



**Shannon
Chamber**
Advancing business together



**Mid-West
Sustainability Network**



'Future Ready'
Driving Competitiveness
in a Changing Climate

Conference 2026

Wednesday, 21 October 2026

Venue: The Rine Hotel
Newmarket on Fergus, Co. Clare

#midwestsustainability

Network Sponsor



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The business landscape is changing.

Climate risk, evolving regulation, investor expectations and customer demands are reshaping the way organisations compete and grow.

Competitiveness and sustainability are no longer separate business issues. They are increasingly interconnected, influencing customer decisions, investment, supply chains, regulation and long-term business success.

This conference will examine how leading businesses are embedding sustainability into strategy.

Join industry leaders as they explore how organisations are responding to climate-related challenges, strengthening resilience, creating competitive advantage, and positioning themselves for future growth in a rapidly changing business environment.

Leave with concrete ideas, examples and tools.

Conference Programme

Conference MC: Barry Gavin. Chair, Mid-West Sustainability Network

08:30	Registration & Networking
09:00	Welcome and Introductions Helen Downes, CEO, Shannon Chamber
09:15	Session 1: Winning Business Through Transition Planning Mark Bennett, Head of Climate Advisory, Goodbody Clearstream This session will explore the practical realities of developing and implementing a carbon transition plan, the key drivers prompting companies to develop transition plans, the practical steps involved, and balancing regulatory and sustainability ambitions with commercial realities. The implications of the forthcoming ISO 9001 revision will also be addressed, also why sustainability and transition planning are becoming increasingly connected to how businesses demonstrate quality, resilience, competitiveness and responsible business practice. CASE STUDY This session will include a case study delivered by David McKenna, Head of Sustainability, ESG & Climate Strategy for the Built Environment, John Paul Construction.
10:00	Session 2 Futureproofing Your Business Aidan Kelly, Senior EHS Engineer, Edwards Lifesciences This session will provide practical guidance for businesses that are only beginning to consider climate adaptation, including where to start and the simple tools and frameworks that can help bring climate risk into mainstream business strategy. It will show how businesses can prepare for the growing impact of climate risk while strengthening resilience and protecting long-term competitiveness. The physical risks of climate change - including heat, flooding, water stress and infrastructure disruption - and the transition risks created by changing legislation, policy, markets and technology, will also be addressed. Building the business case for resilience beyond traditional ROI measures, as well as how climate adaptation can be aligned with regulatory requirements and wider local and national planning will feature.
10.45	Coffee Break
11:00	Session 3 Strengthening Supply Chains Sean McCaffrey, Supplier Performance and Sustainability Manager, Iarnród Éireann/Irish Rail This session will demonstrate the real impact of sustainable procurement in Iarnród Éireann, by addressing: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is Sustainability Procurement 2. New and upcoming Legislation – Greenwashing legislation, CBAM, EUDR, CSDDD, Battery Passports, ESPR and new EU Public Procurement Directive (if it's released in time). 3. Engagement with suppliers – Supply Chain Sustainability School, IÉ Sustainability Week, IÉ Sustainability Awards, IÉ Anti - Slavery Week and Carbon Reporting 4. Social Value in Procurement SME CASE STUDY This session will include a case study delivered by David Courtney, Senior Acoustic Consultant and Technical Manager at Enfonic. He will share Enfonic's sustainability journey as an SME, highlighting challenges overcome, tools used and the opportunities encountered.
12:00	Q & A with Presenters
12:15	Keynote Address Dr. Matt Kennedy, Global Head of Client Transformation, IDA Ireland Q & A
13:00	Remarks from Anchor Sponsor
13:15	Closing Remarks Helen Downes, CEO, Shannon Chamber
13:30	Networking Lunch



About the Presenters

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Barry Gavin, Chair, Mid-West Sustainability Network



Barry Gavin is the Chair of the Mid-West Sustainability Network. Barry is a qualified accountant with over twenty years' experience in the area of Clean Energy and Sustainable Investment. Barry is a member of the Institute of Directors. He is a member of the board of An Post, and is the Chair of the An Post People and Sustainability Committee. He is the

Chair of Future Energy Ireland, an independent director on the Board of the City of Dublin Energy Management Agency (CODEMA) and an independent director with the Arjun Investment Clean Energy Fund. Barry is also an adjunct lecturer in the UCD Smurfit Business School and in the University of Galway, where he lectures in Sustainable Finance.

Introduction & Summation

Helen Downes, Chief Executive, Shannon Chamber



Chief Executive of Shannon Chamber since 2008, Helen has been instrumental in transforming the Chamber into a dynamic force for regional economic development and business advocacy. Under her leadership, the Chamber has launched a series of strategic initiatives that foster collaboration between the public and private

sectors, both nationally and internationally, significantly expanding its membership and influence. Helen plays a pivotal role in championing the interests of the Chamber's 330+ members - engaging with key stakeholders, policy makers, and influencers to address barriers to enterprise growth and promote sustainable economic development at local, regional, and national levels. Helen brings a unique blend of strategic vision, stakeholder engagement expertise, and a deep commitment to regional progress.

Mark Bennett, Head of Climate Advisory, Goodbody Clearstream



Mark has over 25 years' experience working internationally in the private, public and NGO sectors on environmental and business strategy. He is currently Head of Climate Advisory at Goodbody Clearstream, specialising in decarbonisation. He was previously a Director of Portal Innovation Hub at Trinity College Dublin, Country Manager in Talent

Garden, founded an Internet of Things startup and led sustainability projects for Dublin City Council. Mark has completed traineeships in the Irish EPA, the US EPA and the European Commission. Mark holds a BA in Environmental Science from Trinity College, an MSc in International Management from King's College London, a postgrad in Sustainable Energy Finance from Dublin City University and has completed the Artificial Intelligence Programme in Oxford University.

David McKenna, Head of Sustainability, ESG & Climate Strategy for the Built Environment, John Paul Construction



David McKenna is a sustainability leader with over 25 years' experience in engineering and construction, specialising in climate transition planning, corporate net-zero implementation and decarbonisation. A Chartered Fellow of Engineers Ireland and a Chartered Fellow of ISEP, he works with clients, project teams and supply chain

partners to deliver practical carbon reductions across construction projects. His expertise includes developing the management systems, governance processes and carbon data frameworks needed to translate climate commitments into measurable action across the built environment.



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Aidan Kelly, Senior Engineer EHS Specialist, Edwards Lifesciences



Aidan Kelly is a Senior Engineer in Environmental Health, Safety and Sustainability at Edwards Lifesciences Ireland, supporting manufacturing operations across the Limerick and Shannon sites. With more than 10 years of experience in the medical device, pharmaceutical and biotechnology sectors, he specialises in environmental management

systems, sustainability programmes, regulatory compliance, ISO 14001 and ISO 45001 governance, audit readiness, carbon reduction initiatives and EHS leadership.

At Edwards, Aidan has played a key role in advancing the company's environmental sustainability agenda, including support for the Ireland Climate Roadmap 2030, carbon reduction programmes, energy efficiency projects, sustainability reporting, environmental compliance and employee engagement initiatives. He has also led and supported implementation of environmental management systems, energy audit activities and community engagement.

Under the Edwards Ireland sustainability programme, the sites have achieved several notable environmental milestones, and continues to progress towards:

- 100% renewable electricity
- Zero waste to landfill
- LEED Gold certified manufacturing facility, the first manufacturing location in Ireland to achieve this certification
- ISO 14001 certified environmental management system
- Rainwater harvesting and water reuse initiatives
- Active participation in the Smarter Travel programme and sustainable commuting initiatives
- Ongoing delivery of Edwards' Carbon Neutral 2030 commitments through energy reduction and decarbonisation projects.

Seán McCaffrey, Supplier Performance and Sustainability Manager, Iarnród Éireann/Irish Rail



Seán McCaffrey is the Supplier Performance and Sustainability Manager, Iarnród Éireann/Irish Rail Procurement Department, where he leads the integration of sustainability, Social Value and responsible procurement across major contracts. His work focuses on using procurement as a strategic tool to deliver measurable environmental,

social and economic outcomes. He has played a key role in developing and implementing Iarnród Éireann's approach to Social Value Creation, supplier carbon reporting, sustainable supply chain management and emerging initiatives such as the CO₂ Performance Ladder. His work is helping to embed sustainability requirements across hundreds of millions of euros of procurement activity and major long-term investment programmes. Seán holds a Postgraduate Certificate in Sustainability Leadership from Technological University Dublin. In 2026, he was appointed Chair of the Sustainable Procurement Working Group of the European Railways Purchasing Conference (ERPC), bringing together railway organisations from across Europe to share best practice and advance sustainable procurement, ESG, supply chain resilience and responsible sourcing.

He is a regular speaker on sustainable procurement, Social Value and supply chain sustainability and works collaboratively with public bodies, industry organisations and suppliers to promote practical approaches that deliver measurable impact. In 2026, Seán was shortlisted for Sustainable Procurement Champion of the Year at the National Procurement Awards, alongside a number of Iarnród Éireann procurement initiatives recognised across sustainability, innovation, collaboration and people development categories. Seán is particularly passionate about ensuring that major public investment leaves a positive legacy, creating opportunities for communities, supporting a more sustainable and resilient supply chain, reducing environmental impacts and ensuring that procurement delivers value that extends well beyond the goods and services being purchased.



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David Courtney, Senior Acoustic Consultant and Technical Manager at Enfonic



David Courtney is a Senior Acoustic Consultant and Technical Manager at Enfonic, where he leads the delivery of acoustic consultancy services across Ireland.

Alongside his technical role, David and the Enfonic Team have been closely involved in Enfonic's sustainability initiatives and the journey to Gold Membership at the

Irish Sustainability School. This has helped to embed sustainable practices throughout the business.

David will share Enfonic's sustainability journey as an SME, highlighting challenges overcome, tools used and the opportunities encountered."

Keynote Speaker

Dr. Matt Kennedy, Global Head of Client Transformation, IDA Ireland



Matt Kennedy (PhD) is the Global Head of Client Transformation in IDA Ireland where he leads transformation initiatives with international business, including a portfolio of R&D, digital, sustainability and talent development offerings.

Matt is a Fellow (FIEMA), chartered environmentalist and energy engineer with over 25 years' experience

in delivering national and international climate and innovation initiatives across government, industry and academia. Matt was Lead Negotiator for the European Union at the UN Paris Agreement (COP21) negotiations and was previously Chair of the UNEP's Climate Technology Centre. Matt has worked with the United Nations on clean energy and transport projects across Africa, Asia and Middle East and was previously Arup's Sustainable Development Leader for Europe and led climate change services within infrastructure, buildings and cities. He holds a PhD in Engineering from Trinity College Dublin, and Masters degrees from University of Galway and University College Dublin. Matt is a member of the Government's Climate Change Advisory Council and is an experienced independent non-executive Director.



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Since 2023, the Mid-West Sustainability Network has been helping businesses advance their sustainability efforts and achieve their environmental goals.



By fostering peer-to-peer learning and collaboration, the Network provides a platform for sustainability practitioners to connect, share challenges, and exchange best practices - empowering companies to drive meaningful progress towards their environmental ambitions.

The purpose of the Network is to support Chamber members in their sustainability journeys and in the delivery of their sustainability goals, focusing on four key areas.



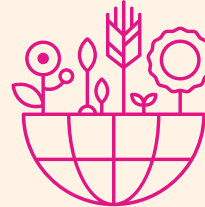
Waste



Water



Energy



Biodiversity

To BOOK YOUR PLACE at any of the Sustainability Week events, including the S4 Conference, log onto:

www.shannonchamber.ie/events-training/

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