

10th January 2007.

Taoiseach Bertie Ahern T.D.,
Department of the Taoiseach,
Government Buildings,
Upper Merrion Street,
Dublin 2.

Re: Future of Dublin Port and Bay Area

Dear Taoiseach,

The Dublin Chamber of Commerce has a vision for the Greater Dublin Area as a world-class, competitive, knowledge region with a modern developed infrastructure base. Ease of access to overseas markets and the efficient importation of goods are central to the development of the region and the wider economy. Equally, Dublin's city centre needs to develop as a clean, green, safe and pedestrian-friendly environment to enable Dublin's retail and tourism sectors compete with other leading capital cities.

In recent months, we have held a series of meetings with members and various stakeholders regarding the future of the Port and Bay Area. We are deeply concerned at the lack of certainty and clarity as to its future development. The immediate capacity constraints facing Dublin Port, and the lack of a robust long-term development master-plan encompassing the retail and tourism heart of the city and future transportation of goods in the region, undermines the ability of Dublin to achieve the above mentioned vision.

The Dublin Chamber is conscious that a number of studies are underway, examining national port capacity needs and the development of the Dublin Bay Area. We are also aware that there are a number of competing views on the area's future development. We have not lent our support to any particular one of these proposals at this time. Rather, our sole concern at present is ensuring that the complex issues surrounding Dublin Port and Bay Area are resolved in an informed, transparent and objective fashion. We believe a more comprehensive assessment must be carried out, which incorporates an assessment of the feasibility of alternative sites, including full hydrographical studies, a review of market structures and legal frameworks to ensure effective competition will be guaranteed in the Greater Dublin Area.

It is important that any decision on the future of this area does not fall between a number of national and local government bodies. Thus we are calling on the Department of the Taoiseach to take the lead role in ensuring a comprehensive review of all options, leading to the preparation of a 30-year vision and a more short-term action plan to address existing capacity constraints. Such a review must include a consultation with stakeholders and lead to a swift decision. Without such a review, we fear that the development of vital port facilities, wherever such facilities may be, will be delayed.

I look forward to hearing your views on our proposal that your Department take a lead role in ensuring that both the immediate and the longer term needs of exporters and importers in the Greater Dublin Area are addressed.

Yours sincerely.

Gina Quin
Chief Executive