

Air Quality Unit,
Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment,
Newtown Road
Wexford
Y35 AP90.

20th February 2026

Re: Public Consultation on Updating Clean Air Strategy 2025

To whom it concerns,

Cork Chamber welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the public consultation on the update to Ireland's Clean Air Strategy.

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. 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. Cork Chamber has also recently been appointed an SDG Ambassador by the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment.

Our advocacy is shaped by the views and priorities of our partners, and is informed by our continuous engagement with members, our Board and key stakeholders in Cork city and county.

Sustainability is at the core of all Cork Chamber's areas of activity and initiatives, and we recently published a comprehensive Sustainability Strategy and Report¹, outlining the Chamber's internal activities and targets in this area, as well as collaboration with members and the wider community to progress sustainability goals more broadly.

The pursuit of sustainable goals and a just transition with regard to climate change is centred around the pursuit of a cleaner environment for all, one that protects the health of both humans and other living organisms, preserving the planet for future generations. The adverse health implications of air pollution are well-documented; the WHO estimates that 99% of the global population breathe air that exceeds WHO guideline limits and contains high levels of pollutants.² Air pollution is also closely linked to the

¹ Cork Chamber, [Our Dedication to Sustainability: Cork Chamber's Sustainability Strategy and Report](#)

² WHO, [Air Pollution](#)

broader outlook for climate change, with many of the key drivers of air pollution also recognised as contributors to greenhouse gas emissions.

Despite the progress made since the introduction of the Clean Air Strategy in 2023, the reality is that almost all of us live with some degree of air pollution on a daily basis, the effects of which are particularly pronounced in large urban centres. Research undertaken by Cork City Council in 2023, for example, found that home energy usage and road transport emissions were responsible for two-thirds of greenhouse gas emissions in Cork city, and a corresponding level of air pollution.³ Businesses and the wider community are increasingly attuned to the importance of reducing emissions and deploying more sustainable practices, yet a systemic shift in our energy, transport and other practices will be required to delivered a true step change with regard to emissions and air pollution.

Support for infrastructure projects of strategic importance is vital in this regard. Through large-scale projects like the Cork Area Commuter Rail Programme, Luas Cork and BusConnects Cork, alongside developments in active travel infrastructure, the Cork city region has an opportunity in the coming years to deliver an effective modal shift in terms of travel through the city centre. The decrease in traffic congestion expected as a result should have a significant impact on air quality levels in Cork city.

Another key area for consideration is the existing building stock and emissions created as a result of energy usage. Pursuing large-scale retrofitting and decarbonisation projects must continue to be a priority in order to reduce these emissions and improve air quality both inside and outside our buildings. In Cork, initiatives like the EU Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities Mission help to support the delivery of decarbonisation on a large-scale in pursuit of the goal of climate neutrality by 2030. While recent funding allocations to support projects in the Mission Cities are a welcome step forward, it is critical that dedicated, multi-annual funding streams are made available to support the realisation of these projects in the period to 2030.⁴

The clear link between effective investment in transport and other infrastructural developments and air quality should be acknowledged and recognised further. Alignment with the aims of the Clean Air Strategy should be prioritised in other significant policy documents across relevant sectors, such as the National Development Plan and National Planning Framework, as well as local development plans.

Furthermore, the interconnection between areas like transport and building with air quality underlines the need for a collective effort to ensure a just transition and improve air quality in a systemic manner that benefits communities equally. Additional engagement with and supports for the business community would be welcome in this

³ Cork City Council, [Research published on sources of Cork's greenhouse gas emissions](#)

⁴ Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment, [Minister O'Brien announces new funding of almost €35 million to underpin climate action in our communities](#)

regard, ensuring that SMEs in particular can access financial supports and advice to implement air quality improvements on a local scale where possible.

Consideration should also be given to the provision of support for larger firms whose activities may result in an adverse impact on air quality. For example, government could work with such businesses to help them offset their air pollution in the communities where they are based, through initiatives like air quality monitoring or tree planting. Above all, it is vital that businesses of all sizes are incentivised to invest in air quality improvements and that such measures do not negatively impact their competitiveness and profitability.

The Department's support of Cork City Council to develop a national clean air website, CleanAir.ie, has been a welcome development to date, providing an accessible source of information for businesses and communities in relation to air quality in Ireland. Ensuring that the availability of resources such as this is communicated to businesses and other interested parties is critical, alongside the provision of more tailored, local supports that could potentially be rolled out through local authorities or regional organisations with a wide network of members, such as Chambers of Commerce.

At a local level, Cork City Council has implemented a suite of measures to monitor air quality across the city and raise awareness of the importance of clean air among local communities through initiatives such as CorkAirQuality.ie. Consideration should be given to ensuring sufficient funding and resources for other local authorities across the country to replicate a similar monitoring system. The expansion of air quality monitoring infrastructure at a national level as part of the strategy to date is welcome in this regard.

Existing monitoring and awareness campaigns should also be expanded over the lifetime of the next strategy to ensure air quality considerations are further integrated in local policymaking and development plans and are a focus of communications campaigns targeted towards the general public, as well as specific audiences, such as the business community. For example, holding air quality workshops within local communities or deploying air quality monitoring systems to measure the impact of traffic layout changes or other developments, could be considered.

Given the number of actions from the existing strategy still progressing through the implementation phase, ensuring clear and achievable delivery timelines for all actions contained in the updated strategy should be a priority. Government departments and state agencies with responsibility for various actions should be clearly identified and supported insofar as possible to ensure a coordinated approach to implementation.

Cork Chamber looks forward to the publication of the updated Clean Air Strategy in due course and to supporting related activities across Cork's business community where possible.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cathal McSweeney', written in a cursive style.

Cathal McSweeney

Director of Public and International Affairs