SHANNON CHAMBER
A Strategic Investment Framework for Budget 2027

Shannon Chamber
Pre-Budget 2027 Submission

Executive Summary

Ireland's continued prosperity depends on strengthening its ability to compete internationally while ensuring that economic growth is distributed more evenly across the country. Successive Government strategies, including the National Planning Framework, Project Ireland 2040 and the Programme for Government, recognise that achieving this ambition requires sustained investment in regional locations capable of supporting enterprise, attracting talent, improving connectivity and delivering long-term economic resilience.

Shannon and the wider Mid-West are uniquely positioned to contribute to these national ambitions.

Over many decades, Shannon has evolved from Ireland's first planned town into one of the country's most significant centres of enterprise, innovation and international connectivity. Today, the region is home to a globally competitive cluster of aviation, advanced manufacturing, life sciences, logistics, engineering and technology companies, supported by a highly skilled workforce and internationally recognised transport infrastructure. Together with the strategic potential of the Shannon Estuary as a centre for renewable energy and industrial decarbonisation, these assets provide an exceptional platform for future economic growth.

Representing more than 330 companies employing in excess of 20,000 people, Shannon Chamber works with businesses that contribute significantly to Ireland's export performance, foreign direct investment, innovation and employment. Their continued success depends upon strategic public investment that enables the region to realise its full potential.

Shannon Chamber welcomes the positive measures introduced since Budget 2026, particularly the inclusion of Shannon Airport in the Regional Airports Programme and the continued commitment to employer-led workforce development through Skillnet Ireland. These decisions acknowledge the strategic importance of the region and provide a strong foundation for future progress.

However, significant challenges remain.

Housing shortages continue to constrain workforce growth. Transport infrastructure requires further investment to improve regional connectivity. The opportunity presented by offshore renewable energy demands accelerated delivery of enabling infrastructure. Businesses require continued support to strengthen productivity, embrace artificial intelligence, invest in innovation and compete successfully in increasingly challenging international markets.

Budget 2027 provides Government with an opportunity to address these challenges while delivering on its wider objectives of enhancing national competitiveness, strengthening regional economies and supporting sustainable growth.

This submission sets out a strategic investment framework focused on three interconnected priorities:

Connected Places

Investing in the infrastructure that supports thriving communities, international connectivity and sustainable mobility.

Competitive Economy

Creating the conditions that enable businesses to attract talent, develop skills, improve productivity and compete internationally.

Future Growth

Positioning the Mid-West as a national leader in renewable energy, industrial innovation and long-term economic resilience.

Within these three pillars, Shannon Chamber proposes a series of practical and achievable measures that will strengthen Ireland's competitiveness while enabling Shannon and the wider Mid-West to make an even greater contribution to national economic, social and environmental objectives.

The recommendations contained within this submission should not be viewed as individual regional projects. Collectively they represent strategic investments capable of delivering national benefit through enhanced connectivity, stronger enterprise, improved housing supply, accelerated decarbonisation and increased regional capacity for growth.

Shannon Chamber looks forward to continuing to work collaboratively with Government and its agencies to support the delivery of these shared ambitions.

Summary of Key Recommendations

Pillar One – Connected Places

Investing in Infrastructure that Underpins Regional Growth

- ***Creating a Shannon Town Centre that Reflects Shannon's Economic Importance***
    - Provide a dedicated capital allocation through the Towns and Cities Regeneration Investment Fund to enable delivery of the OneShannonHub project submitted by Clare County Council.
    - Support investment in associated public realm improvements in the Town Centre
    - Continue investment in projects that strengthen Shannon's attractiveness as a place to live, work, invest and visit.
- ***Strengthening International Connectivity to the West of Ireland***
    - Significantly increase the funding allocation to the RAP to support terminal modernisation, sustainability initiatives and operational resilience and invest in future-ready airfield infrastructure and sustainable aviation technologies in Shannon.
    - Establish a Regional Airports Route Development Fund.
    - Complete the review of the National Aviation Policy with measurable objectives for strengthening regional connectivity.

- ***Connecting Enterprise, Communities and Opportunity***
    - Accelerate delivery of the N19 Shannon Airport Access Road Scheme.
    - Expand integrated bus services connecting Shannon with surrounding towns and cities.
    - Allocate funding to progress planning and route selection for the Shannon Airport Rail Link.
    - Continue investment in active travel infrastructure.
    - Ensure future national transport investment reflects Shannon's strategic economic importance.

Pillar Two – Competitive Economy

Creating the Conditions for Sustainable Enterprise Growth

- ***Unlocking Housing Supply to Support Workforce Growth***
    - Prioritise delivery of the Shannon Flood Relief Scheme to unlock residentially zoned lands.
    - Introduce low-cost financing mechanisms for SME residential developers.
    - Expand support for modular and modern methods of construction.
    - Increase investment in cost-rental and key-worker housing schemes.
    - Continue planning and infrastructure reforms that accelerate housing delivery in strategic employment locations.

- ***Preparing Ireland's Workforce for the Economy of Tomorrow***
    - Increase investment in specialist upskilling programmes addressing critical labour shortages.
    - Accelerate development of the National AI Talent Centre of Excellence with strong regional and industry participation.
    - Expand employer-focused AI training programmes covering digital capability, data literacy, computational skills and AI adoption.
    - Ensure National Training Fund resources are deployed more effectively to address emerging enterprise needs.
    - Continue strengthening employer-led workforce development through Skillnet Ireland.
- ***Building the Skills Pipeline for Ireland's Aviation Industry***
    - Confirm Shannon as the location for Ireland's National Aviation Apprenticeship Centre.
    - Provide the capital and operational funding required to establish the Centre of Excellence for aircraft mechanic training.
    - Support continued collaboration between SOLAS, industry and regional education providers to ensure apprenticeship programmes remain responsive to evolving aviation skills needs.
    - Recognise Shannon's aviation cluster as the national hub for aircraft maintenance training and workforce development.
- ***Enabling Enterprise to Invest, Innovate and Grow***
    - Expand energy efficiency and decarbonisation supports for SMEs.
    - Increase the standard rate income tax band to improve competitiveness and support workforce participation.
    - Remove the additional 3% USC surcharge for self-employed individuals.
    - Introduce automatic monthly VAT refunds for qualifying SMEs to improve cash flow.
    - Enhance R&D tax incentives to encourage innovation.
    - Reform Entrepreneur Relief to better support business scaling and succession planning.
    - Expand supports for ESG compliance and sustainability reporting.
    - Increase investment in export diversification and international market development programmes.

Pillar Three – Future Growth

Positioning the Mid-West to Drive Ireland's Next Phase of Economic Development

- ***Developing Ireland's Atlantic Renewable Energy Hub***
    - Prioritise investment in enabling infrastructure for floating offshore wind development.
    - Accelerate the implementation of Designated Maritime Area Plans and resource the marine planning and consenting system to provide greater certainty and shorter timelines for offshore renewable energy projects.
    - Provide targeted capital investment in the strategic port infrastructure required to support floating offshore wind deployment, supply chain development and long-term industrial growth along the Shannon Estuary.
    - Expand enterprise supports that enable Irish businesses to participate in offshore wind supply chains.

    - Increase investment in research, innovation and specialist workforce development supporting renewable energy industries.
- ***Investing in Energy Security, Industrial Competitiveness and Decarbonisation***
    - Accelerate reinforcement of the national electricity grid serving the Mid-West.
    - Increase funding for industrial decarbonisation programmes.
    - Expand supports for renewable energy adoption across enterprise.
    - Invest in energy storage and enabling technologies that strengthen grid resilience.
    - Support innovation programmes that position Ireland as a leader in clean energy technologies.

1. Delivering Balanced Regional Development Through Strategic Investment

Ireland's economic success has been built on its ability to adapt to changing global circumstances while remaining an attractive location in which businesses choose to invest, innovate and grow. Maintaining that competitiveness over the coming decades will require continued investment in the infrastructure, communities and enterprise ecosystems that support sustainable regional development.

Balanced regional development is therefore not simply a planning objective; it is an economic necessity.

As Ireland continues to experience population growth, increasing demand for housing, pressure on transport infrastructure and intensifying international competition for investment and talent, strengthening regional economic centres has become increasingly important. Locations that already possess strong enterprise ecosystems, international connectivity and capacity for further growth offer Government the greatest opportunity to translate national policy into measurable economic outcomes.

Shannon is one of those locations.

Its strategic importance extends well beyond County Clare and the Mid-West.

The region supports one of Ireland's largest concentrations of internationally trading companies, provides a globally connected international airport, accommodates world-class aviation and manufacturing clusters and possesses exceptional potential to lead Ireland's transition towards offshore renewable energy.

These strengths provide a solid foundation upon which Government can build.

Strategic investment in Shannon will not simply strengthen one regional economy. It will contribute directly to wider national priorities by improving international connectivity, supporting enterprise expansion, enabling housing delivery, enhancing labour mobility, accelerating climate action and strengthening Ireland's long-term competitiveness.

The recommendations that follow have therefore been developed as an integrated investment framework rather than a collection of individual funding requests. Each proposal complements the others, recognising that economic competitiveness depends upon the interaction of infrastructure, housing, skills, enterprise and innovation.

By investing strategically in Shannon and the wider Mid-West, Government can accelerate regional growth while reinforcing Ireland's position as a competitive, resilient and internationally connected economy.

2. Why Shannon Matters Nationally

Shannon occupies a unique position within Ireland's economic landscape.

Few regional locations combine such a concentration of internationally significant assets within a single economic area. These include a major international airport, one of Ireland's largest clusters of advanced manufacturing and aviation enterprises, internationally competitive life sciences and engineering companies, an expanding technology sector and one of Europe's most strategically important estuarine environments for renewable energy development.

Together, these assets create an economic platform of national significance.

Shannon Airport provides essential international connectivity for enterprise, tourism and investment across the western region while enhancing the resilience of Ireland's national aviation network.

The Shannon Estuary offers unparalleled opportunities to support Ireland's transition to renewable energy through floating offshore wind, industrial decarbonisation and the development of new clean energy industries.

The region's internationally recognised manufacturing base continues to attract investment while supporting high-value employment, innovation and exports.

Combined with its strategic location between Limerick, Galway and the Atlantic Economic Corridor, Shannon has the capacity to play an even greater role in Ireland's future economic development.

Government policy increasingly recognises that regional centres capable of supporting enterprise, innovation and population growth are essential to achieving sustainable national development.

Investment in Shannon therefore represents an opportunity to strengthen existing strengths rather than create new ones.

It offers Government the opportunity to:

- strengthen Ireland's international competitiveness through enhanced regional enterprise;
- improve national transport resilience by expanding international connectivity;
- support sustainable population growth through improved infrastructure and housing;
- accelerate the development of renewable energy industries;
- strengthen Ireland's export capacity;
- improve productivity through investment in skills, innovation and artificial intelligence; and
- reinforce the long-term resilience of the national economy.

The following sections set out the strategic investments that Shannon Chamber believes will enable Shannon and the wider Mid-West to continue delivering significant economic value while supporting the achievement of Government's broader national objectives.

Pillar One – Connected Places

Investing in Infrastructure that Underpins Regional Growth

The competitiveness of regional economies depends upon more than successful businesses. It relies on connected communities, modern infrastructure and efficient transport networks that enable people, enterprise and investment to thrive.

Across Ireland, Government is seeking to strengthen regional centres capable of supporting sustainable economic growth while reducing pressure on the Greater Dublin Area. Achieving this ambition requires investment in locations where infrastructure improvements will deliver long-term economic and societal benefits.

Shannon is one such location.

As one of Ireland's leading centres of enterprise, international connectivity and innovation, Shannon already supports thousands of high-value jobs and plays a significant role in the national economy. Continued investment in the town, its airport and its transport infrastructure will not only strengthen the Mid-West but also enhance Ireland's competitiveness by improving connectivity, attracting investment and supporting future population growth.

The following recommendations form an integrated programme of investment designed to create a modern, connected and competitive regional economy.

P1.1 OneShannonHub

- ### *Creating a Town Centre that Reflects Shannon's Economic Importance*

Successful regional economies require more than employment opportunities. They require vibrant communities that attract and retain people, encourage investment and provide the social and civic infrastructure expected of modern towns.

For more than six decades, Shannon has been recognised internationally as a place of innovation, enterprise and opportunity. Yet despite its economic success, it remains one of Ireland's few major employment centres without a vibrant civic heart capable of supporting a growing population and workforce.

This presents both a challenge and an opportunity.

As businesses increasingly compete internationally for skilled employees, quality of place has become an important factor influencing investment decisions and workforce attraction. Creating attractive town centres that encourage people to live, work and participate within their communities is now recognised as an essential element of regional competitiveness.

Shannon Town Centre lacks that quality of place.

That is why the proposed OneShannonHub - a landmark civic, cultural and community facility should become the focal point for community life while supporting enterprise, learning, innovation and collaboration. Together with the associated public realm improvements proposed by Clare County Council under the Towns and Cities Regeneration Investment Fund, the project has the potential to transform Shannon into a town centre that reflects its economic significance.

Investment in the OneShannonHub should therefore be viewed as more than a community project. It represents strategic investment in one of Ireland's most important regional economic centres, supporting the wider objectives of balanced regional development, sustainable communities and enterprise competitiveness.

Shannon Chamber recommendations for Budget 2027:

- Provide a dedicated capital allocation through the Towns and Cities Regeneration Investment Fund to enable delivery of the OneShannonHub project submitted by Clare County Council.
- Support investment in associated public realm improvements in the Town Centre
- Continue investment in projects that strengthen Shannon's attractiveness as a place to live, work, invest and visit.

Contribution to National Priorities

Investment in the OneShannonHub will:

- strengthen regional population growth;
- improve quality of life for residents and employees;
- enhance Shannon's attractiveness for investment and talent;
- support sustainable town centre regeneration; and
- reinforce Government's commitment to investing in communities alongside enterprise.

P1.2 Shannon Airport

- ***Strengthening International Connectivity to the West of Ireland***

International connectivity is fundamental to Ireland's economic success.

As an island nation, Ireland depends upon resilient aviation infrastructure to support trade, tourism, inward investment and global business connectivity. Strengthening the national aviation network is therefore essential to maintaining competitiveness while supporting balanced regional growth.

Shannon Airport has played a defining role in Ireland's economic development for almost eighty years.

Today, it remains a critical gateway for the Mid-West and western seaboard, providing essential international connectivity for globally trading businesses while supporting tourism, education and foreign direct investment.

Shannon Chamber welcomes Government's decision to include Shannon Airport within the Regional Airports Programme 2026–2030. This represents an important recognition of the airport's strategic contribution and provides a welcome platform for continued investment in operational resilience, sustainability and route development.

However, Shannon Airport has the capacity to contribute even more.

With the State's longest runway, significant operational capacity and an established international route network, Shannon is uniquely positioned to support future growth in transatlantic services, freight activity and international business connectivity. Greater utilisation of this strategic national asset will strengthen Ireland's resilience by providing additional capacity outside Dublin while improving access to international markets for businesses located throughout the western region.

Realising this potential requires sustained investment.

Budget 2027 should therefore support increasing the RAP’s overall funding allocation to accelerate modernising airport infrastructure, strengthening operational resilience, accelerating decarbonisation and expanding international connectivity.

In parallel, Shannon Chamber believes that Government should establish a dedicated Regional Airports Route Development Fund to support strategically important international services that strengthen business connectivity, tourism and regional economic development.

The forthcoming review of National Aviation Policy also provides an opportunity to embed balanced regional development more firmly within Ireland's aviation strategy by recognising the strategic role of regional airports in delivering national competitiveness.

Shannon Chamber recommendations for Budget 2027:

- Significantly increase the funding allocation to the RAP to support terminal modernisation, sustainability initiatives and operational resilience and invest in future-ready airfield infrastructure and sustainable aviation technologies in Shannon.
- Establish a Regional Airports Route Development Fund.
- Complete the review of the National Aviation Policy with measurable objectives for strengthening regional connectivity.

Contribution to National Priorities

These measures will:

- strengthen Ireland's international competitiveness;
- enhance aviation resilience;
- improve connectivity for enterprise and tourism;
- reduce over-dependence on Dublin Airport;
- support balanced regional development; and
- increase Ireland's attractiveness for international investment.

P1.3 Integrated Transport Connections for Shannon

- ***Connecting Enterprise, Communities and Opportunity***

Efficient transport infrastructure underpins economic growth.

It enables businesses to access skilled workers, supports sustainable commuting, improves productivity and connects communities with employment opportunities. As regional economies continue to grow, integrated transport networks become increasingly important in ensuring that development remains sustainable and inclusive.

Shannon's continued success is now creating new transport challenges.

The town supports one of Ireland's largest concentrations of employment, attracting workers from across Clare, Limerick, Galway and Tipperary. Yet Shannon remains the largest urban centre in Ireland without a rail connection, while increasing traffic volumes place growing pressure on the surrounding road network.

Government has already recognised the strategic importance of improving connectivity through the inclusion of the Shannon Airport Rail Link within the All-Island Strategic Rail Review and the progression of the N19 Shannon Airport Access Road Scheme.

Budget 2027 should now provide the resources necessary to move these projects from policy commitment to implementation.

The proposed rail link should be viewed not simply as an airport project but as a transformative investment in regional connectivity. It will strengthen links between Shannon, Limerick, Galway and the Atlantic Economic Corridor while improving access to employment, education and tourism destinations.

Complementary investment in enhanced bus services, active travel infrastructure and integrated transport planning will further strengthen labour mobility while supporting climate action objectives.

Together, these investments will create a transport network capable of supporting the Mid-West's continued economic growth.

Shannon Chamber recommendations for Budget 2027:

- Accelerate delivery of the N19 Shannon Airport Access Road Scheme.
- Expand integrated bus services connecting Shannon with surrounding towns and cities.
- Allocate funding to progress planning and route selection for the Shannon Airport Rail Link.
- Continue investment in active travel infrastructure.
- Ensure future national transport investment reflects Shannon's strategic economic importance.

Contribution to National Priorities

These measures will:

- improve labour mobility;
- strengthen regional productivity;
- enhance airport accessibility;
- reduce transport emissions;
- improve quality of life; and
- support sustainable regional growth.

Pillar Two – Competitive Economy

Creating the Conditions for Sustainable Enterprise Growth

The strength of Ireland's economy has long been built on its ability to attract investment, support indigenous enterprise and develop a highly skilled workforce. Maintaining that success in an increasingly competitive global environment requires more than physical infrastructure. It requires the conditions that enable businesses to recruit talent, innovate, improve productivity and compete internationally.

For Shannon and the wider Mid-West, those conditions are increasingly influenced by three interdependent factors: the availability of housing, access to the skills required for a rapidly evolving economy, and a competitive business environment that supports entrepreneurship, investment and export growth.

These issues are no longer regional challenges; they are national competitiveness challenges.

Addressing them through Budget 2027 will not only strengthen the Mid-West's economy but will reinforce Ireland's reputation as one of Europe's leading locations for investment, innovation and enterprise.

P2.1 Housing

- ### *Unlocking Housing Supply to Support Workforce Growth*

Access to housing has become one of the most significant barriers to economic growth across Ireland.

Employers consistently report that housing shortages are restricting their ability to recruit and retain staff, while escalating accommodation costs are reducing Ireland's competitiveness as a location for both indigenous enterprise and foreign direct investment.

For Shannon, this challenge is particularly significant.

As one of Ireland's largest employment centres outside Dublin, Shannon attracts employees from across Clare, Limerick, Galway and Tipperary. However, residential development has not kept pace with economic growth. Constraints associated with flood risk, infrastructure capacity and the activation of zoned lands continue to limit housing delivery, despite sustained demand.

Addressing these constraints is essential if Shannon is to continue supporting employment growth and attracting future investment.

The timely delivery of the Shannon Flood Relief Scheme is particularly important, as it will unlock significant residential development opportunities and provide greater certainty for future housing investment. This should be complemented by measures that improve the viability of residential development, particularly for SME builders, while encouraging innovation in construction methods and supporting affordable housing delivery.

Housing investment should therefore be viewed as an investment in Ireland's future competitiveness.

Shannon Chamber recommendations for Budget 2027:

- Prioritise delivery of the Shannon Flood Relief Scheme to unlock residentially zoned lands.
- Introduce low-cost financing mechanisms for SME residential developers.
- Expand support for modular and modern methods of construction.
- Increase investment in cost-rental and key-worker housing schemes.
- Continue planning and infrastructure reforms that accelerate housing delivery in strategic employment locations.

Contribution to National Priorities

These measures will:

- increase housing supply in a key employment location;
- improve workforce attraction and retention;
- support continued enterprise investment;
- reduce commuting pressures;
- strengthen regional population growth; and
- enhance Ireland's international competitiveness.

P2.2 Skills, Artificial Intelligence and Workforce Transformation

- ***Preparing Ireland's Workforce for the Economy of Tomorrow***

The pace of technological change is transforming every sector of Ireland's economy.

Artificial intelligence, automation, advanced manufacturing and digital technologies are reshaping how businesses operate, while demographic change and evolving sustainability requirements are creating new demands for specialist skills.

Ireland's future competitiveness will depend upon its ability to equip businesses and employees with the knowledge and capabilities required to adapt successfully to these changes.

Employer-led workforce development has a critical role to play.

Through its Skillnet network, Shannon Chamber has seen first-hand how collaborative investment in skills strengthens productivity, supports innovation and enables businesses to respond quickly to changing market conditions. This model has become increasingly important as companies seek to embrace digital transformation while addressing persistent labour shortages.

Budget 2027 should build upon this success by increasing investment in specialist workforce development while accelerating Ireland's capacity to adopt and benefit from artificial intelligence.

The development of a National AI Talent Centre of Excellence represents an important opportunity to strengthen collaboration between enterprise, higher education and regional innovation ecosystems. Equally important is ensuring that businesses of every size have access to practical training that enables them to integrate AI into everyday operations.

Investment in digital literacy, data capability, leadership development and lifelong learning will ensure that Irish businesses remain internationally competitive while creating rewarding career opportunities for employees throughout the regions.

Shannon Chamber recommendations for Budget 2027:

- Increase investment in specialist upskilling programmes addressing critical labour shortages.
- Accelerate development of the National AI Talent Centre of Excellence with strong regional and industry participation.
- Expand employer-focused AI training programmes covering digital capability, data literacy, computational skills and AI adoption.
- Ensure National Training Fund resources are deployed more effectively to address emerging enterprise needs.
- Continue strengthening employer-led workforce development through Skillnet Ireland.

Contribution to National Priorities

These measures will:

- improve productivity;
- strengthen workforce resilience;
- accelerate AI adoption;
- address strategic skills shortages;
- support innovation and enterprise growth; and
- reinforce Ireland's long-term competitiveness.

P2.3 Establishing Ireland's National Aviation Apprenticeship Centre in Shannon

- ***Building the Skills Pipeline for Ireland's Aviation Industry***

Ireland's aviation sector is one of the country's most internationally competitive industries, supporting thousands of highly skilled jobs across aircraft maintenance, aerospace engineering, aviation services and manufacturing. As the sector continues to expand and respond to increasing global demand, ensuring a sustainable pipeline of skilled aircraft maintenance engineers has become a national priority.

The Government has already recognised this challenge. In announcing a significant expansion of aircraft mechanic apprenticeship places, the Minister for Further and Higher Education confirmed that SOLAS has been tasked with establishing a dedicated National Centre of Excellence for aircraft mechanic training from 2028.

Shannon Chamber strongly supports this initiative and believes that Shannon represents the optimum location for this strategically important national investment.

Shannon is already recognised as Ireland's principal aviation cluster outside Dublin. It is home to a unique concentration of aircraft maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) operations, aviation training providers, aerospace businesses and engineering expertise. Existing apprenticeship delivery arrangements already utilise facilities and specialist knowledge available within the region, providing a strong foundation upon which a national centre can be developed.

Locating the National Aviation Apprenticeship Centre within this established ecosystem would provide apprentices with direct access to industry-standard facilities, experienced practitioners and real-world operational environments. This close integration between education and industry would strengthen training quality, improve employment outcomes and ensure that apprenticeship programmes remain aligned with the evolving needs of the aviation sector.

Shannon also offers significant practical advantages. Existing aviation infrastructure, including specialist workshops, hangars and training facilities, provides an opportunity to reduce development risk and deliver better value for public investment. The region also offers greater capacity for future expansion and lower operating costs than many alternative locations.

Establishing the National Aviation Apprenticeship Centre in Shannon would not only strengthen Ireland's aviation capability but would also reinforce Government's commitment to balanced regional development by locating a nationally significant education and training facility within an established regional enterprise cluster.

Shannon Chamber recommendations for Budget 2027:

- Confirm Shannon as the location for Ireland's National Aviation Apprenticeship Centre.
- Provide the capital and operational funding required to establish the Centre of Excellence for aircraft mechanic training.
- Support continued collaboration between SOLAS, industry and regional education providers to ensure apprenticeship programmes remain responsive to evolving aviation skills needs.
- Recognise Shannon's aviation cluster as the national hub for aircraft maintenance training and workforce development.

Contribution to National Priorities

These measures will:

- strengthen Ireland's aviation skills pipeline;
- support the continued growth of the aviation and aerospace sector;
- enhance Ireland's international competitiveness in aviation services;
- deliver balanced regional development through investment in an established aviation cluster;
- create high-value education, training and employment opportunities; and
- maximise value for public investment by building on existing infrastructure and industry expertise.

P2.4 Supporting SME Competitiveness and Export Growth

- ***Enabling Enterprise to Invest, Innovate and Grow***

Small and medium-sized enterprises remain the backbone of Ireland's economy.

They create employment, drive innovation, support local communities and contribute significantly to national exports. However, many businesses continue to operate within an increasingly challenging economic environment characterised by rising operating costs, labour shortages, regulatory complexity and global uncertainty.

For businesses throughout the Mid-West, these pressures are compounded by housing shortages, increasing energy costs and the need to invest in digital transformation and sustainability.

Budget 2027 should therefore prioritise measures that improve business confidence, strengthen cash flow, encourage investment and support long-term competitiveness.

A stable and competitive operating environment will enable businesses to invest in research and development, expand into new markets, improve productivity and create sustainable employment opportunities.

Government also has an opportunity to strengthen entrepreneurship by ensuring that taxation and enterprise supports encourage business formation, scaling and succession while reducing unnecessary administrative burdens.

Supporting SMEs is not simply about helping individual businesses. It is about strengthening the resilience and competitiveness of Ireland's economy as a whole.

Shannon Chamber recommendations for Budget 2027:

- Expand energy efficiency and decarbonisation supports for SMEs.
- Increase the standard rate income tax band to improve competitiveness and support workforce participation.
- Remove the additional 3% USC surcharge for self-employed individuals.
- Introduce automatic monthly VAT refunds for qualifying SMEs to improve cash flow.
- Enhance R&D tax incentives to encourage innovation.
- Reform Entrepreneur Relief to better support business scaling and succession planning.
- Expand supports for ESG compliance and sustainability reporting.
- Increase investment in export diversification and international market development programmes.

Contribution to National Priorities

These measures will:

- strengthen SME competitiveness;
- encourage innovation and investment;
- improve productivity;
- support export growth;
- enhance regional economic resilience;
- stimulate entrepreneurship; and
- reinforce Ireland's position as a leading location for business investment.

Pillar Three – Future Growth

Positioning the Mid-West to Drive Ireland's Next Phase of Economic Development

Ireland's long-term prosperity will depend on its ability to anticipate change, invest in future industries and build resilience in an increasingly uncertain global economy. The transition to a low-carbon economy, the rapid pace of technological innovation and the need to strengthen energy security present both significant challenges and unprecedented opportunities.

The Mid-West is uniquely positioned to help Ireland respond to these challenges.

With the Shannon Estuary at its heart, the region possesses exceptional natural resources, internationally recognised industrial capability, deep-water port infrastructure, engineering expertise and a long-established tradition of innovation. These strengths provide the foundations for the Mid-West to become a nationally significant hub for renewable energy, industrial decarbonisation and clean technology investment.

Strategic investment through Budget 2027 can help unlock this opportunity, ensuring that the region contributes not only to Ireland's climate ambitions but also to its future competitiveness, energy security and sustainable economic growth.

P3.1 Unlocking the Strategic Potential of the Shannon Estuary

- ***Developing Ireland's Atlantic Renewable Energy Hub***

The Shannon Estuary represents one of Ireland's greatest strategic economic assets.

Its deep-water ports, established industrial base, engineering expertise and proximity to some of Europe's strongest offshore wind resources create a unique opportunity to position the Mid-West as Ireland's leading location for floating offshore wind development and the wider renewable energy economy.

Government has already recognised the importance of offshore renewable energy in achieving national climate objectives. The challenge now is to ensure that investment in enabling infrastructure keeps pace with ambition.

Developing the Atlantic offshore wind sector will deliver benefits that extend well beyond electricity generation. It has the potential to stimulate indigenous enterprise, strengthen manufacturing, create highly skilled employment, attract international investment and establish Ireland as a European leader in floating offshore wind technologies.

The opportunities are significant.

A thriving offshore renewable energy sector will create demand across engineering, construction, logistics, maritime services, digital technologies, research and professional services while enabling Irish companies to participate in rapidly expanding international supply chains.

Realising this ambition requires a coordinated programme of investment in enabling infrastructure, planning systems, grid capacity, port development and workforce capability.

Budget 2027 provides Government with an opportunity to accelerate this transition while positioning the Mid-West as a key driver of Ireland's low-carbon economy.

Shannon Chamber recommendations for Budget 2027:

- Prioritise investment in enabling infrastructure for floating offshore wind development.
- Accelerate the implementation of Designated Maritime Area Plans and resource the marine planning and consenting system to provide greater certainty and shorter timelines for offshore renewable energy projects.
- Provide targeted capital investment in the strategic port infrastructure required to support floating offshore wind deployment, supply chain development and long-term industrial growth along the Shannon Estuary.
- Expand enterprise supports that enable Irish businesses to participate in offshore wind supply chains.
- Increase investment in research, innovation and specialist workforce development supporting renewable energy industries.

Contribution to National Priorities

These measures will:

- strengthen Ireland's energy security;
- accelerate the delivery of national climate targets;
- position the Mid-West as Ireland's Atlantic renewable energy hub;
- create high-value employment and enterprise opportunities;
- strengthen indigenous participation in offshore wind supply chains;
- enhance Ireland's international competitiveness; and
- support long-term, sustainable regional economic growth.

P3.2 Building the Energy Infrastructure to Support Ireland's Future Economy

- ***Investing in Energy Security, Industrial Competitiveness and Decarbonisation***

Achieving Ireland's climate ambitions will depend not only on generating renewable energy but also on ensuring that the infrastructure exists to transmit, store and utilise that energy effectively.

The Mid-West is well placed to play a central role in this transition.

Its combination of major industrial energy users, strategic electricity infrastructure, international engineering capability and proximity to renewable energy resources makes the region an ideal location for investment in next-generation energy systems.

Continued investment in electricity grid reinforcement, energy storage, industrial decarbonisation and supporting infrastructure will be essential if Ireland is to maximise the economic benefits arising from offshore renewable energy while maintaining international competitiveness.

These investments will also enhance energy security, reduce reliance on imported fossil fuels and provide businesses with greater confidence to invest in low-carbon technologies.

Government support should extend beyond physical infrastructure to include measures that enable businesses of all sizes to adopt renewable energy technologies, improve energy efficiency and reduce emissions.

Taken together, these investments will strengthen Ireland's resilience while supporting sustainable industrial growth.

Shannon Chamber recommendations for Budget 2027:

- Accelerate reinforcement of the national electricity grid serving the Mid-West.
- Increase funding for industrial decarbonisation programmes.
- Expand supports for renewable energy adoption across enterprise.
- Invest in energy storage and enabling technologies that strengthen grid resilience.
- Support innovation programmes that position Ireland as a leader in clean energy technologies.

Contribution to National Priorities

These measures will:

- strengthen Ireland's energy security;
- accelerate delivery of Climate Action Plan objectives;
- support industrial competitiveness;
- create high-value employment;
- stimulate indigenous enterprise and innovation;
- reinforce balanced regional development; and
- position Ireland as a leader in renewable energy and sustainable industry.

Conclusion

Investing in Shannon to Deliver National Ambition

Ireland has set ambitious objectives for balanced regional development, economic competitiveness, climate action and sustainable growth. Achieving these ambitions will require targeted investment in locations that have demonstrated both the capacity to deliver and the potential to contribute even more.

Shannon is one such location.

For more than six decades, strategic investment has transformed Shannon into one of Ireland's most successful centres of enterprise and international connectivity. Today, the region is home to globally competitive industries, internationally recognised aviation infrastructure, a highly skilled workforce and one of Europe's most significant renewable energy opportunities.

The recommendations contained in this submission represent a coherent investment framework that will enable Shannon and the wider Mid-West to make an even greater contribution to Ireland's future prosperity.

Collectively, these recommendations will:

- strengthen regional competitiveness;
- improve international connectivity;
- support sustainable housing and community development;
- accelerate renewable energy investment;
- enhance workforce capability;
- improve enterprise productivity; and
- reinforce Ireland's resilience in an increasingly competitive global economy.

These proposals are not presented as a series of individual funding requests. Rather, they represent strategic investments that align with Government's own ambitions for balanced regional development, climate action, enterprise growth and national competitiveness.

By investing in Shannon, Government will be investing in one of Ireland's most important economic assets - a region with the capacity to deliver lasting national benefit through innovation, connectivity, sustainability and enterprise.

Shannon Chamber welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the formulation of Budget 2027 and looks forward to continuing to work in partnership with Government, local authorities, State agencies and industry to help deliver these shared ambitions.

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