

N/M20 Project Office,  
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To whom it may concern,

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, uniting, representing and supporting 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 2024-25.

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. Cork Chamber is deeply committed to sustainability, embedding it within all our activities and initiatives.

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the consultation process on the N/M20 Cork to Limerick multi-model route, which was identified as a key infrastructural priority in the National Development Plan as part of Project Ireland 2040 and has long been a priority for Cork Chamber and our members.

The need to improve the roadway was identified in the 1998 National Road Needs Study and the issues on the existing route have worsened since then.

The development of the N/M20 Cork to Limerick is a key element in Project Ireland 2040. The National Planning Framework (NPF) and National Development Plan (NDP) identify improved accessibility between urban centres of population and their regions as a major enabler for balanced regional development.

The N/M20 would enhance connectivity between Ireland's second and third largest cities by improving the quality of the transport network which will enable the development of a stronger southern region and greater collaboration between Cork and Limerick. Despite the fact that the city centres are approximately 100km apart, there are surprisingly few economic links between the two cities.

Poor connectivity also inhibits the growth of the regional economy and the facilitation of counterbalance to Dublin. The potential for a 50% growth in population in both Cork and Limerick is outlined in the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the requirement for improved connectivity countrywide informs Project 2040, with Cork-Limerick links identified as a priority.

It will also help to resolve the safety issues associated with the existing N20 route and provide for safer and more efficient journey times.

In addition, this motorway, when delivered, will shorten journey times travelling across Munster and open up both Cork and Shannon Airports to more intra-Munster traffic, too much of which is travelling to Dublin because of the existing hub and spoke nature of the national motorways currently centred in Dublin.

### **Transport and sustainability**

Improvements to infrastructure, connectivity and accessibility are critical to enhancing Ireland's competitiveness and sustainable economic development. Cork currently has an opportunity to integrate economic growth and environmental responsibility.

The N/M20 scheme would enable a number of environmental benefits if delivered appropriately, reducing through traffic in towns and villages, which would benefit placemaking and serve to improve air quality.

It would also enable the development of local opportunities for walking and cycling activity in and between communities as a result of a reduction in traffic volumes on the existing road network.

There is also an opportunity to enhance rail connectivity between Cork and Limerick with the implementation of more frequent and more direct services, giving an alternative and more sustainable option for people travelling between the two cities.

### **Industrial development**

Furthermore, the scheme aims to unlock lands which will facilitate future commercial development, enhancing the attractiveness of the area for investment.

Among Cork Chamber's key asks for the government is the unlocking of strategic sites for IDA and other developments, providing serviced greenfield sites which are needed for continued industrial growth. Cork is home to many large indigenous and FDI companies, and the region continues to attract interest from other such operators due to our talent and skills.

However, our ability to continue to keep punching above our weight in global competitiveness depends on being able to provide lands for expansion and future investment. Improved connectivity through this region will ensure that such spaces are accessible and attractive to potential investors.

Given the strategic importance of this corridor for industry and logistics, it is also critical that the route is designed to accommodate Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) efficiently. This will be essential for businesses relying on logistics, including those connected to the Port of Cork and other industrial zones. Proper planning for HGV accessibility will contribute to smoother freight movement, reduce bottlenecks, and enhance the overall functionality of the route.

In addition, the development of the N/M20 would serve to improve economic connectivity between Cork and Limerick. The NPF includes an objective of reducing journey times between the two cities and enhancing rail routes, all of which would serve to strengthen and improve economic and educational cooperation between the two cities.

## **Conclusion**

The development of the N/M20 is a long-held ambition of Cork Chamber and our members.

It is a vital piece of transport infrastructure, which would serve to enhance economic activity in the southern region, benefitting both Cork and Limerick and ensuring a stronger relationship between the cities.

The benefits for the existing towns and villages on the route would be to reduce through traffic, improving the air quality and placemaking opportunities, and it would also create an opportunity to develop active travel infrastructure on the existing roads, which would be quieter due to the relocation of traffic onto the new motorway.

It should, too, lead to the identification and activation of new lands for residential development, aiding us in achieving our housing targets.

It is critically important that this project is delivered on time and on budget. It has long been a goal of stakeholders in the southern region and further delays will continue to undermine the economic potential of Cork and Limerick.

Cork Chamber welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the public consultation on the preferred route. This much-needed project will be transformative for the city, county and region, and we encourage the delivery of this crucial project on budget and without delay.

We look forward to ongoing engagement with project partners to ensure the best outcomes for businesses, communities, and the entire region.

Yours sincerely,

**Cathal McSweeney**

**Director of Public and International Affairs**

**Cork Chamber**