

Business link

Ennis Chamber Bulletin

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YOUR NEW PRESIDENT IS LOOKING FOR YOU - ENNIS CHAMBER MEMBERS TOLD



"The members of Ennis Chamber are the most important people in our organisation. Yet, I feel that too many members feel detached and don't participate as if they didn't have a sense of ownership or belonging." That's according to John Madden of the Temple Gate Hotel who has been elected President of Ennis Chamber.

Addressing members at the Chamber AGM, John said that reaching out to members is one of his top priorities. "I intend to use every opportunity to meet and engage with you, especially with our newer and younger members. It is really not acceptable that so many business people in Ennis are not members of the Chamber. There are too many young and successful entrepreneurs in Ennis who don't see the Chamber as relevant. We must change that," he said.

In his first address the new President called for balanced development between the heart of the old town and the new periphery so that the overall total package attracts more people for business, shopping, sport and leisure.

He congratulated Clare County Board of the GAA on what he described as "their ambitious plan" for Cusack Park but added that it is entirely a matter for the GAA to decide on what they consider best for Gaelic games in Clare.

"However, should they decide to move from the existing Cusack Park to a site at the edge of town, this would leave the way open for a major commercial development that I believe would immeasurably strengthen the business heart of Ennis," John Madden said. He described a new 21st century state of the art stadium at the edge of town as a wonderful resource for Ennis that would drive business and tourism," he added.

The new President said an integrated shopping and leisure precinct of the future could include a pedestrianised "old town" linked to a new shopping centre on the former Cusack Park with leisure spaces - such as boardwalks - on the banks of the River Fergus offering an oasis of calm and relaxation.

John said he looked forward to the completion of the new Ennis by-pass but warned Chamber members that the by-pass will not solve all problems. "Just because towns in the greater Dublin area have benefited from by-passes doesn't automatically mean that the heart of Ennis will be sustained. Maintaining and developing a vibrant attractive town centre in Ennis is a core value for Ennis Chamber. If this means the pedestrianisation of key streets, then so be it," he added.

The new President warmly welcomed the Ryanair announcement of new routes for Shannon Airport and the promise of 1.7m passengers per annum from next September.

"The problem is that these new tourists are not staying here - at least not in sufficient numbers. That is largely our fault. I welcome the recent work of Clare County Council in facilitating the development of a "Clare brand" in co-operation with various tourism industry interests and tourism promotion bodies. I also welcome the decision by the Council to place suitable Clare signage in and around Shannon Airport," he added.

He also announced that Ennis Chamber hopes to organise a special Tourism Forum later in the year. The theme will be "Clare Tourism in Coming Times" and key industry players will be invited.

ISSUE
SPRING /
SUMMER
2006

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**Ennis
CHAMBER**
IN BUSINESS FOR BUSINESS

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2006

The AGM of Ennis Chamber was held on April 3rd with the following Elected to the Executive:
John Madden, Temple Gate Hotel – President
John Quinlivan, Shannon Development – Vice President
Tony Barrett, AIB Treasurer
Margaret Neylon, Secretary

Executive Members include

John Galvin, The Clare Champion
Deirdre Brady, Ennis Supply
Donagh Cronin, Bank of Ireland
John Devitt, Panalok
Michael Evans, The Ennis Bookshop
Niall Garvey, Niall C. Garvey Accountants
Ray Kenny, Icon Business Solutions
Oliver Moylan, The Ennis Cash Company
Pat O'Hanlon, Ulster Bank
Terence Mangan, Mangan Brothers

Membership Rates 2006

No of Employees	Annual Subscription Rate
1 – 5	€250
6 – 25	€360
26 – 50	€440
51 – 250	€595
251+	€660
Corporate	€2,100 – includes table of 10 at the President's Dinner and a team of four in the Golf Classic



What Ennis Chamber does

- It's a network that people listen to
- Lobbies local authority and government on business issues
- Strives to keep town and county a competitive location for business
- Keeps a real business agenda up-front in local and national politics

CHAMBER BRANDING

Ennis Chamber of Commerce, has joined a new unified national Chamber identity and changed its title to "Ennis Chamber". Ennis Chamber is the brand name of Ennis Chamber of Commerce, a company limited by guarantee, which remains the legal entity.

The new Logo has five curved figures representing a meeting or network of people, ideas, cultures and knowledge. The symbol represents the ethos being in business to assist the business community on a local, regional, national and international level. The gold stand reflects the original function of Chambers as stamping official documents and this underpins the attitude that a document with a Chamber seal of approval is legitimate. The tagline "In Business for Business" has now been incorporated into the logo for the Chambers Network.

Local Chambers undertaking vital work for business is the central theme of the new branding. The relevance to potential business partners and government agencies is underpinned in the new approach. There is an increased clarity and uniformity of message throughout the Chamber Network.



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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

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Ennis Chamber Joins with Businesses And Tourism Interests in calling for action to ensure Maximum benefits from Open Skie

The Government has made a decision to embrace open skies and indicated that in this scenario Airlines will have the right to fly direct to Dublin without any regulation in respect to the use of Shannon.

Business leaders in the Mid West and West accept that open skies is inevitable and will in all probability lead to increased traffic to Ireland. However they believe that the full impact of the decision and its impact on the western regions needed to be quantified and actions identified that would maximize the potential benefits.

Ennis Chamber along with Shannon Chamber ,IBEC Mid- West and IBEC West surveyed up to 700 members to quantify their priorities for a sustainable economic future for Shannon Airport and the Western Regions

The key finding of the survey was:

The Western regions will experience positive benefits provided investment is committed and delivered by Government to ensure an even distribution of economic growth. Any failure or delay to invest will not only hamper the delivery of the potential benefits but will undermine the huge developments of the past 50 years.

Key points made within the report are :

- Shannon is the gateway to the Western Regions and delivers over 700,000 American visitors .
- Aer Lingus accounts for 400,000 of these
- Transatlantic traffic is the most profitable element of the business mix
- The Airport is key to the up market tourism product
- The Airport is the key driver of industrial investment in the regions and over 200,000 jobs.
- The Airport and its services are essential to ongoing investment and employment
- Tourism will continue to grow but access is essential
- Tourism supports 39,000 jobs and revenues of €1.3 billion

The report of the Business Community is entitled Embracing The Challenges of Open Skies and sets out the following priorities:

- Infrastructure investment must be accelerated with such projects as:
- Ennis By pass completed
- Dual carriageway to Galway delivered
- 4th River crossing of the Shannon .
- Adare bypass and linkages to N69
- Travel time target of 80 minutes Limerick to Galway
- Rail development between the South and Sligo must proceed
- Rail link to Shannon is critical

Focused development and investment in infrastructure will increase the Airports catchment area within 90 min drive time to 650,000 people

- Broadband accessibility must be a given
- A comprehensive 10 year fully costed Marketing budget must be agreed

Essential factors for the Airport are :

- 1. Fully independent Board**
- 2. Debt free with essential investment capital**
- 3. Year round connectivity to the USA**
- 4. Aggressive 10 year capital investment plan**
- 5. AerRianta International to be a core component of Shannon**
- 6. Linkages to Dublin and Regional Airports such as Galway need developing**
- 7. New route development East and West must be prioritized**

Shannon Airport and its regions have a proven track record for innovation and remain confident that they can successfully embrace the opportunities offered by open skies. However **Government must support and address the issues identified** in this report so as to deliver balanced regional growth and progress must be continuously monitored in regards to delivery. Ennis Chamber thanks IBEC for the wonderful commitment and leadership they gave to this initiative.



At the Business Lunch with Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dick Roche in February and a subsequent private meeting, the Ennis Chamber Spatial Hub Sub Committee raised a number of important issues affecting the future development of Ennis:

1) Improved Integration of Local Authority Decision-Making Process.

- Extension of Ennis Town boundaries to create Borough Council status for Ennis to allow the application for vital infrastructural grants.
- In advance of this Clare County Council and Ennis Town Council staff and councillors to agree decisions at Ennis Electoral Area Meetings

2) Rates and Value for Money.

- Commercial Rates in Ennis have increased by over 25% in the past 4 years. Rates should not exceed the rate of inflation. A proportion of the Rates should be ring-fenced for particular business beneficial projects
- Businesses have not seen improvements in service levels since introduction of Better Local Government / Benchmarking. Local Authorities require ISO Certification
- Implementation of the Town Centre Management Regime as committed to in the 2003 Ennis & Environs Development Plan

3) Quin Road to Eastern By-Pass Link.

- Link from N18 Ennis By-Pass to Western Relief Section is an intersection and not access point to Ennis. Require direct access to the N18 Ennis By-Pass at Quin Road. Safeguard land to provide for this.
- Proposal by Clare County Council to develop road through Commercial/Industrial Zone on Quin Road to Skehanagh Roundabout on Western Relief Section of the N18 Ennis By-Pass not a suitable solution to access issue
- Objection to levies collected within Ennis Town boundaries being used outside of its area, for projects such as the Quin Road Link to the Skehanagh Roundabout.

4) Inner and Outer Relief Roads.

- Various Local Authority reports recognise that the Western Relief Section of the By-Pass should be extended from Lahinch Road to Gort Road to link with Tulla Road to Quin Road via the Business Park onto Western Relief Section.
- Widen bridge at Clare Abbey from 4 metres to 10 metres to facilitate Quin Road Business Park link to be privately developed at no cost to the tax payer
- Railway bridges at Tulla Road and Quin Road require upgrading
- Inner Relief Road requires only 100 metres of road (Section E) for completion. Crucial to town infrastructure
- Redevelopment of GAA's Cusack Park should include construction of Section A of Inner Relief Road - from Glór across the River Fergus to New Road

5) Infrastructure

- Water: Fast-tracking of water augmentation for secondary supply - ensure a long-term resource for Ennis as population expected to exceed 35,000 by 2012
- Rail: Create spur rail-link to Shannon, from the Ennis to Limerick line and upgrade Ennis to Galway line. Develop commuter train station at Information Age Park and Clarecastle with Park and Ride Facilities

6) Planning Process

- Formulate Pre Planning Process to work properly by introducing requirements for Planners to record and minute details of pre-planning and other relevant meetings
- Development Levies are often imposed where a minor Change of Use is involved. Development Levies should be capable of being appealed without jeopardising the entire Planning Permission
- Proposed Planning Guidelines must be given status of Planning Regulations if to be taken seriously. Planning Regulations should form basis of External ISO Auditing for the Planning Process.
- In the event of a Planner being reassigned mid-file, s/he should leave a recommendation on file at that stage in order to facilitate External Auditing and consistency in Planning Decision Making

7) Ennis as a Hub Town

- Implementation of National Spatial Strategy assigned to identifiable individual or body to ensure the aims and objectives are pursued
- Ennis Chamber would oversee Project Manager to ensure Mid West Region achieves full potential of Hub and Gateway Towns and Cities

8) Retail Development

- Retail Centres should be facilitated within a town's core and retail warehousing catered for in edge-of-town parks. Planning Guidelines state that retail parks should not be used for products normally traded in the town centre
- Retail Planning Guidelines appear to advantage large retailers in floor-space provision while existing businesses find it difficult to get permission to expand. For sustainable, healthy development of County Clare, a tiered retail structure in hinterlands to the West, East and North of Ennis is necessary
- Town centre business would also like consultation in relation to proposed parking facilities and changes in restrictions within shopping areas

9) Renewable Energy

- Removal of VAT from Renewable Energy fuels, products and services. Carbon Tax Benefits annually preferable to grants, which disrupt market trends
- Private Wind Turbines, including domestic urban areas, should be permitted under strict regulations and allowed to connect to National Grid for back feeding of meters
- Improve AER pricing to allow Wind Farm developers to locate in less intrusive areas and not on elevated sites
- Monitorium on Connection to National Grid by Wind Farms and other Renewable Energy Products to be lifted for the Shannon Region due to the availability of two 400 Kv Transmission Lines direct from Clare to Dublin



RECENT CHAMBER ACTIVITIES

Business After Hours

Business After Hours Networking Nights took place in January at the newly expanded premises of Bank of Ireland with presentations from the hosts, InnFluential Marketing and Clare TimeShare. Another such night was held in March at the new premises of Munster Group, formally the AIB building on Bindon Street. The company outlined its amalgamation of a number of companies to provide Financial, Investment and Property Services.

President's Dinner

The President's Dinner took place in Dromoland Castle on March 10th with Guest of Honour, Minister of State, Sile de Valera. An enjoyable evening was had by all, with a scrumptious meal in elegant surroundings followed by dancing to the lively West Coast Big Band.

St. Patrick's Day Parade

On St Patrick's Day Parade, Ennis Chamber organised clowns, fire artists, magicians, balloon modellers, puppet shows, stilt-walkers and kiddies characters in the afternoon to coincide after the Ennis Town Council Parade and the activities at Glor. The provision of this street entertainment was made possible through generous sponsorship from Ennis Vintners, Ulster Bank, AIB, Bank of Ireland, National Irish Bank and Permanent TSB.

PROMOTE ENNIS: a model for co-operative marketing



As Promote Ennis approaches the anniversary of its launch in June 2005, it is an appropriate time for reflection on what it has achieved.

One of its most significant achievements is that it has demonstrated that a private-public co-operative venture can succeed. It is heartening to see delegates of public bodies such as Ennis Town Council, Shannon Development and Shannon Airport sit down with representatives of over fifty local businesses and agree on hard-nosed marketing objectives.

The action group that has driven the initiative comprises Tom Coughlan, Ennis Town Council; Gwen Culligan, County Boutique; Guy Flouch, New Idiom Marketing [Chairperson]; Mary Gleeson, Old Ground Hotel; Rita McNerney, Ennis Chamber; Eddie Power, Ennis Town Council; John Quinlivan, Shannon Development; and Katie Verling, Glor. The group has met regularly and deserves great credit for their commitment to the town.

Visitennis.ie, the website created by the group, is now developing significant national and international traffic. It is also rocketing to the top of those all important search rankings. With a daily average of some 1200 hits and 100 visits, the site is poised to attract some 3000 visitors next month, with visitor numbers to the site rising every month since its launch last summer. These numbers can be expected to rise significantly as the summer months approach and e-marketing initiatives increase their bite.

The success of the website is particularly important in the context of the demise of www.ennis.ie

Under the guidance of local marketing firm New Idiom, and reflecting current best practice in e-marketing, the success of the website is being driven by e-initiatives that ensure that the site figures highly in web search results when key words are entered in the major search engines. It is certainly a good time to book a button ad on the home page of the site: rates are very low.

Another successful initiative of Promote Ennis is the distinctive yellow Visit Ennis printed guides which are frequently spotted on local streets. Not only are they available locally, in all Shannon Region tourist offices and in the Dublin Tourism Office, but are increasingly being distributed at international events and holiday fairs including Boston, New York, Milwaukee, Stockholm, Belfast and Dublin.

The group also ran an exceptionally successful promotion on RTE, on the Ronan Collins Show, and an on-line promotion with www.pigsback.com. The competition on RTE, for prizes offered by local businesses, attracted some 7200 entries from across the country: a number that astounded even the Ronan Collins Show.

Because membership rates were set low for local businesses, revenue has restricted what even this dynamic group of people can do. The group is currently trying to raise extra revenue to underwrite its planned poster campaign of Ryanair destination airports.

If you want to be part of the drive and determination to make sure Ennis isn't 'by-passed' by national and international visitors, join the group and make a difference.

Guy Flouch, who runs local marketing company New Idiom, can be contacted, as chairperson of Promote Ennis, at info@visitennis.ie

CHAMBERS' RESPONSE TO INDECON REVIEW OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCING

Chambers Ireland has accused the Government of renegeing on its responsibility to provide new funding streams for local authorities or honour its historical undertakings.

Welcoming Indecon's independent analysis and recommendations on Local Government Financing published in early March, Chambers Ireland Chief Executive John Dunne said, "while the underlying analysis in this report is rock-solid, some of the recommendations are too soft. For example, calling for the extension of water charges on an equitable basis is to be commended but excluding principle private dwellings contravene the user pays principle.

"Indecon have identified a projected funding gap meaning that by 2010 additional expenditure of 1-2 bn per annum will be required if service levels are to be maintained. If Government will not provide additional locally based revenue streams as recommended by Indecon, it is unclear how local authorities will meet this significant funding deficit," he added.

"There have been no fewer than 15 articles published on the same topic already – the recommendations of which were largely ignored. The root of the problem is a failure by Government to devise an equitable and adequate basis for funding local authorities. We are disappointed that the Government has, yet again, kicked to touch the introduction of a site-value tax – the most equitable way to ensure adequate funds are directed to local authorities," he argued.

"When the Government abolished rates for domestic and agricultural property, it gave a commitment to make up the resultant shortfall in income. Yet, recent Government policy has increased local authorities; costs and responsibilities while constraining revenue options, leaving them to make up the shortfall through commercial rates and other service charges for businesses. This is unsustainable and this is supported by the Indecon report", he added.

Hilary Haydon, Chair of Chambers Ireland's Ratepayers' Council added "Being realistic, we acknowledge that as long as the Government is enjoying fiscal strength, and as a general election looms, it will be disinclined to introduce a new form of taxation. However, if the Government is queasy about adhering to the 'user/polluter pays' principle, then it must calculate the shortfall and pay that money directly to local authorities to ensure that the business community pays its fair share and no more".



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Now Booking: Chambers Ireland National Business Forum 2006: Taking on the World and Winning

The 2006 Chambers Ireland National Business Forum, in association with Eircom and hosted by Dublin Chamber of Commerce, will take place in the Croke Park Conference Centre on Thursday 11th May.

The theme of this year's conference is "Taking on the World and Winning" and topics outlined for coverage include:

- Case studies on opening new markets abroad
- Creating successful enterprises and brands
- Integrating international workers in Ireland
- Using regulations and taking the correct policy decisions to keep Ireland competitive.

Confirmed speakers for the event include:

- Prof. Niamh Brennan, Smurfit Business School and HSE Board Member,
- Michael Donnelly, Chairman, Growcoro.
- Michael Dwyer, CEO, Pigsback.com,
- Prof. Tom Garvin, Author of "Preventing the Future – Why Ireland Stayed So Poor For So Long",
- Cian Kinsella, Founding CEO of CR2,
- Lainey Keogh, Leading Irish designer,
- Joe Macri, General Manager, Microsoft Ireland and Chair, Small Business Forum,
- Cathal Magee, Eircom.

For further information please contact Susan Grant or Dara Calleary

NOMINATE YOUR LOCAL HERO

Call for entries for upcoming Passion for the World Around Us Award

Ennis Chamber and Vodafone have called for the people of Clare to recognise those who make life in Clare better by nominating them for a *Passion for the World Around Us Award*. Whether they are carers, environmentalists, volunteers or just good citizens who contribute in some other way to the community, they are all eligible for the award.

Ennis Chamber and Vodafone recently joined forces to announce the plan for the *Passion for the World Around Us Awards* for 2006 which will see two individuals and one business honoured for their work with the community in Clare. The nominations will be considered by a local selection panel.

Recipients of the *Passion for the World Around Us Award* will receive a certificate and a specially commissioned, handmade award designed by Irish artist Michele Hannan. The award will be presented in early summer.

Nomination forms are available from Ennis Chamber, local Vodafone stores or via www.vodafone.ie, once completed the forms should be returned to the Chamber. Entries can also be sent via email, to passionawards.ie@vodafone.com, simply send the name of the person or business being nominated, and why they deserve the award. The deadline for entries is Sunday 30th April 2006 and the award will be announced a short time later. Last year the winners included Flan Brennan for the youth group, Kate Browne for her work with animal welfare and foster carer Tina Whelan.

According to Elaine Hurley, Regional and Community Relations Executive with Vodafone Ireland this award offers the chance for unsung heroes to receive the praise they are due. She said, "There are so many people throughout the country who work tirelessly for the good of the community. Whether that is through local voluntary organisations, sporting groups or by developing community resources – their effort deserves to be rewarded."

"The *Passion for the World Around Us Awards* offer these people the chance to be recognised for their good work. However, they can only receive this award and the recognition they deserve if someone else nominates them. So we are urging all the people of Clare to think about who makes their lives better and to put these people forward for an award," she added.

Her sentiments were echoed by Rita McInerney, CEO of Ennis Chamber who said, "The *Passion for the World Around Us Awards* offer an excellent opportunity for the people of Clare to showcase the commitment and dedication to the local area offered by so many of the people who live here. Ennis Chamber is proud to be involved with these awards which provide a unique opportunity to honour our local heroes for the hard work they have put in to making Clare a better place."

