



DBEC co-chairs  
councillor Brian  
McDonagh and  
councillor Pete Byrne

# Power of collaboration creates bright future for DBEC

The **Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC)** has brought together stakeholders from across the region in a unique initiative which will drive inclusive economic growth

**T**he collaboration which has been spurred by the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC) initiative will act as the catalyst for widespread inclusive growth and transform the 100-mile stretch into a global economic powerhouse.

That is the message delivered by two key figureheads for DBEC who believe the unique cooperation between the public, private and third sectors in the eight council areas stretching from Dublin to Belfast can provide the right conditions for businesses and society to thrive.

Co-chairs of DBEC, councillor Pete Byrne and councillor Brian McDonagh, said the collaborative approach will create a pro-business ecosystem which will leverage the strengths across the eight council areas, fuel job growth and foster talent.

“Our long-term vision is for DBEC to become a leading economic corridor in Europe,” councillor Byrne said. “Across the eight council areas we have a third of the population of the island of Ireland and numerous world-class businesses and sector clusters.”

“Our focus is on improving the connectivity along the corridor and ensuring we are working together to harness our collective potential, so we can retain and grow our indigenous business and also attract foreign direct investment. To do that, we need to be cognisant of our strengths and weaknesses in the area of skills, infrastructure and policy, plugging any gaps and providing the right conditions for our standout specialisms to shine.”

Councillor Byrne is also the current chair of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, a region which is strategically located mid-way on the economic corridor between Belfast and Dublin and a key gateway for cross border trade and partnerships.

He said that crucial to DBEC’s success is its’ focus on boosting economic activity right along the corridor as well as across the specific council areas.

“We are committed to working together to ensure there is growth on the corridor as a whole; that there is something in it for everyone. We’re not starting from scratch because there is already lots of collaboration happening through the likes of InterTradeIreland, Waterways Ireland and the Food Safety Promotion Board and other forms of cross border co-operation set up via the North South Ministerial Council.”

“We, as DBEC, are focused on advocating for the development of the corridor as a whole. We have recognised that we have strengths - in our society, in our economy and in our environment - as a collective region and are determined to help build on those strengths in the future.”

Councillor McDonagh is also the current Mayor of Fingal County Council and said that securing long-term strategic investment in the infrastructure of the corridor is key.

“With the ongoing and future investment in infrastructure and the continued regeneration of the towns and villages along the corridor, we can not only help businesses thrive, we can also provide huge benefits for the people that live and work in the region. For instance, better transport infrastructure to link areas of high

unemployment with areas where talent is in demand will help everyone; better road and rail infrastructure will help people get to work and help businesses transport goods; better air and sea infrastructure will grow the regions import and export capability”.

“It’s about developing an ecosystem which ultimately improves the lives of everyone within that corridor, including businesses. We want the cluster effect – whether that’s manufacturing, fintech, professional services, agriculture, or the creative and tourism industries - to spread along the corridor so the economic benefits which arise from it can be shared.”

Mayor McDonagh’s referenced his own council of Fingal as recognising the corridor as key for economic growth in the long term. He said that Fingal has already been developing a skills strategy to identify future requirements there, something he sees as essential for Fingal and which could benefit the DBEC region as a whole.

Councillor Byrne says: “We are currently working with universities and colleges to ensure we can have the right pipeline of talent coming through for the jobs of the future. We have been identifying where our skills base is at the moment and where we need to develop across the corridor.”

Life sciences, renewable energy, creative industries, green infrastructure and agrifood are just some of the sectors expected to benefit in the coming years, not just as a result of success for indigenous companies but also as a result of inward investment.

Both said the collective ‘sell’ of the region under the DBEC umbrella is a powerful attractor for foreign direct investors.

“The DBEC region is strategically located in Ireland, with access to excellent digital connectivity, road, rail, air and seaports as well as providing access to GB, EU and international markets,” councillor Byrne said. “We sometimes overlook the draw of the fantastic quality of life which we all enjoy along the corridor, but when you hear that from investors you realise it plays a hugely important role in their decision to set up a base in a region. That is something we can really promote when we’re selling the corridor in the future.”

Councillor McDonagh said that part of the DBEC Councils’ focus is also on highlighting the support packages for smaller local indigenous businesses to set up, grow and develop. He referenced the importance of the

The Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC) is a collaborative network of eight councils (Dublin City Council, Fingal County Council, Meath County Council, Louth County Council, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Belfast City Council) and two universities from across Ireland (Dublin City University and Ulster University), which are working together to realise the economic potential of the corridor between Dublin and Belfast.

Visit [www.dbec.info](http://www.dbec.info) for more information

supply chain networks to bolster the raft of small and medium-sized organisations which are the bedrock of the economies in the corridor.

The sustainability angle is something which is also at the heart of DBEC’s plans, both in supporting the development of the green economy and in enhancing the green and blue spaces which the length of the corridor is blessed with.

In all, the multipronged approach to inclusive economic development which DBEC is driving is something which will be transformational, and a hugely exciting initiative to be involved with, Councillor Byrne said.

“DBEC has already created a unique level of collaboration between the councils, businesses, education sector and others along the corridor. That has already had a big impact on the region and by continuing to harness our collective potential we will be able to do so much more.

“Individually, the council areas that make up the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor already have a powerful offering. By bringing that together under one, collaborative umbrella, DBEC has potential to be world leading, now and especially in the future.” ■

**dublin  
Belfast**  
economic  
corridor