



# Ireland 2040

## East Border Region LTD Submission

### 1.0 Introduction

East Border Region is a Local Authority led cross border network, established in 1976, comprising six Local Authorities on the East Coast of Ireland. Louth, Monaghan and Meath County Council in Ireland and Newry Mourne and Down, Armagh Banbridge Craigavon and Ards North Down in N Ireland. The aim of the organisation is to promote regional cross border economic development.

This submission has been prepared to provide comments in respect of the draft National Planning Framework.

### 2.0 General Comments

East Border Region agrees with the five Key Elements set out in the document. The idea of promoting more balanced growth between the three regions of Ireland, developing and promoting existing urban areas and also addressing rural decline is welcomed. East Border Region would point out however that the Border Corridor, both North and South, is still at an economic disadvantage and would thus like the National Planning Framework to be more explicit about how these key elements will be achieved in respect of the Border Corridor.

In Chapter One the Framework states that one of the key values for Ireland 2040 is Opportunity. Opportunity for all our communities and our regions to develop spatially irregardless of where one is located. East Border Region agrees with this principal. The delivery of opportunity for the citizens and communities of the Border Corridor is essential for the balanced and sustainable development of the country. Again East Border Region would like to see a stronger emphasis on how this will be delivered along the Border Corridor

In Section 2.2 of Chapter 2 the Framework outlines the location of the five designated cities and the focus on them for significant spatial growth. East Border Region believes that the focus on these five cities will contribute to a more spatially uneven pattern of regional development which continues to disadvantage the Border Corridor. Urban centres in the southern and eastern regions of the country will develop ahead of the towns located along the border corridor. The border corridor has suffered more than any part of the island as a result of the Troubles in N Ireland. Like other border regions across Europe the border has suffered from peripherality, a lack of investment in

infrastructure, lower levels of Inward investment, higher unemployment, skills shortage Brexit has the potential to exacerbate this situation. The recent report ‘Brexit and the Border Corridor’ October 2017 commissioned by the eleven border Local Authorities highlights that the Ireland/ N Ireland Border Corridor will be most impacted by Brexit. Interventions are required now to address the negative impact. East Border Region considers that the National Planning Framework needs to take account of these issues and actively intervene to ensure that the disadvantage of the Border Corridor, the economic imbalance, is addressed immediately.

East Border Region also believe that the National Planning Framework must adjust its targeted growth figures to address the population imbalance of the Border Corridor. This is the only way to promote balanced and sustainable development of the island as a whole.

## Cross Border Local Initiatives

East Border Region believes that insufficient detail has been provided on the delivery of these initiatives. As stated previously the Border Corridor will be impacted more than any other region in both the UK and Ireland. The Border Corridor Report outlines clearly the potential impact of Brexit on the Border Corridor particularly on the All Island Economy. This needs to be reinforced by a Spatial Plan which doesn't stop at the border. The National Spatial Plan must clearly acknowledge the importance of the All Island Economy and should outline specific proposed investments to mitigate against the negative impact of Brexit. The National Planning Framework needs to acknowledge that Brexit is a ‘Game Changer’ and thus proactively invest along the Border Corridor.

Regarding infrastructure, specific mention is made of the Dublin to Derry route. EBR believes that further specific investment is required in infrastructure as described above. Investment in business infrastructure is also vital. SME's in the southern border counties have already suffered in the past year due to the sudden dramatic fall in sterling. Some have closed, others are barely turning a profit. Border towns encounter specific problems due to their location. Issues such as currency and taxation, poor broadband connectivity, rural location are all challenges to the economic situation along the border Corridor. Dedicated investment is required in the National Planning Framework in this regard.

GDP and per capita and GVP within the border region is already significantly below the average for both Ireland and N Ireland.

**There is a clear need for a Brexit Transition Assistance Programme to support the border regions in adapting to the challenges that the UK's exit from the European Union will bring. The National Planning Framework needs to contribute in this respect.**

Bradley and Best in their publication 'Cross Border Economic Renewal: Rethinking Regional Policy in Ireland (March 2012) identified a number of steps necessary to restart regional policy along the border corridor. Recognition of the unique circumstances of the Border Corridor with its distinctive cross border flows would contribute to the vision as outlined by Bradley and Best. This must be accounted for in the National Planning Framework to mitigate against the further economic deprivation of the Border Corridor

## Conclusion

EBR welcomes the National Planning Framework. EBR recognises that there is a need for more balanced growth and regional parity but we are concerned that the Framework is not explicit in this regard in respect of the Border Corridor. The situation regarding Brexit is still very uncertain but the National Planning Framework need to take this into account. Recognition of the importance of an All Island Economy must be supported by Spatial Planning. The people and communities of the Border Corridor deserve a positive discrimination in the National Planning Framework to redress the negatives associated with Brexit

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