



Subject:	Update on Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor
Date:	11 August 2022
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
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Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with a progress update on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC) and work on a development plan, strategy and action plan to deliver on the partnership's objectives.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Members of the Committee are asked to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the contents of this report and progress to date to develop the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>At CG&R 12 January 2022 Members were provided with an update on progress to support the development of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor including progress on the creation of a development plan and ongoing work on developing a strategy and action plan. Members noted the progress to date and endorsed the developmental plans of the partnership.</p>
3.2	<p>Since the last committee update the Development plan for the partnership has been completed. The strategy and action plan will be finalised in September 2022. Belfast City Council continues to act as lead partner on contract management alongside a project steering group made up of partnership representatives. The work to date has made a number of recommendations to support the ongoing development of the partnership including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A phased development timeline up to 2030. In the short term from 2022-2024 priorities include set up of initial partnership personnel, consideration of legal structures, and identification of funding options. DBEC should remain an informal partnership model in the short term, together with an MOU, with a view to exploring independent legal status for the partnership in the future. This will be funded initially through council contributions. DBEC should be established with a bottom-up governance structure, largely based on the current existing structure. This includes a board of 12 growing to 16 in the long term to include private sector representatives. The partnership should be housed at a single location with staff and resources to lead and manage delivery of the partnership aims. Key areas of focus should include Research and Development, Trade and Investment, Skills and Infrastructure and Connectivity.
3.3	<p>Stage 2 includes the development of a strategy for the partnership. The strategy aims to articulate a vision for the partnership to enable sustainable economic growth across the region. This part of the project will undertake a review of the economic context and key emerging work areas at a local and regional level and their potential to impact the region, and assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to achieving sustainable</p>

	<p>economic growth across the region. This will provide an evidence base for action, identifying areas of focus for the partnership to address future opportunities and address any gaps in existing provision.</p>
3.4	<p>Stage 3 includes the development of an action plan. This aims to build on the foundations of the development plan and strategy. This piece of work will prioritise key areas of work for the partnership aligned with the key thematic areas to 2030. The action plan aims to clearly define the role of DBEC and other partners in delivering key actions and will identify new areas for collaboration, it will also identify potential opportunities to access funding and resources to deliver on the objectives of the partnership.</p>
3.5	<p>All stages of this work have been informed by extensive stakeholder engagement including workshops with DBEC partners and one to one meetings with stakeholders and strategic partners.</p>
3.6	<p>It is expected that the final draft of the development plan, strategy and action plan will be presented to the members of the political advisory group for consultation and feedback. The meeting will take place at the end of September, date to be confirmed.</p>
3.7	<p>Based on the recommendations of the development plan it has been agreed that a dedicated resource is put in place to support the delivery of the strategy and action plan for the partnership. This resource will include two dedicated positions which will be located in Newry and Mourne District Council as they are currently hold the chairing role, the positions will be responsible to the partnership. It is intended that the recruitment process will commence in August with the staff being in place by November.</p>
3.8	<p>In tandem with work on the development plan, strategy and action plan officials from partner councils have continued to identify collaborative opportunities, in addition to engaging with external stakeholders to further the aims of the partnership. Belfast City Council officials have met with representatives of Special EU Programmes Body, Intertradelreland, the Irish Government's Shared Island Unit, in addition to a range of business representative organisations to identify joint interventions and potential opportunities to access funding.</p>
3.9	<p>In June 2022, the partnership applied to the Irish Government's Shared Island Local Government Development Fund for funding to conduct a feasibility study on regional</p>

	<p>innovation centres. This funding is aimed at supporting cross-border local authority partnerships develop proposals for joint capital projects.</p>
3.10	<p>Belfast City Council have also partnered with Dublin City Council and Cork County Council to make applications for grants under this fund. The application with Dublin City Council is in relation to the circular economy and with Cork on Harbour facilities. These applications are being evaluated and allocations are expected to be announced in August.</p>
3.11	<p>The Peace Plus programme has also been identified as a potential source of funding relevant to the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor. In particular Theme 2, Delivering Economic Regeneration and Transformation and Theme 6, Building and Embedding Partnership. Funding calls under these thematic areas are expected to open in the Autumn. The DBEC partnership are currently scoping out potential collaborative initiatives that would align with these thematic areas under Peace Plus, in preparation for funding calls.</p>
3.12	<p>Members will be updated with further progress on the strategy and action plan at a later date.</p>
3.13	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The activities outlined within this report will be resourced from the 2022/23 Enterprise and Business Growth budget. Applications for grants under the Shared Island Fund do not require a matching financial contribution from council's, however, in-kind staff time will be required.</p>
3.14	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>The unit is currently undertaking a process of equality screening on the overall work programme, this will ensure consideration is given to equality and good relation impacts throughout the delivery of this project.</p>