

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Development Plan](#)
Subject: Variation No.1 to the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 - Iarnród Éireann submission
Date: Tuesday 7 April 2026 16:00:03
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image006.png](#)
[image007.png](#)
[Proposed Variation No. 1 to Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029_ÍÉ submission.pdf](#)

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please see attached submission from Iarnród Éireann / Irish Rail for consideration for Variation No.1 to the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029.

Kind regards,

Laura

Laura Coughlan
Transport Planner

Capital Investments - Iarnród Éireann

📍: Haymarket House, Smithfield, Dublin 7.

📞: [REDACTED]

✉️: [REDACTED]

🌐: <https://www.irishrail.ie/en-ie/>



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Iarnród Éireann Irish Rail, cuideachta ghníomhaíochta ainmnithe, faoi theorainn scaireanna, cláraithe in Éirinn ag Stáisiún Uí Chonghaile, Baile Átha Cliath 1, Ur. 119571 Ur. CBL: IE 4812851 O, Iarnród Éireann Irish Rail, a designated activity company, limited by shares, registered in Ireland at Connolly Station, Dublin 1, No. 119571 VAT No. IE 4812851 O

In Iarnród Éireann, creideann muid in obair sholúbtha a éascú, agus mar sin, cé go n-oireann sé dom ríomhphost a sheoladh anois, níl mé ag súil le freagra ná gníomh lasmuigh de d'uaireanta oibre.

At Iarnród Éireann we believe in facilitating flexible working, so while it suits me to email now, I do not expect a response or action outside of your own working hours.

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Planning Department,
Clare County Council,
New Road,
Ennis,
Co Clare.

7th April 2026

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Proposed Variation No. 1 to Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029

Iarnród Éireann (IÉ) welcomes the opportunity to submit observations on the proposed Variation No.1 to the Clare County Council Development Plan 2023 – 2029. IÉ understands that the proposed variations are in response to the publication of the National Planning Framework (NPF) First Revision and the NPF Implementation Guidelines - Housing Growth Requirements (July 2025).

IÉ notes that the publication of the new NPF in April 2025 created a requirement that development plans be assessed and updated where required. To clarify the objectives of the NPF in respect of housing, the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage issued Section 28 implementation guidelines to local authorities. It is further noted, in relation to the public consultation, that a key focus of the NPF is the delivery of housing and associated infrastructure to serve a growing population. Aligned with [ESRI research](#) on population growth scenarios and housing demand, infrastructure delivery through strategic planning, is required to be aligned with planning for Transport Orientated Development (TOD) in and around Ireland's five cities to support the delivery of new sustainable communities at brownfield and greenfield locations along existing or planned high-capacity public transport corridors.

Observations

Iarnród Éireann have reviewed the consultation documents available online and make the following observations.

- IÉ notes the population growth in Ennis and the aim to support the implementation of the Ennis Local Transport Plan to reduce car dependence, improve sustainable transport, reduce traffic congestion, promote sustainable growth and meet climate targets. IÉ suggests the Ennis Local Transport Planning should consider Ennis station as a suitable location for a mobility hub development.
- *Proposed Amendment No. 3a – 38 – Ennis Transformational Sites* – IÉ suggest that the inclusion of the rail line serving this area should be included in the new map.
- In relation to *proposed sites LDR2, COM8, COM4, COM1, L12 and R40* – these sites appear to be adjacent to the railway boundary. IÉ requests that proposals to zone lands or amend zoning at locations adjacent to the

railway shall include an objective to adequately protect the railway boundary so as not to impede future investment and improvement to rail services, as recommended in the All-Island Strategic Rail Review

- *Shannon Town and Environs*- IÉ notes the objective to seek investment to regenerate and rejuvenate Shannon Town and Environs area, through the enhancement of transport services, amenity and design quality, and the delivery of smart technologies, in order to drive public sector-led recovery, and to sustainably influence and support the Metropolitan Area and the wider county/region.
- *Sixmilebridge* - IÉ notes the proposed amendments to zoning at Sixmilebridge. IÉ wishes to advise that proposals that may negatively impact on the Infrastructure Safeguard (Rail) and expansion of the rail corridor to accommodate double tracking could impede the delivery of a rail link to Shannon Airport, should this objective be funded and approved by Government. In the absence of an up-to-date appraisal of an appropriate corridor to provide for a rail link to Shannon Airport, IÉ suggests it necessary for Clare County Council to support the undertaking of a pre-feasibility study to assist with improving the Infrastructure Safeguard (Rail), as a connection point for the rail link will be determined as part of this study. IÉ requests that Clare County Council continue to engage with IÉ through the detailed design of the N19 to ensure it does not negatively impact on the rail link to Shannon Airport. IÉ wishes to highlight the upgrade works at Sixmilebridge including passing loop and station accessibility improvements. These upgrades will expand the station footprint and support future service increases. With these improvements and the planned future residential development at Sixmilebridge, the existing station carpark may not be able to accommodate future carparking demand.
- In relation to the proposal to *amend Objective CDP 4.4 Shannon at Section 4.2.3 Settlement Hierarchy and Strategy*, IÉ recommends the inclusion of Iarnród Éireann in new subsection (e) with other relevant agencies to deliver the objectives of LSMATS
- In relation to *proposed amendment 3.3.5*, relating to the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, IÉ notes that a review by the Southern Regional Assembly is currently underway. IÉ suggests that the crafting of a standalone Rail Strategy within the new RSES would provide for a coherent and strategic plan for urban and regional rail services throughout the region and support delivery of, and investment in current and potential new routes serving County Clare. The inclusion of a Rail Strategy within the RSES would appear to be consistent with, and provided for in Section 29 of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (Content of RSES)
- In proposed amendments to *section 3.4.2, Core Strategy Statement*, Clare County Council may wish to consider the inclusion of 'a rail investment program to deliver improved frequency and capacity to Clare railway routes from Limerick and Galway' in bullet point 15 in addition the reference to the LNDR infrastructure.
- *Volume 2 Maps*- IÉ welcomes the Infrastructure Safeguard (Rail) component and suggests, with relevance to the recommendations of the All-Island Strategic Rail Review, that a safeguard should apply to the entire railway corridor through County Clare. IÉ requests that where it is intended to zone lands or amend zoning objectives or determine development applications on lands adjacent to the railway that appropriate objectives are included, to protect the railway boundaries for future investment and expansion such as passing loops, double tracking, realignment to improve line speeds or electrification of the route. Dynamic passing loops at Sixmilebridge station and Meelick are proposed as part of the Ennis line capacity project. Iarnród Éireann is

available to provide further detailed information on the locations of the dynamic passing loops by emailing ciforwardplanning@irishrail.ie.

- IÉ notes the content of the Ennis 2040 Economic and Spatial Strategy which recognises the value and potential of the railway through County Clare, connecting it to Limerick and Galway and to the greater Atlantic Economic Corridor and its connectivity to the rail connected Shannon Foynes Port. IÉ suggests that a Rail Strategy, contained in the Northern and Western Regional Assembly RSES and the Southern Regional Assembly RSES, which supports rail investment and improvements would collectively bring benefit to County Clare. The Ennis 2040 Economic and Spatial Strategy, may wish to consider the recommendation contained in the A-ISRR, relating to a rail connection to Shannon Airport.

Rail Development in Clare

Iarnród Éireann is committed, subject to funding, to further expand and integrate the railway network, in accordance with national, regional, and local policy, in collaboration with Clare County Council, the Department of Transport, and the National Transport Authority (NTA).

All-Island Strategic Rail Review (A-ISRR)

IÉ wishes to highlight the recommendations contained in the [All-Island Strategic Rail Review \(A-ISRR\)](#) relevant to the Clare County Council administrative area and the mid-west region.

The A-ISRR was published by Government in July 2024 and is the basis for rail investment across the island. In the short term, the A-ISRR recommends the protection of railway boundaries to allow for future expansion such as constructing double tracks or installing passing loops, electrification and realignment to improve speeds. It is essential that land use and zoning objectives adjacent to railways shall not impede future rail network improvements.

The A-ISRR recommendations relating to County Clare include:

Connect Shannon Airport to the Rail Network

- This would involve building a new line from either Sixmilebridge or Cratloe to Shannon Airport via Shannon Town and the Shannon Free Zone.
- This intervention would include developing new stations on the spur itself and potentially between the Sixmilebridge/Cratloe and Limerick Colbert to be served by a new high frequency suburban rail service centred on Limerick Colbert.

Dublin – Galway (serving Clare County via Athenry)

- Electrification of Galway to Dublin route
 - Double tracking of sections and installation of passing loops on Galway to Dublin route, including the double tracking of the Athenry to Galway section (improving frequency, service options, and punctuality on the existing WRC between Limerick and Galway)
 - Line speed improvements
 - Galway to Dublin hourly service

Dublin – Cork/Limerick (serving Clare County via Limerick Colbert)

- Electrification of Dublin to Cork/Limerick route

- Double tracking Limerick Jct. to Limerick (onward connectivity improvement to Clare)
- Line speed improvements

Restore a further section of the Western Rail Corridor from Athenry to Claremorris

- Providing connectivity via interchange from Limerick / Cork via Clare to Galway, Mayo and Ballina for passenger and freight services.

Upgrade Limerick to Waterford line

- Improving connectivity to the south east for passengers and freight.

Ensure regional and rural lines have at least one train per two hours (at regular times) – and hourly services between Galway, Limerick, Cork, and Waterford

Provide more direct services between Ireland’s West and South Coasts

- For example between Galway, Limerick, and Cork



Figure 1: All-Ireland Strategic Rail Review: A Potential Future Railway

Iarnród Éireann is available to provide further detailed information on the recommendations of the A-ISRR for County Clare and the mid-west region.

Rail Projects Prioritisation Strategy (RPPS)

[The Rail Projects Prioritisation Strategy \(RPPS\)](#) was published in December 2025 and is a follow-on strategy from the A-ISRR. The RPPS sets out at a high-level the proposed sequencing of selected investments recommended in the A-ISRR. The strategy was prepared for the Department of Transport (Ireland) and Department for Infrastructure (Northern Ireland) with support from the European Investment Bank (EIB). These projects are broken down into two categories: Early Interventions and Major Projects (see Figure 2).

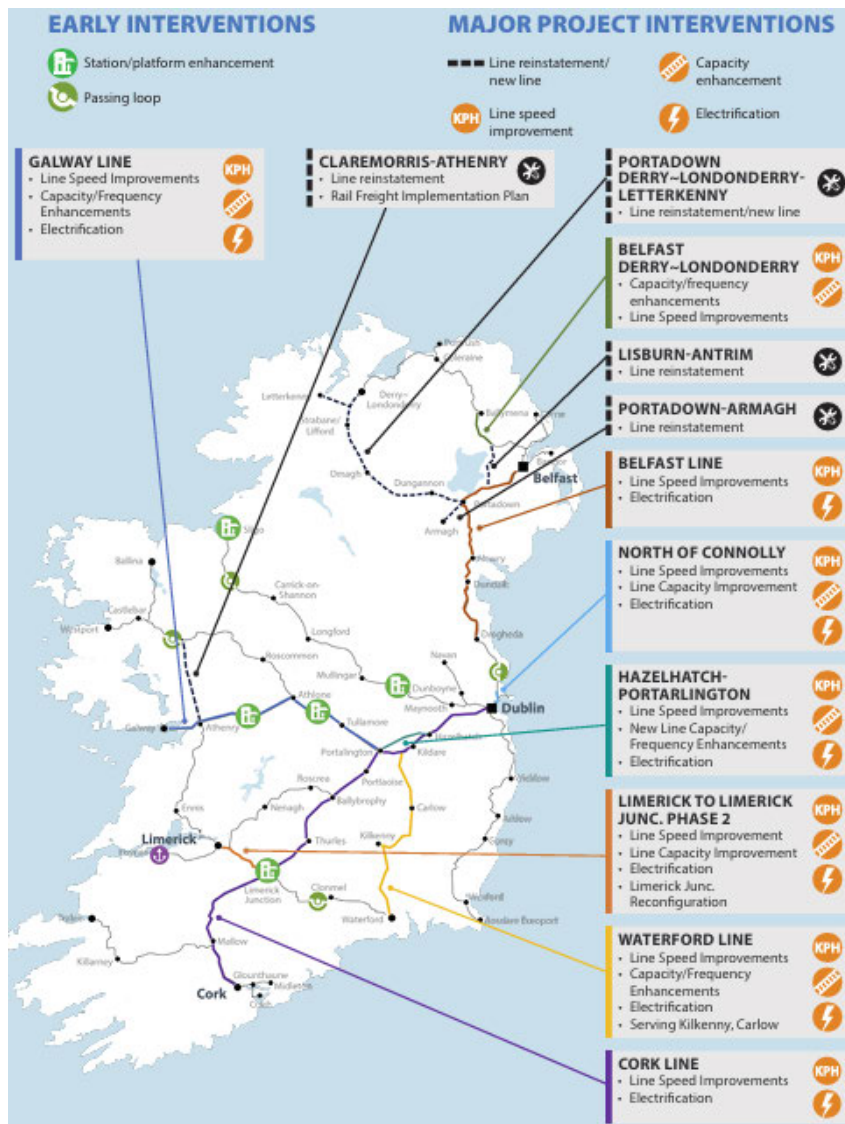


Figure 2: Early Interventions and Major Projects – RPPS

Ennis Line Capacity Enhancement

IE are currently undertaking the Ennis Line Capacity Enhancement study. Phase 1 projects have commenced.

Proposal include:

- The provision of static passing loop at Sixmilebridge Station which will increase service capacity by 30% between Limerick and Ennis. (Phase 1)
- Platform extensions at stations between Limerick and Athenry are currently progressing to support running of larger trains with increased capacity. (Phase 1)

- Seeks to provide 30 minute commuter frequency and hourly intercity frequency on the line through the provision of dynamic passing loops between Limerick and Ennis. (Phase 2)

Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, Iarnród Éireann welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the proposed variation to the Clare Development Plan. Iarnród Eireann wishes to acknowledge the local and national support for better public transport in County Clare and looks forward to your continued support to deliver essential rail services and to further engagement with the elected members and Chief Executive as you progress housing delivery and forward planning objectives for the county.

Should you wish to discuss in further detail this submission or any plans or potential for rail service improvements in County Clare, including the recommendations contained in the All-Island Strategic Rail Review, IÉ Capital Investments Transport Planning would welcome the opportunity to assist and can be contacted through ciforwardplanning@irishrail.ie

Yours sincerely,



Mary Considine

Chief Executive



Figure 4: Sustainable Cities and Heavy Rail Interventions (A-ISRR 2024)