



dublinchamber
of commerce

Policy Tracker

5th January 2006

About the Policy Tracker

This policy issue tracker provides a comprehensive and up-to-date review of policy developments of interest to Dublin Chamber of Commerce members every month. Each issue is explained, with an indication of the current position and the Chamber's policy response. Major amendments to each new monthly addition are highlighted in the section below and with an asterix (*) under the "issue" column.

For more information on any issue, please contact Aebhric@dublinchamber.ie, cian@dublinchamber.ie or kathleenquinlan@dublinchamber.ie.

Recent Highlights

Following November's briefing with Pat Mangan, Assistant Secretary, Department of Transport, the Chamber held a number of individual informal meetings with agencies and groups involved in the delivery of *Transport 21*. These included the RPA, Irish Rail and the Dublin Transport Authority (DTA) implementation group. Both the RPA and Irish Rail outlined their detailed plans under Transport 21. The Chamber had a broad discussion with the Dublin Transport Authority implementation group focussing on the structure, powers and remit of the DTA.

In response to a request from the Minister for Transport, the Chamber will submit its response to Transport 21, including recommendations on the DTA, in early January.

The Chamber convened a meeting with South Dublin Chamber, Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Chamber and North Dublin Chamber to discuss a possible joint submission on *Transport 21*. This submission builds on chambers' individual submissions. The chambers also agreed to work together on common issues arising from Transport 21 through a working group.

The Chamber was represented at the Public Transport Partnership Forum, which met to discuss *Transport 21*.

A *Transport 21* briefing for members is scheduled for early March. The CEOs of Irish Rail, the RPA, Dublin Bus and the NRA will outline their development plans, post publication of the transport plan.

Coverage was obtained over the course of the month on *Transport 21*, the Xmas sales, the Budget and the impact of the "Irish Ferries" protest march on the city.

Issue	Background	Current Status	Dublin Chamber Policy/Action
<p>VISION</p> <p>Dublin Vision 2020*</p>	<p>The Greater Dublin Area (GDA) accounts for 40% of the population of Ireland and just under half of all output. The GDA has grown by 145% between 1997 and 2005. Further sustained growth requires a clear vision as to how the city will evolve. The Chamber vision document was launched in Q2 2004 and highlights 5 themes. It sees Dublin as a competitive city, a great European city, a knowledge city, a city that works and one that is well governed.</p> <p>Policies are examined under these headings below.</p>	<p><i>Imagine Dublin 2020</i> is the cornerstone upon which all policy is built. The Chamber's vision for Dublin is set out at public meetings and continues to be distributed at international meetings. Members have reasserted the vision during quantitative and qualitative research. The forward-looking aspect to the Dublin Chamber is reflected in the more modern logo, launched in September 2005, and the newly refurbished building.</p>	<p>The new building will be formally launched on January 19th.</p>
<p>Strategic Plan*</p>	<p>A committee, headed up by Vice President Eugene McCague is preparing a revised strategic plan. This process has been facilitated by BDO Simpson Xavier.</p>	<p>A draft presentation of the plan has been made to Council.</p>	<p>An Action Plan is being prepared to progress the implementation of the plan.</p>

Issue	Background	Current Status	Dublin Chamber Policy/Action
COMPETITIVE CITY			
Local Authority Charges	Dublin City Council has a current budget of €710.2m in 2005, up from €329.03m in 1997. In addition to this, DCC has a capital budget of €1.07bn, which is funding the Port Tunnel, the Dublin Bay project and the refurbishment of O'Connell St amongst other things. The number of staff in 2005 is 6,589 (full time equivalent of 6283.7). Pay related expenditure has fallen from 57.6% to 52.4% of total expenditure over the period. The council is financed as follows: Goods and Services (43%); Government grants (13%); Local Government Fund (12%) and Rates (32%).	The publication of new local authority charges, including commercial rates and waste charges, is expected shortly as budget is approved.	Chamber prioritises value for money in local authority spending.
Budget 2006*	Our 2006 Budget submission focused on capital infrastructure, the need for public sector expertise in project management, decentralisation, childcare and the removal of double taxation from business expenditure on hotels and restaurants. Measures to support childcare were introduced. There is a large increase in the five-year plan for capital spending on Transport, reflecting the measures announced in <i>Transport 21</i> . Tighter contracts were proposed for capital projects.	A Budget reaction has been issued and circulated. A briefing seminar with Marc Colman, Economics Correspondent of the Irish Times and with FGS has been held the day after Budget day.	The Chamber will respond to particular issues arising in the Finance Bill. The Heads of this bill are generally published in late January, early February. Interested members should contact Aebhric@dublinchamber.ie .

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Waste to Energy Plant	Thermal treatment is a major element of the integrated waste management mix (recycling, landfill & thermal treatment) for the Dublin region.	The statutory planning stages are to start in the spring and are bound to be hotly contested.	Chamber is strong supporter of the project and may offer its support at the planning stages (oral hearing). For further information, please contact cian@dublinchamber.ie .
National Conference Centre	Minister O'Donoghue is championing the current procurement competition. The Chamber presented to the Oireachtas committee on Arts, Culture and Tourism earlier this year.	The Spencer Dock Consortium has been appointed by Cabinet as the developers subject to due diligence.	Not only does Dublin need a Conference Centre, business needs to be certain of the date it will open. Major conferences are prepared many years in advance. It is hoped that the centre will be operational in 2009. The Chamber is considering direct involvement in the running of the Centre.
Croke Park/Lansdowne	Every major soccer or rugby international is worth €50 million to the city. Losing games to foreign grounds while Lansdowne is being redeveloped out of the question.	Construction work on Lansdowne due to start following planning permission. Date for opening Croke Park to be expected only at this stage, although the present damage to the North Terrace may speed this up.	Chamber campaigned strongly for GAA to open Croke Park. Chamber also campaigned for redevelopment of Lansdowne Rd, in preference to out-of-town site.

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Tourism*	A tourism committee is preparing a Chamber position paper dealing with issues such as a vision for tourism in Dublin, Business tourism, Cultural tourism and the tourism Environment. Issues include a VAT reduction for the Meetings, Incentive travel, Conference & Exhibition (MICE) sector, the availability of suitable venues and business class travel.	The Culture Sub-Committee have prepared a report based around three themes of optimising the existing cultural tourism product; expanding the cultural tourism product range and innovative cultural programme planning.	Tourism committee to report by Q1 2006.
EUROPEAN CITY			
EU Regional Planning Guidelines	The EU Commission is tightening the guidelines, with consequent implications for capital grants and other tax supports such as the Business Expansion Scheme.	A strict interpretation of the guidelines and a narrow EU-centric focus has led to grant aid being denied for companies whose other option is to locate outside the EU (i.e. there is not intra-EU competition for investment).	The Chamber has met with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the EU Commission on the issue.
WELL-GOVERNED			
Greater Dublin Area Authority/Elected Lord Mayor	Dublin businesses eagerly await the land use and transport body for the GDA that is promised in the current Programme for Government. Some progress has occurred - an integrated Dept of Transport now exists and there is a proposal for a Dublin Transport Authority.	Jury is still out on effectiveness of the Regional Planning Guidelines for the GDA.	The Dublin Chamber is keeping the issue under review.

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Dublin Transport Authority*	An interim DTA board has been established, headed by Professor Margaret O'Mahony of TCD. The structure, membership and remit of the DTA is expected to be announced early next year.	The Chamber met with the DTA implementation body in late December and will make a submission on the structure of the DTA in early January.	Please contact Aebhric@dublinchamber.ie or cian@dublinchamber.ie .
City Planning Developments	<p>Dick Gleeson, City Planner, Dublin City Council gave a presentation to the Chamber. The city centre has been divided into a number of areas, each with an Integrated Area Plan or a Framework Area Plan.</p> <p>The City is preparing a retail core strategy that envisages a retail district running from Smithfield to O'Connell St to Grafton St. There is presently 200,000m² of retail space in the retail core and the city has identified another 250,000m² of potential additional space currently under alternative usage. The plan seeks to improve the retail experience by enhancing the civic space, pedestrianisation and signage improvements. It seeks to provide a better links between shops on the North and South side.</p>	The relief provided by the removal of HGVs from the city centre is essential to provide the capacity for private car traffic relief and increased pedestrian space.	A position paper on port tunnel "dividend" to the city centre in terms of increased capacity is being prepared. Please contact Aebhric@dublinchamber.ie or cian@dublinchamber.ie .
Decentralisation	The decentralisation programme is already 1-2 years behind schedule.		Cost-benefit analysis called for.

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CITY THAT WORKS			
Integrated transport system – Transport 21.	Government have launched a policy document outlining the capital plan for road and most public transport developments for the next ten years, called <i>Transport 21</i> . <i>Transport 21</i> contains an integrated plan for Dublin. Pat Mangan, AS, Department of Transport and on the interim board of the proposed Dublin Transportation Authority gave a presentation to the Dublin Chamber transport and infrastructure committees in November.	The Chamber held a number of individual meetings with agencies and groups involved in the delivery of <i>Transport 21</i> . These included the RPA, Irish Rail and the Dublin Transport Authority (DTA) implementation group. Both the RPA and Irish Rail outlined their detailed plans under Transport 21. The Chamber had a broad discussion with the Dublin Transport Authority implementation group focussing on the structure, powers and remit of the DTA.	In response to a request from the Minister for Transport, the Chamber will submit its response to Transport 21, including recommendations on the DTA, in early January. Please contact Aebhric@dublinchamber.ie or cian@dublinchamber.ie .
Metro rail system	Was first proposed in the Dublin Transport Office’s (DTO) report of 2000, <i>Platform for Change</i> . The metro from the airport to the city centre (Metro North) was first supposed to be operational by 2007. A second metro, Metro West, is also proposed in Transport 21 linking the Tallaght Luas line and Metro North and running through Clondalkin, Liffey Valley and Blanchardstown. A high capacity metro is one of the most costly elements of <i>Transport 21</i> .	The Railway Procurement Agency (RPA) should issue an official Invitation To Tender in the next six months. Both Metro North and Metro West will be built as PPPs.	We have long supported the proposal to provide a Metro Phase 1 link from the city centre to Dublin Airport and Swords. We will keep pressure on the RPA to issue tenders ASAP.

Issue	Background	Current Status	Dublin Chamber Policy/Action
Suburban Rail Interconnector	This major project has been announced as part of <i>Transport 21</i> and will link the Kildare and Maynooth rail lines to the DART lines. It will be built by 2015 and will serve the Docklands, Pearse Station and St. Stephen's Green. This project will relieve a severe bottleneck in the city centre rail network and permit a major expansion of the suburban rail service.	A full feasibility study and EIS is to be published.	We fully support this proposal.
Luas*	The two Luas lines carried more than 20 million passengers during their first year.	<p>The RPA have submitted an application for a Railway Order for the construction, operation and maintenance of a light railway between Connolly and the Point Depot to the Minister for Transport on 1st December 2005. The preferred route for Line BX, connecting the red and green lines has been put out to public consultation.</p> <p>Deals for extensions on the red line to Citywest, and on the green line to Cherrywood, are being progressed.</p>	<p>We support the increase in Luas services.</p> <p>We have expressed no particular preference on the BX route, but are mindful of potential problems of routing through College Green. We attended the public information day on route options, and subsequently met with the RPA CEO Frank Allen. Please contact Aebhric@dublinchamber.ie or cian@dublinchamber.ie.</p>

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Port Tunnel and IFSC area	<p>Construction is on schedule to be completed by the end of 2005. Systems testing and commissioning will take place between January and April to 2006, although this has been privately queried.</p> <p>Tenders for the building of Macken St Bridge are being assessed, with a decision due by end 2005. The bridge is estimated to cost €47m and will take 30 months to build. Improvements to the East Wall Road are underway, at a cost of €25m. Completion expected by December 2005.</p> <p>The General McMahon Bridge, running from Ringsend to the Port, is to progress in Q1 2006.</p>		<p>We fully support these proposals. See also HGV Management Strategy. A position paper on the cordons and restrictions on HGVs and the "dividend" to the city centre in terms of increased capacity is being prepared. Please contact Aebhric@dublinchamber.ie or cian@dublinchamber.ie.</p>
Traffic Corps	<p>The Chamber proposed the establishment of a Dublin Traffic Corps in 2002. The announcement of the traffic corps was most welcome, although the practical delays in delivering this is disappointing.</p>	<p>Additional traffic corps recruits are due to be added to the corps by 2008.</p>	<p>The Chamber supports the allocation of additional funds for the traffic corps in any Budget proposal.</p>

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Congestion Charging	London’s congestion charge led to a 30% reduction in congestion. Dublin City Council and many others are keen to introduce a charge for cars entering “the canal cordon”. The DTO have conducted extensive work on the topic. Minister Cullen has stated that it won’t be introduced until Transport 21 has been completed.	A DTO report on demand management is due to be published shortly.	The Chamber is opposed to congestion charging until adequate public transport alternatives are available to commuters.
Bus Market Reform	No new capacity has been added to the Dublin Bus market since 2000. The priority is to add additional buses, providing increased public transport capacity in the short term. Re-regulation, where private operators bid for new routes and about 15% of existing Dublin Bus routes, rather than deregulation, is one possible outcome.	<p><i>Transport 21</i> sees the role of bus transport moving towards feeding the rail network. Investment in buses is a priority for the first half of the life of the programme. There will be a greater focus on the development of orbital, feeder and local services.</p> <p>The Minister for Transport has asked Dublin Bus to review their network in light of the planned investment and to examine the most effective means of expanding bus services in the short, medium and long-term. This is due early in the New Year.</p>	We support the expansion of the size of the bus market in Dublin, through Government funding of Dublin Bus fleet additions if necessary, and expansion of the number of QBCs operating in the city.

Issue	Background	Current Status	Dublin Chamber Policy/Action
Quality Bus Corridors	Dublin City plans an expenditure of €33m on bus priority measures in 2006 and 2007. "Super" QBCs are being developed – these will have high quality (LUAS like) infrastructure.	<i>Transport 21</i> states the Quality Bus Network will be at least doubled over the period of the plan to improve the quality, reliability and efficiency of the bus service.	We support the expansion of the number of QBCs operating in the city, so long as additional capacity is brought to bear.
Dublin Airport	Government indecision has delayed the future development of Dublin Airport for many years. There is a pressing need to develop a second and third terminal, build Pier D, build a second runway and link the airport with the city centre by the Metro. <i>Transport 21</i> provides for the Metro.	Contract for Pier D construction to be awarded. Final spec of 2 nd terminal to be decided, followed by planning application.	We support the addition of extra passenger capacity. Chamber surveys show that members split on the proposed increase in user charges at the airport.
Critical Infrastructure Bill	First proposed in 2003, the bill has been held up at cabinet level. The proposal would create a new court to deal with planning objections. Progress on the bill is vital if transport and waste projects to be developed.	Revised bill to be brought yet again to cabinet in January 2006.	Chamber supports the bill. Unfortunate that the delays have meant the Poolbeg Thermal Treatment project will not be able to avail of this legislation.

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HGV Management Strategy (city centre/Port Tunnel)	The Dublin Port Tunnel is designed to remove most large HGVs from Dublin Port from the city centre. The strategy proposes a prohibition on vehicles with 5 or more axles within the Canal Cordon between 7am and 7pm, moving to a prohibition of vehicles with 4 or more axles after 12 months. There will be exemptions for the delivery of construction materials and liquid fuels and for deliveries to certain city centre manufacturers.	Dublin City Council has issued a draft plan.	A position paper on the cordons and restrictions on HGVs and the "dividend" to the city centre in terms of increased capacity is being prepared. Please contact Aebhric@dublinchamber.ie or cian@dublinchamber.ie .
Macken St Bridge	This bridge is urgently needed to provide traffic relief in the docklands and to move through-traffic away from city centre.	City Council to award contract very shortly.	The Chamber has supported this proposal at its oral hearing.
DCC Waste Management Plan	DCC are preparing a new waste plan out to 2010. The goal is self-sufficiency, with targets of 59% for recycling/reuse, 25% for energy recovery and 16% for landfill. This will require the doubling of recycling infrastructure, biological treatment facilities as well as a Waste to Energy facility and new landfill.	Dublin Chamber made a full submission to the drafting of the new Waste Management Plan for the Dublin Region. The approved plan is expected early 2006.	Chamber wants to see the full cost of household waste management services borne by household charges. Current landfill charges for business in South Co Dublin are over twice the EU average.

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KNOWLEDGE CITY			
Dublin Wireless Cluster*	A draft strategy for the Dublin Wireless Cluster has been prepared and an EU framework proposal with the Torino Wireless Cluster has been submitted.	Currently developing an implementation plan for the draft wireless cluster strategy and working in partnership with the Irish Wireless Leaders Forum on networking events. Peter Davies, a UK based expert on regulation has submitted a proposal to undertake an analysis of the regulation issue in Ireland. This will be discussed with Enterprise Ireland with a view to accessing consultancy funding.	Generating momentum for the wireless cluster through networking events and lobbying re: regulation of the sector.
Childcare*	The childcare committee is focussing on four aspects of the childcare debate: early education, employers' side perspective, the tax system and the local authority perspective. The committee proposed a number of initiatives to address childcare concerns and a survey was sent to members with 105 responses received. A letter proposing the relaxation of benefit-in-kind rules and a reduction in employers' PRSI to incentivise flexible working arrangements has been sent to Minister Cowen and officials in the Dept. of Finance.	25 of the respondents to the survey have been invited to participate in a focus group on childcare issues on January 18 th . This group will discuss the implications of the recent changes in the budget on employers and discuss how the proposals from the childcare committee would help to alleviate costs. This discussion will contribute to the development of a final Chamber policy document.	The chamber is opposed to changes that will increase the costs and undermine the competitiveness of business. Any extension of maternity leave should be offset by a reduction in PRSI.