



**County Wexford**  
**Chamber**  
Advancing business together

# Pre-Budget Submission

# 2026

Prepared: August 2025



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# FOREWORD

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As we look ahead to Budget 2026, County Wexford Chamber of Commerce (CWCC) is calling for decisive action to unlock the potential of our region - and to remove the persistent barriers hindering progress.

While the national economy continues to perform strongly, this growth is placing ever-increasing pressure on core infrastructure - particularly in housing, energy, transport, and water. In County Wexford, we see the real-world consequences of these deficits every day, with businesses facing rising costs, and uncertainty about how and where they can grow.

To sustain regional economic progress, we urgently need targeted, timely infrastructural investment, allied with policy supports that enable businesses to succeed. These are not abstract national concerns - they are local, practical issues affecting Wexford's ability to attract talent, scale enterprises, and retain vibrant communities.

County Wexford has enormous potential to lead in areas like offshore renewable energy, sustainable tourism, agri-food, and digital transformation. However, realising that potential requires a coordinated effort across Governmental Departments, agencies, and business to deliver meaningful results on the ground.

This submission highlights the determination and ambition of CWCC to deliver a more balanced, resilient economy - one that empowers businesses, supports communities, and builds for the future.



Conor Robinson  
President, County Wexford Chamber



Paula Roche  
CEO, County Wexford Chamber



# INTRODUCTION

County Wexford Chamber is the leading voice of business across County Wexford, representing a broad membership base that spans all key sectors of the local economy - including medtech, manufacturing, technology, professional services, hospitality, tourism, and retail.

The Chamber operates from a strong, county-wide mandate, having evolved from a merger of several local chambers into a unified organisation.

County Wexford Chamber plays a pivotal role in the economic and community development of the region by providing advocacy, networking, training, and promotional support to over 400 member businesses. We work closely with local authorities, elected representatives, state agencies, and educational institutions to advance a shared agenda of regional prosperity.

County Wexford Chamber is proud to champion the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as part of our commitment to building a more inclusive, resilient, and forward-looking economy. Aligned with Chambers Ireland and its network, we are working locally to help businesses understand and act on the opportunities the SDGs present - driving innovation, competitiveness, and positive impact across our community.

**5** GENDER  
EQUALITY



**8** DECENT WORK AND  
ECONOMIC GROWTH



**9** INDUSTRY, INNOVATION  
AND INFRASTRUCTURE



**11** SUSTAINABLE CITIES  
AND COMMUNITIES



**13** CLIMATE  
ACTION



# OUR POLICY PRIORITIES

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County Wexford Chamber's three key priorities reflect our members' feedback and our county's strengths. **Infrastructure, Industry & Climate** prioritises investment in sustainable infrastructure, such as Offshore Renewable Energy and transport, to boost competitiveness, while improving housing and essential services. **Enterprise, Work & Economic Growth** supports local businesses, particularly SMEs and start-ups, by supporting innovation, job creation, and access to resources for long-term growth. **Education, Innovation & Research** focuses on ensuring access to quality education and research, advocating for investment in South East Technological University's Wexford campus to drive regional growth.

Though distinct, these priorities are strongly interconnected: education and research fuel infrastructure and climate innovation, while enterprise and economic growth rely on efficient transport links, including strategic access through Rosslare Europort. Together, they aim to deliver lasting benefits across sectors, strengthening both the regional economy and resilience.



**Infrastructure,  
Industry &  
Climate**



**Enterprise, Work  
& Economic  
Growth**



**Education,  
Innovation &  
Research**



# 1. Infrastructure, Industry & Climate

Long-term regional competitiveness depends on strategic investment in key infrastructure and innovation that supports both indigenous enterprise and foreign direct investment. County Wexford Chamber strongly advocates for accelerated progress on two vital enablers of economic growth: the extension of the M11 from Oylegate to Rosslare motorway and investment in the development of an Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) hub at Rosslare Europort.

The M11 upgrade is essential to improving regional connectivity, reducing travel times to and from Dublin, and enhancing the county's attractiveness for investment. Meanwhile, the advancement of ORE infrastructure at Rosslare positions Wexford as a critical national asset - supporting climate goals, investment, job creation, and long-term economic resilience.

These investments will create quality jobs and drive wider economic benefits across the county. Higher disposable income boosts sectors like retail, hospitality, services, and the growing circular economy. A thriving, connected county attracts talent, supports enterprise, and enhances quality of life.

To fully realise this potential, targeted investment in housing, transport, and essential public services is also required - alongside a modern, responsive planning system that enables the timely delivery of infrastructure and enterprise projects. Without coordinated action, Wexford risks missing a generational opportunity to become a high-value hub for innovation, industry, and inclusive economic growth.

# Additional Recommendations

## Strengthen Collaboration Across Planning Functions

**Recommendation:**  
**Undertake a holistic review of Ireland's planning framework, including the roles of key planning approval bodies, with a focus on streamlining processes and improving coordination.**

County Wexford Chamber is calling on the Government to review and reform how planning functions operate across local authorities and key state agencies such as An Coimisiún Pleanála and MARA.

The current complexity of planning processes often results in duplication, delays, and uncertainty - particularly for projects that require multi-agency engagement.

A modernised, coordinated planning system with clear responsibilities, efficient approval pathways, and improved communication between stakeholders is essential to accelerate the delivery of critical infrastructure.

This is particularly relevant in sectors such as tourism, where joined-up planning supports the implementation of initiatives like the Destination Experience Development Plan (DEDP), developed in partnership with Fáilte Ireland and Wexford County Council.

## Water Infrastructure

**Recommendation: Invest in Water and Wastewater Infrastructure in County Wexford**

A significant barrier to development in parts of County Wexford is the lack of adequate water and wastewater treatment infrastructure. Areas such as Castlebridge, Wellingtonbridge, and other communities continue to face real constraints on their ability to deliver new housing, support local business growth, and protect the natural environment due to insufficient capacity and outdated infrastructure.

We call on Government to commit to a multi-annual funding programme to upgrade water and wastewater infrastructure, and to streamline planning and consenting systems to accelerate delivery.

These services are essential to meet the demands of a growing population and economy. Wexford must be prioritised to ensure sustainable regional growth, protect public health, and support enterprise and tourism development across the county.



## Adequate Investment in Housing

**Recommendation: Increase Housing for All targets to at least 60,000 units annually after 2026, in line with the Housing Commission's findings.**

Wexford County Council is ahead of current targets, but local demand continues to grow. Future targets must reflect population growth and housing need across the region.

The Government should use all available tools - investment, incentives, and policy reform - to boost housing supply. This is essential to meet local demand and support economic and workforce growth in County Wexford and beyond.

## Regional Housing Targets

**Recommendation: Set regional targets for housing in all regions of the State to ensure balanced regional growth.**

To promote balanced regional development, Government should set clear housing targets for each region of the State. This approach would support more equitable population distribution, reduce pressure on urban centres like Dublin, and ensure that infrastructure and services are developed in line with local housing needs. Regional targets would also empower local authorities to plan more effectively and contribute to sustainable national growth.

## Vacant Property Registration

**Recommendation: Expand Vacant Property Registration and Taxation**

Assess the impact of the Vacant Home Tax and consider extending it to long-term vacant commercial properties, linking it to broader land value capture strategies.

While the Vacant Home Tax aims to reduce residential vacancy, its effectiveness should be closely monitored. A similar measure targeting commercial vacancy is needed, recognising that prolonged vacancy and dereliction undermine community wellbeing and local vitality. This approach should align with land value capture principles, ensuring taxation reflects the underlying value of land.

## Development of Residential Zoned Sites

**Recommendation: Introduce a legislative framework for Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) to promote development of underdeveloped residential zoned sites.**

CPOs would address vacancy, dereliction, and slow urban regeneration, boosting housing supply, encouraging responsible land use, and improving community wellbeing by allowing local authorities to sell neglected properties.



## **Strengthening Grid Infrastructure for Renewable Energy**

**Recommendation: Reinforce and upgrade our grid infrastructure as part of Price Review 6 (PR6) through front-loaded investment to effectively support Ireland's renewable energy generation capacity.**

Upgrading the grid infrastructure with front-loaded investment under PR6 is crucial to harnessing the full potential of renewable energy sources. Grid upgrades need to scale to meet anticipated demand in future years based on expected population growth and increasing demands from industry.

By enhancing the capacity and resilience of our grids, we can facilitate the integration and transmission of clean energy, allowing us to fully harness the benefits of renewable energy.

## **Strategic Investment in our Ports.**

**Recommendation: Provide targeted funding and implement an ambitious national ports strategy that recognises the strategic importance of Rosslare Europort, particularly in supporting the development of offshore renewable energy.**

With Ireland's National Ports Policy due for update this year, its publication should be expedited to reflect the national shift toward renewable energy and the urgent need to accelerate offshore wind development. Rosslare is uniquely positioned to serve as a key hub for the construction, assembly, and servicing of offshore wind farms in the Irish and Celtic Seas.

Strategic investment in port infrastructure, connectivity, and capacity at Rosslare will not only support Ireland's climate and energy goals, but also unlock significant economic opportunities for the South-East region - driving job creation, strengthening the local supply chain, and enhancing Ireland's position as a leader in offshore renewable energy.





## 2. Enterprise, Work & Economic Growth

Sustainable economic growth depends on creating quality jobs, promoting innovation, and supporting the businesses that drive local economies. County Wexford Chamber believes that prioritising policies which enhance employment opportunities, business resilience, and long-term growth is essential.

We are calling for enhanced government support for entrepreneurship - particularly early-stage start-ups, solopreneurs, and social enterprises. SMEs, the backbone of Wexford's economy, must be supported through improved access to education, research, finance, and innovation.

A consistent concern among our members, especially smaller and indigenous businesses, is the disproportionate administrative burden they face - often equivalent to that of much larger firms. There is a pressing need for a fairer, more streamlined tax system that reflects the size and capacity of businesses. This includes a reduction in Capital Gains Tax (CGT), simplification of compliance processes, and stronger incentives for start-ups and solo operators. Additionally, labour shortages and limited incentives for employees to take on additional hours also remain key challenges. A more responsive tax system is needed to support staff retention and reward increased participation in the workforce.

Addressing these issues is vital to sustaining enterprise growth, driving job creation, and maintaining a competitive workforce across the region.



## Additional Recommendations

### Promoting Investment and Entrepreneurship

**Recommendation: Reform the Employment Investment Incentive Scheme (EIS) by simplifying the qualifying criteria and prioritising flexibility to encourage broader investor participation.**

The EIS is an important incentive designed to encourage investment in SMEs by offering tax relief to investors. The current qualifying criteria are overly restrictive, and this limits its potential scope and benefit to smaller businesses. A programme of reform will make it easier for individuals to invest in businesses and stimulate economic growth.

### Streamlining International Recruitment

**Recommendation: Roll-out the single permit system for living and working in Ireland without delay.**

The single permit system should be rolled out in advance of the 2027 deadline without delay. Such a measure is important in reducing the administrative and cost burden faced by businesses looking to recruit from outside Europe while they continue to experience skills shortages. By streamlining these processes, we can create a more inclusive workforce that welcomes diverse skills and perspectives.

### Review KEEP (Key Employment Engagement Programme)

**Recommendation: Extend KEEP until 2030 and conduct further reviews and reforms to simplify the programme and ensure easier accessibility and user-friendliness.**

KEEP is a valuable incentive in competitive industries where skilled employees are in high demand and it helps in optimising financial efficiency and improving cash flow management for start-ups or growing enterprises. Conducting a detailed review of the programme is important in ensuring that KEEP remains an effective tool for attracting and retaining key talent in innovative enterprises. The review should focus on reducing bureaucracy for businesses.

### Capital Gains Tax Reform

**Recommendation: Reduce the Capital Gains Tax rate of 33% for non-passive investment. Additionally, increase the lifetime limit of €1 million in qualifying capital gains under Entrepreneur's Relief.**

Such reforms would better align tax policy across the island, encourage repeat entrepreneurship, and attract greater levels of investment into Irish businesses.



## **Personal Tax Relief to Boost Workforce Participation**

**Recommendation: Introduce targeted personal tax reliefs to make additional work more financially rewarding, particularly for middle- and low-income earners.**

High effective tax rates can discourage individuals from taking on extra hours or returning to work. Reducing the burden will support increased labour participation, ease skills shortages, and strengthen economic resilience.

### **Supporting SMEs in Global Trade**

**Recommendation: Allocate additional resources to the Trade and Investment Strategy and optimise the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) to actively support small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in engaging with international trade.**

Providing targeted assistance, both within and outside the EU, we enable SMEs to enhance their productivity and navigate trading challenges as they arise. Targeted assistance will help SMEs to access new markets and expand in existing ones which will help them grow and improve their overall economic development.

## **Business Supports**

**Recommendation: Strengthening Supports for Enterprises in Rural Wexford**

Enterprise supports in Wexford should focus on increasing funding and ensuring grants and resources are easily accessible.

As business needs to continuously evolve, it is essential that support mechanisms adapt to assist companies at every stage of growth - particularly those operating in rural communities. Enhanced access to tailored resources will help foster entrepreneurship, encourage innovation, and promote long-term, sustainable economic development.

Increased investment in local enterprise programmes will enable businesses to scale more effectively, compete in wider markets, and generate local employment. Ensuring rural businesses have the tools and support they need to thrive will not only strengthen individual enterprises but also enhance the resilience and competitiveness of Wexford's economy as a whole.



### 3. Education, Innovation & Research

County Wexford Chamber strongly supports sustained and accelerated capital investment in South East Technological University (SETU), as outlined in the current National Development Plan (NDP). County Wexford and the South East region continues to be underrepresented in higher education funding, despite rapid population growth. This has hindered talent retention and economic potential. SETU is the sole university in the region and is central to advancing enterprise development and competitiveness. County Wexford Chamber urgently calls on Government to accelerate its investment in SETU's new Wexford Teaching and Innovation campus as earmarked under the TSSPF fund. Expanding SETU's campuses will:

- Broaden access to higher education
- Enhance county and regional innovation ecosystems
- Attract and retain talent and investment

In an era of rapid technological and social change enabling and encouraging lifelong learning is essential for upskilling our workforce and preparing individuals for the jobs of the future. Unlocking the National Training Fund to increase investment in Skillnet Ireland, the ETBs and Technological Universities (TUs) is critical.

Furthermore, as advocated in the OECD 2022 review of TU academic career paths, contracts and organisation in Ireland, the sanctioning of Professorship grades within the Technological University sector is paramount. Such academic leadership appointments are critical to attract global talent to our regions and enable Irish TU's to compete at a European and international level.

## Additional Recommendations

### Enabling and encouraging Lifelong Learning

**Recommendation: Update and expand Ireland's Lifelong Learning Strategy beyond 2025, with a focus on inclusion, digital transformation, and green skills.**

Despite surpassing its lifelong learning target, the Strategy could better prioritise continuous education and flexible learning pathways. Strengthening upskilling and reskilling programmes, especially in digital and green sectors, will support a smoother transition between the theoretical framework and their practical application.

### Ensuring Access Through Affordable Student Accommodation

**Recommendation: Increase investment in purpose-built student accommodation, particularly in regional areas, and introduce targeted financial supports for families.**

The rising cost and limited supply of student housing is a key barrier to further and higher education. Many families cannot afford suitable accommodation, forcing students to miss out or commute long distances. Targeted investment and university partnerships are essential to expand affordable options and support equal access to learning.

### Addressing equitable funding for technological universities

**Recommendation: Amalgamate the funding streams for the Technological Universities (TUs) and traditional universities.**

The Programme for Government commits to granting Technological Universities borrowing powers for student accommodation to enhance financial autonomy while maintaining separate funding streams and fails to address funding equality or pay parity with traditional universities. Traditional universities can and do have the ability to borrow their own investment funding, which gives them the flexibility to shape their own future.

However, technological universities do not have the same ability and therefore are constrained, as their funding streams come via the Government. By amalgamating the funding streams for the technological universities and traditional universities, both can co-exist and offer the best in education for all third level students.



## Women in Business

### **Recommendation: Support for Women in Business in County Wexford**

Expand targeted entrepreneurial training and funding supports for women and other groups facing barriers to employment, including enhanced support for programmes like ACORNS.

These initiatives should focus on providing the necessary skills, resources, and mentorship to empower women to start and grow their own businesses. Dedicated support should be offered throughout the entrepreneurial journey, from initial business concept development to scaling and accessing markets.

By offering targeted assistance, Wexford can increase the number of women-led businesses, helping to diversify the local economy, promote gender equality, and create new employment opportunities. These efforts will also encourage greater participation of women in entrepreneurship, fostering a more inclusive and sustainable business environment in the region.

### **Expanding on Apprenticeships, including those focused on STEM**

#### **Recommendation: Increase employer funding for apprenticeships and invest in more STEM-focused apprenticeship programmes.**

More funding needs to be available for consortia-led apprenticeships where employers provide off-the-job apprenticeship training. The standard annual grant of €2,000 is insufficient to make the apprenticeship model more appealing to potential employers and increase the number of apprentices. While there will be over 100 national apprenticeship programmes in Ireland by the end of 2025, our members are calling for a sustained focus on STEM-focused apprenticeship programmes.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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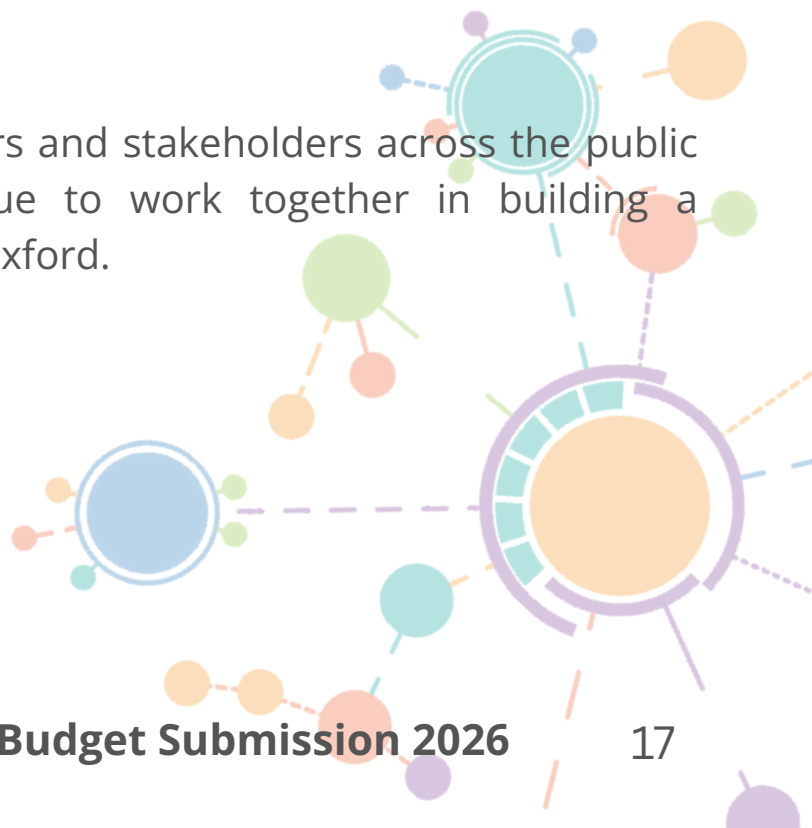
County Wexford Chamber extends sincere thanks to all of our members who contributed their insights and feedback in shaping this submission. Your input ensures our priorities reflect the real needs and ambitions of the businesses and communities we represent.

We also wish to thank our elected representatives for their continued support in raising and advancing these important issues at national level, and for their shared commitment to making County Wexford a better place to live, work, and do business.

A special thank you to Wexford County Council for their ongoing collaboration and dedication to driving progress across our region. Their work is essential to unlocking the county's full potential.

We acknowledge and appreciate the research and advocacy undertaken by Chambers Ireland in preparing the national Chambers Ireland Pre-Budget Submission, which has informed and supported our own regional priorities.

Finally, we thank all of our partners and stakeholders across the public and private sectors who continue to work together in building a stronger, more resilient County Wexford.





A lighthouse with a white and dark horizontal band pattern stands on a rocky cliff. The sky is a deep blue with some light clouds, and the sea is visible in the distance. The overall tone is serene and coastal.

"Strategic investment  
today builds a sustainable,  
competitive County  
Wexford of tomorrow."



# COUNTY WEXFORD

## *SHAPING OUR FUTURE*



## KEY OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

**JOB CREATION**

**ECONOMIC EXPANSION**

## KEY ENABLERS



### Infrastructure, Industry & Climate

Invest in infrastructure, housing, and ORE to boost industry, climate action, and regional growth.



### Enterprise, Work & Economic Growth

Strategic investment in the Offshore Renewable Energy hub to drive economic growth and achieve climate goals.



### Education, Innovation & Research

Expanding SETU Wexford, research, and skills programmes to meet future job needs and retain local talent.

## GROWTH DRIVERS

County Wexford Chamber operating at the intersection of key growth drivers

**Government Policy**

**Public Representation**

**Funding Support**

**FDI Investment**

## EXPECTED OUTCOMES

### **Skilled Workforce**

A future-ready workforce through stronger education, research, and skills development.

### **Business Growth**

Growth of local businesses and SMEs with better access to finance, talent, and innovation.

### **Regional Connectivity**

Improved connectivity and competitiveness via infrastructure, housing, and transport investment.

### **Green Leadership**

Wexford as a leader in renewable energy, advancing climate goals and green job creation.



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