

An Taoiseach Simon Harris TD,  
Department of the Taoiseach,  
Government Buildings,  
Merrion Street Upper,  
Dublin 2

**Re: Cork Chamber's priorities in the Programme for Government**

11/12/2024

Dear Taoiseach,

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of Cork Chamber to outline some of the key measures the next government should prioritise for Cork's future in the Programme for Government.

Cork Chamber is the leading voice for business in the Cork region, representing 1,200 members, together employing 130,000 people throughout the city, metropolitan area, and county.

Cork's population is projected to grow by 50% by 2040, with immense potential for economic growth and development in the decades to come. Cork Chamber calls on the next government to commit to policies and measures that will enable the City and County to reach its full potential.

As we find ourselves at this important juncture, the message from Cork Chamber's members is clear – **Cork needs investment and supporting policies to drive its economic growth.** We must invest in our infrastructure, our housing, and our public transport. We need to prioritise the pursuit of a sustainable, vibrant evolution in our urban centres, and we must enhance our competitiveness, attracting talent and investment, and supporting SMEs and local businesses.

With government formation talks underway, Cork Chamber urges all those involved in designing the next Programme for Government to include the following priority areas for Cork's development:

- Deliver 7,500 - 10,000 housing units per year in Cork City and County.
- Increase the number of Gardaí in Cork City and County by 40% to 1,000.
- Include the Cork Light Rail project in the Programme for Government and commit to fully funding it.
- Commit to the delivery of the Northern Distributor Road to support the Apple investment in Cork and Ireland and open up further economic opportunities for the north side of Cork City.
- Fund and develop the R624 Cobh Road to enable Cork docklands development and Port activities further out the harbour.

- Guarantee funding for the delivery of the M28 Cork to Ringaskiddy and M20 Cork to Limerick roads.
- Provide multi-annual funding plans for providers of critical utilities and infrastructure and ensure greater alignment among delivery stakeholders.
- Restate the funding commitment for the Cork Events Centre.
- Deliver the flood defence schemes for Cork City and towns across County Cork.
- Introduce multi-annual funding for higher education to bridge the €150m gap that exists in the sector.
- Designate the Cork Harbour region as an energy park, deliver enabling infrastructure for the offshore renewables sector.
- Progress and fund key infrastructural projects, including the new Cork University Business School development, dental hospital, and new elective hospital.
- Establish a dedicated fund to support Cork and Dublin to achieve the targets set out under their designation as EU mission cities for climate neutrality by 2030.
- Introduce urban evolution deals to deliver funding for local authorities to implement bespoke development plans for their regions.
- Support Ireland's energy transition by providing operational supports for biomethane production.
- Fully resource An Bord Pleanála and planning authorities at local level to ensure applications are seen without delay.
- Fully resource the Cork Airport masterplan to further international connectivity for the region.
- Increase support for domestic enterprises and encourage innovation and collaboration, promoting partnerships between SMEs and R&D institutions to drive competitiveness.
- Identify, purchase and service large strategic sites for industrial growth, expansion and FDI.
- Commit to appointing extra judges for Judicial Review cases related to planning. Ensure all cases are resolved within six weeks

Please also refer to our General Election manifesto for further information and background on these priorities.

Cork's business community is ready to collaborate with the new government to ensure these priorities are addressed, and that the City and County maximises its potential as a great place to live and work. Cork Chamber is always available to discuss these priorities and other matters impacting Cork's business community in further detail.

Yours Sincerely,




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Conor Healy  
CEO