



## Shannon Chamber End of Year Statement

### 2014 – AMBITIOUS TARGETS ATTAINED

As we enter our twentieth year in business, Shannon Chamber looks back on a year where the ambitious targets set were surpassed and future undertakings were augmented by engagement with new strategic partnerships.

Clearly focused on providing a range of services and events to accommodate all members' needs, Shannon Chamber's continuing aim is to remain relevant and fit for purpose; this is achieved through maintaining a continuous two-way communication and information flow between the Chamber executive and its diverse membership.

Under the direction of president Kevin Thompstone and a board of directors representative of Shannon's diverse sectoral base, chief executive Helen Downes and her team planned and co-ordinated an imaginative and energetic calendar of events.

Membership continued its upward growth trend, and, as members are the lifeblood of the Chamber, success can only be determined by the strength and activity of our membership base.

One of the most obvious and visible aspects of member engagement is through attendance at events; 2014 saw an increasingly high level of attendance across all events, including training, which was a new departure in 2014, with 23 training events delivering new knowledge and skills to members for individual and corporate gain.

As we review our activities for 2014, we do so in the knowledge that the expanse of our undertakings has been made possible by the support of so many organisations, local and national, from both the private and public sectors. We appreciate and value their ongoing support.

Stepping into 2015, we look forward to celebrating the achievements of our twenty-year lifespan, and charting the growth and relevance of the Chamber in its lifetime. As we enter a new phase in our own corporate life as the voice of the business community in the greater Shannon area, our overarching aim will be to keep the Shannon story to the fore, to ensure that Shannon remains an attractive option for investment, and to deliver a schedule of events that is ambitious, thought-provoking and beneficial to members.

## A Busy Events' Calendar

- 54 events were hosted in 2014, a mix of business seminars, information and instructional workshops, breakfast briefings, the President's spring, autumn and Christmas lunches, the ever-popular annual golf classic and a new 'showcasing members' series was introduced, which involved hosting events in members' premises; this series will continue in 2015.
- A very broad range of subjects were examined during the year including: The power of face reading; fundamentals of employment law; energy efficiency; VAT on property; facing the fear of public speaking; rates methodology; capital allowances; international trade; managing performance; the Companies' Bill; managing discipline; employment services; further education and training services; labour relations; international tax; the power of the corporate voice, and InterTradelreland's Challenge programme, which resulted in over 20 member companies applying to participate in this highly-beneficial corporate development programme.
- 23 training courses were delivered as part of the events' schedule, in response to direct requests from members. Training was delivered both in-house in member companies' premises and in Shannon Chamber designated training centres.
  - A 6-part social media course delivered know-how on Facebook, Twitter, Blogging, Pinterest, LinkedIn, video, email marketing, creating compelling content, and showed attendees how to increase and convert visitors to their websites.
  - Computer skills training were also delivered including PowerPoint, Excel, and Word.
  - Business and personal development training included Time Management, Business Writing and Finance for Non-Finance managers
- This expansive events' programme was facilitated through collaborations with a broad range of companies and organisations including Grant Thornton, Zimmer, Lean Business Systems, Bank of Ireland, UCB, InterTradelreland, Genworth Financial, Shannon Golf Club, Shannon Airport, Shannon Group plc, IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Razorcoast, Adare HRM, Morgan McKinley, Laya Healthcare, Three, Public Relations Institute of Ireland, Shannon Engine Support, Limerick City and County Council, Clare County Council, Dromoland Castle Hotel, the Inn at Dromoland, Department of Social Protection, Enterprise Ireland, GECAS, LEAP. Blagdon/Viking Pumps, Park Inn by Radisson, Shannon Heritage, AIB, Metis Life, One4All, Glass Box Events, Shannon Region Conference and Sports Bureau and SOLAS.
- We thank our many sponsors, appreciative of the fact that without their support, we could not have delivered an events' calendar of this magnitude.

## **Government Submissions**

Shannon Chamber responded independently to two separate calls from Government for input to both the draft National Aviation and National Tourism Policies currently being compiled; and via Chambers Ireland contributed to the Chamber's pre-Budget 2015 submission and the Action Plan for Jobs 2014.

### **1. National Aviation Policy**

Having responded to the initial call for submissions to the Issues Paper published in March 2013, Shannon Chamber was pleased that many of the points raised in its initial response were taken on board in the draft report, particularly with regard to airports, air services, aircraft leasing and finance, aerospace MRO, education & training & employment rights, general aviation, and consultation with industry. However, we felt it necessary to expand on specific points in the draft paper that had not been dealt with in the manner expected, most particularly: Fifth-Freedom Rights; Cargo Services; Preclearance; Secondary Hub; and a National Aviation Forum, and look forward to their being taken on board in the final report, when published. Full details on Shannon Chamber's submission will be available to download on our new website when it goes live in the next few weeks.

### **2. National Tourism Policy**

Shannon Chamber was pleased to note that some of the recommendations it made in its September 2013 submission to the National Tourism Policy for Ireland were taken on board in the draft publication, most notably the references to the development of regional tourism, the involvement of local authorities, the recognition of tourism's value to the wider economic and social fabric of the State, the convergence of tourism and other areas of enterprise, the coalition between Fáilte Ireland and SOLAS in training and skills development, and the development of a Tourism Satellite Account for Ireland.

However, we took the opportunity to reiterate some specific points included in our submission which we felt needed to be taken into account when formulating the final Strategy and Action Plan, most notably: regional packaging/business tourism; the development of a national innovation centre for tourism; and the funding of providers by national agencies. We look forward to seeing these recommendations being taken on board.

## **Contributing to Formulation of Further Education and Training Strategy**

As the sole respondent to an open invitation from Chambers Ireland, to all Chambers in Ireland, to represent the Chamber body at a series of SOLAS organised consultation workshops related to the formulation of a new 5-year Further Education and Training Strategy, Shannon Chamber was delighted to present its views to a process it considers pertinent for the development of industry, not only in Shannon, but throughout Ireland.

Shannon Chamber presented its views, and those of its members, at a consultation workshop joined by a mix of employer organisations, private sector training organisations, Unions, Enterprise Training Boards, Irish Hotels Federation, ISME, IBEC, and Games Ireland.

SOLAS Executive Director, Fiona Hartley, who led the project, presented the final strategy at a briefing in Shannon in October following its earlier national release. As a result of this proactive interaction, Shannon Chamber has been invited to continue dialogue on this topic and input to future SOLAS considerations.

## Shannon Chamber Forums

Shannon Chamber Forums – Human Resources (HR), Health and Safety (H&S) and CEO - have developed considerably since their establishment:

- Shannon Chamber has seen the **HR Forum** continue to grow from strength to strength. Since its formation in 2011, the HR Forum has grown steadily in members with senior HR representatives from key businesses throughout the Shannon area actively participating in the Forum.

In 2014, building on the Forum's aims of knowledge sharing amongst its HR members, sharing of best practice HR and keeping abreast of trends in HR and Employment Law, a number of guest speakers addressed the Forum in key areas such as Occupational Health and Wellbeing, Employment Law and Employment Schemes available to employers. 2015 promises to be a busy one for HR Forum members in discussing the challenges that a changing external environment will bring for HR and how HR practitioners can ensure they are best positioned to continue to support the business strategy within their organisations. We will of course look forward to welcoming some new members to the HR Forum also.

- The newly established **H&S Forum** is encouraging H&S professionals employed in Shannon companies to share best practice and engage on issues that allow them to understand how other companies are managing their respective undertakings in this area. The first training programme was delivered in Lufthansa Technik Turbine Shannon's Free Zone East facility and the agenda for 2015 is currently being drawn up. Professionals working in H&S in Shannon are encouraged to join this Forum.
- The **CEO Forum** met three times in 2014:
  - To present their views on development and critical needs in the indigenous enterprise arena to Ms Julie Sinnamon, chief executive, Enterprise Ireland. This very meaningful and productive meeting coincided with the Chamber's spring lunch at Dromoland Castle Hotel.
  - For a presentation on The Venue, a new multi-functional civic/arts centre being developed in Shannon. This private sector led but public good initiative has to date received substantial backing from business. The CEO Forum provided the voluntary promoters the opportunity to present project milestones, achievements and further required deliverables to key influencers from the business community.

- For a presentation on Shannon Airport's sales and marketing strategy to give CEO Forum members the opportunity to give feedback and offer suggestions for improving the airport's offerings; this meeting also included specific coverage on how the airport sells targeted routes to airlines, and explored how Shannon Chamber and Forum members could best help get the business market message across.

Feedback from CEO member, John O'Brien, VP Operations Europe and TB, Molex Incorporated points to the value of the Chamber CEO Forum: "On one level, being a member of the CEO Forum provides a mechanism for catching up with leaders in different businesses and enterprises and realise that we all face the same challenges. Listening to how others articulate the challenges helps to put one's own in perspective at times. On a higher level, having a key input into a local collective voice means our voice on local challenges is just a bit louder than it would have been if we were all alone... and that can be very valuable for us all."

- An exploratory meeting was held towards the end of 2014 to assess the feasibility and benefits of establishing a '**Women's Executive Group**' in Shannon. When established, this grouping will focus in on professional development, networking opportunities, sharing of best practice and provide support on issues members need individual help with. The exact structure of this group is still being worked on with initiation planned for early 2015.

## Projecting Shannon

Shannon Chamber was delighted to initiate linkage with one of Ireland's leading business publications, the Sunday Business Post, re compiling a special report on Shannon, to project the potential of the Shannon area as an investment location: to showcase what's happening in industry and tourism and the enormous potential this region has to counteract the developing skew that's growing between the east and west coasts. Thanks to the tremendous support and buy-in from key stakeholders in the area, the resultant 10-page supplement was published on 30 November 2014, garnering favourable comment for the many positive developments now underway in the greater Shannon area. The supplement is available for download at <http://www.flipsnack.com/SBPost/sbp-shannon-30-11-2014.html>

## Website Upgrade

The development of a new website to replace the existing [www.shannonchamber.ie](http://www.shannonchamber.ie) site is underway. The current site does not adequately project the dynamism of the Chamber and its multi-functional undertakings in a creative, easy-to-follow manner. The new site is set to go live by end January 2015, and will contain a comprehensive members' directory to profile each member's business activities. It also incorporates an online booking system for events, and links to the Chamber's social media outlets e.g. Twitter (@SNNChamber) and LinkedIn.

## Linkages with Chambers Ireland

Shannon Chamber is one of 50 Chambers in the national chamber structure and is represented at national board level by CEO, Helen Downes. This board presence gives Shannon a voice at a national level and provides an opportunity to input to national submissions, comment on and contribute to Chamber Ireland's many strategic undertakings.

Shannon Chamber's presence on the national Policy Council enabled us to input and influence a number of key issues concerning employment, workplace and skills in 2014, most notably:

- Monitoring and lobbying on key legislation such as Workplace Relations Bill and proposing Collective Bargaining Laws
- Ongoing promotion of Alternative Dispute Resolution in the Workplace, and a submission made on the Mediation Bill
- Documents produced for Chambers (with input from the Council) on how to engage with Local Authorities including sections on Education and Training Boards
- Council Member Karl Fitzpatrick made a presentation at European Parliament of Enterprises on the need for a European Apprenticeship Scheme
- Chamber representation on the Department of Education Industry Consultation Group

Chambers Ireland's 'In Business' magazine has also allowed us to showcase activities and initiatives conducted by Shannon Chamber to a wider audience. This reach and awareness is of benefit when we showcase the quality of companies operating in Shannon.

## Atlantic Chamber Alliance

Having collaborated with neighbouring Chambers – Ennis, Limerick and Galway – since 2013 - in an association loosely named as the Atlantic Chamber Alliance, to comment on issues that affect Shannon and the wider region, a decision was made at the end of 2014 to take this collaboration one step further. Recognising current and future challenges and opportunities and acknowledging the advantages of collaboration, the Signatory Chambers of Commerce agreed to form the 'Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC), This new grouping will actively comment on and seek resolution for issues affecting the region and will also seek participation and collaboration from agencies, institutions, enterprise, economic sectors and communities is attaining its aims. This new Charter will be operational in early 2015.

## Business Networking

To further develop its networking reach and to seek/assess new linkages and opportunities for members, Shannon Chamber participated and engaged in the following exhibitions during 2014:

### 1. **One-Stop-Shop: Taking Care of Your Business – The Strand Hotel, Limerick**

This half-day event involved 25 State bodies and agencies coming together to help small businesses. It was a follow on to the very successful pilot event held in Dublin Castle in October 2013. Shannon Chamber actively promoted the event on behalf of the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation.

## **2. Clare Meets Dublin – CHQ Dublin**

As an active participant in the 'Be Captured by Clare' event held in Dublin, Shannon Chamber availed of the opportunity to project the many attributes of the county – for business, sport and leisure.

## **3. Munster SME Business Summit – Limerick Racecourse**

Shannon Chamber took the opportunity to represent itself and many of its members at this inaugural event. As the largest gathering of SMEs in Ireland, participation in the event was beneficial for forging new business relationships, networking and projecting the many benefits of belonging to a Chamber.

## **4. Chambers Ireland CSR Awards**

The Chambers Ireland Corporate Social Responsibility Awards were established in 2004 to recognise the work being carried out by Irish and multinational companies to improve the lives of their employees and to enhance the civic environment in which they operate. This unique competition offers the business community a chance to promote their efforts in CSR and gain recognition for best practice. The awards are presented in a variety of categories covering all areas of CSR. Shannon Chamber will actively encourage its members to participate in these awards in 2015.

## **5. Shannon Foynes Port Transition Year Schools Competition**

Shannon Chamber's CEO, Helen Downes is one of 4 judges adjudicating the inaugural Shannon Foynes Port Company (SFPC) competition for secondary schools in counties Clare, Limerick and Kerry, introduced to foster greater awareness amongst students of their local region, particularly on the businesses and resources which play an important role in its development. 'The Importance of Ports in the Mid-West Region' was the theme for the first competition, which closes on 4 February 2015, with the top five entries making a public presentation of their project at a gala event on 9 February.

## **6. Irish Aviation Industry Awards 2014**

Shannon Chamber attended the inaugural Irish Aviation Industry Awards 2014 as representative of its broad membership and in recognition of the fact that 11 Shannon region companies: Shannon Airport Authority, Limerick Institute of Technology, TRANSAERO Engineering Ireland Ltd., University of Limerick, Shannon Aerospace, Shannon Training Centre, Eirtech Aviation, GECAS, Lufthansa Technik Turbine Shannon, Aero Inspection International, and Part M Aviation were shortlisted in 10 categories. Seven (7) companies were successful award recipients:

### **a. Upcoming Aviation Professional Award**

*Peter Bagnell, Aero Inspection International*

### **b. People Development Award**

*GE Capital Aviation Services (GECAS) Ltd.*

**c. Aviation Support Services Award**

*Part M Aviation*

**d. Aviation R&D Award**

*The Department of Mechanical, Aeronautical and Biomedical Engineering, UL*

**e. Aviation Training Award**

*Shannon Aerospace*

**f. Airport Achievement Award**

Shannon Airport Authority

**g. Aviation Innovation Award**

Eirtech Aviation

## **Contributing to Regional Initiatives**

Shannon Chamber was also invited to participate in a number of new initiatives being undertaken by Limerick City and County Council:

- 1. Weastflows (West and East Freight Flows)**, an INTERREG IVB (North West Europe) project which is looking at a range of methods that can be used to enhance the sustainability of freight logistics and regional freight flows throughout North-West Europe. The aim of this strategic initiative logistics and ICT project is 'To strengthen the development of sustainable connectivity solutions for freight transportation and logistics in NWE on an east-west green axis through telematics & ICT solutions'.

Shannon Chamber will be a major contributor to this project as it develops in 2015.

- 2. Stakeholder in the Innovate Limerick Consortium:**

Shannon Chamber was one of 50+ stakeholders who partook in the initial scoping meeting of the newly establishing Innovate Limerick Consortium which is being set up to identify how Limerick, as the capital city of the Shannon region, can be developed to its fullest potential and be regarded as a dynamic city in which to live, work and do business in. Feedback from this initial scoping meeting will inform future direction to which Shannon Chamber will contribute to ensure that Shannon, as a key gateway to Limerick, can make a meaningful contribution.

- 3. Encouraging SMEs to embrace technology**

Shannon Chamber is actively encouraging small and medium-sized enterprises in the wider Shannon area to fully exploit the benefits of faster broadband. Through linking up with Limerick City & County Council to promote its EU-funded project – Connecting Rural Enterprise for a Transnational Economy (CREATE) – Shannon Chamber members, primarily SMES, can avail of an independent review session with a CREATE advisor to develop a tailored action plan to transform their businesses through ICT. This project, introduced in late 2014, is ongoing.



## Thank You

**Shannon Chamber Board** thanks each member for their support in 2014. Your ongoing commitment to the Chamber is very much appreciated. We look forward to representing your business at local and national levels in 2015 and beyond, and to framing a schedule of events that addresses key issues in your sector. Your suggestions for future events/topics for exploration/issues of concern to your business sector are always welcome.

*The 2015 Schedule of Events is currently being compiled and will be shared with members when complete.*

**Kevin Thompstone (President)**, the Thompstone Group  
**Helen Downes (Chief Executive)**

**Damian Gleeson (ex officio)**, Grant Thornton  
**Edmund Jennings**, CREGG Group  
**Ian Barrett**, Resilience Care

**David Brown**, IDEX Pump Technologies Ireland Ltd.

**Mark Nolan**, Dromoland Castle Hotel

**Mary Considine**, Shannon Group plc

**Adrian Furey**, Zimmer Orthopedics Manufacturing Ltd

**Nandi O'Sullivan**, Shannon Group Plc

**Brian Lohan**, Brian Lohan Auctioneers & Financial Services

**Eoin Hctor**, McLoughney's News Agency

**Stephen Keogh**, Keating and Keogh Solicitors

**Julie Dickerson**, Shannon Engine Support (SES) – newly elected to Board at 2014 AGM