



Limerick CHAMBER

Committed to your business needs



Election Manifesto 2016



Limerick Chamber is the largest business representative body in the Mid-West region, representing almost 500 companies who cumulatively support the employment of 50,000 people.

Our members and businesses across the Limerick region are committed to leading change and working with government to facilitate economic growth, job creation and sustainable economic expansion in our city/region.

The cooperation and collaboration that is happening in Limerick is generating a sense of excitement and belief; differentiating us from our rivals. This commitment by business leaders, academics and stakeholders will continue to drive growth.

However, there is a requirement by this region for government policies which will support and enhance our local achievements to ensure a sustainable future for the businesses and citizens of our great region; utilising our unique position as an urban capital strategically located mid-way along the Western seaboard. The business community ask that government work with us to deliver the necessary environment to ensure continued success for Limerick and the region. To facilitate this, the business community have 3 asks:



**MAKE LIMERICK
AN ATTRACTIVE
INVESTMENT
LOCATION**



**INVEST IN
CONNECTING
LIMERICK**



**IMPLEMENT
POLICIES
WHICH
ATTRACT &
RETAIN TALENT**



1 MAKE LIMERICK AN ATTRACTIVE INVESTMENT LOCATION

Limerick is strategically located mid-way along the Atlantic Corridor. There are almost half a million people within a 60 minute drive. We are recognised as a top ten cities in which to invest in Europe. We have a student population in excess of 20,000 across three Higher Education Institutes producing 6,000 graduates per year. We have an urban population of 100,000 people and almost 50% of our population is under 35 years of age.

Limerick is proving itself as an attractive location for globally mobile investments with over 6,000 jobs created by multinational, indigenous firms and start-ups in the past 36 months.

We are leading a period of transformation with capital investment projects valued in excess of €1bn currently being undertaken by public and private entities across the City and County; our newly amalgamated local authority is delivering vision and direction for our region; the newly formed Shannon Group continues to post growth; Shannon Foynes Port company have announced a series of capital investment projects; while our third level institutions continue to prove their flexibility and adaptability in meeting emerging industry skills needs and investing in innovative research.

Businesses are playing their part in driving and supporting the attractiveness of the region as an attractive investment location. Government policies must complement this work to deliver a globally competitive fiscal environment with the necessary social infrastructures in place.

International competitiveness

Central to Limerick's success is Ireland's position globally as a competitive location. With Ireland currently ranked 11th in the OECD 32 'Doing Business' report; Limerick

Chamber would like to see Ireland continue to increase its competitiveness and enter the top 3. Rising labour costs and Ireland's ability to attract and retain talent are key threats to our competitiveness and impact greatly on both SMEs and MNCs.

Ireland's next government must commit to:

- maintaining Ireland's **12.5%** Corporate Tax Rate
- showing leadership by exercising **restraint** on policies which increase employment costs and **erode competitiveness**; particularly in relation to **pay increases**





Social Infrastructure

Investment in social infrastructures is crucial in supporting Limerick's economic growth. In this regard, Limerick maximised the opportunities the designation of National City of Culture delivered in 2014 and are committed to enhancing and investing in our cultural infrastructures.

Limerick was recently identified as the most affordable place to buy a home out of 367 cities. However Limerick's recent successes in attracting inward investment are resulting in a lack of supply in the private housing market. This will ultimately drive wage demands, reduce consumer spending and hinder FDI; threatening to undermine our region's locational competitive advantage. Government policies need to address the national housing crisis that is emerging across the country by implementing policies which support residential developments without introducing incentives for developer.

Limerick's reputation has been transformed in recent years primarily through the provision of additional Gardaí and resources to tackle serious crime. On-going investment is needed to provide adequate resources and manpower for Limerick and ensure our reputation as a globally competitive location which is a safe location in which to do business and live continues to strengthen.

Ireland's next government must commit to:

- Introduce a suite of measures which support an **increase** in the **supply of housing**
- **Investment into** the healthcare facility at **University Hospital Limerick** to create a regional **Centre of Excellence** in medical care
- Support for the development of a **private hospital facility** in Limerick
- Increase the number of **Gardaí**





2 INVEST IN CONNECTING LIMERICK

Investment in energy, transport and communications infrastructure is central to the future growth of Ireland's economy and society. At 1.6% of GDP, current government spending on capital investment projects is not sufficient to support our growing economy into the next decade, and falls well below OECD guidelines of 4%. Increased government spending on capital projects is essential in facilitating growth. Infrastructure is a requirement if sustainable long-term growth is to continue; our increasing population trends further exasperate the urgency for such investment. Fiscal policies focused on increases in current expenditure may be popular but they do not provide for long-term growth and Limerick Chamber urges caution at such policies.



Limerick Chamber calls on government to deliver greater ambition, long term planning and strategic thinking in investing in Limerick's physical and social infrastructure.

Ireland needs a transparent methodology in place which provides clear guidelines on strategic priority investments. Central to this is a robust National planning Framework to ensure that investment and infrastructure plans are implemented in the context of best planning that delivers Functioning Urban Regions (FURs).

Ireland's next government must commit to:

- Increased **Capital Investment** spending on **Physical Infrastructures** to bring Ireland **in-line with OECD averages** and thereby delivering the following

- *Realignment of the Rosbrien M7/ N18 interchange; allowing direct access into Limerick City Centre and alleviating bottlenecks in residential areas*
- *Monies to complete the Northern Distributor Route*
- *Inter-urban motorway connectivity between Limerick and Cork(M20)*
- *The Limerick-Foynes Road*
- *The Adare by-pass*

- Continued investment in **Smarter Travel initiatives**
- Rollout of **National Broadband Plan** with no further budgetary cuts
- Increased investment in our **water infrastructure** to **increase capacity** for both residential and industrial use



3 IMPLEMENT POLICIES WHICH SEEK TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN TALENT

Education

Skills shortages are growing as our recovery develops and this creates a challenge for our education and training system to ensure that our future skills needs are addressed. Ireland needs focused investment in education and skills, particularly STEM, and a greater focus on training to address the skills needs of the Irish labour market.

Innovative industry-led initiatives in Limerick are delivering talent in a timely and efficient manner. Government supports which would facilitate the longevity of such initiatives are necessary.

Finally, employees of businesses across the region are struggling to find places for their children within the current education system at both primary and secondary level. Investment into increasing the capacity of schools across the region needs to continue.

Ireland's next government must commit to:

- Increases investment for the **Higher Education Authority** to support our **Third Level** institutions in delivering world class talent and research
- **Funding** to support **skills talent solutions** being driven by industry in the region
- Increase capital spending for the provision of **additional primary** and **secondary** education **capacity** and **facilities**

Support for Start-ups & Entrepreneurs

Government plays a vital role in creating an environment which supports businesses as they seek to expand, grow and create jobs. 97% of all businesses in Ireland are SMEs; these indigenous businesses provide a solid foundation for growth and job creation in Ireland's. They generate wealth, pay taxes and create jobs; and yet they do not receive sufficient recognition or support. The Irish tax structure does not incentivise our small business owners and entrepreneurs to take risks, grow or succeed. The attractiveness of our taxation system is essential as we seek to attract globally mobile entrepreneurs to invest and do business in Ireland.

The attractiveness and competitive proposition that urban cities like Limerick offers need to be supported by government policies which address the anomalies in relation to the taxation and social security net treatment of entrepreneurs and the self-employed.





Ireland's next government must commit to:

- Delivering **Full Equality** in the **Taxation** treatment of the **Self-Employed**
- Introduction of **Social Protection Net** of the **Self-Employed**

Taxation Measures

A threat to Ireland's future economic stability and growth is to repeat mistakes of the past in terms of narrowing the tax base. Following Budget 2016, 31% of all income earners in Ireland are now outside of the tax net. This is neither prudent nor progressive fiscal planning. It is not sustainable and the entire system needs to be re-examined. Current increases in exchequer returns are driven by corporate tax collections; government need to learn from past mistakes when we income was overly reliant on transactional property taxes.

Without addressing the narrow tax base, the marginal tax rates for those in employment will remain to be prohibitive and continue to deter internationally mobile people from choosing Limerick, or Ireland, as a location in which to supply their skills and talent.

Ireland's next government must commit to:

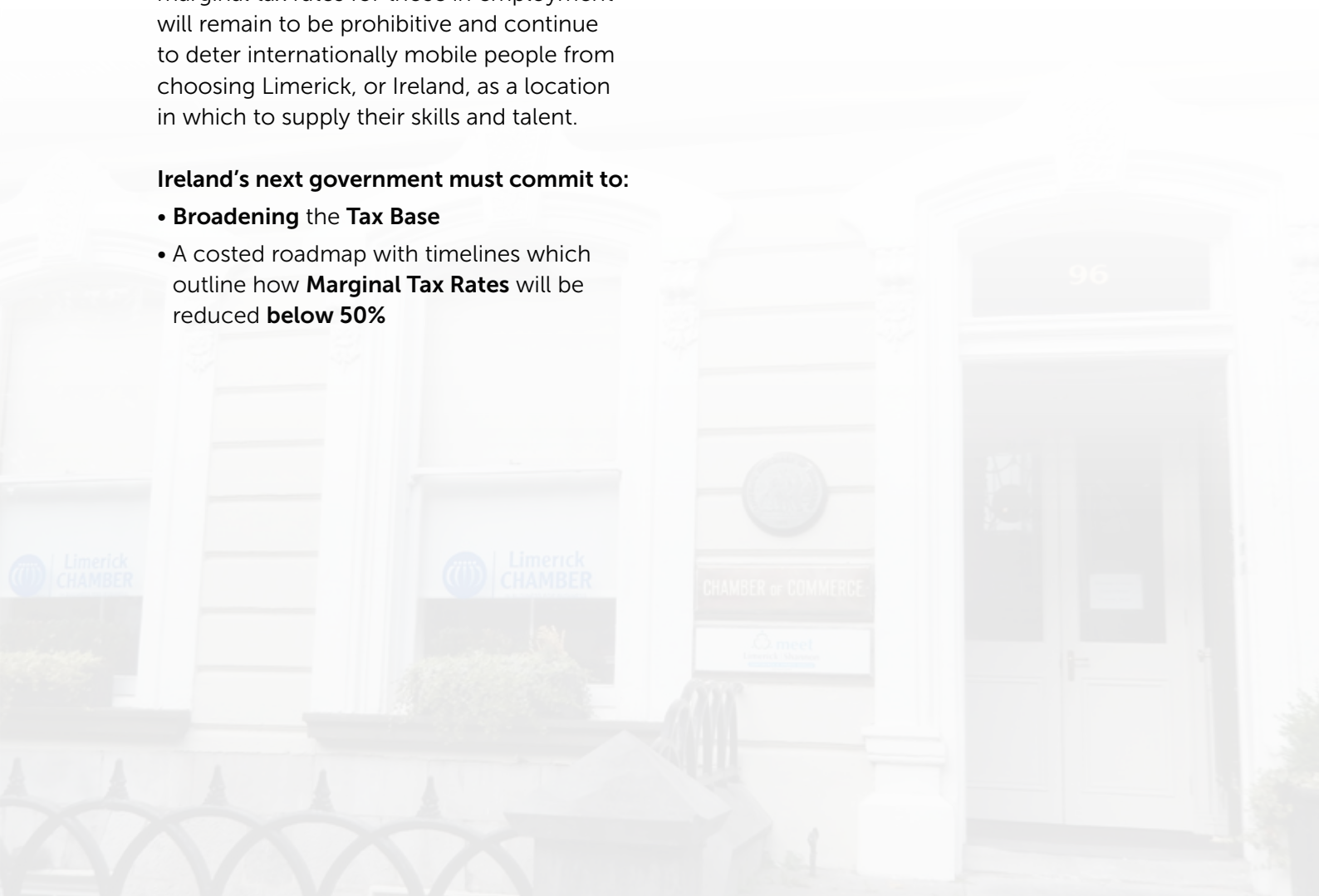
- **Broadening the Tax Base**
- A costed roadmap with timelines which outline how **Marginal Tax Rates** will be reduced **below 50%**

Childcare

Limerick Chamber considers the provision of affordable, accessible and high-quality childcare services a matter of critical importance for Ireland's economic future. The cost of childcare in Ireland is over 20% above the OECD average as a percentage of family incomes. The next government need to bring Government annual investment in early childhood education in line with UNICEF guidelines of 1%. While the benefits to families of affordable childcare are obvious, the positive economic and social impacts must not be ignored.

Ireland's next government must commit to:

- Investment in an **effective Childcare Strategy** to support our future economic growth and increase Labour Market Participation rates





Limerick CHAMBER

Committed to your business needs



CONNECTED NETWORK

- Giving access to over 2,000 people across the region
- Offer 80+ events attended by >2,000



Largest business network in the Midwest with almost 500 members



LOBBYING

- 15 submissions on national and regional issues
- 100+ representation meetings



TRAINING

- Provide training to over 600 people across 1,600 training days accessed by 245 companies
- Upskill over 100 jobseekers



CONNECT WITH US GET CONNECTED

- 4,661 Twitter followers
- 1,066 Facebook Likes
- 1,000 Linked In Connections
- Quarterly magazine
- Bi-weekly ezine



BUSINESS BUILDER

- Start-up offering includes >80 Mentorship Sessions & >50 Training Days
- Enterprise training supports 35 businesses p.a.

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