



<b>Report to:</b>	Development Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Belfast Dublin Economic Corridor
<b>Date:</b>	14 January 2014
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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	The Belfast Dublin Economic Corridor is a term used to describe the geographical area between both cities recognising the economic wealth and future potential that is created from the concentrations of business, industry, educational institutions, technology and transport infrastructure and other capital developments located in this area.
1.2	Over the last 10-20 years a number of research reports and analytical discussion pieces have emerged on this concept. These have included reports by the University of Ulster, the Centre for Cross Border Studies, the joint CBI/IBEC Council, the Irish Planning Institute and John Yarwood, a former Director of the Urban Institute at University College Dublin. Recommendations within the various reports and emerging from the seminars and workshops held have centred on how both cities and the 2 governments could capitalise on the latent potential of the area by consciously promoting the Belfast Dublin economic corridor in policy terms and developing a range of initiatives to build up its economic strength even further.
1.3	The idea behind the Belfast Dublin economic corridor is essentially to build up the economic strength of the area to create a poly centric city region on a scale large enough to compete with the major urban clusters of continental Europe.
1.4	Between 2001 and 2002 University of Ulster held 2 conferences in association with other Irish Universities and the Harvard Graduate School of Design on major planning challenges affecting the key urban locations. The central theme focused on partnership, prosperity and place identifying the need for the delivery of sustainable development of the Belfast Dublin leg of the Eastern seaboard corridor as they defined it. They pointed out

	that this is the geographical area where development pressure is most apparent and where economic growth is evident thereby requiring a coordination of policy and practice to promote it as a location of choice for investors, entrepreneurs and successful companies.
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<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	Following recent discussions between the Lord Mayor of Belfast and the Lord Mayor of Dublin, a proposal has emerged to re-invigorate the concept of the Belfast Dublin economic corridor to bring new economic opportunities to both cities and the wider corridor region in between. Whilst new updated research and analysis would be required to investigate the potential in depth, in the first instance discussions could take place with a wider range of partners in Belfast and Dublin to ascertain interest in working together to develop the corridor proposal.
2.2	Initial discussions have taken place between officers of Dublin City Council and the Director of Development and the Head of Economic Initiatives on how such a project might be developed. There are already significant areas of commonality in the key economic sectors that are being promoted and in the technology and communications infrastructure required to support business development.
2.3	Some examples of initiatives that could be developed in concert are the super connected broadband and digital projects; rapid transit and other public transport infrastructure enhancements to connect both cities with higher speed and more efficient services; the security of an all Ireland energy supply; linked technology and enterprise parks with incubation and growth support; new trade and investment initiatives to promote business; joint campaigns to attract new inward investors and encourage expansion of existing companies already located in the corridor area.
2.4	Overall it would be necessary to create a sound strategic base for the corridor concept working not only with Dublin but with the other strategically important locations in between such as Newry and Dundalk. Leadership from the Councils would in turn attract support from the key organisations representing business and industry, education and communication providers. There may be the potential of attracting European Interreg funding for such an initiative
2.5	In order to take this forward it is proposed that both Belfast City Council and Dublin City Council take the lead in instigating a set of discussions with other potential partners on how to reinvigorate the corridor concept and make it into a meaningful project. It is also proposed that these discussions are managed through a bespoke programme of two seminars/receptions which would spotlight the growth opportunities in both Belfast and Dublin.
2.6	Specifically it is proposed that a business breakfast is held in Dublin around 28 <sup>th</sup> March 2014 (provisional) in conjunction with the Lord Mayor of Dublin and attended by leading business people from the Dublin region. Following this opening event, the Lord Mayor of Dublin and the Lord Mayor of Belfast will travel by train to Belfast for a bespoke leadership forum with Belfast business leaders on how to strengthen the Belfast Dublin Economic Corridor. The spotlight of the discussion fora will be on profiling the key opportunities in Belfast and Dublin. Also invited to participate in the full day's programme of events will be the

