



**Fingal
Chamber**
Advancing business together

FINGAL CHAMBER SUBMISSION TO THE DRAFT FINGAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2023-2029

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Introduction

Fingal Chamber is the accredited Chamber for the entire Fingal region representing over 400 businesses that support 25,000 jobs in the area.

Fingal Chamber is the independent voice of business in Fingal, with members across every town from Balbriggan in the north to Santry in the south, and from Howth in the east to Blanchardstown in the west. The Chamber advocates for business, provides advice, support, referrals, lobbying and represents members to deliver positive change and drive a strong vision for Fingal as the best place for business.

The Chamber also works with Government Ministers, MEPs, the Mayor of Fingal, Fingal County Council and local representatives to deliver pro-business and employment initiatives for the region.

Fingal has major economic assets which includes Dublin Airport and strong representation from the pharmaceutical, agri-food, IT, retail and extended aviation industry.

Context: Fingal Chamber Business Sentiment Survey

Fingal Chamber published the results of its Business Sentiment Survey in February this year.

The survey which focused on business challenges, competitiveness, staff recruitment and retention, flexible and remote work, local Government supports and the outlook for the region, was conducted over a two-week period last month looking at the immediate and short-term issues facing Fingal businesses.

Results of the survey provide a clear mandate for the Chamber to advocate on behalf of its members highlighting the key issues impacting them.

Of the total number of responses received from businesses in the region, 36% were from companies with 50+ employees, while 64% came from businesses ranging from one to 50 employees.

The key findings of the survey indicated that over 40% of businesses in the area said that staff retention and recruitment is their biggest challenge. The survey also showed that the availability of skills and talent (32%) together with short supply of housing (26%) and transport issues (15%), will threaten the future competitiveness of Fingal according to local businesses.

Shortage of housing (26%) and public transport services/traffic congestion were also highlighted as risks to Fingal's competitiveness.

Fingal Chamber's submission to Fingal County Council's Draft Development Plan is set against the backdrop of its Business Sentiment Survey.

It cannot be understated the importance of addressing critical issues such as lack of housing, transport delivery and congestion issues sooner to ensure Fingal and its citizens are best placed to embrace economic, employment and economic growth across the region.

Housing

Fingal Chamber notes the Draft Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029 analysis of the expected population growth of Fingal and that the region is the second most populous local authority in the State.

The Draft Plan states that Fingal is the youngest local authority at 33.8 years and the population of the region is estimated to grow from 296,020 in the 2016 census to 369,000 by 2031. Fingal Chamber notes the DDP has made a calculation that 16,240 homes will be delivered over the lifetime of the 2023-2029 Development Plan with an annual average of 2,700 per annum.

While the provision of large scale housing in the Draft Development Plan is welcomed, there is huge frustration and concern in the business community that the provision of housing is not happening quickly enough and this in turn is impeding Fingal's competitiveness. **Housing must be delivered as a priority to address this serious concern.**

However, there must be a mix of unit types and sizes, and a variety of living accommodation to support varying needs if Fingal is to remain competitive. Multinational businesses in the County are finding it difficult to attract staff to the region due to a severe lack of accommodation.

There is a real danger that Fingal and its economy will lose out because large organisations have found that they can function and operate well with large numbers of staff working from home in their country of origin, especially if suitable accommodation is not available in the Fingal region. This is a huge threat to Fingal's local economy as money earned here is spent elsewhere.

Fingal Chamber notes the Draft Development Plan Policy SPQHP35 on Upper Floor Use above commercial development in town centres and fully supports this. Offering these spaces as residential places will bring vibrancy and economic buoyancy into town centres around the region and Fingal Chamber strongly urges that provision is made to implement this policy without delay.

Fingal Chamber also notes the Draft Development Plan's objective SPQH043 on vacant/derelict sites and while a levy is welcome what is lacking is urgency of action and KPIs to monitor progress.

Transport

Fingal Chamber fully supports Fingal County Council's Active Travel Strategy and the need to change behaviour around transport however this will only be realistically achievable if real and accessible public transport options are open to everyone in every region in the county. This is currently not the case.

Fingal Chamber supports the MetroLink project however the delivery of this project has been in gestation for more than 20 years with millions spent on consultants reports and surveys and not a single sod has been turned to signal its commencement. There is a lack of faith that this project will ever come to fruition as it has been delayed at every hands turn. Fingal Chamber strongly recommends that faith is restored in this project, that work commences without delay and a delivery date is set and adhered to.

While the Chamber supports a more efficient, frequent, sustainable public transport service there needs to be an audit of existing and developing areas currently not served by public transport and prioritised for action.

Fingal Chamber is supportive of the Draft Development Plan's: Policy CMP18 on public transport to support the provision of a high-quality public transportation system that is accessible to all to serve the needs to the county and to enable a significant shift from car-based travel to public transport, however the reality is stark and completely at odds with this policy.

For example the area from Stockhole Lane down to Clonshaugh Road has been completely neglected in previous development plans. Not only is this area not currently served by public transport, it is also suffering from a lack of infrastructure development with no public walkway or lighting making it an extremely dangerous place and not at all conducive to walking and cycling.

Almost 1,000 people work in the Stockhole Lane/Clonshaugh Road as the area has a large nursing home, two hotels and a large filling station. One hotel is home to 30 Ukranian refugees while the other hotels is full with Ukranian refugees and the closest bus stop for public transport is a 30 minute walk away to the R107.

The lack of public infrastructure and bus services is a barrier to recruitment and in attracting staff to work there. In addition the nearest public transport options for nearby residents and for those working and living in the hotels is 30 minutes away making it very difficult to travel to jobs outside this area, and to bring children to schools or childcare.

Fingal Chamber strongly recommends that areas of such poor accessibility and infrastructure are set out as prioritisation areas in the Development Plan.

Town Centres First Strategy

Fingal Chamber welcomes the Draft Fingal Development Plan, Town Centres First Strategy.

This strategy will bring business and community vibrancy to town centres across Fingal and with it a sense of economic buoyancy to the region.

However, derelict, vacant areas can lead to antisocial behaviour tarnishing the area's reputation which in turn can impact existing and potential businesses and discourage visitors to the locality.

Fingal Chamber recommends these sites are prioritised for positive action to prevent this happening.

Dublin Airport

Dublin Airport's contribution nationally and to Fingal cannot be underestimated or overstated. The airport is of significant strategic importance in terms of global connectivity, employment, suppliers and services and FDI. Fingal Chamber welcomes the fact that this has been robustly outlined in a specific chapter in the Draft Development Plan.

Dublin Airport's has a mandate from the Department of Transport to grow capacity out to 40 million passenger per annum by 2030. In this regard it is critical that the Development Plan specifically states that planning applications to develop runway and terminal capacity and campus improvements, all within the Development Plan's sustainable objectives, are prioritised to enable this growth to take place.

Fingal Chamber notes and is disappointed that Dublin Airport Central is not recognized as a strategic site in the Draft Development Plan. Dublin Airport Central is an important office and employment cluster within an already important significant employment generating zone, and it deserves its own recognition as a strategic site.

Designating Dublin Airport Central as an office/employment area of strategic importance will elevate its attractiveness to further multi-national companies.

The Draft Development Plan also correctly states that Dublin Airport is well ahead of many other European airports in terms of connectivity however it is sadly lacking behind in terms of a MetroLink connection, which according to the latest estimate is expected to be completed in 2035, some 12 years away. Dublin Airport is the only airport of its size in Europe with no direct rail connection to its city centre. In addition, further delays to MetroLink will impact the airports ability to meet carbon targets.

Fingal Chamber is calling for the removal to the caveat that the Phase 2 of the high technology zoned land development of Dublin Airport Central's office space is linked to the delivery of MetroLink. This effectively delays the delivery of this employment generating space for a minimum of 12 years.

It is critically important that airports develop non-aeronautical revenue streams as it builds resilience into the airport's operating model which is imperative particularly in a post-COVID environment. These non-aeronautical revenue generating initiatives help fund the development and maintenance of the airport while keeping airport charges low in order to attract new airlines and routes, enhancing the airport's connectivity globally.

Fingal, its businesses and communities benefit and reaps the rewards when Dublin Airport is thriving.

Climate Action/Energy

Events in Ukraine have highlighted even more Ireland and Fingal's need to be independent from overseas energy supplies. Fingal Chamber is hugely supportive of the development of onshore and offshore renewable energy however, critically infrastructure needs to be in place to support this without delay.

Fingal Chamber is fully supportive of the DDP's digital infrastructure initiative to position Fingal as a forward thinking and digitally inclusive urban and rural landscape, supporting businesses, residents and visitors and, while much work has been done in towns and villages with free WIFI spaces, charging benches etc more needs be done to support and cover the active travel strategy areas.

The chamber notes that there is 88KM of coastal area from Howth to Balbriggan, therefore it should be a leader and demonstrate progressiveness when it comes to renewable energy sources such as floating wind farms. It is vital the region has sufficient uninterrupted energy supplies for businesses to ensure continued FDI in Fingal.



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