



**Limerick CHAMBER**

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# **Northern Distributor Road**

**Submission  
to  
Limerick City and County Council**

**24th March 2017**

## **Introduction**

Limerick Chamber represents over 500 businesses in Limerick City, Limerick County, Shannon and South East Clare and is the largest chamber in the Mid-West region. The Chamber welcomes the call for Submission in relation to the proposed Northern Distributor Road. Limerick Chamber's view is that in the long term, the regional cities will play a key role in developing a counterbalance to Dublin and will support the regional development of their hinterlands. As such it is vital that Limerick has the necessary infrastructure to grow and development.

The forthcoming National Planning Framework is firmly focused on developing our regional cities for supporting future economic growth. While Limerick has been very successful in recent years in attracting investment and growing our economic base, it is imperative that we have sufficient infrastructure to continue this trend and act as a counterbalance to Dublin. The Northern Distributor Road is a vital piece of infrastructure necessary for the development of Limerick City and supporting its wider hinterland. Inappropriate road capacity gives rise to suppressed economic activity, increased congestion, longer journey times and safety concerns for road users. The NDR will address each of these issues for the betterment of the Limerick City region.

## **A Catalyst for Jobs Growth and Balanced Regional Development**

The Northern Distributor Road could act as a catalyst for further development in our city and region. The proposed road provides a significant improvement in connectivity by improving accessibility into the city centre, business parks, the education institutes and Shannon Airport, all of which is crucial in attracting in and sustaining investment.

A significant proportion of education and employment opportunities are concentrated in the East and South of the city. The population of Limerick needs easy access to these employment and educational opportunities. The NDR allows this by integrating the north of Limerick more conveniently with the N18 and N7; as well as allowing easy access for those in the east of Limerick access employment areas in the west of Limerick and vice versa.

Without improvements in the road network there will be limited capacity for growth within the NTP or University of Limerick. An inability to develop the NTP will have serious implications in terms of Limerick's ability to attract FDI with knock on implications for job opportunities for our current population of workers as well as future graduates.

The NTP is the largest business park under the remit of the IDA in Limerick and has a significant amount of land which can be developed. Under the Action Plan for Jobs, the IDA intends to develop a 55,000 square foot office block on the site. Of course, any potential development within the NTP will be subject to a planning permission process which will take account of the receiving road network. As the current road network is suffering capacity

and safety constraints the prospect of further development of the NTP is likely to be curtailed.

### **Lost Economic Contributions**

In the event that development within the NTP is curtailed, this would have serious implications for the local economy. A development of the scale proposed by the IDA would have substantial benefits for Limerick City and County Council and the local business. In terms of the former, a large office development of this nature would result in a significant contribution in terms of commercial rates paid by the tenants on the site, while local authority development contributions would be made to LCCC as a result of the construction activity. A development of the scale proposed by the IDA would also result in a number of construction jobs within the local economy and further support jobs once completed.

It is estimated that an office block of circa 55,000 square feet would accommodate approximately 550 direct employees. Furthermore, the activities of the enterprises would further support employment in the wider economy as they would source goods and services from local suppliers (known as an indirect impact) and as their employees spend wages and salaries locally (known as induced impact). Based on similar type schemes elsewhere, it is estimated that in the region of 700 indirect and induced jobs could be supported from such a development. This would suggest an additional 1250 jobs could be supported locally in Limerick from such a scheme.

Any potential constraint to such development needs to be addressed if the local Limerick economy wishes to capture such benefits of which the NDR is the most pressing.

### **Supporting Skills**

Limerick is also very fortunate to have three third level centres of education which is a key factor in attracting FDI. More and more collaboration between centres of education is becoming critical to building the skills base of the region, as is collaboration between education and industry. The centres of education are critical to educating our future generations of workers and supporting the University of Limerick, Limerick Institute of Technology and Mary Immaculate should be a priority for our elected representatives.

The Limerick Institute of Technology has identified the Northern Distributor Road as key in terms of improving access to their current campus as well as their new campus at Coonagh, while University of Limerick have also stated it will be important to expansion plans at the University. Both the University and Institute of Technology are key factors in increasing educational attainment which has knock on implications for the development of indigenous industry, the expansion of current business and in attracting more high value foreign investment. Future generations must be supported in their education and have the opportunity to continue to live and work in Limerick.

## **Capacity Constraints are posing Safety Concerns for our Residents**

Capacity constraints have been an issue on many routes into Limerick City for some time. It is known that much of the traffic into the City is merely transiting to and from employment and education centres outside of the city centre. This is resulting in additional congestion for those road users who wish to access the city centre for business and leisure. As our economic recovery gathers pace, it is inevitable that traffic volumes will increase further, acting as a constraint on revitalising the city centre. Likewise, inappropriate road capacity in the vicinity of the National Technology Park (NTP) and the University of Limerick (UL) is resulting in significant delays and posing serious safety concerns. At evening peak, traffic volumes are resulting in up to 40 minute delays exiting UL and up to 20 mins exiting the NTP and onto the R445 – the old Dublin to Limerick Road at Annacotty. While in the morning peak, significant queueing from the Mackey Roundabout onto the Motorway is posing serious safety concerns for motorists.

Traffic modelling undertaken for the proposed NDR suggests that it will relieve traffic pressure on the river crossings in the city centre and further address congestion issues around the Mackey Roundabout. Not only will these improvements substantially benefit commuters with reduced travel time and cost but also will improve the safety standards of roads. In particular, the current practice of rat runs through residential areas would be reduced as access to the N7 and N18 would be improved and thus improve safety for all road users on local roads. Likewise, reduced traffic in the city centre will potentially allow road space to be reallocated to improve pedestrian and cycling facilities and could potentially reduce the number of accidents, particularly those involving pedestrians. Furthermore, the proposed designated cycle and walkways on the NDR will encourage more active travel as safety for these vulnerable road users will be improved.

## **Regenerating our City**

Many of the key factors necessary for successful cities require critical investment in the area of transport links. In the context of Limerick City, the Fitzgerald report identified the need to improve transport links as a key ingredient in the regeneration of the deprived parts of the city. It is well recognised that the social and economic exclusion experienced by some residents arise from their physical isolation from employment and education opportunities and other services elsewhere in the city. Ending this isolation by investing in better transport is a key element in the regeneration of the city. Although the residents of Moyross will be the most obvious beneficiaries of the integration effects arising from the road it will generate similar benefits for all residents of North Limerick city. By improving connectivity across the city, the road will also support all areas of the city in achieving its potential.

## **The Future of Limerick is at Stake**

Limerick Chamber view any further delay in the progression of this road will limit the scope for future growth of the city resulting in further isolation of local communities and suppressed economic activity within Limerick. The Chamber is calling on our elected representative to act now to solve the problems that exist today and plan for the growth of our City Region. Limerick Chamber urges a vote in favour of amending the Development Plan for Limerick by including the route corridor. Delaying the progression of this road will limit the scope for future economic growth of Limerick.

**Ends.**

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