advance and support our mutual goal of driving local economic development. Every day, our affiliated Chambers work closely with local businesses, stakeholders and decision makers to improve local economic and social environments and ensure that the necessary physical and social infrastructure are in place to facilitate growth.

The role of Chambers has dramatically increased over the course of the Covid-19 pandemic. Chambers will continue to form a major component of the post-Covid-19 recovery as we positively contribute towards a wider national response to how we shape the recovery period and collectively confront the economic challenges that are faced by every community across Ireland.

In response, Chambers Ireland have compiled this guide to give a snapshot of some of the positive actions currently being undertaken to foster enterprise development at local level. It will also serve as a ready resource for Local Authorities and Chambers as they seek to develop programmes within their own communities. It is hoped that many of the initiatives taken by Chambers in collaboration with Local Government and Local Enterprise Offices can be easily replicated in any town or city across Ireland to boost local economic development, especially in the wake of Covid-19.

Restoring our towns and cities' economic health will be critical to our recovery. It is our belief that Local Authorities, Local Enterprise Offices and Chambers must develop even closer partnerships if we are to successfully drive local economic development to bolster this recovery. Chambers Ireland will continue to advocate for constructive and creative engagement between Chambers, Local Government and other State agencies to support our local economies to thrive.

We expect that this document will inspire new ideas for how co-operation can be enhanced to support sustainable economic growth and we look forward to publishing these findings in future editions.

The following sections illustrate current Initiatives Adopted at Local Level to support Economic Growth under the six headings of:

- ***Advancing Innovation***
- ***Economic Development Plans***
- ***Infrastructural Development***
- ***Promoting Competitiveness & Attracting FDI***
- ***Tourism***
- ***Town Revitalisation***





# Best Practice

at Local Level to Support  
Economic Development



# Best Practice Initiatives

Category	Best Practice Initiative
Advancing Innovation	<b>Ballina Chamber Office</b> – Ballina Chamber <b>Business Sustainability Programme</b> – South Dublin Chamber <b>Cork Innovates</b> – Cork Chamber <b>Drogheda Enterprise Development Group</b> – Drogheda & District Chamber <b>Illuminate Female Entrepreneurship</b> – Drogheda & District Chamber <b>Innovation Centres</b> – County Kildare Chamber <b>Leeson Enterprise Centre</b> – Westport Chamber <b>Limerick Digital Innovation Forum</b> – Limerick Chamber
Economic Development Plans	<b>Aviation Policy as a Driver of Economic Development</b> – Limerick Chamber <b>Ennis 2040</b> – Ennis Chamber <b>Galway 2040</b> – Galway Chamber <b>Ireland 2040 – Cork</b> – Cork Chamber <b>North East and Mid East Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy</b> – Drogheda & District Chamber <b>Sligo City Centre Public Realm Plan</b> – Sligo Chamber <b>Town Development Plan</b> – Letterkenny Chamber
Infrastructural Development	<b>Coach Friendly Destination</b> – Ennis, Sligo and Dungarvan & West Waterford Chambers <b>Get Galway Moving</b> – Galway Chamber <b>Ireland's Greenest Bus Fleet</b> – Cork Chamber <b>M20 Limerick-Cork Motorway</b> – Limerick Chamber and Cork Chamber <b>Sligo Chamber Industry Group</b> – Sligo Chamber <b>The Viability and Affordability of Apartment Building in Cork City</b> – Cork Chamber
Promoting Competitiveness & Attracting FDI	<b>Atlantic Economic Corridor</b> – Limerick, Shannon, Ennis, Galway, Mayo and Sligo Chambers <b>Chamber Trade Connections 'Export to The Netherlands' Programme</b> – County Carlow Chamber <b>County Kildare International Trade Delegations</b> – County Kildare Chamber <b>CORE &amp; Cork City Centre Forum</b> – Cork Chamber <b>Diaspora Strategy &amp; Overseas Trade Missions</b> – Sligo Chamber <b>Dublin's Global Reputation Project</b> – Dublin Chamber <b>Enterprise Europe Network</b> – Cork Chamber and Dublin Chamber <b>Fingal Overseas Relationship Development</b> – Fingal Chamber <b>M1 Corridor</b> – Dundalk Chamber and Drogheda & District Chamber <b>South Dublin Exporting Survey &amp; County Marketing Plan</b> – South Dublin Chamber



## Category

## Best Practice Initiative

### Tourism

**Dungarvan Home of the Déise Greenway** – Dungarvan & West Waterford Chamber  
**Galway 2020: European Capital of Culture** – Galway Chamber  
**Limerick Milk Market** – Limerick Chamber  
**Other Voices** – Ballina Chamber  
**Purple Flag** – Ballina, Ennis, Limerick and Cork Chambers  
**Tralee Tourism Strategy** – Tralee Chamber

### Town Revitalisation

**Donegal Tourism, 'ShopLK' and the Retail Promotion Initiative** – Letterkenny Chamber  
**Keep Your Spend Local – Me2You Laois Gift Card** – Laois Chamber  
**Promote Ennis / Visit Ennis** – Ennis Chamber  
**Limerick City Centre Retail Steering Group** – Limerick Chamber  
**See Something Say Something** – Tralee Chamber and Fingal Chamber  
**Team Tullamore** – Tullamore & District Chamber  
**The Kilkenny Age Friendly Initiative** – Kilkenny Chamber  
**Collaborative Town Centre Health Check (CTCHC)** – Dundalk Chamber and Tralee Chamber



# Advancing Innovation

Ireland has a world-leading reputation for innovation. Continued sustained investment in innovation and knowledge development will be key to driving sustainable economic growth for local economies all across Ireland in the coming years. Chambers, Local Government and Local Enterprise Offices have an important role to play in advancing innovation and driving established and prospective businesses and entrepreneurs to achieve their potential, giving positive knock-on effects for the communities and local economies in which they operate.

## Ballina Chamber Office *Ballina Chamber*

In 2015, Ballina Municipal District Council allocated a three-storey building on Pearse Street in the town centre to Ballina Chamber, under the agreement that the Chamber would act as its caretaker. This space has been invaluable in promoting business innovation events over the past five years and LEO Mayo have recently come on board to host monthly business advisory clinics and training workshops. Since the onset of the pandemic, Ballina Chamber and LEO Mayo have expanded their reach and are now working with businesses across the county to host webinars in place of the business advisory clinics. The building is described as a 'one-stop-business-shop', which is a win-win for the Chamber, LEO and interested stakeholders in the region.

The Mayo North Promotions Office also works out of the same building which seeks to promote North Mayo while working collaboratively with [www.mayo.ie](http://www.mayo.ie). Ballina Chamber have a caretaker's agreement with Mayo County Council for this.

## Business Sustainability Programme *South Dublin Chamber*

The core work of the Sustainable Business Programme is to provide a link to the wide range of services and resources available to local business in an easily accessible format without undue bureaucracy, as well as feeding back information from these businesses to inform local economic development policy. A collaborative project between South Dublin Chamber, South Dublin County Council and LEO South Dublin, the programme has focused support intervention available to all 6,000 ratepayers in the county, ensuring no geographical disadvantage.

The key to the programme's success is listening to businesses and working with them to understand their needs and to share with them what is available to assist in addressing these needs, with some of the following services provided:

- A personal proactive engagement to connect businesses to the resources available to help them to scale up
- A direct contact and pathway to the key people in local/national agencies who can assist them to grow their business and help them resolve the difficulties they may be facing



- An on-site visit to the business, regardless of their size, to work with them to address challenges and recognise opportunities
- An information service outlining clearly, and directly, what is available for a business, who can access it and assistance where applicable on preparing an application
- Information is collated on each business assisted and the outcomes of the service(s) provided to the business is conveyed to the partner agencies.

Through one-to-one meetings and industry-based groups, the programme attends to the needs of all businesses in the county. There is a clear plan to ensure all parts of the county are served and where possible clusters of industry types are used to service generic needs.



## **Cork Innovates** *Cork Chamber*

The Cork Innovates Partnership comprised of 12 of the most influential organisations in the Cork region who were actively engaged in entrepreneurial or innovative business support activities. These organisations also collaborated under the mantle of 'Cork Innovates' to promote Cork with a specific focus on driving the economic reputation and perception of Cork as the optimum location in Ireland for innovation and entrepreneurship. Cork Chamber actively engaged as the voice of business and was a long-standing member of the project steering group.

The Chamber also worked with other stakeholders to identify strategies aimed at marketing the region as a location which offers entrepreneurs, globally and locally, the best environment to start, scale and stay their business successfully.

## **Drogheda Enterprise Development Group** *Drogheda & District Chamber*

Drogheda & District Chamber recently established a joint Enterprise Development Group with representatives from Drogheda BID and the Mill Enterprise Hub to work on a cohesive economic plan for Drogheda. The group's activity to date includes a joint commuter survey, a c-funded analysis of Census figures, and an upcoming marketing initiative to promote Drogheda. Joint monthly meetings with Louth County Council take place to brief members on the work of the group.

## **Illuminate Female Entrepreneurship** *Drogheda & District Chamber*

The '[Illuminate Female Entrepreneurship](#)' programme was developed by the Mill Enterprise Hub and supported by M1 Drogheda Chamber Skillnet, Coca-Cola International Services and AIB to fast track female-led businesses to develop their operations and enhance their leadership skills to ultimately achieve scale and to create



employment. Drogheda Chamber works alongside the Mill Enterprise Hub, Louth and Meath LEOs, and the DCU Ryan Academy to deliver this programme. Upon completion of the programme, participants receive a QQI Level 6 accreditation having developed skills in business strategy, finance and funding, legal, sales and marketing, business and financial risk assessment, as well as learning how to sustain and scale a business.

## **Innovation Centres** *County Kildare Chamber*

County Kildare Chamber have been involved in the development of creating three Innovation Centres to attract business to the area. Chamber Chief Executive Allan Shine is a director and secretary of the company that is driving this initiative, in conjunction with Maynooth University, Enterprise Ireland and Kildare County Council.

The first of these centres is due to open in November 2020 and will serve the emerging tech sector and act as a Centre of Excellence in supporting innovation within small businesses, housing 34 businesses with approx. 120 employees. The hub will work closely with Maynooth University and MaynoothWorks, LEO Kildare and Enterprise Ireland in providing necessary supports that will allow entrepreneurs and start-ups to scale up. Enterprise Ireland's Regional Enterprise Development Fund provided just under €2 million to this hub, which is a key objective under the Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan 2020. The other two centres are set to open in 2021 with one specifically dedicated to the Equine Industry and the other is as a Food Innovation Hub.

## **Leeson Enterprise Centre** *Westport Chamber*

The [Leeson Enterprise Centre](#) is a hub for innovation and business to help entrepreneurs and start-ups succeed in providing centrally located office space in Westport town and access to a range of business supports and agencies.



The centre is the result of a public-private partnership between Mayo County Council and the Westport Multi-Agency Enterprise Group (comprised of Westport Chamber and local business representatives). The Group was originally established in response to the threat of the downturn in the local economy with a view to promoting innovation and growing indigenous businesses in the town. The complex is a purpose-built community enterprise centre that hosts 11 small start-ups, 8 co-working desks, and the Chamber offices which act as the on-site management organisation. LEO Clinics are hosted in the centre free of charge each month and LEO Mayo also run regular training events here.

## **Limerick Digital Innovation Forum** *Limerick Chamber*

The [Limerick Digital Innovation Forum](#) brings together key stakeholders and subject matter experts from across Limerick with a unique focus on applying digital technology to accelerate the economic, social, physical and environmental transition to a resilient and thriving carbon neutral region.

The Forum builds on the Limerick Digital Strategy which aims to lay the foundation for the "Sustainable Smart Limerick City Region and Communities". This aims to design a plan that will enable the utilisation of digital technologies in Limerick and embrace new work practices to empower communities, create better services, accelerate sustainable social and economic growth and to improve the quality of life for all.

Limerick Chamber, as the largest business representative body in the region, is a key stakeholder on the group.





# Economic Development Plans

When planning for economic development, the goal is to create and maintain a strong, vibrant local economy. Local Government economic development planning is part of a region's overall economic development strategy and involves inter-governmental coordination. The economic development plan provides a comprehensive overview of the economy, sets policy direction for economic growth, and identifies strategies, programmes, and projects to improve the economy.

As a 'bottom-up' initiative, the plans complement national-level policies and programmes emanating from a 'top-down' approach, such as the National Planning Framework, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, and the National Development Plan. Chambers form an important part of the drafting process of economic development plans and often act as the link between Local Government and the business community, thereby enabling increased collaboration and a wide buy-in for the strategies.

## Aviation Policy as a Driver of Economic Development *Limerick Chamber*



In addition to quantifying the economic contribution of Shannon Airport to the Mid-West region, the report makes several policy recommendations on how to support the sustainable development of regional airports in Ireland. It calls for a roadmap for more balanced regional growth that builds on a closer integration of aviation policy with enterprise policy and cites the sustainable development of Shannon Airport as a vital cog in the wheel of balanced growth, which is at the heart of Project Ireland 2040 and the most recent Programme for Government.

The development of Shannon Airport is a key element of the [Limerick 2030 Economic and Spatial Plan](#) in addition to the Southern Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES). Limerick Chamber, supported by Shannon, Ennis and Galway Chambers, commissioned Copenhagen Economics to review the National Aviation Policy in light of the goals of Project Ireland 2040 and also in response to the need for enhanced direct air connectivity into the region. The [report](#) focuses largely on the challenges around growing the key gateway airport for the Mid-West and West – Shannon Airport.



## Ennis 2040

### Ennis Chamber

The need for a [Spatial and Economic Plan for Ennis](#) up to 2040 arose as the town and its environs faced specific economic, infrastructural, environmental and physical challenges, including transportation; demographic and population change; retail vitality and viability; availability of modern office and employment accommodation; environmental considerations and town centre accessibility.

This led to Clare County Council commissioning a multi-disciplinary team led by economic consultants GVA Grimley Ltd. to develop the 'Ennis 2040 Economic and Spatial Strategy', to include a marketing plan for the town that aims to help attract investment. The only external agency appointed to the steering committee was Ennis Chamber who played a key role in ensuring engagement from the business community through consultation workshops around the development of the strategy. Publication of the draft plan has been postponed in light of the Covid-19 crisis.

## Galway 2040

### Galway Chamber

The development of the [Galway 2040](#) strategy brings an opportunity to rebuild and rebrand both the city and county to regain their significance as European and International Centres of Culture, Innovation and Commerce, making Galway a destination of choice for both citizens and visitors alike. Galway Chamber, supported by GMIT Management & Centre for Creative Arts & Media, took this initiative to the next stage by structuring the engagement and dialogue such that it was inclusive, imaginative, informed and fluid.

The strategy vision document sets out a particular view of Galway as it develops and transforms over the next 20 years. It is not intended to be a definitive path or a prescriptive sequence of events but more a

guide to challenge the imagination, fuel discussion and inspire Galway's citizens to support and take ownership of the development of a new Galway, both city and county.



## Ireland 2040 – Cork

### Cork Chamber

Cork Chamber's vision for Ireland 2040 is for a high density city region with a diverse and resilient economy, equipped with regional, national and international connectivity that is serviced by high quality transport corridors enabling a healthy, sustainable, educated, skilled, confident, and entrepreneurial community.

The Chamber campaign throughout the development of Ireland 2040 was for the plan to recognise Cork's position as Ireland's second city by way of growth projections and the alignment of capital expenditure. This approach has been supported in the published plan which provides a strong validation of Cork's potential as Ireland's second city region, with a larger percentage growth than Dublin and a population growth equal to Limerick, Waterford and Galway combined.

Highlights of the plan include:

- Welcome confirmation of existing projects such as the N22, the Dunkettle Interchange, the M28 and a commitment to commence 'shovel ready' projects that have been stalled or are yet to begin. Most notably, there is a commitment to the M20 with full funding for delivery and planning for the eastern section of the Northern Ring Road. There is also commitment to examine the feasibility of a high-speed rail connection between Cork and Dublin; a vision firmly endorsed by the Chamber



- €2 billion Urban Regeneration Fund, aimed at enabling the development of areas such as the Docklands
- €500 million innovation fund, the detail of which is eagerly awaited
- €200 million fund for public transport which will be essential in developing a Rapid Transit Corridor to enable sustainable, enjoyable and appealing commuting and development patterns in the city region.

## North East and Mid East Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy *Drogheda & District Chamber*

The North East and Mid East Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) is overseen by the Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly and aims to identify the Midlands and Eastern region's key strategic assets, opportunities and challenges, and set out policy responses to ensure that people's needs – such as access to housing, jobs, ease of travel and overall well-being – are met up to 2030 and beyond. The RSES provides a spatial strategy, economic strategy, metropolitan plan, investment framework and climate action strategy. Drogheda & District Chamber has been instrumental in its feedback into the regional spatial and economic strategies, ensuring a cohesive approach to development of commercial and residential projects in the region through widescale engagement with the business community.

## Sligo City Centre Public Realm Plan *Sligo Chamber*

In February 2018, international design consultancy firm, Building Design Partnership (BDP) were commissioned by Sligo County Council to prepare a public realm plan for Sligo. A Public Realm Plan is a planning document with a long-range vision for the built environment which takes account of the varied needs of its users. Following a period of public consultation, the [Sligo City Centre Public Realm Plan](#) was completed in September 2018. Chamber Chief Executive Aidan Doyle was the Chamber representative for the period of public consultation. This single, coherent concept for the city centre's public realm seeks to achieve the ultimate goal of transforming Sligo into the leading city in the north-west region through the design of an attractive and vibrant city centre in which people want to live, work, socialise and shop.



The Plan identified a number of key locations within the urban core where there are significant opportunities to create high quality urban spaces including O'Connell Street, Stephen Street Cultural Plaza, Rockwood Parade and Quay Street carpark. Sligo County Council have successfully applied under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund for funding for a number of these projects which will be implemented in the coming years.





## Town Development Plan *Letterkenny Chamber*

Letterkenny Chamber has been working with senior county planners over the past three years in the creation of the Town Development Plan, playing a key role in facilitating workshops with the business community to ensure widespread endorsement of key business leaders. This was conducted through a partnership approach and has resulted in the Chamber leading a design competition to regenerate one particular area of the town centre.

Having successfully achieved Urban Regeneration and Development Funding (URDF), Donegal County Council are now in the process of appointing a consultant to develop a Master Plan for this regeneration. The Chamber continues to engage with the Planning Department as this contract rolls out.

Letterkenny Chamber is also a strategic partner in a current URDF funding application that will transform the town centre in terms of public realm, transport, and acquisition and development of key sites. These plans will deliver a town that can accommodate a growing population and aligns with the ambitions of both the Council and the Chamber to promote Letterkenny and its environs as attractive places to do business.



# Infrastructural Development

Ireland's ability to attract investment and to remain competitive while meeting the needs of a modern economy is dependent on the provision of high-quality infrastructure. Demographic changes are placing ever greater pressure on our infrastructure system and new infrastructural demands are emerging.

Under-funding, short-term planning and an absence of ambition have led to deficits in public infrastructure over many years, undermining both economic competitiveness and quality of life.

New approaches are required to ensure sustainable long-term planning, coordination with spatial and urban policy, adequate funding, and a transparent prioritisation and decision-making process on capital projects.

## Coach Friendly Destination *Ennis, Sligo and Dungarvan & West Waterford Chambers*

Sligo was the first town in Ireland, followed by Ennis and Dungarvan, to be accredited with the 'Coach Friendly Destination' status by the Coach Tourism Transport Council of Ireland (CTTC).



The establishment of Friar's Walk Coach Park in Ennis, located close to the Glór Theatre and developed by the former Ennis Town Council, was a critical factor in Ennis achieving this status, but so too was the commitment made by Ennis Chamber and Clare County Council to understand and meet the requirements not only of coaches, but also of coach drivers and passengers arriving into the 'Wild Atlantic

Way' town. The free coach park features 14 spaces, on-site facilities and a drop-off / pick-up bus shelter located just 100m from the town centre. The site is also equipped with a water supply for coach washing, waste-water disposal facilities and 24-hour CCTV monitoring. Having realised that the amenity was not leveraged or marketed to its full potential, a joint working group comprising Clare County Council and Ennis Chamber rebranded the space and made a successful submission to the CTTC for accreditation.

Further south in Waterford, Dungarvan Tourist Office, Dungarvan & West Waterford Chamber and Waterford County Council came together to form a steering group to enable them to use this unique selling point to attract coach companies and tour operators to consider Dungarvan as a destination for the coach tours they operate. Dungarvan Tourist Office was delighted to have reported a 300% increase last year on the number of people attracted to Dungarvan as a Coach Friendly Destination coupled with the innovative 'Meet & Greet Service' offered by the Tourist Office staff.



## Get Galway Moving Galway Chamber

Galway Chamber, through their campaign 'Get Galway Moving', are of the view it is the combination of the Galway Transport Strategy and the Galway City Ring Road that will be required to help solve the city's traffic challenges making it one of the best places in which to live, learn, work and to visit.



The National Development Plan forecasts that the population of Galway City will grow by 50% by 2040. At present, just 38% of trips made in the city are made using sustainable modes of transport. There is an urgent need to improve transport infrastructure to support a growth in sustainable travel which will encourage a reduction in car use within the city.

Galway Chamber has focused on five priority areas in which Galway can get moving, including -

- **Accessibility:** The ability to get into and around the city and county is vital for society & the economy. Traffic congestion is choking Galway
- **Sustainability:** Address climate change, its impact on society and increase the use of Green Energy throughout Galway
- **Liveability:** Make Galway the best place in Ireland in which to live, learn, work and visit

- **Economic Viability:** To achieve the National Development Plan growth targets, Galway must increase its attractiveness for international, national and local businesses
- **Accountability:** Policy decisions on Galway's immediate environment should be made in Galway by those accountable to its people.

The Chamber has also launched a policy and communications campaign for supporting the delivery of the Galway City Ring Road, in its bid to Get Galway Moving. This campaign was also awarded honours for the 'Most Successful Policy Campaign' at the Chambers Ireland annual Chamber Awards 2020, highlighting the outstanding work of the Chamber in developing a campaign that has proven to positively contribute to both the Chamber locality and wider geographic region.

## Ireland's Greenest Bus Fleet Cork Chamber

Bus travellers in Cork were the first passengers to journey on a 'green bus' in Ireland in March 2019 from Cork City to Ringaskiddy. With a zero-carbon emission footprint, the biomethane-powered bus is a viable alternative for Ireland's public bus fleet. The biogas bus has been part of national trials looking at green bus performance, air quality impacts and CO2 emissions, among other criteria. Biomethane is a clean, renewable gas that is 98% methane. Also known as green gas, it can be used interchangeably with conventional fossil-fuel natural gas, meaning it can be added to the existing gas grid. A growing number of European capital cities now run their buses on gas, resulting in lower carbon emissions and better air quality in cities.





The Ireland's Greenest Bus Fleet proposal, developed by the Energy Cork Transport Sub-Group with the support of Cork Chamber, Bus Éireann, Gas Networks Ireland, Cork County Council, Cork City Council and UCC, envisages the transition of the Cork city bus fleet (at least 120 vehicles) on a phased basis from the current diesel vehicles to compressed natural gas/biomethane, fully-renewable gas fuelled vehicles.

With the initiation of green gas injections into the national grid the possibility of a fully renewable and carbon neutral bus fleet and technology is now a real possibility that holds unprecedented benefits from an energy resilient, circular economy, waste to energy, clean energy and environmental perspective.

## M20 Limerick-Cork Motorway

### *Limerick Chamber and Cork Chamber*

The [M20 Limerick-Cork Motorway](#) campaign was undertaken by Limerick and Cork Chambers with the strategic objective of the M20 motorway being formally included in the Government's capital programme. The M20 scheme represents a major strategic infrastructure project that is required to address existing weaknesses and growing constraints on the existing N20 national primary route, linking Ireland's second and third largest cities.

Targeting the NDP and Ireland 2040, the Chambers' joint campaign provided evidence for the economic, social and transport needs for the motorway to be prioritised, uniting business across Munster in the process. Limerick and Cork Chambers jointly commissioned a [report](#) by Indecon Economic Consultants and Red C Research in 2017 on the socio-economic benefits of the M20 to the city regions along the Atlantic corridor.

Both Chambers continue to emphasise the need for improved intercity connectivity to decongest the existing route which passes through urban centres, and to enhance safety and journey times for logistics and other road users.

## Sligo Chamber Industry Group

### *Sligo Chamber*

One of the long-term strategic goals of the Sligo Chamber Industry Group, which has representation from all sectors of industry, is to support the funding and development of better infrastructure in the region, which is given as the number one reason in the decision-making process for investment. Sligo Chamber works with Sligo County Council and all main agencies to seek agreement and win funding for the upgrading of infrastructure including projects such as the N4 and the Western Distributor Road. The completion of these projects will enable IDA Ireland to showcase even more reasons to attract FDI in Sligo.





## The Viability and Affordability of Apartment Building in Cork City

*Cork Chamber*

Produced by EY-DKM Economic Advisory, Cork Chamber and the Construction Industry Federation commissioned a report in 2019 on the [Viability and Affordability of Apartment Building in Cork City](#) to provide an analysis of the issues surrounding the lack of new apartment buildings in urban areas and the unintended consequences that arise as a result. Specifically, the report found that 'hard' building costs made up just 48-56% of the cost of construction of two-bedroom apartments.

It highlighted that the cost of construction of new apartments is significantly beyond viability and threatening the future economic growth in Ireland's cities as first-time buyer, working couples are being pushed out of the market. The report authors said that with a new two-bed apartment in Cork city costing €390,000-486,000, first time buyers would need a combined income of €100,000-125,000 with a cash deposit of €39,000-49,000. The rental market is equally inflated, with two-bed (€2,500) and three-bed (€3,000) accommodations costing tenants well above the national average. While this report is focused on the lack of new apartment building in Cork City, Ireland's second largest city, it presents evidence which is relevant in a national context.



# Promoting Competitiveness & Attracting FDI

Ireland is one of the most open economies in the world. The relationship between Ireland and overseas companies has stood the test of time with the relationship benefitting local economies, national economic performance and our valued investors. With the numbers providing compelling evidence, there are over 174,000 people employed in foreign-owned enterprises in Ireland which represents almost one in ten workers in the Irish economy.

Traditional business models are evolving, and customer loyalty is more hard-won than ever before. Nonetheless, initiatives across Ireland led by Chambers and Local Government has meant that increased investment from companies and investors alike are driving economic progress across all segments of the economy which will continue to be vital to our economic prosperity locally, nationally and internationally in the coming years.

## Atlantic Economic Corridor

The [Atlantic Economic Corridor](#) (AEC) stretches along the entire western seaboard of Ireland, from the most northern tip of Donegal to the most southern point of Kerry. The combination of stunning natural landscapes, rich cultural environments and vibrant communities create a unique place in which to live and work. The AEC is driven by business representatives and communities and supported by national and local Government and State agencies.



Driven by Limerick, Shannon, Ennis, Galway, Mayo and Sligo Chambers, the initiative seeks to consolidate and align the State capital investment programme

with the potential investment of the private sector to strengthen the region's economic contribution, thereby making the AEC region a better place in which to live and work.

The mission of the AEC is to create a 'city of scale' from Limerick through Galway to Sligo, to match Dublin and Cork in success in developing infrastructure, attracting Irish and multinational investment, and growing jobs and wealth in vibrant communities.

The collective objectives of the [strategy](#) are to:

- Actively pursue balanced regional progress and balanced national development
- Strengthen enterprise development through alignment, collaboration and investment
- Create a dynamic 'city' effect of scale through an Economic Corridor
- Enhance the technology, research, skills capacity and reputation of the region
- Seek the infrastructure investment necessary to support this growth
- Promote modern rural development based on rich natural resources and human capacity
- Identify and actively promote areas of competitive advantage
- Promote social cohesion and equality to maximise contribution and citizenship



## Chamber Trade Connections 'Export to The Netherlands' Programme County Carlow Chamber



County Carlow Chamber, Carlow County Council, and LEO Carlow have come together to develop the [Chamber Trade Connections](#) Export to The Netherlands Programme which is designed to assist SMEs in the region in developing new export opportunities in The Netherlands.

The Netherlands has consistently been a popular export market for Irish SMEs over the last 10 years and with dozens of flights from Dublin, Cork and Belfast every week, Irish exporters can service the needs of Dutch customers quickly, easily and cost-effectively. The purpose of the programme is to provide businesses with the skills and confidence to identify, target and exploit new business opportunities in the Dutch market and to then pitch themselves to potential customers over the course of the programme. Each company is provided with pre-trip support, a dedicated export mentor, facilitated meetings and on-the-ground support for the journey.

## County Kildare International Trade Delegations County Kildare Chamber

County Kildare Chamber host an annual trade visit to Boston to market the region and to promote businesses to relocate. The delegation usually consists of approximately 20 companies along with Kildare County Council and LEO Kildare. The Chamber is focused on advertising their attractiveness for FDI in Boston. The biggest win thus far for the region, resulting from these trade

visits, has been the establishment of a new confectionary drinks plant, 'Dr. Pepper', in Newbridge in Q4 2020 offering 120 jobs. The Chamber also facilitates reciprocal trade visits from the Boston Irish Business Association annually.

The Chamber are currently in the process of pitching to become the official welcoming county for the 2021 American College football game. If successful, this will see 4 high schools staying in Maynooth and surrounding areas for four nights (equivalent to 3,000 bed nights), in addition to a host of FDI conferences.

## CORE & Cork City Centre Forum Cork Chamber



Cork City Council has drawn together key stakeholders including Cork Chamber, Cork Business Association, An Garda Síochána and Bus Éireann, as well as

representatives from the retail and hospitality sectors in the city, to form [CORE](#). The CORE partnership takes an overall strategic view towards the management and promotions of all aspects of city life. 'Core' means something that is central to existence or character, and Cork City Centre is certainly at the heart of a dynamic and vibrant region. The forum focuses primarily on the city centre, strategically and operationally, working to ensure that opportunities are maximised and that the city centre achieves and surpasses its enormous potential.

A working group of CORE, which the Chamber actively manages and participates in, has successfully undertaken several initiatives such as the Purple Flag Award, traffic incentives and marketing campaigns for Cork City Centre such as 'Cork Cashes Out' – the campaign to make Cork Ireland's first cash-free city.



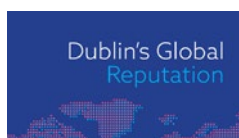
## Diaspora Strategy & Overseas Trade Missions Sligo Chamber

It is widely recognised that diaspora engagement is a critical component in local economic, social and community development in Ireland as outlined in the “[Global Irish – Ireland’s Diaspora Policy](#).” As well as reaching out to the diaspora on a national level there is potential for local communities and counties in Ireland to reach out to their own diaspora and build new relationships, to benefit local and regional development. Sligo Chamber in collaboration with Sligo County Council and other relevant agencies support [The County Sligo Diaspora Strategy](#) 2019-2024.

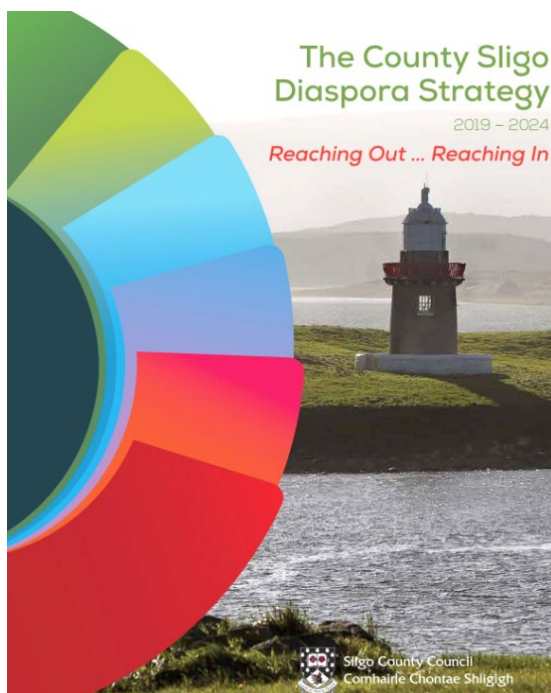
At a local level this is an action in the Sligo Local Economic Community Plan 2016-2021 to develop ways of linking with diaspora to build mutually beneficial connections through networks and the involvement of other agencies. Sligo County Council also continue to support the Sligo/London Business Network in partnership with Sligo Chamber in engaging with, and promoting, Sligo to the UK-based county diaspora.

In addition to this, the Chamber has also partnered with LEO Sligo on various overseas trade missions, the focus of which has been to promote Sligo as an attractive destination for FDI and also to build on the strong political, economic and cultural linkages already established through its diaspora.

## Dublin’s Global Reputation Project Dublin Chamber



Dublin Chamber has historically worked on successful programmes such as the ‘Activating Dublin’ project. Last year the Chamber completed the [Dublin’s Global Reputation](#) Project which analysed



the city region’s international reputation, its strengths and weaknesses and how it could improve its competitiveness. This was fed into the Local Authorities and the Chamber continues to use this data in their submissions.

The Chamber is currently working on another urban planning initiative for Dublin which will form the basis of submissions and consultations with the four Local Authorities as they begin work on their Development Plans.

## Enterprise Europe Network Ireland Cork Chamber and Dublin Chamber

Delivered in partnership between Enterprise Ireland, Cork Chamber, Dublin Chamber and the Local Enterprise Office, the [Enterprise Europe Network Ireland](#) helps Irish businesses to innovate and grow internationally through tailored support; new business and technology partnerships; commercial





opportunities; licensing deals, and partner searches for EU-funded R&D. Its services are tailored to SMEs but are also available to all other businesses, universities and research centres.



Bringing together more than 3,000 experts from more than 60 countries and 600 member organisations, the Enterprise Europe Network is the largest support network for SMEs that combines international business expertise with local knowledge to bring innovation to new markets.

The network is open to SMEs, start-ups, entrepreneurs, research centres, universities and institutes of technology, business support organisations and industry clusters with services, including:

- Developing a business in new markets
- Sourcing and licensing new technologies
- Providing comprehensive innovation support and business advice
- Finding the right partners for R&D
- Understanding how to protect intellectual assets
- Learning about EU regulation
- Accessing EU funding and finance

## Fingal Overseas Relationship Development Fingal Chamber

Fingal Chamber organised and completed a pre-visit planning trip to Seattle, USA in order to develop trade links between Washington State and Fingal. They have an excellent relationship with the Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce and both sides are committed to expanding this relationship for the benefit of boosting business and investment in both locations. Seattle Chamber paid a visit to Fingal in 2019 and signed a “Heads of Agreement” with

Enterprise Ireland who, as a result of this, opened an office in Seattle in late 2019.

## M1 Corridor Dundalk Chamber and Drogheda & District Chamber

The M1 East Coast Corridor region connects Ireland’s two largest cities, Dublin and Belfast, with the two largest towns, Dundalk and Drogheda at its centre. The region offers unrivalled access to talent and infrastructure, with a population of 2.25 million people within 60 minutes of Dundalk and Drogheda, representing over one-third of the population of the island.



The region has already established itself as a centre for global excellence with internationally recognised clusters in financial services, existing and emerging technologies, engineering, life sciences and food manufacturing. To highlight the success of multiple industries in the region and further boost investment and jobs, Paddy Malone of Dundalk Chamber developed the concept of the [M1 Corridor](#) to highlight the huge advantages of the region in comparison to Dublin or Belfast as a location for investment. The project has developed into a business-led initiative driven by local business groups, and spear-headed by Dundalk Chamber, Drogheda & District Chamber, the Mill Enterprise Hub and Oriel Hub Enterprise Centre, in conjunction with Louth County Council and LEO Louth.



## South Dublin Exporting Survey & County Marketing Plan

### South Dublin Chamber

The objective of this survey is to provide connections for new exporters, or those considering exporting, to experienced tradespeople through introductions and market intelligence from those with country-specific expertise to those interested in exporting to those same countries. In doing so, the survey identifies potential clusters, networks and opportunities for meetings of these groups, in partnership with LEO South Dublin.

From the information collected through this survey, South Dublin Chamber has also undertaken a marketing campaign to promote the county as a desirable business location. Key state agencies along with international and indigenous companies based in the county have been engaged to discern the main reasons they choose to locate to South Dublin and this will be part of the proposition that will be marketed to those considering to locate to the county as part of the County Marketing Plan. The main work of implementing this plan will take place in 2020 with work to further the campaign and build on its initial implementation continuing into 2021 and 2022.

## We are Cork

### Cork Chamber

The 'We are Cork' Brand has been developed as part of a collaborative project between a number of stakeholder organisations in Cork, including Cork Chamber, Cork City Council, Cork County Council, UCC, CIT, IDA, and Enterprise Ireland, aiming to act as an overarching brand that can tell the story of Cork from one position, under one unified voice, through many different channels.

The brand is the foundation that helps the world to see what makes Cork a desirable

business location, visitor destination, place to study and work, and a place to call home. The development of the brand strategy for the region leverages the features of Cork to provide a relevant and compelling promise to audience groups. It is not an ad campaign or a tag line, rather, the place brand strategy is a deeper, more meaningful shared vision which influences actions and creates a positive perception, forging a new reputation.

The overarching objectives of the brand are:

- To help the Cork Region have more conversations and successful dealings with Government, its agencies, large and small businesses, property investors and developers in Ireland and internationally
- To help the Cork Region retain and attract businesses and jobs
- To help grow existing businesses in the Cork Region
- To appeal to talented people, both Irish and international
- To leverage proposed investment, by the public and private sector, in planned property development projects and support existing business, education, leisure, retail and tourist destinations in the Cork Region
- To position the Cork Region as a truly successful global business location – regional, national and European-wide
- To give the citizens of Cork a collective voice that everyone in Cork can support and be proud of.



**We are Cork.**



# Tourism

Tourism is a vital industry and significant source of employment for many regions across Ireland, with valuable spill-over effects into other sectors of local economies. The capacity of towns and cities to promote themselves as tourist destinations is crucial to the survival of SMEs which benefit from these additional customers. The strategies and projects highlighted below emphasise some innovative ideas which attract tourists and increase spending in localities across the country.

Already damaged by Brexit and the falling value of Sterling, the Irish tourism sector has been heavily hit by the Covid-19 pandemic and restrictions introduced to contain its spread. An increase in the capacity of State agencies to promote Ireland as a destination to local and international visitors will be vital in the coming years to support the tourism industry through to the recovery period.

## Dungarvan Home of the Déise Greenway *Dungarvan & West Waterford Chamber*

The world-class 45km Waterford Greenway runs from Dungarvan to Waterford along the route of an old railway line. Since it was officially opened in 2017, it has become a beacon, drawing visitors to the Déise from all over Ireland and abroad. Waterford City and County Council obtained a licence from CIE at the start of the century to develop the line as an amenity for the public who it represents. With works now completed it is being used by tens of thousands of walkers and cyclists annually.

The Déise Greenway provides many opportunities for businesses along the line to provide the services needed to support a Greenway, such as accommodation, cafes, restaurants, bike hire, etc. Dungarvan & West Waterford Chamber have continued to promote this initiative with the City & County Council to boost tourism and business in the area.

## Galway 2020: European Capital of Culture *Galway Chamber*

For over 30 years, the EU designates one or more cities as a European Capital of Culture. In 2020, [Galway](#) and Rijeka, Croatia were chosen to showcase an innovative year-long cultural programme that highlights the richness and diversity their cultures. This has been a chance for the whole of Galway, from all walks of life, from all areas of industry and culture, to come together to create a wonderful cultural legacy.



Despite Covid-19 disruptions, Galway Chamber has played a leading role in this year-long festival, engaging with the front-end media and the business community to support events. Most significant was the Chamber's role in negotiating a 3% top up in commercial rates from businesses to contribute ringfenced funding to Galway



2020, from 2016 to date. This has been worth over €1 million in additional co-funding for the Local Authorities and would not have happened without the leadership of the Chamber.

## Limerick Milk Market

### Limerick Chamber

Along with Limerick City and County Council, Limerick Chamber are trustees of Limerick's city centre [Milk Market](#) – an all-weather, year round market space which accommodates major markets on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. The Milk Market is considered to be one of the city's main tourist attractions.



This market hosts a community of remarkable individuals from throughout the province, all of whom care deeply about the offering to their customers. Most of the stallholders are themselves producers who grow, rear or bake the food they sell.

Others are importers with an intimate knowledge of the products they source from far and wide.

As it has evolved, the Milk Market has gained a reputation as a repository of culinary skills, knowledge and understanding, all of which are imparted during the discourse of the market day.

## Other Voices

### Ballina Chamber

'Other Voices' has twice been to Ballina over the past 3 years. Ballina Chamber facilitated this by channelling funding through LEADER and other community sources with an estimated €2 million return on investment.



In addition to Other Voices, Ballina Chamber secured public and private funding, together with a subvention of €150,000, which was put towards a variety of projects for the continued promotion and development of the town. This has included the running and upkeep of the Ballina Tourist Office and over 30 festivals and events. With a plethora of new festivals and events delivered throughout 2019, and the growing offering of existing festivals, Ballina Chamber is proud to have supported Food Fleadh Ballina, Ballina Street Festival, Cannonball Quay Festival, Ballina Fringe Festival, Samhain Abhainn – Ballina's Halloween Festival, Ballina Salmon Festival and the Shop Local Christmas Campaign (with an investment of €15,000).





## Purple Flag

### *Ballina, Ennis, Limerick and Cork Chambers' please*

The [Purple Flag](#) standard, launched in 2012, is an accreditation process similar to the Green Flag award for parks and the Blue Flag for beaches. It allows members of the public to quickly identify town and city centres that offer entertaining, diverse, safe and enjoyable nights out. Reinvigorated over the past three years by the Association of Town and City Management (ATCM), there are now 70 Purple Flag towns and cities across Ireland and the UK. The positive response by place managers, local businesses and venues, and the public is testament to the difference that this great initiative can make.

The accreditation process takes towns



and cities through a comprehensive set of standards, management processes and good practice examples, all designed to help invigorate the evening and night-time economy, and provide research, training and development programmes.

As the governing body, ATCM has set out the core agenda at the heart of Purple Flag which represents the standards that must be achieved and maintained for an accreditation, which in turn will lead to a thriving evening economy. The five core standards are outlined here:

- **The Policy Envelope:** An after-hours policy that shows a clear strategy based on sound research, integrated public policy and a successful multi-sector partnership
- **Wellbeing:** Successful destinations are all safe and welcoming with all sectors playing their part in delivering high standards of customer care

- **Movement:** Getting home safely after an evening out is crucial, as is the ability to move around the centre on foot with ease
- **Appeal:** Successful destinations offer a vibrant choice of leisure and entertainment for a diversity of ages, groups, lifestyles and cultures
- **Place:** Successful areas are alive during the day, as well as in the evening. They contain a blend of overlapping activities that encourage people to mingle and enjoy the place. They reinforce the character and identity of the area as well as flair and imagination in urban design for the night.

Ennis was the first town in Ireland to achieve Purple Flag accreditation when it successfully underwent its rigorous assessment in 2013, the town has since successfully retained accreditation. Annual renewal of this accreditation process is led by Ennis Chamber, with multi-agency involvement and with funding support from Ennis Municipal District.

Similarly, Cork City Centre holds the Purple Flag accreditation since 2015. As a member of the Cork City Centre Forum, Cork Chamber supported this process through funding from an early phase and lead out on this initiative in 2015 on behalf of the Forum. The award's application process engaged with a broad range of representatives from across the City, including public, private and volunteer sector services.

Limerick City Centre has seen a co-ordinated approach between Limerick City and County Council, Limerick Chamber, and An Garda Síochána, to develop the evening and night-time offering in the city centre which has helped in securing the award for Limerick. This initiative is co-sponsored between Limerick City and County Council and Limerick Chamber.

Finally, in 2019, Ballina was awarded the Purple Flag for the sixth consecutive year. It is now the only town in Mayo with this award, proving that Ballina has a safe and vibrant night-time economy.



## Tralee Tourism Strategy

### Tralee Chamber

In collaboration with Kerry County Council, and with support from the local LEADER organisations, Tralee Chamber developed a forward-thinking [strategy](#) for the economic development of the area's tourism industry, which integrates public and private sector ambitions for the town. The plan provides a blueprint for the development of Tralee as a visitor destination over the coming five years and is focused around six strategic pillars which include:

- Developing Tralee as a Destination Town – developing walking trails, the night-time economy, public realm, information and wayfinding signage, and promoting local retail, restaurants and pubs
- Promoting the Tralee Bay Area as a premium destination for water-based activities
- Developing Cultural and Heritage experiences including investing in the Blennerville heritage experience, developing heritage trails and promoting Ardfert and Blennerville as heritage destinations. The plan also recommends promoting cultural quarters, street entertainment and art around the centre of the town
- Promoting Tralee as an activity destination through further development of the Canal and Wetlands Area, the development of the Tralee to Fenit Greenway and promotion of existing walking and cycling trails
- Developing the Business and Events market by investing in an events and conference centre in Tralee and promoting Tralee as a destination for the corporate market outside of the main tourism season
- Focusing on Sustainable and Accessible Tourism – promoting best practice with the Tourism Industry in Tralee and investing in making Tralee accessible for visitors of all ages and abilities.



# Town Revitalisation

Before Covid-19, a 'Town Centre First' programme was critically important and urgently needed attention. Now in the wake of the pandemic, with the global economic downturn likely to gravely impact our economic performance, a well-resourced Town Centre First programme would serve as a platform for a counter-cyclical economic stimulus – supporting jobs while carrying out much needed public works at a cost-effective point in the economy cycle.

The following section highlights a selection of initiatives being undertaken locally across the country to bolster local economies by revitalising town centres. It is hoped that the Programme for Government, which committed to a 'Town Centre First' policy approach, will further capitalise on this and ensure that our cities and towns become vibrant places for living and working in by removing the blight of underused and vacant urban building stock.

## Donegal Tourism, ShopLK and the Retail Promotion Initiative *Letterkenny Chamber*

Letterkenny Chamber is an associate member of Donegal Tourism, a county-wide forum of tourism operators and stakeholders. Within this, the Chamber represents the retail sector and drives Letterkenny as a key tourist destination. Letterkenny Chamber is also represented on the recently formed 'Destination Recovery' Taskforce to bring its expertise to assist in rebuilding the county's tourism offering post-Covid-19.

In addition to this work on a representative level, the Chamber organises a host of events throughout the year that boosts the vibrancy of the town and attracts local spending. The Chamber events committee is the sole organiser of the St. Patrick's Day Parade and through Retail Promotion funding the Chamber has also become a key partner in the "Off the Street Food Fest", "Letterkenny Jazz & Blues Festival" and the 'Shop LK' initiative.

'ShopLK' is a retail branding initiative for Letterkenny that promotes excellence in value, choice, and customer service. ShopLK provides a platform for Letterkenny to promote itself as a retail centre of excellence

in the North West and encourages consumers to think local when purchasing so that they can protect local jobs and support the local economy. 2019 saw over €2.5 million in ShopLK gift card sales. These cards can be redeemed in over 210 members' stores and are sold to businesses and individuals solely through Letterkenny Chamber.

The Retail Promotion Initiative and annual funding from Donegal County Council and the Letterkenny Municipal District has enabled the Chamber to elevate the ShopLK brand beyond what it would have been able to achieve alone. It is a shopping brand that attracts visitors from across the region and enabled everyone to brand Letterkenny as the commercial centre of the county.



## Keep Your Spend Local – Me2You Laois Gift Card *Laois Chamber*

Laois Chamber, in collaboration with Laois County Council, LEO Laois and Laois Tourism, have launched a county wide “Keep Your Spend Local” campaign. The campaign is running in conjunction with a Portlaoise Town Team activity, using similar branding and messaging, ensuring a cohesive approach to urge consumers to spend in their local communities.

As part of this campaign Laois Chamber has introduced the Me2You Laois Gift Card. Over 100 Laois businesses including retailers, hotels, restaurants, bars, coffee shops, and tourist attractions are participating in the scheme. The gift cards can be redeemed online and instore across the county of Laois. The campaign is supported by a digital marketing campaign, managed and delivered by Laois Chamber in collaboration with other stakeholders mentioned above.

## Promote Ennis / Visit Ennis *Ennis Chamber*

Established for over a decade, [Promote Ennis / Visit Ennis](#) is a public-private partnership, driven by Ennis Chamber and supported by Clare County Council, specifically through the Ennis Municipal District Council. ‘Promote Ennis’ exists to deliver increased visitor numbers to the town by exploring new initiatives and build relationships with relevant stakeholders and partners. Each year Ennis Municipal District awards a small grant to fund these endeavours.

The initiative needed to be refreshed to become more ambitious and attract more investment. In 2019, Ennis Chamber CEO applied for LEADER funding from Clare Local Development Company to fund a Niche Destination Plan for Ennis, under the ‘Promote Ennis’ banner. The Chamber secured over €24,000 from LEADER on a 75:25 co-funded basis. The remaining €8,000 was raised



through ‘Promote Ennis’ from an Ennis Municipal District grant and contributions

from local businesses. Ennis Chamber created a tender document and oversaw the eTender process and appointment of consultants. This process is still ongoing as the Niche Destination Plan launch was pushed back to allow for Covid-19 update/considerations to be addressed within the plan.

In addition to the ‘Promote Ennis’ strategy, a multi-agency committee has been established by Clare County Council to ensure buy-in from, and support for, the business community to help deliver on Clare’s Age Friendly Strategy.

## Limerick City Centre Retail Steering Group *Limerick Chamber*

Limerick City and County Council and Limerick Chamber recognise the strategic importance of a thriving urban centre for overall economic development of the Mid-West. While a number of longer-term infrastructural projects are expected to yield results, Limerick Chamber highlighted the need for immediate improvements to halt the decline of the city centre.

Arising from dialogue with the Council Executive, and a trial run of the format, Limerick City and County Council appointed a dedicated City Centre Revitalisation Manager and convened a City Centre Retail Steering Group. The Chamber CEO and other Chamber members sit on the group which aims to identify short-term wins, to work with all stakeholders within the city centre and the local authority, and to drive a programme of activities to encourage people to visit the city centre and see more retail units open. Chief among these measures are plans to address





the maintenance and management of the city centre and increasing the city's vitality through on-street events, improved floral displays and street dressing.

## See Something Say Something Tralee Chamber and Fingal Chamber

A new text alert system was launched in Tralee to allow the public to instantly and anonymously alert Gardaí if they see a crime - be it a public order incident or a robbery in progress.



The 'See Something, Say Something' initiative - which embraces know-how from local technology company ZinMobi and Text Republic - was launched by Tralee Chamber Alliance in partnership with An Garda Síochána.

This project, the first of its kind in Ireland, is for members of the public who 'See Something' that might need Garda intervention and to 'Say Something' by texting TRALEE and the incident details to 50555. The free text message is received by the sergeant on duty and is acted upon immediately by local Gardaí.

The technology that was built for this initiative uses text messaging, which is ideal as it works on all phones and it is a

technology that everyone is familiar with. The system was designed with the goal of making it simple, user-friendly and effective while ensuring the confidentiality of the person making the report.

Fingal Chamber, in partnership with Fingal County Council and An Garda Síochána, also launched the campaign in Swords (the first town outside Kerry to introduce the campaign), which is Fingal's largest town and Ireland's fastest growing town.



Very distinctive promotional signage highlighting the 'See Something, Say Something' text number - including signs, posters and stickers - was erected in several high-visibility outdoor and indoor vantage points in and around the town and the public has been encouraged to embrace the initiative and use it to tackle suspicious or illegal behaviour.

## Team Tullamore Tullamore & District Chamber

Team Tullamore is a partnership of the Tullamore Chamber, Tullamore Tidy Towns, Offaly County Council, and the Inland Waterways. The committee works to coordinate the upkeep of Tullamore town centre through initiatives such as floral displays and anti-litter campaigns.

2019 saw highly successful engagement between the Team Tullamore committee and local pubs, cafés and restaurants in the 'Dashboard Dining' anti-litter campaign which encouraged these businesses



to stock more environmentally friendly takeaway food packaging.



In addition to this, Tullamore was one of only two Irish towns to be nominated to host 'Entente Florale', an international horticultural competition established to recognise

municipalities and villages in Europe for excellence in horticultural displays. Organised by the non-profit European Association for Flowers and Landscape, the overall aims of the competition are to encourage social and cultural development, promoting greener and more pleasant environments in European towns and villages, and to facilitate international contacts among the participants, based on reference towns and villages network.

Through this annual competition, public authorities, private bodies and individuals are encouraged to cooperate in beautifying their towns and villages. This competition aims to improve the quality of life for both inhabitants and visitors through the planting of flowers and shrubs, as well as the development and maintenance of green spaces and parks which are ecologically and environmentally sensitive.

## The Kilkenny Age Friendly Initiative

### Kilkenny Chamber



Kilkenny Chamber, Kilkenny County Council and LEO Kilkenny adopted a partnership approach in rolling out the '[Kilkenny Age Friendly Initiative](#)' which encourages businesses

to recognise the value of older customers through adapting their premises and ways of doing business so that they are more user friendly for people of a certain age.

LEO Kilkenny provided funding and resources to develop brochures, leaflets, venues for

meetings, etc. while the Chamber provided the connectivity needed to disseminate the message throughout the business community. The original aim was to get 30 businesses to sign up for the programme which would allow them to nominate a champion to attend training, survey their customers about what they would like to see, and identify the key changes that they would introduce in their business to make it more age friendly. Such was the success of the collaborative approach that over 80 expressions of interest were secured in the first phase, and a waiting list established for the following phases.

## Collaborative Town Centre Health Check (CTCHC)

### Dundalk Chamber and Tralee Chamber

The Heritage Council in collaboration with the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, as well as RGDATA, the Retail Consortium IPI, ILI, RIAI, UCD, LIT Thurles, DIT and QUB have developed a trans-disciplinary National [Collaborative Town Centre Health Check](#) Programme in conjunction with participating towns across the country to bolster the review of county development plans and Local Area Plans.

The CTCHC aims to develop an innovative town centre-led retail, cultural, heritage and tourism baseline, which will be recognised internationally as a best practice collaborative development model for regeneration in which the 'Town Centre First' approach is placed at the forefront of future policy decisions. Essentially, the CTCHC is to provide an innovative national 'Towns' capacity-building blueprint designed by, and for, Local Authorities, town centre businesses and local citizens/community groups. It will include close mentoring support from professional practitioners with significant experience of town centre regeneration, urban design, and planning and management in Ireland, and elsewhere.



## Dundalk

In October 2018, Dundalk was chosen to participate in a pilot national CTCHC training programme in conjunction with seven other regional towns across the country to help monitor and drive the development of the town centre going forward.

The CTCHC project was established by the Heritage Council, Dundalk BID, Dundalk Institute of Technology, Dundalk Chamber, Dundalk Credit Union and Louth County Council in conjunction with Queens University Belfast. In Autumn 2018, the TCHC assessed vacancy rates, footfall patterns, spend in the town centre and online, commercial confidence and selling activity on-line.



Masters students from Queen's University Belfast carried out several inspections and fieldwork visits from October 2016 onwards, including a comprehensive survey that analysed land use, undertook a public shopping questionnaire and studied pedestrian footfall. They also carried out a public realm study in across locations in the town centre.

The first-time CTCHC baseline will be used to inform and guide management and investment decisions in relation to the town centre and has already informed a detailed submission on the county development plan, recommending that it should fully embrace a policy of putting 'Town Centres First' to ensure that Dundalk Town Centre survives and thrives into the future.

## Tralee

In September 2016, Tralee was selected to participate in the CTCHC training programme (2016/2018).



Representatives of Kerry County Council, Tralee Chamber Alliance and IT Tralee with ongoing support provided by the Heritage Council formed the Tralee TCHC. This steering group engaged in a collaborative process to achieve the goals set out in the CTCHC briefing documents. The [research](#) focused on a number of key areas:

- Shoppers' behaviour and attitudes
- Business owners' perceptions of the town centre
- Footfall in the historic town centre
- Land use in the historic town centre
- Availability of parking spaces.

Some of the headline findings include –

- 78% of the business respondents feel that shopping is the main thing that attracts people to the town centre
- 46% think that parking is the most important improvement that could be made to the town
- 55% expect trading to improve over the next two years
- 64% would contribute to a marketing fund to attract people to Tralee.

Since the publication of the report the Chamber have undertaken the steps required under the Framework for Town Centre Renewal within the resources available. On an ongoing basis the Chamber collaborates with the Tralee Municipal District on individual projects and plans including Urban Regeneration Development Fund applications, engagement on planned works in the town centre, small-scale projects, murals projects and accessibility projects in the town.





# Responding to Economic Challenges posed by Covid-19

The impact of Covid-19 on the Irish economy has been widespread. Businesses in Ireland are responding to significant challenges and must continue to manage and mitigate the disruption that Covid-19 is causing to every aspect of their operations.

Chambers Ireland have been conducting and publishing a series of nationwide surveys on the impact of Covid-19 on the business community in all corners of the country. Headline findings have revealed that:

- **Business activity levels are extremely low**, for those businesses that returned to operation under phase 1 of the National Protocol for Re-Opening Society and Business. **Revenue has been far below normal** over the last number of months, but there is wide variation between sectors.
- **Regional level effects are strengthening** and arise out of the different business mixes within geographical areas.
- **Smaller operations have seen revenue reduced most significantly**, again compounding regional effects for areas which do not have large employees.
- **Sentiment about the economy is beginning to improve**, but there is no sign that business owners and operators are expecting a rapid snap back to normal activity.

Throughout the crisis, Chambers, Local Government and LEOs have been working together to support the business community. The following examples are a selection of the work that is being carried out on the ground to support local economies across the country as businesses begin to find their feet and operate under new guidelines and regulations.

## Big Little Ideas Waterford Chamber and Dungarvan & West Waterford Chamber

'Big Little Ideas... Driving Waterford Together' is a new initiative from Waterford Chamber with the support of Waterford City and County Council, LEO Waterford and Dungarvan & West Waterford Chamber to improve the city and county in a way that is both deliverable and cost-effective within a twelve-month timeframe post-Covid-19. The Chamber is calling on the public to be part of the recovery by facilitating an [online forum](#) where ideas can be submitted. The ideas will catalyse the revitalisation of the retail, tourism and hospitality sectors, support local businesses and ensure everyone can access public amenities safely.



One of the biggest projects under review is the development of William Vincent Wallace Plaza, which will be marketed as 'Where Ireland Begins' and the starting point of the Waterford Greenway. The 'Big Little Ideas' action group are currently looking at a suitable layout for the space, which will include a large-scale photo opportunity for tourists, as well as a communal outdoor space. The area will also be designed to encourage more cyclists into the city.



## **Covid-19 Business Recovery Group and Laois Response Community Forum** *Laois Chamber*

Laois Chamber works very closely with both Laois County Council and LEO Laois on the Business Recovery Group and the Laois Response Community Forum, with the Chamber acting as the main driver in the Recovery Group. In this capacity, Laois Chamber is engaging with businesses across the county the intention of supporting the re-opening of premises. Focusing specifically on town centres, with support from the Local Authority, this project seeks to facilitate the external deployment of tables and chairs, to compensate for the loss of internal floor space; enable social distancing, and encourage consumer confidence and safety.

Laois County Council are keen to engage as proactively and positively as possible to support the re-opening efforts of all businesses, with the expectation of commensurate positive engagement from retailers. Additionally, the Chamber assists where businesses seek access to the public realm for matters other than for tables and chairs(e.g. for queuing customers).

## **Destination Recovery Taskforce** *Sligo Chamber*

Sligo Chamber is a Business Support Partner of Sligo Tourism and has two representatives on its Board. The Chamber helps to promote Sligo as a high-quality tourism destination. With the catastrophic impact of Covid-19 on the tourism sector, the 'Destination Recovery' Taskforce was formed with the aim being for each member, including the Chamber, to bring their expertise to help rebuild the tourism industry across the county.

## **Galway City Business Association** *Galway Chamber*

The mission of the [Galway City Business Association](#) is to increase footfall in Galway by promoting the city as a relaxing, safe, friendly and vibrant place in which to do business and to visit. Galway Chamber is currently in the process of collapsing the Association and merging it into the Chamber. In doing so, the Chamber are leading out on the new 'Shop in Galway' and 'Dine in Galway' campaigns to improve the City's attractiveness for consumers to boost spending locally as part of the post-Covid-19 recovery. Both of these aims are being channelled and led through the Chamber, with both the City and County Councils receiving the funding from Fáilte Ireland and Creative Ireland.



## RevivingWexford.ie County Wexford Chamber

'Reviving Wexford' is a new County Wexford Chamber initiative aimed at rejuvenating the local economy after the downturn caused by Covid-19. This initiative is fully supported (in practice and financially) by Wexford County Council and South East Radio. The objective of 'Reviving Wexford' is to support businesses in a post-pandemic environment by providing a platform through which businesses can share their concerns, experiences, and insights. These will inform the advocacy work of the Chamber in their representations to Local Government and state agencies alike for new supports to complement the existing financial assistance measures which have been made available during the Covid-19 pandemic.

## Sectoral Business Recovery Forum Galway Chamber

The Galway Sectoral Business Recovery Forum, led out by Galway Chamber, comprises of stakeholders from both Local Authorities, State agencies, the Department of the Taoiseach, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, financial institutions, elected officials, and business owners. The sectors represented include ICT, retail, manufacturing, hospitality, tourism, academic, medical and MedTech.

Phase one of the forum saw Galway Chamber coordinate and facilitate sectoral conversations with a variety of businesses in order to collate brief sectoral reports to provide an analysis of the trading situation, the immediate challenges, the short-to-medium term challenges (3-6 months), the opportunities that exist sector-to-sector and the assistance/enablers/grants etc. that will be required during the post-Covid-19 recovery period. Phase two of the forum aims to share these sectoral reports with a wide range of the stakeholders to:

- Remove the reliance on anecdotal information
- Help local authorities and government in their decision-making processes
- Act as the benchmark for a roadmap to recovery in Galway
- Determine how the recovery period is materialising by acting as a baseline from which to improve.

## Shop Limerick Limerick Chamber

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Limerick Chamber partnered with both the Limerick City and County Council and LEO Limerick to deliver the 'Shop Limerick' initiative which is the first of its kind in the county. Shop Limerick is a virtual marketplace where customers can browse and buy from homegrown Limerick businesses, buy a local business voucher, find out about local neighbourhood food deliveries or where they can order a take-out from a favourite restaurant. There are currently 150 businesses registered on the platform.



The aim of the project is two-fold:

- 1) Connect Limerick consumers with local Limerick businesses who may stock the products they need (or source a local alternative)
- 2) Assist businesses that have not yet gone online to do so by availing of the supports in LEO and use the Trading Online Voucher and other funding supports



The online platform is accompanied by other Covid-19 business supports such as digital marketing training and mentoring, including help and support on how to sell through established e-commerce platforms such as Shopify. Local businesses who want to move online or to improve their online presence will be connected with local specialists and service providers who can offer that assistance. Training will also be given on how to create short marketing videos, as well as social media boot camps and webinars for local businesses about cash flow management and how to navigate their business through the pandemic slowdown.

## **Shop Waterford Support Local Dungarvan & West Waterford Chamber**

The 'Shop Waterford Support Local' campaign was launched as retailers and business owners across Waterford City and County began to prepare for the reopening of the City and Town Centres post-Covid-19. The campaign, which is supported by business owners from Waterford City, Tramore and Dungarvan aims to encourage all Waterford people to support local enterprises in every purchase they make. The group leading this initiative includes Waterford City and County Council, Waterford Chamber, Dungarvan & West Waterford Chamber, Waterford Business Group and LEO Waterford.



# Places Matter - Reflections

This guide is evidence of the wide range of work that Chambers are involved in and leading on throughout the country.

From campaigns on infrastructure and promoting inward investment, to encouraging communities to shop and spend locally, Chambers of commerce are driving economic development in their local economies.

Pride of place is at heart of this work as Chambers commit to making the towns, cities and regions better places to live, work and do business.

There are challenges on the horizon and the impact of Covid-19 could have a lasting impact on our urban centres and high streets. As we look to the recovery, we will need innovative solutions to support job creation, reduce commercial vacancies, tackle climate change, as well as improving infrastructure and our quality of life. These issues will require us to work together to find solutions. Through collaboration and engagement, we can support local economies through this crisis. This collaboration is evident throughout the stories and examples of best practice in this publication.

The importance of community has been reinforced throughout this past year which emphasises the role that people, as well as business-friendly investment and development, has to play in improving our lives and our communities.

Both communities and local economies across the country face enormous challenges in the years ahead. Chambers, working in collaboration with Local Government and State agencies, will need Government to respond to these challenges through tailored policy and investment to ensure that the places where we live and work are supported in a balanced regional recovery. No region can afford to be left behind.





# Appendix I

## Local Authorities and Regional Assemblies

Ireland has 31 councils which are divided into 26 county councils, 3 city councils and 2 city and county councils. Local Authorities are multi-purpose bodies responsible for delivering a broad range of services in relation to roads; traffic; planning; housing; economic and community development; environment, recreation and amenity services; fire services and maintaining the register of electors.

Policy decisions are made by majority resolutions passed by the elected councillors during council meetings. These are reserved for the elected council and are 'reserved functions'. Some of the reserved functions include; passing an annual budget, housing policy decisions and policies on environmental protection.

These decisions may be made at 2 levels:

- Full council (plenary level)
- Municipal/metropolitan/borough district level

Ireland also has three Regional Assemblies which have a range of powers in relation to spatial planning and economic development. The Regional Assemblies source European funding from Regional Programmes, promote coordinated public services, monitor proposals which may impact on their areas, and advise public bodies of regional implications of their policies and plans. The membership of a Regional Assembly consists of members of the Local Authorities within the region. The aim of these assemblies is to co-ordinate, promote or support strategic planning and sustainable development and promote effectiveness in local government and public services.



# Appendix I

## County Councils

Carlow County Council  
Cavan County Council  
Clare County Council  
Cork County Council  
Donegal County Council  
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council  
Fingal County Council  
Galway County Council  
Kerry County Council  
Kildare County Council  
Kilkenny County Council  
Laois County Council  
Leitrim County Council  
Longford County Council  
Louth County Council  
Mayo County Council  
Meath County Council  
Monaghan County Council  
Offaly County Council  
Roscommon County Council  
South Dublin County Council  
Sligo County Council  
Tipperary County Council  
Westmeath County Council  
Wexford County Council  
Wicklow County Council

## City Councils

Cork City Council  
Dublin City Council  
Galway City Council

## City and County Councils

Limerick City and County Council  
Waterford City and County Council

## Regional Assemblies

Northern and Western Regional Assembly  
Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly  
Southern Regional Assembly





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