

Ibec/CBI Northern Ireland Joint Business Council (JBC)

**Submission to the Consultation Process for the Draft Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES)
of the Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly**

[Friday 12th April 2019]

Introduction

The JBC welcomes the opportunity to respond to the draft RSES consultation by the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly and recognises the importance of the RSES for the all island economy. We support the amendment to Section 3.2 Growth Enablers, point 4, in identifying the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and support the recognition of the importance of economic growth as a Regional Policy Objective (RPO 11.1) for the all-island economy. It is crucial to be consistent when referencing this area with the inclusion of “economic” each time in the specific sub-regional growth enablers for the Dublin City & Metropolitan Area, the Core Region and the Gateway Region.

Economic activity

Cross border economic activity plays a significant role in driving growth to mutual advantage in both Ireland and Northern Ireland. Local and regional economies function across both jurisdictions within an all island market that includes many different sectors. Our ambition is a connected all-island market that realises its full potential to support prosperity and employment through increased flows of people, goods, services, energy and investment at the regional urban and local level.

Co-operation and gains

These are derived in a multitude of areas ranging from environmental collaboration, accident and emergency services, education, energy, tourism, recreation, social cohesion and transport.¹ There are substantial economic benefits, including shared public service provision, to be gained from the effects of agglomeration between urban centres. It allows for a deeper pool of labour, knowledge spill-overs, and supply chain integration between centres of economic activity. It is important that the RSES prioritises joint spatial planning and development along the Dublin-Belfast corridor. It is right that recognition is given to the Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry economic zone and the crucial role it plays as a North-South economic interconnector.

Benefits of the all-island economy

The all-island economy has developed into an efficiently functioning ‘natural economic zone’ of scale, which delivers significant economic benefits:

- An all-island consumer market of 6.6 million people, which will grow by 33% to 8.8 million by 2048.
- Employment totalling 2.869 million, up 32% since the Belfast / Good Friday Agreement in 1998. The single all-island labour pool is greater than that of Denmark, Norway or Scotland.
- €3.2 billion (stg£2.84 billion) trade in goods only between Ireland and Northern Ireland.
- Gross consumer spending of €72.2 billion (stg£60.5 billion).
- 110 million people border crossings annually.
- 3,600 light goods vehicles crossing the border every day.

¹ The recently published ‘Technical Paper’ setting out the results of joint mapping exercise done by the EU and UK as part of the Article 50 Negotiation process lists 156 areas of N/S cooperation to be protected in the future. See https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/technical-explanatory-note-north-south-cooperation-mapping-exercise?utm_source=49a11224-ccef-4e30-9659-fc9e6cef2e14&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate

The future of the all-island economy

Brexit creates uncertainty; this should not undermine territorial cohesion. The future development of the all-island economy must be protected. This includes ensuring the attraction, retention and development of skills necessary to deliver future growth. Significant investment in essential infrastructure across both jurisdictions will be required to sustain economic gains because failure to do so is already resulting in increasingly chronic infrastructure deficits that negatively impact on competitiveness and the quality of people's lives.

The all-island economy is core to the regional growth strategy

Further development of the all-island economy is specifically identified in the proposed amended key regional growth enablers (Amendment 6). To ensure better alignment, this should be also reflected in the specific sub-regional growth enablers for the Dublin City & Metropolitan Area, the Core Region and the Gateway Region. Consistency requires this be also reflected in the guiding principles for core strategies.

Detailed amendments

Amendment No.	Proposed	Amend
7 (6)	Protect and improve access to the global gateways of Dublin Airport and Dublin Port for the region and to serve the Nation, and safeguard and improve regional accessibility and service by rail, road and communication, with a key focus the Dublin-Belfast Corridor.	<i>Protect and improve access to the global gateways of Dublin Airport and Dublin Port for the region and to serve the Nation, and safeguard and improve regional accessibility and service by rail, road and communication, with a key focus the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.</i>
8 (2)	Drogheda to realise its potential to grow to city scale and secure investment to become a self-sustaining Regional Growth Centre on the Dublin-Belfast Corridor, driving synergies between the Drogheda - Dundalk - Newry cross border network.	<i>Drogheda to realise its potential to grow to city scale and secure investment to become a self-sustaining Regional Growth Centre on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor, driving synergies between the Drogheda - Dundalk-Newry cross border network.</i>
9 (2)	Support compact growth in the regional growth centre of Dundalk to grow to city scale, capitalising on its location on the Dublin – Belfast Corridor to drive the linkage between Dundalk and Newry to strengthen cross border synergy in services and functions.	<i>Support compact growth in the regional growth centre of Dundalk to grow to city scale, capitalising on its location on the Dublin – Belfast Economic Corridor to drive the linkage between Dundalk and Newry to strengthen cross border synergy in services and functions.</i>
12 (6)	Dublin Belfast Corridor – Safeguard and improve accessibility and service by rail, road and communication between Dublin and Belfast and drive cross border networks between Drogheda, Dundalk and Newry. Post – Brexit, consideration should be given to a process that can establish protocols for environmental protection and movement of people and goods.	<i>Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor – Safeguard and improve accessibility and service by rail, road and communication between Dublin and Belfast and drive cross border networks between Drogheda, Dundalk and Newry. Post – Brexit, consideration should be given to a process that can establish protocols for environmental protection and movement of people and goods.</i>

On behalf of:

Fergal O'Brien
Director of Policy and Public Affairs, Ibec

Angela McGowan
Director, CBI Northern Ireland