

Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU)  
The Exchange,  
Belgard Square North,  
Tallaght,  
Dublin 24.

23<sup>rd</sup> February 2026

**Re: Uisce Éireann's Non-domestic and Trade Effluent Tariff Framework**

To whom it concerns,

Cork Chamber welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the public consultation on Uisce Éireann's Non-domestic and Trade Effluent Tariff Framework.

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.

Investing in the maintenance and upgrade of water and wastewater services is a key priority for Cork Chamber members, supporting future economic and population growth by ensuring the resilience and adaptability of critical water infrastructure. With significant population growth projected for the coming decades in the Cork region, it is essential that the development of water and wastewater services keeps pace with population growth, as well as making provision for future expansion and new connections.

While we recognise the importance of ensuring sufficient funding for Uisce Éireann to enable the investment in water services required over the coming years, it is critical that businesses are not adversely impacted by a disproportionate increase in tariffs. The cost of doing business in Ireland remains a key concern for Cork's business community, and indeed firms operating across the country. It is essential that proposed tariffs are considered within the broader framework of cost burdens affecting businesses. Given recent developments such as the introduction of pension auto-enrolment, many

businesses are facing increased cost pressures in 2026, which could be exacerbated by increased tariffs.

In July 2025, the CRU published its decision on Uisce Éireann's Non-domestic Tariff Framework, increasing existing water and wastewater tariff rates by 9.8%, with this increase coming into effect in October. This represented a significant increase in tariffs for many businesses; businesses alone should not be required to shoulder the burden of water tariffs.

The cumulative impact of such tariff increases, and legislative changes, is a particular challenge for many SMEs, who face considerable increases in their operating costs, coupled with increased resourcing requirements in many instances to enable compliance with new regulations.

The critical funding required for Uisce Éireann to make the necessary investments in water and wastewater infrastructure should be facilitated through sufficient capital allocations from government in the first instance, recognising the importance of this investment to support government's broader priorities in areas like housing and economic development. The allocation of additional capital for Uisce Éireann to accelerate housing development, for example, is a welcome move. Multi-annual funding certainty is vital to facilitate the timely execution of Uisce Éireann's planned major infrastructure projects, and would also ensure greater certainty for local authorities, planning authorities, developers and the business community in their future planning.

Moves to harmonise trade effluent charging arrangements are a welcome step, one which will provide more certainty for non-domestic and trade customers. Recognition of the importance of transition arrangements is also welcome and will help to mitigate uncertainty and business disruption for customers moving to the tariff structure, and the proposed transition period of four years to 2030 is to be welcomed.

With regard to the CRU's proposal to cap the annual bills of customers eligible for the transition period using a percentage of the bill that they would pay under cost-reflective rates, it is vital that steps are taken to ensure that these bills do not represent an undue increase for customers during the transition period, particularly in the year following the entry into force of the new arrangements. Consideration should be given to a mid-transition period review of the implementation of new harmonised charges to identify any customers who may have faced a disproportionate increase in bills and enable the CRU and Uisce Éireann to implement measures to mitigate such disproportionate increases going forward. Customers should also be given sight of how their new bills could look without the proposed cap, enabling them to prepare sufficiently for the end of the transition period.

The CRU's recommendation to instruct Uisce Éireann to provide an expanded programme of communications and supports targeted towards trade effluent customers

in advance of, and during, the period of transition arrangements is also welcome. Ongoing engagement with impacted customers is vital to understand the true impact of any significant increases in bills, and to monitor the impact on customers in the period following the introduction of the new tariff framework in October 2026. Consideration could also be given to targeted webinars or workshops to support affected customers in particular sectors or industries.

Furthermore, the proposed tariff application rules, which would see trade effluent customers classified based on their annual consumption and business activity is also welcome. It is critical that this classification of customers remains fair and balanced, with particular consideration given to SMEs who may be unduly impacted by a disproportionate customer classification. Consideration should also be given to enhanced supports for businesses seeking to reduce the volume of their trade effluent in order to reduce their bills. Such a mechanism could also result in broader environmental benefits.

While final tariff rates have yet to be published, impacted businesses have expressed concern that the proposed changes to the scale and structure of the revised charges will likely result in a significant increase in tariff costs for many. Ensuring that the new tariff structure remains fair and proportionate must be prioritised, and ongoing engagement with affected customers, as well as close monitoring of customers' new bills, should be undertaken throughout the transition period.

It is imperative that impacted customers are given as much advance notice as possible of the increases in tariff rates they can expect to see when the new framework is implemented in October.

Cork Chamber looks forward to seeing the publication of final tariff rates in Q3 following the final determination on Revenue Control 4 in Q2 2026.

Yours sincerely,



Cathal McSweeney

Director of Public and International Affairs