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From: Jennifer Wallace <info@emra.ie>
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From: Jennifer Wallace [REDACTED]
Organisation: Joint Business Council Ibec-CBI

Message Body:
To Whom It May Concern,

Please find attached the Ibec-CBI submission on behalf of the Joint Business Council for the EMRA draft RSES.

Best,

Jennifer

This e-mail was sent from a submission form on Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly (<http://emra.ie>)

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Ibec/CBI Northern Ireland Joint Business Council (JBC)
Submission to the Consultation Process for the Draft Regional Spatial and Economic
Strategy (RSES) of the Eastern Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA)
Wednesday 23rd January 2019

Summary

- **All island cohesion is essential for the successful implementation of the NPF**
 - **Enhanced connectivity between EMRA and Northern Ireland is crucial to this cohesion**
 - **The JBC supports the draft RSES plans to deepen further and strengthen these links**
 - **Post Brexit this will require considerable 'joined up' investment planning and delivery**
 - **The EMRA has a key role to play in this long term strategic and complex process**
 - **JBC supports the urgent provision of necessary post Brexit capacity and resources**
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Introduction

The all-island market supports greater prosperity and employment through increased flows of people, goods, services, and investment. The Belfast/Dublin Economic Corridor first proposed by the late Sir George Quigley at a Confederation of Irish Industry (now Ibec) event in 1992 is a key element of this economy.

Considerable advances have been made in delivering this concept compared to the limited interaction, and poor connectivity between Belfast and Dublin and all points in between that was the case when it was proposed in response to completion of the Single Market. However, concerning the original ambition, it remains in many respects a 'work in progress'. So the JBC very much welcomed National Policy Objective 44 in the National Planning Framework (NPF):

- *"In cooperation with relevant Departments in Northern Ireland, to further support and develop the economic potential of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and in particular the core Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry network and to promote and enhance its international visibility."*

For the same reasons, the JBC welcome and broadly supports the chapter on All Island Cohesion in the EMRA draft RSES and in particular its commitment to it being implemented on a joined up basis with Northern Ireland's Regional Development Strategy supported by the Framework for co-operation on Spatial Strategy between Ireland and Northern Ireland. This submission offers strategic observations on the proposed plans to do so and thereby help to protect the proven benefits for citizens business and employment of the all island market, especially post Brexit.

Context

The overarching context within which the RSES will be implemented includes to support:

Protecting peace by sustaining prosperity: as part of both jurisdictions response to Brexit there is a renewed and compelling need to accelerate efforts to focus on planning for, and delivering, the island's long term sustained economic development and help embed peace. The UK leaving the EU creates a new shared and now immediate challenge to implementing cohesive plans to do so.

Optimising Belfast/Dublin Economic interaction: to be a coherent conurbation of sufficient scale and so competitive with European and GB equivalents and an attractive place to live and work will be assisted by local authorities' joint, positive and proactive collaboration.

Sustaining the All Island Market: that as documented in the recent Ibec/CBI Report 'Business on a connected island' provides thousands of additional jobs, is the third largest in these islands, employs 2,869,000 people and has a total consumer spend of approximately £60.5b//€72.bn.¹

Planning for a growing population: that meets the needs of the 5m populating envisaged by the draft RSES with unprecedented cohesion, cooperation and coordination that effectively transcends current administrative and future jurisdictional boundaries.

Response

The response to this challenge should not be less ambitious than what is currently planned. Instead, there should be an immediate and determined joined up effort to seek and facilitate investment in the projects identified in the draft RSES. This is fundamental to the region's future contribution to being globally competitive and to attracting investment.

The scale objective: The JBC is greatly encouraged that the draft RSES's ambition includes reaching the European population benchmark of 5m where there is a two city growth pole and so being in a position to compete for investment with similar EU and UK city regions.

RECOMMENDATION ONE: The final RSES should include detailed plans on how precisely the required cohesive interaction will be operationally achieved post Brexit so that business is reassured of the Corridor's continued growth and enhanced international significance will be supported and sustained (e.g. new working groups/strengthened local cross border sectoral frameworks/priority projects/illustrative case studies/additional agreements)

Coordinating Dublin/Belfast Corridor investment: by identifying and developing shared strategic opportunities that will help sustain a competitive business environment on both sides of the border within this primary regional driver of future all island economic development.

RECOMMENDATION TWO: Local business would welcome the final RSES including both the aim and a plan to ensure linkages between Dundalk Drogheda and Newry as the cross border lynchpin of greater Belfast/Dublin economic interaction are to be strengthened (e.g. by the Belfast City Deal's substantial funding and how it can be matched in the Republic).

¹ [https://www.ibec.ie/IBEC/Press/PressPublicationsdoclib3.nsf/vPages/Newsroom~no-deal-brexit-unthinkable,-says-business-north-and-south-11-10-2018/\\$file/Business+on+a+Connected+Island+-+Ibec-CBI+Report.pdf](https://www.ibec.ie/IBEC/Press/PressPublicationsdoclib3.nsf/vPages/Newsroom~no-deal-brexit-unthinkable,-says-business-north-and-south-11-10-2018/$file/Business+on+a+Connected+Island+-+Ibec-CBI+Report.pdf)

Practical Benefits for business: The draft RSES contains many high level goals on digital energy tourism etc. but practical details immediately relevant to local business and the global investors the NPF envisages the Corridor's visibility being raised with are absent.

RECOMMENDATION THREE: The final RSES contains more detail on how this cooperation is going to work in practice irrespective of the outcome of Brexit. Such as a list of projects where companies can added value because they are local, practical and deliverable and designed to enhance current cross border synergies by being jointly progressed (e.g. planning being interlinked so that policy and its delivery are complementary, mutually supportive along with not competing in the provision of local services).

Transport infrastructure: As the draft RSES states, the corridor benefits greatly from having much of the island's international connectivity through its airports and ports (i.e. Dublin Airport and Port, Belfast Port and its International and City Airports, along with complimentary ports in Warrenpoint, Larne, Greenore and Drogheda). The JBC supports on-going investment in these nodes as essential elements of the core transport backbone.

RECOMMENDATION FOUR: Intra-island transport connectivity is also vital and needs to be urgently upgraded. The final RSES should include a list of projects EMRA can promote and or take actions to facilitate the accelerated delivery of because it is within their power and/or remit to do so (e.g. more frequent Belfast/Dublin Enterprise Train service and the A1 being urgently upgraded to high quality dual carriageway as part of the EU TEN-T core network).

Targeted Investments: As the draft RSES states these are needed to upgrade infrastructure and services, so they can operate cohesively and be mutually supportive for business and those living in the region and beyond. However, there is an absence of detailed projects.

RECOMMENDATION FIVE: The final RSES has a list of individual investable projects that will support enable and facilitate more business interaction on the Belfast and Dublin Corridor within the EMRA.

Consultation with business: From a JBC perspective, there is less detail than would have been anticipated in the draft RSES as to how precisely and working together with the local authorities on both sides of the border are going to engage with and consult business in the region on developing planning and delivering their contribution to all island cohesion.

RECOMMENDATION SIX: The delivery by the final RSES of enhanced support for local cross border business will especially post Brexit, be greatly helped by more joint/joined up and on-going consultation by the three local authorities with them and their local/regional representatives.

The Ibec-CBI Joint Business Council (JBC) was formed in 1991 and works to promote an optimal business environment on the island and advance competitiveness for the benefit of both jurisdictions working on collaboration with its member companies and strategic Partners.

