

Title of Report:	Causeway Coast & Glens Local Economic Partnership
Committee Report Submitted To:	Leisure & Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	17 December 2024
For Decision or For Information	For Decision
To be discussed In Committee	NO

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)	
Strategic Theme	Local Economy
Outcome	Council contributes to improving levels of business innovation in the Borough, improving median wage per employee, increasing business startup and survival rates and increasing early stage entrepreneurial activity within the NI norm
Lead Officer	Director Leisure & Development / Head of Prosperity & Place

Estimated Timescale for Completion	
Date to be Completed	Long-term objective

Budgetary Considerations	
Net Cost of Proposal	N/A
Included in Current Year Estimates	N/A
Capital/Revenue	Revenue - Capital
Code	N/A
Staffing Costs	N/A

Legal Considerations	
Input of Legal Services Required	No
Legal Opinion Obtained	N/A

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

1.0 Purpose of Report

To enable Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council to implement the requirements of the Local Economic Partnership following guidance (Annex A) from the Department for the Economy (DfE) including the identification of actions and development of projects that align with the Sub Regional Economic Plan.

2.0 Background

2.1 On the 1st October 2024, DfE launched its Sub-Regional Economic Plan, a new strategic approach to economic development (**Annex B**). The aim is for local communities to be empowered to identify their own economic priorities through local partnerships working together to identify the main barriers to economic growth and the interventions that will unlock the area's potential.

2.2 The plan sets out the next steps DfE and Invest NI (INI) will take to bring about greater regional balance. The plan focuses on three strands of delivery:

1. Creation of new Local Economic Partnerships with dedicated funding;
2. Enhancing the role of Invest NI at a regional level; and
3. Realignment of departmental policies and programmes to help drive local growth.

3.0 Local Economic Partnership (LEP)

3.1 The empowerment of local communities is key to building a more regionally balanced economy. To ensure that there is full engagement and involvement, all 11 Councils have been asked to establish their own LEP. These can be specific to one council area or can expand, creating bigger partnerships, through collaborations with other council areas; they can build on existing partnerships such as Community Planning Partnerships or can be standalone.

3.2 With support from DfE and INI, the LEP will work to identify suitable local projects with proposals being made to access dedicated funding. Projects should aim to:

- Improve productivity;
- Raise median wages;
- Increase the employment rate;
- Lower economic inactivity; and
- Move towards delivering Net Zero and industrial decarbonisation.

3.3 Since Officers provided their last update, a meeting has taken place with DfE and INI officials to determine the preferred structure for Causeway Coast & Glens LEP and it was agreed that the current Economic Advisory Group (EAG) would be reconstituted into the LEP for our Borough. To facilitate this, a rationalisation exercise will need to take place to ensure the appropriate decision-makers are represented on the partnership.

3.4 It is proposed that Elected Members input is coordinated via the Community Planning Partnership to expediate proceedings.

4.0 Timeline

4.1 A proposed timeline was previously provided, this has since been expanded:

Initial setup – November 2024.

- DfE Strategic Advisor has now been appointed.
- Meeting to discuss structure has taken place.

- Council will in collaboration with the EAG agree the draft Terms of Reference (**Annex C**) along with DfE/INI.
- Once agreed, members to be invited to first meeting.
- At first meeting, draft TOR to be adopted – this process allows for membership/ representative board to be widened or for decision making process to be changed.
- Action Planning phase to be started on agreement.

Action Planning will follow – December 2024.

- LEP to agree core focus until end 26-27, e.g. productivity, economic inactivity etc. based on SREP evidence. To be agreed with DfE/ INI.
- LEP will decide how to choose actions to take forward – open call, private submissions, how to rank, appraise options etc. – DfE and INI will advise.
- DfE will confirm funding level to each LEP. Fund management guidance will be provided to council secretariat.
- Project and funding phase to be started on agreement.

Projects and Funding – January to March 2025.

- LEP will identify actions.
- DfE/ INI will work with LEP to identify projects that meets their core focus.
- Projects and actions will be assessed based on LEP methodology agreed.

- 4.2 Fundamentally the LEP seeks to involve communities in decision making. As such, the partnership is required to be in place to develop ideas, plans and inform decision making. The Council is responsible for establishing the partnership and will attend LEP meetings as part of fulfilling the role of the accountable body in relation to the funding received from the Department.
- 4.3 DfE have indicated that funding of circa £1.5m will be made available for each of the next three years to facilitate projects identified and agreed by the LEP, in collaboration with the Department and INI.
- 4.4 This programme sits alongside interventions such as the then Levelling Up Fund and the Shared Prosperity Fund in supporting local regeneration in areas of the UK that have not previously seen significant investment. As previously noted, what makes the LEP distinctive is the economic development focus.
- 4.5 The Partnerships’ principal remit is to determine a core focus and develop projects that will support economic development aligned to the Sub-Regional Economic Plan. Officers previously presented a regional priorities paper to the Leisure & Development Committee on 18th June 2024 (**Annex D**), which identified a range of short, medium and long term strategic priorities for the Borough:

Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
Key strategic roads/ infrastructure (NI Water & NIE) improvements across the borough.	Growth Deal - £72m capital investment – Innovation Pillar Projects. To support existing and new businesses (FDI and spinouts or new businesses) with the creation of high valued jobs/ GVA/ skills/ employment/ and increase productivity to align with Growth Deal projects and other regional initiatives	To develop tourism initiatives that will encourage growth in specific sectors and enhance the area’s tourism provision; as well as generating more visitors, motivating them to spend longer and visit throughout the year i.e. 4/5 Star Hotel Accommodation; signature attractions and facilities across the area to

		convert day to staying visitors and increase dwell time.
Development of new Enhanced Investment Zone for the Borough as part of the recent UK Government's £150 million commitment for Northern Ireland.	Greater availability of enterprise development land/sites across the Borough as current demand from businesses outstrips the limited supply of land available.	Sustainable Energy – development of SOLAR PVC Farms to make the Borough one of the UK's most sustainable regions by 2035; ensuring that sustainability and the development of a vibrant and growing economy go together.
A clearly defined 'value proposition' and promotion of same to encourage investment (indigenous and international) to the Borough.	Compulsory purchase powers to support the delivery of a range of development, regeneration, and infrastructure projects in the public interest.	
Increase demand from businesses in the Borough for mainstream government support, particularly new business start-ups and early stage growth. (Partnership Pathway initiatives / Bespoke Solutions).	Development of Sports / Leisure facilities across the borough.	
Enhanced innovation across key priority sectors as identified within Council's Economic Development Strategy – Recovery & Renewal i.e. advanced manufacturing; engineering; construction; financial business and professional services; retail; tourism and hospitality; agri-food; and sustainable energy.		
Greater linkages / partnership working with Higher Education and Further Education Colleges, and the lifting of the MASN cap at Ulster University Coleraine to increase the skills provision in the region to meet the current and future needs of businesses operating in our priority growth sectors		

4.6 It is these priorities that will help inform the LEP on the direction to take when determining which projects will have the greatest impact. Officers will advise the Partnership on work already undertaken within Council to develop projects. For example, Prosperity & Place have recently completed a scoping study of potential energy projects which was approved by the Leisure & Development Committee on 19th November 2024.

4.7 Similarly, projects which are complementary to other recent investments should be explored, i.e. smart town initiatives, deployment of 5G, improving road infrastructure, development of Blueways, promoting the circular economy etc.

- 4.8 Revenue funding will be available to support this process, which must deliver an agreed project submission by a date set by the Department. The submission is effectively a business case to secure the investment available. As such, it must set out the 'strategic case for change', which identifies the challenges that Borough faces and the opportunities to address them, using the funding available.
- 4.9 As per the existing Departmental guidance, Council will establish, chair, and operate the LEP within their area. In doing so, Council will bring together local economic stakeholders to reflect local needs and strengths, promoting collaborative working, and drive greater integration between local and central government economic initiatives.
- 4.10 The LEP will not be a legal entity, nor hold any finances, and it is anticipated that the final project proposals and any activity related to their implementation, will be formally presented to the Council in its capacity as accountable body prior to submission to the Department. This will ensure the plans and expenditure proposed are subject to appropriate scrutiny, within budget and adhere to relevant legislative, policy and procedural requirements. As the Accountable Body for the funding the council will ensure that at all times the LEP adheres to all relevant council procedures and policy.
- 4.11 As the LEP aligns with the Council area's Community Plan, it is now included as a new action (Action 31) under the Thematic theme Economy & Tourism. The LEP, through its secretariat, will provide updates to the Community Planning Partnership and will report to the Council's Corporate Policy & Resources Committee.

5.0 Local Economic Partnership Membership

- 5.1 DfE have published their guidelines and timelines for the LEP, therefore it is recommended that the Council proceed with the reconstituting of the EAG into the Borough's LEP. This approach will enable the Partnership to be quickly mobilised.
- 5.2 To establish the Partnership, the following criteria has been taken into consideration as per the Departmental guidance relating to LEP membership.
- Membership must include:
 - FE representative(s)
 - Local Enterprise Agency representative(s)
 - Local business representative(s)/ Chamber of Commerce representative(s)
 - Membership can also include:
 - University representative(s)
 - Third sector representative(s)
 - Financial services representative(s)
 - Industry and/or lobby groups
 - Public sector organisations(s)
 - CPP or LMP representative(s)
 - Trade union representative(s)
- 5.3 Membership should reflect local economic needs with no one sector dominating at the expense of others. Each organisation should have an equal vote.
- 5.4 Diversity in representation is encouraged; membership should not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, political opinion, marital status and whether or not a person has dependents.
- 5.5 Based on the guidance, the following LEP structure and membership is recommended:

Chair (1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Executive 	
<p style="text-align: center;">Core Members (5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northern Regional College • North West Regional College • Enterprise Causeway • Roe Valley Enterprises • Causeway Chamber 	<p style="text-align: center;">Additional Members (6)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ulster University • Labour Market Partnership • Community Planning Partnership • Government Departments (Observer status e.g. Department for Economy) • Local Networks

5.6 To meet the requirements of the Guidance, it is proposed that a rationalisation exercise is undertaken regarding the current representatives attending the EAG. Moving forward only individuals who have authority to take decisions on behalf of their organisation will be invited to attend LEP meetings.

5.7 Only in exceptional circumstances may deputies attend. In this instance, deputies should have the full delegated authority to make decisions and approve documentation on behalf of the appropriate member and be sufficiently briefed to provide accurate and timely information to the LEP.

5.8 Secretariat support to the LEP will be provided by the Council's Prosperity and Place team, funded through the revenue funding provided.

6.0 Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee accepts the following, and recommends to full council for approval:

1. To accept the funding of circa £1.5m per year (for the next three years) provided by the Department for the area that makes up the LEP geography and its role as the Accountable body for the funding.
2. To provide delegated authority to the Director Leisure & Development, in consultation with the Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer, to commission appropriate external support as necessary to enable timely preparation of the LEP project proposals.
3. The LEP Membership as proposed in this report, including the process of establishing the LEP in line with the current guidance from the Department.
4. That the Elected Members input is coordinated via the Community Planning Partnership representative to expedite the project development process.
5. That the council provides the secretariat support to the LEP. This support will be resourced through the Council's Prosperity & Place team and funded through the revenue funding provided.

Annex A



Department for the Economy

**Local Economic Partnerships
Guidance Document**

November 2024

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this document is to support councils in setting up Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs).
- 1.2 The Sub-Regional Economic Plan was launched 1st October 2024. The Plan outlined how the department will work with Invest NI, Councils and other key stakeholder to establish Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs) between Oct-Dec 2024.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

- 2.1 Councils will establish, chair, and operate the LEP within their area. They will:
 - Determine LEP Terms of Reference (TOR), assisted by DfE and Invest NI. This will set out the focus of the LEP, membership, decision-making process, and extent of DfE/ Invest NI role. A template is attached at Annex A.
 - Appoint staff to support the LEP. They will manage operational issues relating to their LEP, act as liaison with DfE and Invest NI, and ensure all governance, and assurance matters are adhered to in line with appropriate procedures. They will also act as the interface between councils/ LEPs and DfE/ Invest NI.
 - Take control of identifying actions, designing suitable projects, and overseeing implementation.
- 2.2 DfE and Invest NI will:
 - Support the set up and operation of LEPs.
 - Advocate and champion the local economic needs of each LEP.
 - Appoint a DfE Strategic Advisor to work alongside the relevant Invest NI Regional Office to provide direct support to the LEP.
 - Meet council and agree proposed structure and membership, assist in drafting TOR, and secure funding.

- Ensure actions are aligned with Programme for Government outcomes and Economic Vision objectives.
- Provide specialist support, data, and ongoing guidance as required.

2.3 Local Economic Partnerships will:

- Bring together local economic stakeholders to reflect local needs and strengths, promoting collaborative working, and drive greater integration between local and central government economic initiatives.
- Identify actions and develop projects that align with the Sub-Regional Economic Plan, Council Economic Development Strategies and Invest NI Business Strategy. These will be developed with advice from DfE and Invest NI, and they should be appraised and scored/ ranked (where relevant) using a consistent and transparent methodology.
- Put in place effective monitoring and evaluation – this will be agreed dependent on the nature of the projects.

3. **LEP Structure & Membership**

3.1 Councils will determine what format the LEP will undertake to ensure flexibility and to meet local needs.

3.2 This can be a new standalone body or integrated with an existing structure such as a Labour Market Partnership (LMP) or a Community Planning Partnership (CPP). Councils may merge LEPs to work across a neighbouring council area within an Invest NI region.

3.3 The LEP TOR will set out this structure and should have:

- Clear and efficient decision-making procedures.
- Membership criteria and transparent selection procedures.
- Appointment terms and conflicts of interest management.
- Agreed frequency of meetings and required quorum for decision-making.

3.4 Membership must include:

- FE Representative(s)
- Local Enterprise Agency representative(s)
- Local business representative(s)/Chamber of Commerce representative

3.5 Membership can also include:

- University representative(s)
- Third sector representative(s)
- Financial services representative(s)
- Industry and/or lobby groups
- Public sector organisations(s)
- CPP or LMP representative(s)
- Trade union representative(s)

Membership should reflect local economic needs with no one sector dominating at the expense of others. Each organisation should have an equal vote. Diversity in representation is encouraged; membership should not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, political opinion, marital status and whether or not a person has dependents.



Department for the
Economy
An Roinn
Geilleagair
www.economy-ni.gov.uk



Sub-Regional Economic Plan

OCTOBER 2024



Mid & East
Antrim

Contents

Ministerial Foreword	3
Introduction	4
Economic Vision	5
Recognising Imbalance	6
Tackling Imbalance	9
Next Steps	16

**Sub-Regional
Economic Plan**

OCTOBER 2024



**Derry City
& Strabane**

Ministerial Foreword

This document sets out a new strategic approach to economic policy.

It is a locally-led approach which places regional balance at its heart, and which enshrines partnership working.

Local communities will be empowered to identify their own economic priorities.

Through local partnerships, central government, Invest NI, Councils, and our network of education providers and civic society, we will work together to identify the main barriers to economic development, and the interventions that will unlock the area's potential.

Interventions could involve support for local clusters, investment in skills programmes, or quicker planning decisions.

This may necessitate the recalibration of existing government programmes and budgets, supplemented by additional funding from my department.

As part of this new strategic direction, Invest NI will be reorientated towards developing local economies.

Invest NI's Regional Offices will work hand-in-hand with Councils and take on more functions, and more staff.

Working in partnership with my department, the Invest NI Board and Chief Executive will oversee this profound change in its approach, with clear and ambitious targets agreed to monitor performance.

In working together like this, in the spirit of true co-design and collaboration, we can start to reverse historical imbalances, and deliver prosperity throughout the region.



Introduction

We welcome the publication of the Minister’s Sub-Regional Economic Plan and its ambition to deliver improved regional balance across Northern Ireland. Our teams have worked closely with Departmental colleagues to co-design the plan.

Delivering this Sub-Regional Economic Plan will be a key feature of our new Business Strategy, which we will shortly publish. This strategy will see Invest NI introduce a new Regional Approach that will include an expansion of our regional footprint and increase our capacity and capability in the regions.

We will do more to collaborate with partners and stakeholders in the regions to promote and support local economic development by playing a greater leadership and advocacy role, both in, and for, our regions.

Our focus will be on building out a more regionally balanced, sustainable, productive, and prosperous Northern Ireland economy.

Through enhanced targeting and improved client service and supports, we will drive greater economic activity across Northern Ireland, achieve higher levels of entrepreneurship, new firm formation, R&D and innovation, export growth and productivity.

If you are a business working anywhere in Northern Ireland, with dreams of selling outside Northern Ireland and going to the next level, we will be there to help, advise and guide you.

By focusing on places and partnerships in collaboration with regional stakeholders, we will co-design solutions tailored to regional needs and accelerate the process of addressing deep seated economic challenges.

Invest NI has made regional development a key priority for the organisation, and we are confident that we can make a significant contribution to the achievement of the Minister’s Economic Vision for every part of Northern Ireland.



John Healy
Chair
Invest NI



Kieran Donoghue
Chief Executive Officer
Invest NI

Economic Vision

For too long our economy has been weighed down by structural weaknesses that have limited our ability to reach our full potential. Those weaknesses restrict opportunities for all in society to both contribute and benefit from true economic success. Ultimately, we want to improve the quality of life for all our people and this is where our four objectives come together to support real, life-changing outcomes for people. We want to see employment providing better rewards and to be fulfilling and accessible, we want to see people benefit from better jobs wherever they live, and we want those jobs and the lifestyles they support to be greener.



Productivity has been below the UK average for decades and although the gap has narrowed in recent years (from 17.4% in 2019 to 13.2% in 2022), it ranks at 10th amongst the twelve UK regions in 2022. The productivity gap is even more pronounced when compared to the rest of Ireland with the 2023 Northern Ireland Productivity Dashboard (based on 2021 data) reporting that output per hour worked in the Republic of Ireland was 8% higher than the UK average.



While almost 94% of employees are in permanent jobs with guaranteed hours, approximately 11,000 employees are employed on zero-hours contracts. 84% of working age employees in 2023 were paid on or above the Real Living Wage (RLW) rate, a proportion below most UK regions. Variation in pay varies across sectors and industries. The average pay for sales assistants and retail cashiers is below the RLW whereas IT professionals receive more than double the RLW rate.



Sub-regional disparities remain persistent. The employment rate (including students) in 2022 in Derry City & Strabane is 10 percentage points lower than Mid Ulster. Mid & East Antrim lags almost 16 percentage points behind Lisburn & Castlereagh for Level 4+ tertiary education attainment rates. Fermanagh & Omagh emits the largest share of greenhouse gas emissions yet generates not only the most renewable energy, but is almost 50% ahead of the next best performing LGD.



Greenhouse gas emissions have reduced, seeing a 26% reduction since 1990 while the Republic of Ireland saw a 7.2% increase in emissions over the same period. However, our reduction compares to a fall of 53% in England, 51% in Scotland and 36% in Wales. Our emissions reduction needs to go much further and faster if the targets set out in The Climate Change Act are to be achieved. Net Zero by 2050 or earlier is not just a legal imperative but a moral obligation.

Recognising Imbalance

Disparities across the region in economic performance have been getting worse; it's time to reverse this

Our whole economy faces a number of challenges with issues such as employment, productivity, disposable income, and economic inactivity all areas where we perform poorly compared to our nearest neighbours. These disparities are even more pronounced at a sub-regional level. When looking at the highest and lowest performing council areas:

- Labour productivity in Belfast is 31% higher than in Derry City & Strabane.
- Median wages in Belfast are 44% higher than in Ards & North Down.
- The employment rate in Mid Ulster is 10 percentage points higher than Derry City & Strabane.
- Export intensity in Newry, Mourne & Down is 11 percentage points higher than both Antrim & Newtownabbey and Ards & North Down.
- The tertiary educational attainment rate in Lisburn & Castlereagh is 15.9 percentage points higher than in Mid & East Antrim.
- The rate of employees stating they were in secure employment in Mid & East Antrim is 5 percentage points higher than in Causeway Coast & Glens.

Many of these areas suffer from an economic disadvantage despite all having potential for growth, and in many cases, there are areas of inequality common across neighbouring councils which suggests that collaborating and working together to tackle the problems at scale could be more effective. Even those that are doing relatively well compared to others still fall below the NI average due to the distortive effort of one or two areas that are disproportionately far ahead.



**Ards &
North
Down**

LGD RANK

HEADLINE INDICATOR	Antrim & Newtownabbey	Ards & North Down	Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon	Belfast	Causeway Coast & Glens	Derry City & Strabane	Fermanagh & Omagh	Lisburn & Castlereagh	Mid & East Antrim	Mid Ulster	Newry, Mourne & Down
Labour Productivity (output per filled job, 2022)	3	10	8	1	9	11	6	4	5	2	7
Median Wages (gross weekly pay by place of work, 2023)	2	11	3	1	10	7	6	5	8	4	9
Sub-Regional Employment Rate (including students; 16-64)	5	8	2	10	9	11	7	3	4	1	5
Greenhouse Gas Emissions (tonnes CO ₂ e per capita, 2022)	3	2	7	1	9	8	11	4	6	10	5
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11

Performance of councils against the indicator is ranked from 1 (highest) to 11 (lowest). The three highest performing are highlighted in green, the three lowest in red

Considering the four headline indicators, only two council areas - Antrim & Newtownabbey and Lisburn & Castlereagh - show strong to fair performance across all main priorities. Mid Ulster performs well on productivity, employment and median wages although its proportional greenhouse gas emissions are significantly higher than other LGDs. Causeway Coast & Glens, Derry City & Strabane, and Fermanagh & Omagh mostly lag the NI average across these themes and are in need of focused support.

Area performance on some measures can be affected by adjacency to major hubs of economic activity. Weekly median wages in Ards and North Down are significantly higher for those living in the area compared to those working there, a reflection of its status as a major commuter area of Belfast. Productivity however remains significantly lower than average in the region and improving this will be important in maximising opportunities and improving outcomes for as many people as possible.

Areas performing relatively well such as Antrim & Newtownabbey face challenges too, such as a need to increase export intensity, investment is required in the near future for industrial land, and there is ongoing competition with Belfast for labour/skills. Although its performance in a number of areas is strong, Belfast continues to struggle with poor labour force participation and low employment rates amongst its resident working age population. There is also evidence that employment is comparatively less secure for those that are in work than in other areas.

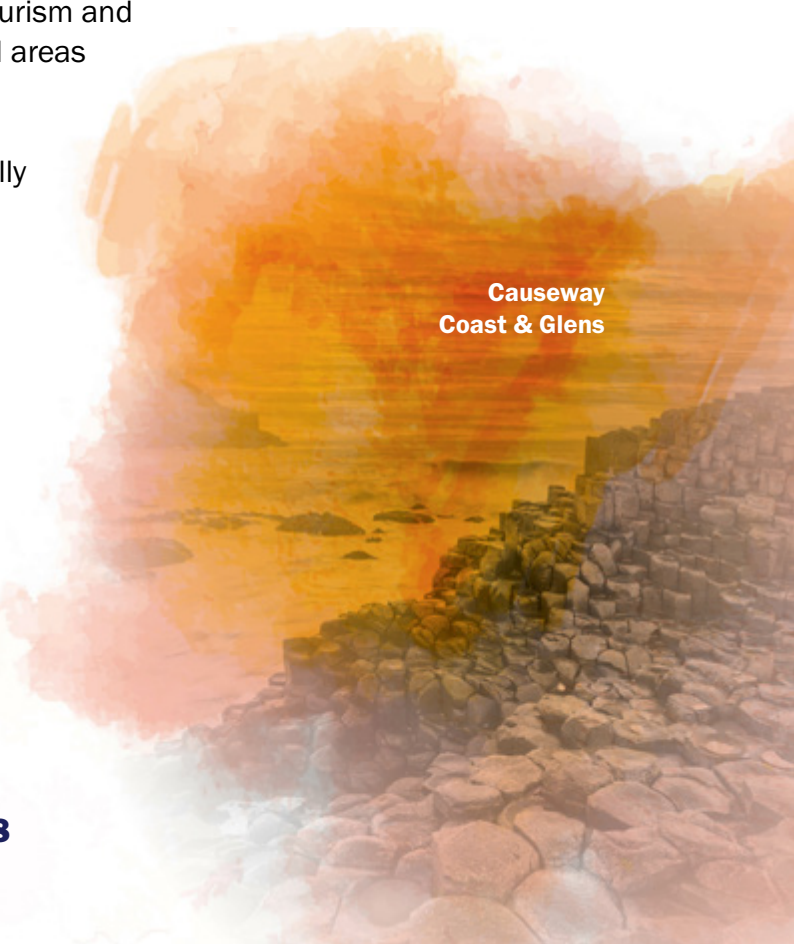
Causeway Coast & Glens, Derry City & Strabane, and Fermanagh & Omagh produce more renewable energy, and their export intensity is much higher than the peripheral councils. Mid Ulster is a manufacturing powerhouse and yet has had the lowest rate of new jobs from Foreign Direct Investment. Despite the lowest tertiary attainment rates, Mid & East Antrim ranks among the highest areas for people in work, the lowest economic inactivity level, and more employees earning above the real living wage and who feel more secure in their job. Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon, without the universities, has a proportional spend on R&D by businesses equalled only by Belfast.

In other words, we need to drill down beyond the data, and there are other factors in play. There are some macro level issues that the entire region faces that permeate into these indicators:

- transport links, or rather the lack of (particularly west of the Bann)
- the lack of supply of industrial land and property
- investment required in water and sewerage
- slow energy connection provision
- traditionally low paying sectors such as tourism and agriculture predominant in certain council areas
- ageing population; and
- health issues and care responsibilities/ childcare costs preventing the economically inactive entering the workforce.

This demonstrates the need for a joined-up approach across government; ‘economic interventions’ alone will not be enough.

Some of the indicators show considerable strengths. Each council area has opportunities for growth, assets to ‘sweat’, city and growth deal projects to cluster around as anchors for innovation and tourism, further education colleges working with employers, and cross-border and east-west dual market access to exploit.



**Causeway
Coast & Glens**

Tackling Imbalance

Fermanagh
& Omagh

A profound change in how we deliver economic development is required. A change in structure. A change in culture. To support this change there are three key strands to delivery.

Formation of new **Local Economic Partnerships** with dedicated funding of £45m

Realignment of Departmental policies and programmes to **drive local growth**

Enhanced **Invest NI** sub-regional role with local targets

Local Economic Partnerships

Empowering local communities is fundamental in building a more regionally balanced economy; one characterised by inclusive, sustainable, and thriving local economies where people want to live and work, and where employers want to invest. At a local level this means attracting investment and capitalising on emerging opportunities that can create high-quality jobs for local people.

To ensure there is full engagement and involvement of local stakeholders, the Department will be inviting councils to establish Local Economic Partnerships supported with dedicated funding of £45m.

The importance of flexibility regarding the geographic area and structure of these partnerships is fully recognised. They must be right for local circumstances and that means there will not be a standardised approach – each council can decide whether their area is the extent of the Local Economic Partnership, or they can choose to collaborate with other council areas to create a bigger partnership.

It will also be for councils to decide where they build on existing partnerships such as Labour Market Partnerships or Community Planning Partnerships and integrate the Local Economic Partnership with those or keep it separate.

Whichever approach is chosen, it is essential to ensure that the Local Economic Partnership reflects the full breadth of local stakeholders. DfE will assist councils in shaping these with supporting guidance, and Invest NI will provide advice through its Regional Teams and their knowledge of local networks.

Invest NI and the Department will support the Local Economic Partnership in the identification of suitable projects and in developing proposals that access dedicated funding. Single points of contact for stakeholders, clear two-way communication channels, and true co-production will be put in place. There will also be the opportunity to tap into expert knowledge provided by the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre (UUEPC).

**Ultimately
however, projects
will be agreed and
prioritised by the Local
Economic Partnership –
local decision making
is at the heart of this
new approach.**

UUEPC is currently engaged in an independent research project, “Delivering balanced regional growth in Northern Ireland”, due to be published by the end of 2024. At that stage, at the discretion of the Local Economic Partnerships, the UUEPC researchers will be keen to discuss their findings and recommendations with the Local Economic Partnerships, and any implications these may have for the development of local actions.

To support Local Economic Partnerships, £45m of dedicated funding will be provided over the next three years to kickstart this new approach.

It will be used to deliver local projects identified by Local Economic Partnerships that seek to improve productivity, to raise median wages, to increase the employment rate and to lower economic inactivity, and to take strides towards delivering Net Zero and industrial decarbonisation. Projects funded will depend on local economic priorities and may differ between different council areas.

The funding is not the answer to all issues; it will not close disparities in isolation. It is a small first step in building better partnerships with councils and putting more control in the hands of local decision-makers on economic development. Learning what works best will take some time and we will listen to councils and others as we progress this work to ensure we maximise the impact of spending. It also offers the Department the opportunity to work with other public sector funders to align sources of funding to deliver greater impact.

Funding to Local Economic Partnerships will be determined by need and this formula will be co-designed with councils by December 2024. Capital and Resource will be available, and there is potential to include Financial Transactions Capital depending on the demand from councils. Support from Invest NI Regional Offices to each Local Economic Partnership will be available.



**Belfast
City**

Refocused Invest NI

Regional development is a key priority within Invest NI's new strategic approach and the organisation will be restructured to ensure delivery in line with the Minister's Economic Vision. Invest NI has a fundamental role to play, and it will implement a new approach from October 2024 onwards with the new structure fully operational by April 2025.

A new **Regional Strategic Agenda** will drive collaboration through greater partnership working, measured with new ambitious targets. Central to this will be a target to increase the percentage of investments outside the Belfast Metropolitan Area¹, from an average of 56% over the last 5 years, to 65% at the end of the Invest NI Business Strategy in 2026/27.

Invest NI will significantly enhance the presence and functions in regional offices by expanding from four offices to five, increasing staffing levels and leadership in each, and playing a greater advocacy role for Local Economic Partnerships to ensure their voices are heard across government.

The introduction of a new **Regional Property Programme** will facilitate higher levels of business investment across the regions, and the integration of City & Growth Deals paired with new bespoke regional value propositions will underpin the Regional Strategic Agenda, supporting regions in becoming more attractive for local and FDI investment.

Current programmes, such as Ambition to Grow and Supporting Women, will be targeted in key regions, and a new Business Innovation Grant will be introduced. Regional cluster strengths will be prioritised and multi-agency cross-border collaborative working on green tech, clusters, and female entrepreneurship will be advanced. Regional offices will lead an enhanced R&D call.

The new approach will deliver more innovative start-ups, strengthen established firms, grow the regional base of export focused companies, increase FDI activity, and only support jobs above the Real Living Wage with good contractual conditions.

Invest NI Headquarters will provide specialist support, advice, and expertise, meaning that the whole organisation is reorientated towards delivering local economic priorities.

1 Belfast Metropolitan Area includes the Belfast, Antrim & Newtownabbey, Ards & North Down, and Lisburn and Castlereagh council areas.

**Lisburn &
Castlereagh**

DfE New Approach

Addressing economic disparities and inequalities at sub-regional level will be considered when developing all macro interventions. Enhanced regional competitiveness must not come at the expense of sub-regional balance. Utilising unique and bespoke solutions for place-based persistent problems will be developed alongside macro initiatives. Empowerment of localities and places will be at the forefront of regional balance. Building economic capacity and capability will start at local level. The new norm will be more balanced public sector investment, staff located and working in the regions, co-designing solutions, and strengthened local, sub-regional and national collaboration.

DfE will restructure to deliver. Additional staff in post, streamlined points of contact for stakeholders, and making central advice, analysis, and specialist support available. Advocating for local needs across government to build a coalition to deliver results.

Delivery not process, focusing on impact, additionality and making the most of limited resources. Targeted funding to ensure effective delivery, and flexibility to respond to new challenges rapidly.

The Department will establish a new Regional Balance Unit to work across DfE to mainstream regional balance. It will support the Local Economic Partnerships and Invest NI to drive effective delivery of locally chosen actions. The team will work across DfE and its partners, NICS, UK, and Irish government departments and agencies to press the case for local issues, to harness synergies in approach, and to bring more cohesion to public sector interventions.



Newry,
Mourne &
Down

This new direction of travel will be rooted in all we do

Sub-Regional Economic Plan

- Local Economic Partnerships set up to empower local stakeholders to harness their potential
- £45m of dedicated funding to kickstart actions and underpin the new approach
- Structural reform of DfE & Invest NI to ensure that local voices are heard and championed

Higher Education

- Magee Taskforce to increase Ulster University's Derry~Londonderry campus to 10,000 students
- Support a strong higher education offering in our Further Education Colleges, including through partnerships between Colleges, QUB, UU and OU
- Partnerships with City & Growth Deals to increase R&D and innovation outside Belfast

Further Education

- Having a curriculum offer for the delivery of professional and technical skills which is tailored to local business and learner needs. Supporting local employers by providing business development and innovation expertise
- Encouraging those with no or low qualifications to participate in education to improve their economic opportunities
- Reduce educational disadvantage and barriers to entry and qualification at local level, supporting progression through further and on to higher education or employment

Tourism

- Tourism Partnership Board refining Tourism Action Plan to ensure local focus
- Tourism NI will develop local action plans based on community strengths and potential
- Tourism NI will pilot a sub-regional Destination Stewardship Plan in 2025

Entrepreneurship & Enterprise

- Support closer partnership working between Invest NI and Go Succeed through a revitalised Invest NI regional office network
- Support greater participation of females and other underrepresented groups in entrepreneurship
- Support Local Economic Partnerships in developing cross-border partnerships and applying to competitive funds

City & Growth Deals & Telecoms

- City & Growth Deals to deliver world class innovation and tourism projects
- Accelerated delivery in 2025 with supporting pilot actions linked to Local Economic Partnerships
- Project Gigabit to provide near universal gigabit access

FDI & Invest NI Investments

- Incentivise delivery of Foreign Direct Investment and increase proportion of Invest NI investments outside of Belfast Metropolitan Area
- Develop updated Value Propositions for council areas and sub-regions
- Work with DETE to develop an MoU on all island economic priorities

Energy

- Develop an energy one stop shop to provide consumers, communities and local businesses with a single, trusted source of energy support, education and advice
- Deliver community benefit through a pathfinder community energy project and widen to support local ownership of renewable energy delivery projects
- Establish an Enhanced Investment Zone to harness £150m of available funding focusing on green technologies and skills

Inclusive Economy

- Work with Community Wealth Building Partnerships in Larne & the North West; Implement the Social Enterprise Action Plan to drive greater benefit at community level
- Co-design legislative changes to enhance local community owned Credit Unions; Consumer Council to examine the feasibility for a disability benefit linked loan pilot with Credit Unions
- Participate in cross-government People & Places pilot schemes in North Belfast and Derry~Londonderry

Innovation & Clusters

- Enhanced R&D Call led by business clinics in Invest NI Regional Offices
- Agree MoU with Innovation UK to deliver place-based actions
- Further develop regional clusters of economic activity in line with Sectoral Action Plans published in June 2024

Skills & Apprenticeships

- Skills Fund initiatives to develop childcare workforce, boost SME productivity, and support green skills, targeted at a local level
- Pre-Apprenticeship Academies to meet local skills demands. Apprenticeship Inclusion Challenge Fund. Skills academies to support SMEs are planned such as childcare, robotics and automation and welding
- Skill Up provides accessible online learning at colleges and universities, with flexible training opportunities available to all

Cross Border

- Develop North/South Fintech corridor to increase collaboration and cooperation
- Examine regulatory landscape to support cross-border financial services
- Review MRPQ/data transfer landscape to facilitate fully functioning all-island economy

Next Steps

Oct 24 – Dec 24

Over the coming months the Department and Invest NI will continue to engage with councils and local stakeholders to support the formation of the Local Economic Partnerships, which will be established between October and December 2024. During this time, the Department will co-design the funding allocation model with stakeholders.

Jan 25 – Mar 25

Local Economic Partnerships will be responsible for bringing forward projects that align with the Minister's key priorities; Productivity, Good Jobs, Reduce Carbon Emissions and Regional Balance. Invest NI will support the Local Economic Partnerships in the identification of suitable projects. Proposed projects should be agreed by the partnerships and brought to the Department by end March 2025, so that funding can begin to be drawn down from April 2025.

Apr 25 – Mar 28

Department and Invest NI to review and approve proposed projects. Approved projects will be funded for delivery through dedicated funding.

The Department understands these are ambitious timelines, however, by working together in partnership, we can deliver tangible change at a local level.



Armagh City,
Banbridge and
Craigavon



**Antrim and
Newtownabbey**

Further Details

You can download a copy of this plan and supporting evidence from www.economy-ni.gov.uk/regional-balance

You can find more information on the Invest NI Regional Office Network at www.investni.com/about-us/where-we-are

If you would like to speak to a member of the team about the Sub-Regional Economic Plan, you can contact the Regional Balance Unit at RegionalBalance@economy-ni.gov.uk

Annex C – Causeway Coast & Glens Local Economic Partnership Terms of Reference



Department for the Economy

Local Economic Partnerships

Terms of Reference

November 2024

Document Control

Summary

This document provides the draft Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Local Economic Partnership (LEP)

Key personnel

Role	Name	Position	Date
Author	Michelle Craig Catriona McAllister	DfE Regional Balance	1/11/24
First Approver	Keith Brown	DfE Lead	1/11/24
Final Approver	Giulia Ni Dhulchaointigh	Group Owner	XX/11/24

This ToR and any amendments to it will be subject to consideration and approval by the DfE (Department for the Economy) Regional Balance Team.

Document status history

Version	Issue Date	Reason for Update	Updated by
0.1	31/10/24	1st Draft	Michelle Craig Catriona McAllister
0.2	XX/11/24	2 nd Draft	Keith Brown
Final			

Distribution

Version	Name	Responsibility / Branch (or Organisation)	Date
0.2			
0.3			

Introduction and Context

- 1.1 The Sub-Regional Economic Plan was launched 1st October 2024. The Plan outlined how the department will work with Invest NI, Councils and other key stakeholders to establish Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs).

Justification for the formation of Local Economic Partnerships

- 2.1 Local Economic Partnerships will play a key role in delivering regional balance, by bringing together central and local government, ALBs, and local stakeholders to create improved economic prosperity at a local level.

Structure, Roles and Responsibilities

- 3.1 The Local Economic Partnership (LEP) will be owned by the Local Government District (LGD) with support from DfE (Regional Balance Team) and Invest NI (Regional Office Network).
- 3.2 Roles and Responsibilities are outlined in the LEP Guidance document.

Membership & Attendance

- 4.1 Membership of the Local Economic Partnership is comprised of the following:
 - **Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council**
 - **Northern Regional College**
 - **North West Regional College**
 - **Enterprise Causeway**
 - **Roe Valley Enterprises**
 - **Causeway Chamber**

- **Ulster University**
 - **Labour Market Partnership Manager**
 - **Community Planning Partnership Representative**
 - **Local Networks (as required)**
 - **Departmental Observers (as required)**
- 4.2 Secretariat to the group will be provided by **Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council**.
- 4.3 Attendance is important but in exceptional circumstances deputies may attend. Deputies should have the full delegated authority to make decisions and approve documentation on behalf of the appropriate member and be sufficiently briefed to provide accurate and timely information to the Local Economic Partnership.
- 4.4 A quorum will consist of **six members**. When a quorum is not present, the meeting should be adjourned to another time.
- 4.5 The partnership should strive to reach decisions by consensus. If a matter cannot be agreed by consensus, the LEP should agree a process for handling i.e. decision by a majority of votes. In the event of a tie, Invest NI Regional Manager will have the deciding vote.

Meetings – Timetable and Protocol

- 5.1 The timescale of this will be **monthly** (can be reviewed and amended with agreement from LEP at later time).
- 5.2 The Local Economic Partnership will convene **online (in-person meetings will be called by exception)**.
- 5.3 Each member should take personal responsibility to proactively declare any potential conflict of interest arising on the group's agenda or from changes in the

member's personal circumstances. The Chair should then determine an appropriate course of action with the member.

5.4 The secretariat will be responsible for circulating papers in advance of meetings.

5.5 Standing items at meetings will include:

- Conflicts of Interest
- Action points from previous meeting
- Local Economic Partnership Updates (including Deliverables, Risks and Issues Management)
- Invest NI Briefing

Terms of Reference – Authority and Review

6.1 The Terms of Reference for the Partnership will be approved by Giulia Ni Dhulchaointigh, DfE.

6.2 Overall responsibility for the Local Economic Partnerships lies with **Pat Mulvenna, Director of Leisure & Development.**

Annex D: Causeway Coast & Glens Draft Regional Priorities Response Document

Top 3-4 Economic Priorities at Council Level (DfE Remit)

Which strategies are they linked to? (e.g. Council's Economic Strategy, Labour Market Partnerships, Community Plans, 10x, City & Growth Deals?)

Short Term

- Key strategic roads/ infrastructure (NI Water & NIE) improvements across the borough.
- Development of new Enhanced Investment Zone for the Borough as part of the recent UK Government's £150 million commitment for Northern Ireland.
- A clearly defined 'value proposition' and promotion of same to encourage investment (indigenous and international) to the Borough.
- Increase demand from businesses in the Borough for mainstream government support, particularly new business start-ups and early-stage growth. (Partnership Pathway initiatives / Bespoke Solutions).
- Enhanced innovation across key priority sectors as identified within Council's Economic Development Strategy – Recovery & Renewal i.e. advanced manufacturing; engineering; construction; financial business and professional services; retail; tourism and hospitality; agri-food; and sustainable energy.
- Greater linkages / partnership working with Higher Education and Further Education Colleges, and the lifting of the MASN cap at Ulster University Coleraine to increase the skills provision in the region to meet the current and future needs of businesses operating in our priority growth sectors.

Medium Term

- Growth Deal - £72m capital investment – Innovation Pillar Projects. To support existing and new businesses (FDI and spinouts or new businesses) with the creation of high valued jobs/ GVA/ skills/ employment/ and increase productivity to align with Growth Deal projects and other regional initiatives.
- Greater availability of enterprise development land/sites across the Borough as current demand from businesses outstrips the limited supply of land available.

Long Term

- To develop tourism initiatives that will encourage growth in specific sectors and enhance the area's tourism provision; as well as generating more visitors, motivating them to spend longer and visit throughout the year i.e. 4/5 Star Hotel Accommodation; signature attractions and facilities across the area to convert day to staying visitors and increase dwell time.
- Sustainable Energy – development of SOLAR PVC Farms to make the Borough one of the UK's most sustainable regions by 2035; ensuring that sustainability and the development of a vibrant and growing economy go together.

Strategies:

- CCG Recovery and Renewal – An Economic Strategy for the Causeway Coast & Glens
https://www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/uploads/general/Causeway_Coast_and_Glens_Socio_Economic_Profile_2020.pdf
- CCG A Better Future Together - Delivery Plan for Causeway Coast & Glens Community Plan 2017 – 2030

https://www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/uploads/general/Community_Delivery_Plan_cover_WR.pdf

- CCG Corporate Strategy 2021 – 2025
https://www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/uploads/general/Appendix_Draft_Corporate_Strategy_Version_5_18.1.21.pdf
- CCG Digital Strategy
https://www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/uploads/general/CCGBC_Digital_Strategy_-_Final.pdf
- DoF City & Growth Deals <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/city-and-growth-deals>
- DfE New Economic Vision (Feb 2024) <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/news/statement-minister-murphy-economic-vision>

Top 3-4 Wider Priorities at Council Level (Multi Departmental Remit)

1. Strategic roads/ infrastructure (NI Water & NIE) across the borough including the Ballykelly by-pass; Coleraine Harbour; A26 dualling extension; dualling Limavady-Coleraine-Derry; and Ballycastle Harbour.
2. Growth Deal - £72m capital investment – Infrastructure & Regeneration Pillar Projects.
3. Compulsory purchase powers to support the delivery of a range of development, regeneration, and infrastructure projects in the public interest.
4. Development of Sports / Leisure facilities across the borough.

Across all Priorities - which strategies are they linked to:

Strategies:

- DfE New Economic Vision (February 2024)
- CCG Recovery and Renewal – An Economic Strategy for the Causeway Coast & Glens
- CCG Labour Market Partnership Action Plan 2023-2024
- CCG A Better Future Together - Delivery Plan for Causeway Coast & Glens Community Plan 2017 – 2030
- TNi Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland - 10 Year Plan
- DfI Draft Road Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2030
- DoH Health and Wellbeing 2026 - Delivering Together
- DfE Draft Circular Economy Strategy for Northern Ireland

Top 3-4 Challenges at Council Level

1. Developing new employment sectors outside of current predominantly lower value-added employment sectors in the region, (tourism/hospitality/retail), that provide high-skilled/high paid jobs. For example, in line with Recovery & Renewal (i.e. sustainable energy, digital (Agri-tech, fin-tech, med-tech, edtech etc.), agri-food, health & life sciences.
2. Increasing early-stage entrepreneurial activity levels.
3. Suitable business units (appropriate to demand i.e. small to medium units)/ reimagining the high-street.
4. Lack of investment in key roads and infrastructure across the Borough.

5. Increasing number of vacant premises in our town centres and reduced footfall, with competition coming from out-of-town Retail Parks, the reimagining of our High Streets is important.
6. Changes to Enterprise Zone categorization.

Council Indicative Indicators/Metrics currently/Could be used

How are they aligned to 10x?

Indicative Indicators	Currently Used by Council	Could be Used by Council
<i>Local Economy</i>		
Employment/Unemployment Rates	✓	
Educational Attainment	✓	
Local migration		✓
Cost of Residential Properties		✓
Social Housing		✓
Cost of Living Trends	✓	
Health & Well-Being	✓	
New Business Registrations	✓	
SME Growth Trends/Productivity	✓	
Exports/Imports	✓	
Trade and Investment Opportunities		✓
Median Earnings	✓	
Skills Gaps	✓	
Business Satisfaction Surveys	✓	
Processing of Planning Applications	✓	
Land Availability/Potential for Development		✓
Derelict Buildings	✓	
Congestion (journey times)		✓
Bus/Train Journeys Originating within the Borough		✓
Road Maintenance		✓
Accessibility of public/ active travel	✓	
Value for Money Outcomes re: Council investments	✓	
Digital Transformation (Infrastructure, Advanced Technologies)		✓
Tourism Trends	✓	
<i>Environmental Sustainability</i>		
Climate Change Initiatives		✓
Carbon Reduction (Council Assets)	✓	
Carbon Reduction (Commercial Premises)		✓
Air quality	✓	
Improved street and environmental cleanliness	✓	
Fuel Poverty	✓	
Municipal Waste to Land Fill	✓	

Council relies on external stakeholders to provide additional insights when monitoring and evaluating current interventions. Improvements could be made to a number of these metrics to enable Council and external stakeholders to further develop innovative interventions which support the three pillars of the 10x strategy (innovation, inclusive growth and sustainability). Up-to-date data availability is a constant issue when developing and analysing effectiveness of interventions.

Commonalities if looked at through geographic INI regional office structure lens (or other).

Demographics

- Causeway Coast & Glens represent 7% of the Northern Ireland population.
- 63% of residents are of working age (NI average, 63%)
- 69% of the economically active are employed (NI average, 70%)
- 10% of the economically active are self-employed (NI average, 12%)
- 5% of NI total jobs are found in the borough (42,424 jobs)
- 75% of jobs are created in the private sector (NI average, 73%)
- The median annual earning for those residing in the borough is £24,825 (NI average £26,182)
- 14% of residents have no qualifications (NI average, 12%), 45% have attained a NVQ at Level 4 or below (NI average, 46%), 41% have attained higher than a NVQ Level 4 (NI average, 42%).
- 8% of NI businesses are registered in the borough, with 91% being micro businesses.
- 92% of new businesses survive their first year of trading (NI average, 93%)
- GVA per head increased 2% between 2016-20 (NI average, 13% increase)
- GDP per head increased 1% between 2016-20 (NI average, 5%).
- Ranked fifth out of the 11 Councils when it comes to early-stage Entrepreneurial Activity (2019-2021)
- With over 144,436 hectares farmed in the area in 2022 the region has 2,621 farms, representing 10% of the NI total.
- Causeway Coast and Glens suffered a 15% reduction in export sales, with sales of £394 million in 2019 down to £335 million in 2022.

Geography

Similar to other Council areas, Causeway Coast & Glens is primarily a rural Council area which presents several challenges including access to key transport links, educational underachievement, poor broadband/mobile connectivity, and access to healthcare.

Investment

There are four City/Growth Deals investing c.£1.3 billion into the local economies. All four Deals aim to create economic conditions that will foster economic growth and prosperity. Approximately 40 projects are spread across innovation, digital and tourism/regeneration themes. All projects are set in the context of the Economic Recovery Action Plan, 10x Decade of Innovation, and the Energy Strategy to decarbonise Northern Ireland energy sector by 2050.

Accommodation

Causeway Coast & Glens is limited by the availability of suitable business units, conferencing facilities and premium hotel accommodation. Outside of Belfast and Derry, this is a common obstacle to attracting inward investment.

Linkages

Given the similarities across industries within NI, Causeway Coast & Glens sees additional benefit in partnering with other Councils to promote our offerings to potential investors on a wider scale. Developing synergies instead of competing. In addition, developing cross

partnerships for future investment opportunities and exploring the potential of public sector and third sector partnership working.

DRAFT