



CBA
Cork Business
Association

CBA 5 Year Strategic Framework

For Cork business
by Cork business



Cork Business Association, as a local voluntary collective of business owners and managers, is deeply committed to supporting its members and driving positive change in the city.

Under the leadership of our current President Kevin Herlihy, CBA engaged in external consultation in 2023 to develop a framework that articulates a clear vision, objectives, and actions.

The creation of this Strategy involved widespread consultation from our members, non-members, industry partners and stakeholders. A flourishing and effective city centre business association is deemed by most as essential to Cork achieving its ambition.

We have now developed a new 5 Year Strategic Framework, which considers the challenges and opportunities facing businesses in Cork, restructured our board and executive. With our members, we aim to support and drive a prosperous and sustainable Cork City.

We invite you to support us in implementing the strategic plan and contributing to the positive transformation of Cork City.

Together we can create a better city to do business in.

ABOUT:

Cork Business Association (CBA) is an engaged, connected and committed representative of the business community in Cork City, supporting members since 1957.

We are a local voluntary collective of business people who provide a support network for members and personal one-to-one advice.

We champion a vibrant, safe, clean, welcoming, sustainable and living Cork City. By working together, we can ensure that businesses in the city have a stronger voice when dealing with local and national issues.

VISION:

CBA will continue to be a driving force in helping shape Cork City as a resilient, vibrant, sustainable, prosperous, welcoming and networked city.

We will do this by working closely with key stakeholders at local, regional and national level to help enact and deliver positive change.

We will foster an inclusive business community and support network for business owners and managers and will proactively address their interests and concerns. We will develop initiatives and campaigns that will build upon the inherent pride that we have in our city, generate new business, and make Cork City a more attractive and vibrant place to do business in.

OUR MISSION:

Together with our members, partners and key stakeholders, CBA works from the ground up to support our members where it matters.

We develop and back initiatives that make Cork City a great place to shop, work, live, play, visit and do business in. Our projects are rooted in listening to our members and collaborating with key partners and stakeholders at local and national level.

Aligned with the pillars of our 5-year strategic framework, our initiatives emphasise data-driven and evidence-based approaches to ensure that together we help steer our city with accurate and positive momentum.

CORE VALUES:

Collaboration: We believe in the power of collective action and collaborative efforts to address shared challenges and opportunities.

Inclusivity: We strive to create an inclusive and diverse community.

Innovation: We embrace innovation and adaptability to stay ahead of changing trends and create a dynamic business environment.

Community Engagement: We are committed to actively engaging with our community, understanding its needs, and contributing to its well-being.



A History of CBA's Recent Achievements

1980s–1990s

CBA managed Cork City's Christmas Lights during this period, overseeing their erection and maintenance.



2004

Over the past two decades, the CBA successfully advocated for Flood Defence measures in Cork City.



2016

The CBA played a crucial role in maintaining Cork City Council as a single entity and expanding the city boundary in May 2019 to accurately reflect its size.



2021

The CBA's innovative approach was evident in the virtual Presidents Dinner and Business of the Year awards during lockdown, earning praise from Micheal Martin.



2003

The Cork Business of the Year awards, initiated by the late James O Sullivan, have become a prestigious business accolade in Cork, spanning over two decades.



2015

The CBA reintroduced the Cork Better Buildings Awards, now a regular fixture in the Cork Awards calendar.



2020

The CBA significantly contributed to the development of on-street dining during the Covid crisis, with 17 city streets now offering and maintaining this service.

Other notable initiatives include:

Feelgood Fridays, Free Parking Campaigns, Graffiti removal campaigns, Traffic Freeflow in the City for December, CBA involvement with the Purple Flag initiative, Sensory Friendly shopping on Sunday mornings, and general security initiatives for the city center, along with supporting the rollout of the Customer Service Charter.

Note From President Kevin Herlihy

As we look to the future, we must remember that Cork City will double in size over the next 20 years – equivalent to the combined growth of Limerick, Galway, and Waterford cities over the next 25 years. How we manage this growth will define what sort of city we will have for at least a century.

Businesses need a city that is attractive, but also a city that works. We have to get the key ingredients right – employment, living and transport.

In 2023, we engaged with external consultation to help us create a strategic framework for Cork Business Association over the next 5 years. Following extensive consultation with CBA members, city centre businesses, and key stakeholders, we have developed a clear and agreed set of priorities for our voluntary organisation.

We now present a restructured board and executive and a strategic framework with 5 Strategic Pillars, from which our dedicated committees will develop a set of clear objectives and actions.

The framework considers the challenges and opportunities facing businesses in Cork, and it aligns with Cork City Council's City Centre Revitalisation & Economic Strategy. It has been reviewed and endorsed by the CBA Board and Executive.

This framework will enable CBA to deliver on our mission, with members at the heart of all that we do, and it will help realise our collective vision of a city where people are drawn to shop, work, socialise, live and play.

We will also build on our previous successes such as our popular Awards events, our business seminars and, overall, will develop and support marketing initiatives that promote and sell Cork.

We now invite Cork businesses to collectively come together to support us in actioning this plan.



KEVIN HERLIHY
President, Cork Business Association



CBA Strategic Pillars

We have identified 5 areas of strategic priorities. These priorities do not exist in isolation, rather they complement and reinforce each other to advance our long-term goals.

Business Leadership



A Safe & Clean Cork City



Cork City 2030 –
Thriving, liveable
Business Committee



Membership Services



Networked Events



CBA Committees 2024



CBA Board

Chair
Lawrence
Owens



Safe & Clean Cork City

Chair
Kevin Herlihy



Cork City 2030

Chair
Clara O'Neil



Membership Services

President &
CBA Office



Events

Chair
Margaret
O'Regan



Marketing

Chair
Eoin Kennedy



Membership

Chair
Eoin O'Sullivan





Strategic Pillars **Business Leadership** – CBA Champions

As a board driven organisation, we have ensured that our board is made up of exceptional Cork Business leaders with diversified experience, expertise and knowledge to steer CBA, with the city's and members' needs central.

The CBA board leads the organisation and will give the CBA Executive, committees and office clear direction and support. It takes responsibility for all lobbying and advocacy, driving the messages, needs and goals of members. The board will meet, at a minimum, 5 times a year.

CBA Board Members



Lawrence Owens,
Chairman

Lawrence chairs the board of directors, having previously served as its CEO from 2014-21 and as a former President of the organisation. A well-respected leader in the Cork business community, Lawrence has extensive experience in the retail and SME sectors. He has a track record of delivering major rationalisation and organisational projects, and has worked extensively in business development and consultancy, spearheading many campaigns for local businesses. His experience gives him an in-depth understanding of the challenges faced by the business community. Lawrence also sits on the Housing Strategic Policy Committee of Cork City Council.



Dave O'Brien,
Secretary & Treasurer
(Quintas)

Dave supports CBA on finance, governance and membership support. He leads the tax advisory practice of Quintas where he provides guidance to both corporate entities and individuals in various aspects of tax planning. His expertise spans company restructures, succession planning, and VAT matters, drawing on more than 15 years of experience in tax advisory.



Niamh Murphy
(ETC)

Niamh is MD of ETC (Events, Tourism, Communication), which specialises in communications and project management for festivals and events, hospitality, retail, and tourism. She formerly held senior management and director roles in leading PR and marketing agencies in Cork and Dublin. Niamh is involved in the promotion and development of many of the city's top festivals and tourism initiatives. She is the festival manager for Cork on a Fork Fest (a Cork City Council festival), sits on the steering group for Let's Play Cork, and the



Eoin O'Sullivan
(M&P O'Sullivan)

Eoin leads membership development within CBA. A passionate and respected business leader, and past-President of CBA, Eoin is a Director of M&P O'Sullivan Ltd and Gala Retail Services. With a family legacy of over 118 years in the wholesale food sector, Eoin is dedicated to ensuring his business adapts to change and continues to uphold a strong reputation. Following in his father's footsteps, he is committed to supporting his local community which echo's Gala Retail Services' promise for service and local engagement.

Kevin Herlihy



Sitting President
(2022-2024)
(Herlihy's Centra)

Kevin is the current President of CBA. As Operations Director of the Herlihy Centra Group,

which he owns and operates with his brother Brian, he runs six Centra Stores throughout Cork City with a seventh store opening in 2024. Kevin is passionate about the success of Cork City and following his tenure as President, he will lead the Safe and Clean committee. Kevin sits on CORE and the Cork Joint Policing Committee.



Aaron Mansworth
Vice President
(Trigon Hotels)

Aaron, a seasoned leader in the hospitality industry, serves as the Managing Director of Trigon Hotels in Cork and oversees their strategic direction. Aaron has established a reputation for driving operational excellence, fostering innovation, and delivering exceptional guest experiences. He is known for implementing forward-thinking strategies that enhance overall business performance and brings that expertise to the board. Aaron sits on the board of Visit Cork, the Everyman Theatre and Cobh Heritage Centre and he also sits on the National Management and Council of the Irish Hotels Federation.

CBA Executive



Clara O'Neill
- Infrastructure

Clara brings over ten years of professional experience as an Urban Planner and is the founder of her own planning consultancy based in Cork City. Currently, she sits on the Community, Culture and Placemaking Strategic Policy Committee of Cork City Council.

Within CBA, Clara supports as Infrastructure lead and is set to spearhead the newly established 'City Centre 2030' pillar. Her expertise lies in policy development, placemaking, urban regeneration, and master planning, and she held a leading role in the planning strategy for the Victorian Quarter in Cork.



Eoin Kennedy
- Marketing

Eoin has more than 30 years' experience in marketing and commercial roles with companies ranging from Fortune 500 to startups – with 25 of these years being at Director level.

Currently Eoin is CEO of Update Digital, a strategy-oriented marketing agency with offices in Cork and Dublin. Eoin is also an advisor for the LEOs in Cork and Dublin, and Enterprise Ireland, amongst others, and specialises in supporting micro businesses and SMEs. Eoin holds multiple qualifications in marketing, management and finance, including an MBA in Strategy.



Margaret O'Regan
- Events

With a passion for creating unforgettable experiences and a background in hotel business management, Margaret has dedicated her career to the art of event planning and management.

As the Owner of O'Regan Events and the Operations Director of Event Plan, she brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to the world of corporate event planning.

Margaret thrives on the art of crafting exceptional events that leave a lasting impression, and her businesses have consistently delivered outstanding events that reflect the unique visions and objectives of their clients.



Sean McCarthy
- Vintners

Sean is the owner of 2 prominent businesses in Cork city, Tequila Jacks and Paddy the Farmers, and only recently sold Soho Bars. He leads the day-to-day operations, emphasizing front-facing excellence to ensure the best service for customers.

Committed to maintaining high standards, Sean focuses on staff training to guarantee a consistently pleasant experience for every visitor to his establishments. A strong Executive member of CBA, Sean is also the Secretary of the Cork City Branch of the VFI.





Julie Evans
- Retail

Julie, a University of Wales graduate and PR Institute of Ireland member, has 30+ years' experience in PR.

She started at Harrods, freelanced for Shandwick PR and Prime Communications, then joined Profile Plus in Dublin in 1991.

In 1993, she became Account Director at Casey Communications Consultants in Cork, leading projects like the Cork Main Drainage Scheme & Patrick Street refurbishment.

Her client list includes Amgen Technology Ireland, University College Cork, and retail projects for House of Fraser, Dundrum, and Opera Lane. Julie is Opera Lane's PR and Marketing Manager.

She's been on CBA's Executive for five years, guiding Retail direction and policy.



Fergal Harte
- Tourism

Fergal Harte, General Manager of The Kingsley Hotel, boasts 25+ years in hospitality management, with notable roles at Fota Island Resort, Knockranny House Hotel, and the Cumberland Hotel in London.

Leading The Kingsley since 2014, Fergal emphasizes trust leadership, collaboration, and effective decision-making. His strategic direction significantly contributes to the hotel's success, maintaining exceptional hospitality standards.

Fergal chaired the Cork Irish Hotel Federation for two years from 2020, and he now represents hospitality on the Cork City Night-time Economy Steering Group.

Concurrently, Fergal is pursuing psychology studies at UCC, following his 2021 completion of a Management Practice diploma also at UCC.

The board and executive is supported by the CBA office, which we aim to grow.



A Safe & Clean Cork City

During our review, safety and cleanliness were leading priorities for members.

Cork has achieved European recognition for being a safe and clean city, a status we are committed to preserving and advancing. Recognized as a top priority for our members, this Executive committee will actively involve our members in ongoing discussions about the safety and cleanliness of Cork City.

We will conduct regular pulse surveys to gather valuable insights, guiding our decisions and actions based on evidence for comprehensive reports.

We will lobby on behalf of our members' business interests with regards to issues that may directly and negatively impact the safety and security of the area. We urge our members to continue reporting any crimes or incidents of anti-social behaviour that they may witness or experience in their business or area.

CBA will also maintain our seat at the Joint Policing Forum. The forum brings together Gardaí, politicians and representative bodies to discuss issues relating to the policing of the city. CBA represents the voice of city centre business in discussions around concerns such as crime levels, anti-social behaviour and the concentration of social infrastructure in the city centre.

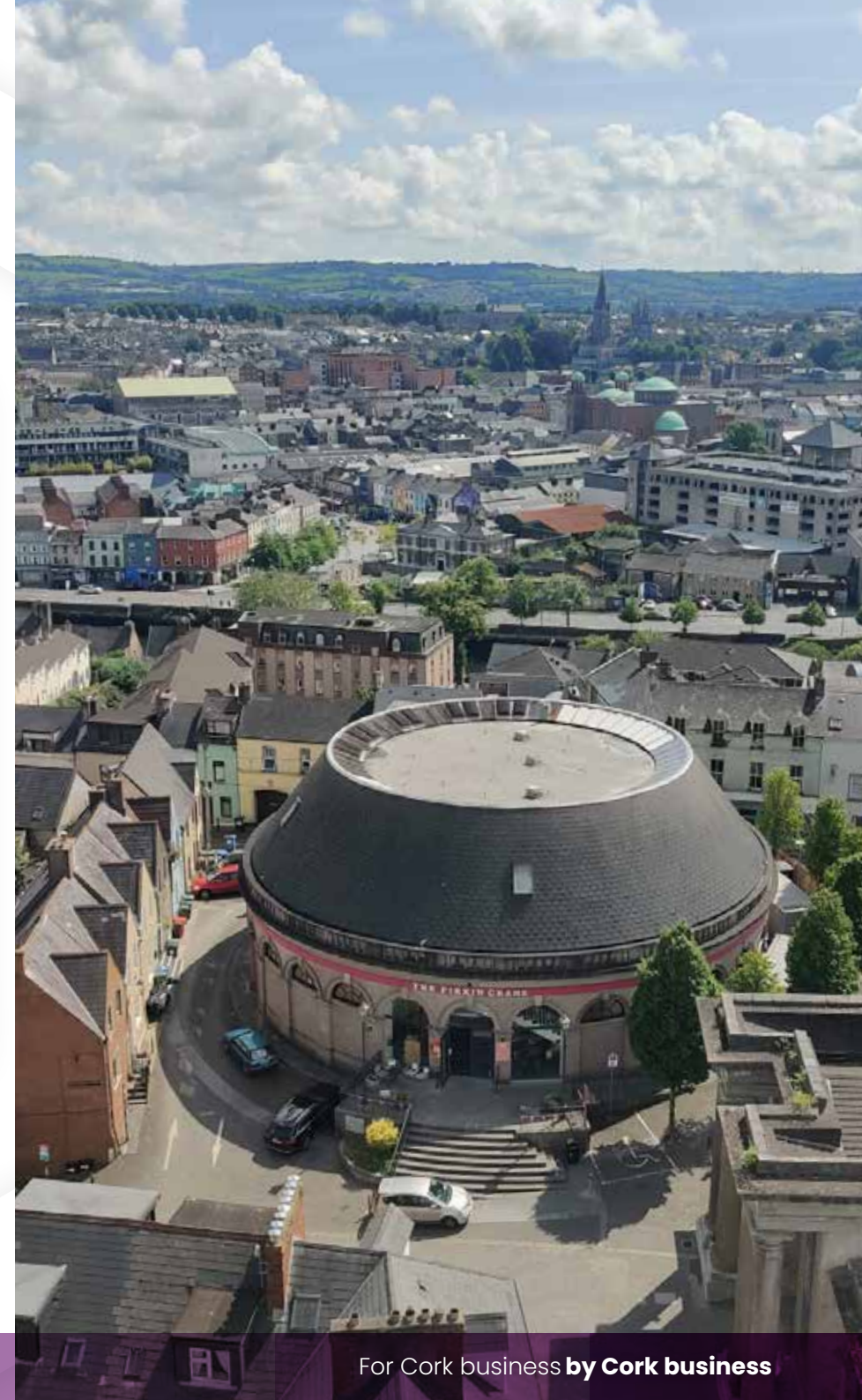
We hope to develop a number of initiatives to be rolled out to the business community with the aim of improving our city, such as a Cork City Tidy Town's committee. We will continue to support the Purple Flag in Cork, a scheme that honours excellence in the appeal and management of a town or city centre area after 5pm. Cork is just one of 40 cities in Europe to be given the badge of honour.

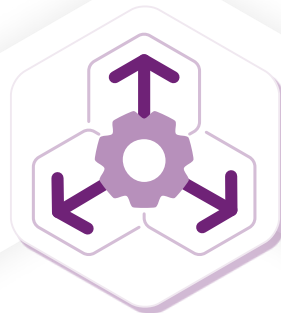
And we will lead on safe and clean at CORE meetings to ensure members' concerns are voiced and heard.

This committee will also lead Policy responses within the realm of a 'Safe and Clean City' (for example recent responses to the Draft Cork City Street Performer Bylaws.)

The Safe and Clean committee aims to deliver 2 network events in 2024 with experts on a Safe and Clean Cork City.

Kevin Herlihy will lead this committee, when he steps down as President in March. Kevin's own businesses, in the heart of Cork City, and his experience as President means he has the real experience to lead this committee and the passion to ensure its success.





Cork City Centre 2030

A key tenet of the Strategic Framework of CBA for the next 5 years is ensuring there is a strong vision for Cork City Centre to 2030 [and beyond]. Cork, as Ireland's second city, must aspire to be judged amongst the best European cities for quality of life.

Cork City Centre has experienced significant change in recent years, and this committee aims to ensure our business community continues to have a voice in Cork City's future.

This committee builds on CBAs previous successes in the City such as Outdoor Dining and the revised city boundary, and we will continue to develop and support new initiatives. We will communicate our ideas and concerns through lobbying, representation, and policy submissions.

The Cork City 2030 committee launches with these initial aspirations, which will be strengthened incorporating member feedback and regularly utilising data-driven insights through pulse surveys.

A thriving business environment: with more offices and opportunities for employment in the city.

A people focused vibrant city centre: An age friendly and playful city, with initiatives to make it attractive for families and older people alike.

A housing orientated city: supporting living in the city, looking at a model for delivering housing for employers – e.g. community trusts.

An improved level of public service provision: good urban transport, good urban planning, good hospitals, schools, amenities and recreation opportunities.

A significantly reduced level of carbon emissions in the city: Partnering closely with Cork City Council on the delivery and execution of the Climate Action Plan and EU 100 Mission Cities initiative where Cork aims to be carbon neutral by 2030. CBA will campaign for the development of business supports, climate action education, retrofitting and greening initiatives.

Review of the 2025 Cork City Centre Revitalisation and Economic Strategy: Informing and contributing to this process and its key policy outcomes.

Review of the 2024 Docklands Framework Plan: helping develop a vision and key development priorities for this important part of the city.

Flooding: Advocating measures which will protect city businesses from future flood damage.

Submissions on Transportation Policy: Continuing to be a key stakeholder in the City Centre Movement Strategy, BusConnects, and the proposed Cork city tram system

Retail & Hospitality: We will work on ensuring these sectors are supported and thriving, which will in turn, drive footfall into the city and make the city a more attractive place.

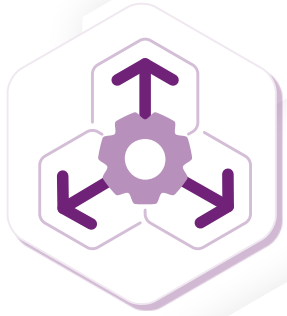
A thriving Patrick Street: At the heart of Cork City, we aim to engage and win membership confidence from the leading retailers and business on this prime retail street, and hope to build the street as a great City boulevard.

Festivals and The Arts: We will continue to partner and support festivals that benefit Cork City, e.g. Cork on a Fork and Corkmas. We're also supportive and hope to see growth in urban art and urban design initiatives.

The Cork City 2030 committee will develop two events each year with key expert speakers, and to further promote our city and it's future.

Clara O'Neill, with a background in Planning and a deep local passion for Cork City, spearheads this committee, bringing her expertise to drive its success.

Strategic Pillars

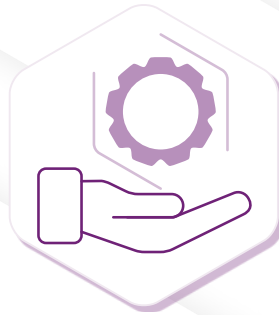


Networked Events

CBA intends to build on our successful networking and award events to support, recognise and promote businesses across the city centre. Adding to this, we plan to hold more business, training and networking events with key speakers covering pertinent topics and issues for Cork City businesses and residents.

The CBA office will share and invite all members to our events. Our event calendar will be kept updated on our website, with bookings welcome in advance.





Member Advisory Services

We are your support on the ground. Our office and President lead the day to day services for members, and can always be contacted directly with any questions or concerns relating to your business.

Adding to this, it is our plan for 2024 to build out the following member services

- **Professional Services Discount -**
A network of professional services partners offering CBA Member discounts
- **Training partnership** focussed on delivering key training sessions to enhance the day to day operations of your business. This plan will be developed ongoing based on market requirements and trends, and in line with our Professional Service Partners. We are now investigating training on the new SCARP scheme, and reintroducing our Customer Service training.
- **CBA Policy responses -**
In addition to our 2 leading strategic committees that will lead Policy responses relevant to their focus, CBA will review and submit responses to national policy that affects our members, i.e. National Budget
- **CBA Office -**
The CBA Office on South Mall is available for our members to use as Hot desk, or to meet in the 10 Seater Boardroom complimentary
- **CBA Website, Newsletter and Event Bulletins -**
the CBA website is being revamped, and will be kept up to date with reports from our committees and events.

We also plan to maintain our newsletter monthly, and aim to release a short event bulletin detailing what is happening in the city.
- **CBA Social Media -**
Our Social media channels are growing in followers. Members can send any updates directly to the CBA office and we will be happy to share on our channels as appropriate

It is our intention to grow membership by 20% year on year.

Note From Chairperson, Lawrence Owens

As we present this 5 Year Strategic Framework, I am filled with optimism for the future of Cork City and the businesses that shape its vibrant landscape. But equally conscious of the challenges that businesses will face in the coming years. However under the dedicated leadership of our current President, Kevin Herlihy, Cork Business Association (CBA) has undergone significant transformations, culminating in the creation of this comprehensive plan.

Since the founding of CBA in 1957, we have been fortunate to have had the advice and guidance of so many brilliant Cork business people. Without this selfless dedication and commitment we would not have survived as an organisation.

In my view our most singular achievement is that we have remained constant and we were always there for our members when needed. We have, of course, played our part and impacted on broader issues such as the Cork city merger proposals & Flood Defence initiatives, to name but a few.

Our new strategic pillars - Business Leadership, Networked Events, Membership Services, Cork City 2030, and A Safe and Clean Cork City - underscore our commitment to fostering a thriving, sustainable, and inclusive city.

We have engaged in extensive consultations with our members, non-members, industry partners, and stakeholders to ensure a holistic approach to our initiatives.

I extend my gratitude to all the members of the CBA Board and Executive for their unwavering dedication. Special thanks to Kevin Herlihy for his exemplary leadership during his tenure as President.

As we invite Cork City businesses to join us in actioning this plan, we recognize the collective strength we possess in shaping the destiny of our beloved city.

Let us, together, create a future where Cork City stands among the best in Europe—a city that is not only a hub for business but also a vibrant, safe, clean, and welcoming place for all.

Sincerely,



Lawrence Owens
Chairperson, Cork Business Association





Acknowledgements:

Cork Business Association would like to convey appreciation to Garden City Culture who expertly supported the research, consultation and drafting of the strategy, to Cork City Council and all stakeholders for their support and sincere engagement in the strategy consultation process.

Thanks to our executive, members and the wider businesses who took time to engage in the process.

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