

Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications,  
Tom Johnson House,  
Haddington Rd,  
Dublin 4,  
D04 K7X4.

11<sup>th</sup> April 2025

To whom it concerns,

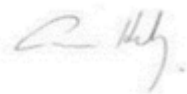
Cork Chamber welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications Statement of Strategy for the period 2025 to 2028.

Cork Chamber represents 1,200 members together employing 130,000 people throughout the city, metropolitan area and county. Our vision is to lead a transforming and ambitious Cork City and County, and our purpose is to unite, represent and support our members and community. Our direction is guided by our formal pledge to uphold the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Cork Chamber has also been designated an SDG Champion by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications for 2024 – 2025.

Cork Chamber's advocacy efforts are guided by the views and priorities of our partners, and are shaped by our continuous engagement with members, our Board and key stakeholders in Cork City and County. The work of the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications includes a number of key priority areas for progress identified by Cork Chamber's members, namely sustainability and renewable energy.

Growing Ireland's offshore renewable energy sector is a critical priority for the Cork region. In 2024, Cork Chamber established the Cork Offshore Renewable Industry Forum (CORIF) to bring together industry representatives to identify and advocate for the key policy and infrastructure enablers needed for Cork to realise its potential as Ireland's first national hub for the renewable energy industry. Sustainability is also a key priority for Cork Chamber and its members, including the protection of our natural environment and biodiversity.

Yours sincerely,



Conor Healy  
CEO

## **Introduction**

Cork Chamber welcomes the opportunity to comment on the development of the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications' Statement of Strategy for the period 2025 to 2028. The Department's work is crucially important for Ireland's future development, particularly as the global climate situation continues to evolve rapidly; now more than ever, setting a course for a sustainable, secure energy and economic future is vital.

## **Energy Security and Renewables**

Cork Chamber supports the Department's current vision of a climate neutral, sustainable and digitally connected Ireland, as well as its statement regarding the importance of collaborative relationships with regulators, local government, businesses, civil society and citizens in the context of realising this vision. The Department's statement in its current strategy that it has a leadership role in developing and implementing policies and programmes to fully leverage the economic and job creation potential of a climate neutral economy is particularly welcome, and indeed, many sectors like green energy present considerable opportunities for job creation and economic development as they continue to grow.

With regard to the Department's current Statement of Strategy's area of focus, 'A Changing World,' it is worth noting that the world in which we live continues to evolve apace. Geopolitical developments, as well as the worsening effects of climate change, have a particularly acute impact on the global economy, an impact that is even more pronounced on a small, open economy like Ireland.

It is vital that the Department's new Statement of Strategy prioritises energy security and independence. Developing our offshore wind capabilities, in tandem with supporting the growth of green hydrogen, biomethane and other energy sources, will help to set a course for a more sustainable, future-proof energy sector that can provide much-needed certainty around security of supply to those looking to invest or scale up operations in Ireland.

Concerns regarding security of supply are an increasingly important factor in decisions around investment, particularly in regions where local grid capacity is thought to be constrained. It is critical that Government supports the build-out of our grid and electricity network to provide the certainty and reassurance needed to attract continued investment and economic growth to Ireland.

Securing our energy supply for the future will also be vital to meet our climate targets in the coming years. The offshore wind sector can play a key role in this regard, and cross-departmental support through the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, as well as through the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment and others, will be crucial to support Ireland's achievement of its offshore wind target of 37 GW by 2050.

Established by Cork Chamber in 2024, the Cork Offshore Renewable Industry Forum (CORIF) works to identify and advocate for the key policy and infrastructure enablers that will be needed to meet and surpass this goal. Accelerating strategic investments in infrastructure, both on- and offshore, through agencies like EirGrid, and supporting investment in the Port of Cork, for example, will be essential in the coming years.

Cork is well-positioned to become the first of the national hubs to support the renewable energy sector, supporting a thriving offshore renewable industry nationwide. Cork benefits from a long and distinguished history in the energy sector, with many of the key industry players already established in the region. Cork is also home to key education and research institutions, such as the National Maritime College of Ireland (NMCI) and the MaREI Centre, and should be prioritised as the preferred location for a green energy skills hub or centre of excellence for the offshore wind sector. MTU, UCC and Cork ETB are already working together to enhance the region's educational offering in this sector. In addition, the Port of Cork has commenced infrastructure development to facilitate offshore wind and is the only port in Ireland with the planning permission to do so.

### **Climate Action and Collaboration**

Collaboration and cooperation across Government department, state and semi-state agencies, local authorities and other relevant stakeholders is critical to ensure we achieve our climate goals in a timely manner, and Cork Chamber welcomes the Department's continued commitment to fostering collaboration between all key stakeholders in this regard. Alignment across Government strategies and policies, particularly cross-departmental frameworks like the National Planning Framework and National Development Plan, as well as local development plans should be prioritised.

It is also vitally important that local communities are brought along the climate transition journey, particularly in areas where large-scale infrastructure projects are happening, such as the Celtic Interconnector project in Cork. Securing social licence for these projects of strategic importance will be crucial to ensure they progress without delay and in a coordinated manner.

Ambitious climate targets have been set at both national and EU level, and strategic collaboration will be critical to achieve these in the years to come. It is vital that regional cooperation and innovation is supported in this regard too.

With this in mind, Cork Chamber is proud to play a role in supporting Cork as a labelled EU Mission: Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities to 2030. Cork Chamber is working alongside Cork City Council to help identify and progress large-scale decarbonisation projects taking place within the city. Transport and building stock are the two primary contributors to carbon emissions at present, and undertaking projects that transform our existing building stock, alongside strategic actions to pursue electrification of our transport system, will have a transformative impact on the city's carbon footprint.

Pursuing the electrification of various sectors will also have a positive economic impact, helping to reduce energy cost burdens on businesses, and SMEs in particular. Retrofitting commercial buildings should be prioritised to promote decarbonisation across industries, and supporting access to renewable energy sources should also be pursued. It is vital that accessible, timely incentives are available, particularly to SMEs looking to decarbonise and retrofit their facilities.

Tailored programmes that help organisations pursue sustainability at a local level should also be supported where possible, in collaboration with local authorities and regional stakeholders. For example, Cork Chamber has partnered with Cork City Council to support the Local Green Deals (LGDs) initiative, supporting businesses to sign up to tailored action plans to accelerate the city's green transition. Cork was recently recognised for its leadership in securing LGDs at the EU Intelligent Cities Challenges in Brussels, where the city received an award for most LGDs signed in the Intelligent Cities Challenge Programme with consistently high quality.<sup>1</sup>

## **Sustainability**

At Cork Chamber, our direction is guided by our formal pledge to uphold the UN SDGs, five of which have been identified as priority areas by the Chambers Ireland network. The Department has designated Cork Chamber an SDG Champion for 2024 - 2025, and we remain committed to upholding the SDGs across all policy outputs and areas of activity.

In particular, the Department should examine possibilities to harness digitalisation and emerging innovations to support the pursuit of SDGs. For example, current and anticipated legislative measures at both national and EU level will have a significant impact on the volume of reporting carried out by many businesses with regard to sustainability practices. The European Commission has recently proposed to amend the Audit Directive, Accounting Directive, Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive and the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive to create a new Omnibus package.<sup>2</sup> Such legislative requirements will result in the collection of a considerable amount of additional data, and deploying new and innovative technologies to analyse such data sets could assist with measuring progress towards the implementation of SDGs and other targets, for example.

Such technologies could also be used to assist with the achievement of the Department's other goals, helping to monitor air quality and support air quality improvements, for example.

Cork Chamber also welcomes the Department's commitment to support the development of the circular economy, and this should continue to be a key focus of work over the lifetime of the new Statement of Strategy. Providing supports and informational advice for businesses, particularly SMEs, regarding circular economy solutions should be a priority for the

---

<sup>1</sup> Cork City Council, [Cork City wins European Award for its Local Green Deals](#)

<sup>2</sup> European Commission, [Commission simplifies rules on sustainability and EU investments, delivering over €6 billion in administrative relief](#)

Department in the coming years, particularly in its communications output and engagement with businesses.

Cork Chamber coordinates the Sustainable Cork Programme, which aims to explore key themes vital to support a sustainable and resilient Cork, empowered by a thriving business community. These events provide a platform for the exchange of ideas and shared learnings among businesses and those with expertise in various areas of sustainability. As part of the Programme, an event on Infrastructure and Biodiversity was held in September 2024, for example, to explore the impact of infrastructure developments on the natural environment and biodiversity. The event featured speakers from UCC, ESB, Bank of Ireland, and the Land Development Agency, offering insights to businesses on how economic development and the natural environment can exist in equilibrium.

### **Conclusion**

Cork Chamber welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications' new Statement of Strategy for 2025 to 2028. The coming years present us with a unique opportunity to set a course for a sustainable future, underpinned by a secure, green energy system. Collaboration and innovation will be critical to achieving this, and Cork Chamber encourages the Department to continue engaging with local stakeholders, particularly in the business community, to support broader climate action and sustainability goals.