



**Shannon
Chamber**
Advancing business together

**Draft Clare Local Economic and Community Plan
(LECP) 2023- 2029**

SHANNON CHAMBER SUBMISSION

December 2023

Preface

Shannon Chamber welcomes this opportunity to comment on the Draft Clare Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2023 – 2029 as our aspirations for Shannon and the county are very much in line with the sentiment expressed in this publication and in our submission to the Clare County Development Plan 2023 – 2029. In that submission, we expressed our vision for Shannon - that it would be:

‘A Metropolitan Town where people want to live and work sustainably and visit because of its strong identity and sense of place, high amenity value and quality of life. A sustainable, low-carbon town, which continues to be the regional leader for economic development and employment, maximising its strategic location, accessibility and metropolitan status.’

We had a similar focus when submitting our inputs to the Shannon Town Centre Masterplan, the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (LSMATS), the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) Southern Region, the N19 Shannon Airport Access Road Improvement Scheme and, more recently to Shannon Town and Environs Local Area Plan.

Clare Local Economic and Community Plan

High-Level Goals 3-5 (inclusive) – How Shannon can contribute to their attainment.

Whilst this Plan sets out a strategy and vision for the development of County Clare over the next six years, our goal will be to ensure that Shannon makes a significant contribution to the attainment of the 6 high-level goals contained therein.

Goals 3,4,5 are particularly relevant to the objectives we have set out in our own Strategic Plan 2023 - 2026

- **Goal 3: A county with vibrant retail, industry, manufacturing, agriculture, marine, tourism, aviation, culture and services sectors and related objectives:**
 - **Objective: 3.3:** *To support viable and **vibrant town and village centres** which function as sustainable communities, and which are linked to rural hinterlands.*
 - **Objective: 3.5:** *To put in place an inclusive, reliable, and **improved Universal Access Public Transport System** to provide connectivity and access to services across the county.*
 - **Objective: 3.6:** *To support greater action and engagement on **Climate Change** ensuring that both mitigation and adaptation methods are pursued to reduce carbon emissions and to foster the development of a sustainable carbon neutral green*

We would suggest that the points raised in our submissions to the County Development Plan and Shannon Town & Environs Local Area Plan are a requirement to enable Shannon to contribute to the attainment of this goal, most notably that:

- ❖ Shannon needs more community amenities (e.g., sports grounds, town hall etc) School provision.
- ❖ In all our commentary on the Shannon Town Centre Masterplan, we have constantly stated that retail and community growth should not be confined to Shannon Town Centre.
- ❖ The delivery of the OneShannonHub is critical to the town on so many fronts, most especially in providing an iconic and attractive centre to act as a beacon for people to visit naturally and conveniently. This will generate an improvement in the mix of retail and entertainment/experience-based activities. It will become the cornerstone for a re-imagined town – a focal point, that improved and new facilities will naturally gravitate around.
- ❖ Civic, cultural and community facilities are severely lacking despite the wealth of talent in the town. This absence also detracts from the living appeal of the town and negatively affects attraction and retention of staff to the large number of internationally traded and knowledge intensive businesses located in Shannon.
- ❖ An adequate supply of suitable accommodation is needed for tourists...particularly in Bunratty.
- ❖ The former Shannon Shamrock Hotel required redevelopment in parallel with the reopening of Bunratty Castle Hotel as tourism accommodation once suitable accommodation for the current residents is sourced.

- ❖ Shannon Chamber was delighted to note that most of the key points raised in our Submission of October 2020 to the Draft Limerick/Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy 2040 (LSMATS) with regards to *Walking, Cycling, BusConnects, Rail, Roads & Streets, Traffic Management, Freight, Delivery and Servicing and Supporting Measures* were taken on board. However, we are now keen to see this plan move to full implementation at local authority level. In our submission to the Shannon Town and Environs Local Area Plan we also suggested that attention needs to be paid to the timing and frequency of bus services in, to and from Shannon and that a local bus would be a welcome addition to transport options in Shannon.
- ❖ We welcome the work that is currently underway on the delivery of the N19 Shannon Airport Access Road Improvement Scheme and as suggested in other submissions, the long-term potential of providing a rail service to Shannon, linking it to the Limerick, Ennis and further, must be examined.
- ❖ Improved bus services (public and private) to/from Shannon Airport are a necessity as is the need to improve/upgrade/extend bus services between Shannon and Limerick/Ennis. It is important, from a long-term sustainability perspective, that this aspect of public transport is adequately dealt with, for various reasons: tourism, town residents, and airport perspectives.

➤ **Goal 4: Enhance economic, cultural and social opportunity**

- **Objective 4.2:** *To facilitate and support **Sustainable Livelihoods** and employment creation which enhances the economic opportunities for all those living in Clare.*
- **Objective: 4.3:** *To leverage the economic, employment, cultural, and social benefits of **emerging technologies** whilst sustaining employment and creating new opportunities through social enterprise and community wealth building*
- **Objective: 4.5:** *To further develop our communities to provide **appropriate accommodation options** for residents and visitors alongside recreational and community spaces for all.*

Our pledge for 2023 – 2026 is to maintain and build on the strong collaboration already initiated with Clare County Council to ensure the successful delivery of the Shannon Town Centre Masterplan for Shannon. As evidenced already, we have contributed and will contribute as appropriate to the design phase of the ‘One Shannon Hub’, a key element of the Masterplan, and we will seek out avenues to create an innovation hub to enhance and perpetuate Shannon’s ‘innovative’ reputation. We want to ensure that Shannon’s legacy for pioneering, inspirational and entrepreneurial achievement perpetuates.

Shannon-based enterprises have a historic association with technological innovation and this continues today, especially with the work being undertaken at Future Mobility Campus Ireland, the first complete development centre and full-scale test bed in Ireland for ground and air mobile technologies. The future of Shannon and its ability to attract new investment from existing and new companies is intrinsically linked to an ability to house the workforce, hence, an urgent requirement for an increase in housing supply.

A varied residential mix is essential for Shannon to create the spending power within the town and to attract the ABC1 class resident to Shannon – this would revitalise the town and surrounding areas. The quality of the living environment and availability of places to live has been consistently highlighted by employers as a barrier to skills. A mix of housing types is required - public and private, for example, starter homes for young families; step-down or shared residential facilities for older residents; step-up or aspirational types for established families ready to move to next stage or senior managers looking for middle-class homes in a good environment; and a mixture of detached, semi-detached and apartments.

➤ **Goal 5: A Sustainable and Resilient County**

- **Objective: 5.2:** *To prioritise climate adaptation measures whilst supporting climate mitigation and implementation of the Climate Action Plan having regard to the reduction of carbon emissions through research, initiatives and collaboration while accessing appropriate funding supports.*
- **Objective: 5.3:** *To work with all our communities, businesses, statutory and voluntary organisations to understand and harness the positive opportunities of undertaking climate action and, in recognising the negative impacts of Climate Change, to prioritise the development of climate resilience across the county.*
- **Objective: 5.4:** *Within the limits of our carbon emissions targets to encourage and support the sustainable development of our renewable natural resources for the benefit of all.*

As stated in our response to the Clare Climate Action Plan, Shannon Chamber's industry-led Mid-West Sustainability Network in 2023, is driven by its mission to make the Mid-West region **the Greenest Industrial Region in Ireland**. This will be achieved through supporting our members in their sustainability journeys and in the delivery of their sustainability goals. Given the similarity between Shannon Chamber's and Clare County Council's objectives, we believe the attainment of both of our organisations' goals would benefit from collaboration, where appropriate, as this would expediate climate action gains for the county.

At a more macro level and, as suggested in our submission to the Shannon Town and Environs Local Area plan, a carbon neutral/saving plan (model) i.e., more industry, lower emissions from all industry, inhabitants etc. could be introduced.

There is also potential to properly manage and extend the thousands of trees and shrubs that were planted in the 1970s and 1980s as these serve as wind shelters, are absorbers of excess moisture and carbon and have strong amenity and biodiversity value. The Government could be encouraged to extend the grants to entice all business and homeowners to install some green energy, solar panels, and heat pumps. We have also suggested that a photovoltaic solution for roofing on buildings in the Shannon Free Zone and on residential areas could be examined and that the potential of biomass be examined given the compact nature of the airport, industrial and residential zones. Another suggestion put forward was the potential that large open areas offer for the development of large-scale solar PV energy projects and, that charging locations for EV transport modes be increased.

Sustainability is at the core of Shannon Chamber's operations. In our Strategic Plan 2023 – 2026, we have pledged to motivate our members to commit to a sustainable future for their businesses and for the environment, hence our willingness to collaborate with Clare County Council to prioritise the development of climate resilience across the county.

Conclusion

We note that the high-level goals and associated objectives contained in this Plan will be further underpinned by strategic actions, which will be inter-agency led, and that these actions and the associated implementation plan are currently being developed. Shannon Chamber would welcome the opportunity to provide further commentary at that juncture and would also commit to assisting in their delivery as they relate to the betterment of Shannon and its environs. We look forward therefore to the publication of the initial 2-year LECP implementation plan and the final LECP Framework document in Quarter 1 2024.

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