

Launch of Galway Chamber of Commerce Economic Plan for Galway City and County
10th November 2014

Mayor Comhairle Catrach na Gaillimhe Councillor Donal Lyons, An Taoiseach Enda Kenny agus dhaoine uaisle. Ta me thar a bheith sasta bheith anseo libh inniu, agus be mhaith liom, ar dtus baire, ar son Cummann Tractala na Gaillimhe faithe a chuir romhaidh go leir.

There is no doubt that on many levels this has been a good year.

Whether it is rising tax receipts, rising employment, or tourist numbers – almost without exception, and may I say against incredibly odds, the national economic indicators are all moving in a positive direction. An Taoiseach, your Government, local Government, Business owners together with all the Irish people are working hard to return this country back to economic solvency and growth and may I say we as a Nation can all be proud of our efforts and success. As we all know in the West and North West of Ireland the critical challenge now is to ensure that this economic success is spread and felt right across Ireland and thus ensure that the BMW Area doesn't continue to have the highest unemployment, highest emigration, and lowest income per capita.

These are the compelling reasons why Chamber immediate past President, Jim Fennell set up an Economic Development Committee under the Chairmanship of Mike Devane and his hard working committee of We are today launching the fruits of their hard work and deliberations. The strategy is to increase the West's GVA to the National Average by 2020 and this will require a growth rate of 5.4%pa in the whole of the West of Ireland. Galway's future is dependent on its capacity to be a major driver of development within a thriving region. One of the key proposals is the development of the Western Economic Corridor ("WEC"). This initiative creates a vision to develop the relationships and structures required to develop a broader integrated Regional strategy from Limerick to Sligo.

Some of the key principles that underline Chamber's economic Plan for Galway City & County are:-

1. Change: The future of the region needs a radical new approach to economic development. Major new promotion of indigenous enterprise is required, together with full exploitation of resources and assets particularly the Blue economy. In 2012 the West had 10.8% of all jobs in IDA backed industries and 7% of full-time jobs in Enterprise Ireland enterprises. We need productive job creation and full exploitation of our resources on an unprecedented scale.
2. WEC – the WEC aims to create a "City" effect of greater scale, larger skilled workforce, significant knowledge and research infrastructure and a rich and diverse hinterland. Its Charter outlines common sectoral ambitions and its objective to attract common and larger investment to the Region
3. Dynamic Cities – The BMW Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020 Consultation Draft commenting on hub and gateways of the spatial strategy states (p.54) "designated urban growth centres and gateways do not have the capacity to be effective drivers of regional and national economic development". The collaboration proposed in the WEC aims at addressing this fundamental weakness. Galway City can be the leader of this new collaborative approach.

The Chamber Plan also specifically recommends eight development initiatives aimed at meeting a GVA growth target of 5.4%pa. These initiatives aim to embrace public policy and private commerce to create jobs, businesses, prosperity and wealth and to promote equity and balance between the development of the City and County of Galway. The eight specific projects are –

On our Outer Ring it is proposed:-

1. New City Enterprise Park (Mervue)
2. Airport Enterprise park
3. Outer Business Parks (Parkmore, Oranmore and Galway County)

We also endorse Barry O'Leary's outgoing CEO IDA call for significant investments in Advance Factories – Industry is not prepared to wait 2/3yrs to complete Irish Planning Process.

And for Galway City the Plan proposes:-

- Innovation District
- Covered food and Craft Market
- Galway Conference, Performance and Exhibition Centre
- Port Development
- Medieval City and old Harbour District development.

Each of these are designed to add vibrancy to our city centre. They will provide significant employment opportunities and draw significant extra visitors to our city. We suggest that the Innovation District be the Nun's Island area – think of what it would add to the city if it was turned into a mini Grand Canal. The proposed Cover Food and craft market would provide an outlet for our wonderful local produced foodstuffs and crafts and be on the same scale as The English Market and The Milk Market in Limerick. The establishment of a Conference & Visual Arts Centre is a must if we are to win the European City of Culture 2020. I commend Mayor Donal Lyons and his fellow councillors for pushing forward on this project but they cannot do it on their own and it will require substantial Government support similar to what the proposed National Conference Centre in Cork has just received. The Port Development will be covered off extensively by Declan Dooley and his team in the second half of today's proceedings. So I will confine my remarks to saying there are compelling reasons why this Port Development must go ahead (1) In the recent budget Minister Noonan stated that the Government wanted to realise the full potential of Ireland's "Blue Economy" and projected a 4% of GDP should be derived from it by 2030. 70% of Ireland's ocean is off the West Coast and Galway is the natural place to realise that Blue Economy potential. My 2nd Point is that "Doing Nothing is not a option" the max ship size the existing Port will take is 5k tons and all new ships being built are a far greater size. In addition Commercial and Cruise Ships are not in this modern age going to continue to wait for up to ten hours for the Port gates to open. Therefore "Doing nothing" means there will be no commercial port in Galway in 20 or less years. There has been a commercial port in Galway for nearly a thousand years and each generation invested a bit more in the Port, none more so that in 1900's you had the huge "Nemo" investment and in the 20th century the building of the Harbour as we currently know it .Just like the family farm, each generation is the custodian of that port and there is an onus on us to hand it down to the next generation enhanced and more vibrant than we received it. And finally the great prize for Galway is that if the new port is developed it releases the medieval port to be used for leisure and tourist purposes and integrated with the Medieval City. There are many other parts to the Economic Development Plan. It is up on Galway Chamber web site and I would encourage you all to read it and gives us your feedback.

Finally can I thank you An Taoiseach for attending this launch. You have done a great job in restoring the health of our National Economy, and I know that you genuinely want to see the fruits of that extended throughout the West of Ireland. May I commend to you the Galway Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Plan as a Blue Print and we are more than willing to engage

with whoever you think fit to elaborate on it.

Go raibh míle maith agat go léir go mór!