



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



REGIONAL ENTERPRISE PLAN  
TO 2024

# NORTH-EAST



An initiative of the Department  
of Enterprise, Trade and Employment



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# Minister's Foreword



*Damien English*

**Damien English TD,**  
Minister of State for Business,  
Employment and Retail

**There is a huge appetite to facilitate regional enterprise development and grow job opportunities right across the country. I am delighted to see this outlook reflected strongly in the publication of this Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024 for the North-East.**

I would like to acknowledge the work of the regional stakeholders – the Enterprise Agencies, LEOs, Local Authorities, Regional Skills, Higher & Further Education, the Regional Assembly, Private Sector, and many other participants – for their determination and intense engagement for the betterment of the North-East.

Together they considered important questions to enhance enterprise development for their region, about enterprise resilience; place attractiveness; competitiveness; and the twin business transformation imperatives - low carbon and digital in developing their Plan.

Looking to the future, through the framework of our Economic Recovery Plan, and the recent review of the National Development Plan 2021-2030, the Government is committed to achieving a balanced, sustainable, and inclusive recovery for our people and our regions. The imperative to realise the enterprise and jobs potential in all our regions and reducing disparities between them remains a core priority.

My Department has an important role to play in the promotion and funding of regional development, through the work of IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, and the Local Enterprise Office Network, by assisting businesses directly, and through ecosystem strengthening measures. These include initiatives such as the IDA regional property programme, the EI Regional Enterprise Development Fund and investments in innovation and start-up infrastructures. Critically, in overseeing the development of Regional Enterprise Plans, we recognise that there is added benefit if stakeholders work together regionally to understand their unique enterprise opportunities and challenges; and collaborate on solutions.



This new Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024 for the North-East is future-focused and centred around a number of priorities including:

- Develop a strong and coherent messaging proposition for the region,
- Support digital transition for enterprise,
- Strengthening the regional SME ecosystem,
- Supporting enterprise to mainstream climate action and assist in the transition to low carbon, and
- Leverage the full extent of existing and emerging growth sectors.

With continued regional collaboration, knowledge sharing and a solutions mindset, the actions within this Plan can make a real and lasting difference for the North-East, and to the collective national economic recovery.

I would like to especially thank the Chairperson of the North-East Regional Steering Committee Richard Hanlon, EMEA, Chief Commercial Officer, Aon, Cyber Solutions for his leadership on the preparation of this new Plan, and Caroline Brady, North-East Programme Manager for her critical coordination role in delivering the final outcome. I am very appreciative of the time and energy given by all the members of the Steering Committee, and for your ongoing commitment to the Regional Enterprise Plan.

To assist the Regional Enterprise Plans, my Department, through Enterprise Ireland, has made available over €126m in funding since 2018 to assist locally-led regional enterprise development projects. Of this, over €20.5m has been approved for the North-East Region under the Regional Enterprise Development Fund, Border Enterprise Development Fund and the Regional Enterprise Transition Scheme.

New funding of up to €180m will be made available for the development and implementation of collaborative and innovative enterprise projects that can make a significant impact on enterprise development in the regions.

This funding will complement the aims and objectives of the Regional Enterprise Plans and through their new Plan, the North-East Region is well positioned to compete for future funding calls to help improve the capability and competitiveness of their regional enterprise development offering and to encourage entrepreneurial activity among their local vibrant business community.

I am very much looking forward to further engagement with Richard and the members of the North-East Steering Committee as implementation progresses towards 2024.



# Message from the Chair



**Richard Hanlon,**  
EMEA Chief Commercial Officer,  
Aon Cyber Solutions

**The North-East Regional Enterprise Plan (REP) to 2024 sets out our collective ambition to build upon our existing and emerging strengths and to help realise the full economic potential of our region.**

Set against a backdrop of challenging circumstances including the COVID-19 pandemic, Brexit, as well as the need to accelerate our progress on climate action and the transition to digitalisation, this new Plan to 2024 is framed in the context of our key stakeholders working collaboratively to overcome such challenges, build resilience and more importantly, harness opportunities to develop and implement some transformative projects and initiatives for the North-East Region.

As a region we are proud of the many successes that stemmed from collaboration and partnership building under the REP to 2020. Some €20.5m was awarded to projects across the North-East Region under the Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF), the Border Enterprise Development Fund (BEDF) and the Regional Enterprise Transition Scheme (RETS). Our Plan also supported the development and progression of a number of Cluster initiatives. These in turn will inform the development of Ireland's Smart Specialisation Strategy in highlighting our regional competitive advantages. One of the key goals of this Plan is to build upon these projects, and to maximise their potential and reach, both within the region and beyond.

This Plan's Strategic Objectives seek to complement and build upon the core activities of the development agencies across the region, with an emphasis on building a cohesive regional identity while acknowledging our diversity, leading the way in terms of our digital and decarbonisation transition, strengthening our SME ecosystem and leveraging the potential of growth sectors across the region. I am confident that we have already laid a strong foundation upon which to build our ambition to 2024.

The Plan's 'Strategic Objectives' have been developed through the input and support of the Project Delivery Team in conjunction with the completion of a series of stakeholder-led engagements. I would like to record my appreciation to all the various stakeholders for their input and commitment to the process to date and I look forward to our continued collaboration as we implement the next phase of our Regional Enterprise Plan.



# North-East Regional Profile

**The North-East Region comprises the counties of Cavan, Monaghan, and Louth. It encompasses a land area of some 4,053sq kms and a combined population of 266,446 (2016) predicted to grow up to 296,256 by 2026. The North-East is a unique region in terms of demographics and economic activity ranging from dispersed and low populated pockets of activity to more urban centric, enterprise intense activity particularly along the east coast. Many parts of the region are heavily dependent on indigenous industries to generate economic activity. The region is rich in culture and heritage and includes a number of significant tourism and recreational attractions.**

Since the launch of Regional Action Plan for Jobs (APJ) in 2015, 27,300 more people are in employment in the region in Q3 2021 relative to Q1 2015. This is an increase of 16.1 percent, while the unemployment rate also fell from 8.6 percent to 3.7 percent over the same period. Following on from the launch of the APJ in 2015 and through the subsequent iteration of the Regional Enterprise Plan, the development agencies through their core activities have been instrumental in supporting enterprise development and job creation across the region.

As of 2021, some 275 Enterprise Ireland client companies supported 18,606 jobs in the region, with 46 (2020) IDA client companies supporting 5,894 jobs (2020), while the Local Enterprise Office supported 3,275 jobs across 594 companies.

The North-East Region straddles two NUTS II configurations, the Northern and Western Region and the Eastern and Midlands Region. Their respective Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) provide the roadmap for regional development. Louth and its strategic growth centres of Dundalk and Drogheda have been identified as extending their influence to Monaghan and Cavan, which together comprise the North-East and Central Border Area, while Cavan Town and Monaghan Town have been identified as key towns that can act as regional drivers. The realisation of the RSES' will be key to addressing longer term strategic planning and infrastructural requirements that will be needed to unlock the economic and enterprise potential of the region.

A key regional strength is the M1 corridor midway between Dublin and Belfast. Strategically positioned, the corridor provides high-capacity road and intercity rail links along with international links via ports and airports. The corridor is home to many of the world's nationally and internationally recognised leading companies as well as a number of developing clusters in financial services, emerging technologies, life sciences and food manufacturing.

The recently launched Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor, a collaborative initiative comprising of 8 Local Authorities from either side of the Border in conjunction with DCU and University of Ulster sees the coming together of key stakeholders to work collectively to find ways of realising the potential benefits of further development of the Corridor. This exciting initiative will further strengthen the economic potential of the North-East, exploiting the unique strengths, opportunities, and capabilities of the region.

Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) is an extremely important asset for the North-East serving as a key educational facility for the student population of the wider region. With a focus on innovation and cutting-edge research and technology it delivers an industry facing, innovative and diverse talent pipeline.



Recent developments at DkIT, including the launch of a new digital health innovation hub, dConnect, will support Ireland's ambition to become a global leader in the development of digital health solutions. Together, with the designation of CREDIT Technology Gateway as one of 16 national Enterprise Ireland Technology Gateways, which focuses on promoting energy optimisation and efficiency, these initiatives will accelerate innovation and improve competitiveness and growth in key emerging sectors in the region. One of the key goals of the region going forward is to support DkIT in its ambition as part of a consortium to move towards a Technological University status. Such a designation would be critical in attracting and retaining talent, researchers, and industry partners as well as enhancing the region's ability to spin out innovative start-ups and support existing and emerging HPSUs and clusters across the North-East.

Our strategic geographic interface with Northern Ireland presents many cross-border opportunities to develop initiatives that support cross-border economic co-operation and development. The new Peace Plus Programme which builds on the previous Peace and Interreg Programmes will focus on activities that promote peace and reconciliation and contribute to cross-border economic and territorial regeneration. The new Programme, with an indicative budget of €1bn will provide 100 percent project funding towards delivering economic regeneration and transformation, supporting a sustainable future, and building and embedding partnership and collaboration. Through the implementation of the North-East Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024 the region will identify opportunities to work with the relevant cross-border bodies to capitalise on such opportunities as presented by the new Peace Plus programme.

The location of the North-East also makes the region particularly exposed with regards to the ongoing uncertainty surrounding Brexit. Issues around regulatory requirements, tariffs, supply chains and logistics as well as currency fluctuations are all challenging, with our Agri-food sector particularly vulnerable.

However, as a region the North-East retains many advantages even in the face of Brexit, with all the benefits of EU membership, strong connectivity to Dublin and Belfast and a strong enterprise ecosystem that makes the North-East Region an attractive proposition for UK businesses who wish to access Irish and EU markets and reciprocally providing relative ease of access for EU and Irish companies wishing to access the UK market. Many of the enterprise development agencies and Local Enterprise Offices have been instrumental in providing support and guidance during this transition period and the Regional Enterprise Plan will continue to promote the availability of such supports.

The impact of COVID-19 has been felt across all sectors of the North-East. According to the CSO Labour Force Survey employment in the region dropped from 183,900 at Q4 2019 to a low of 159,900 in Q2 2020. This is a decline of 24,000. However, at Q3 2021, the unemployment rate in the Border region was the lowest in the country at 3.7 percent having dropped a full 2 percent relative to Q2 2021. The Regional Enterprise Plan will seek to build on this positive development and address employment challenges through job creation, reskilling and upskilling.

In tandem with this decline COVID-19 has also contributed to a monumental shift in working patterns with new hybrid/blended remote working models. The roll out of the National Broadband Plan along with the implementation of the Government's rural development policy, Our Rural Future and the National Remote Work Strategy, will increase opportunities for those who wish to work from home. The Regional Enterprise Plan, in promoting the development and sustainability of remote working hubs, will support this shift in working patterns, while underpinning the retention of talent in the region.

The ambition of the new Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024 is focused on building upon our past successes while working collaboratively around areas of commonality within the North-East to build an innovative, forward-looking, and resilient region. As part of this ambition, the Plan wants to create a sense of regional identity while respecting the region's diversity, to position the region to the forefront in addressing the difficulties presented by Brexit and COVID-19 and embrace the challenges of climate action and digitalisation. The Plan will build upon the regional strengths in both the Agri sector and in new and emerging cluster activity. Through building strategic partnerships and collaboration, the Plan will align our ambition to build a region that is resilient and that supports enterprise investment and growth.



# Overview of Strategic Objectives and Actions



**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1: Develop a strong and coherent messaging proposition for the North-East Region highlighting its unique attributes for investment including talent, sectoral strengths and placemaking/quality of life**

- Action 1.1** Co-ordinate and promote a coherent messaging proposition for the North-East Region.
- Action 1.2** Strengthen collaboration and the development of strategic partnerships among existing Industry/Enterprise Fora across the North-East Region.
- Action 1.3** Deliver initiatives that will support the retention of talent in the region, particularly those who relocated to take advantage of remote working opportunities.



**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2: Position the North-East Region as an exemplar in guiding and supporting digital transition for enterprise**

- Action 2.1** Enable enterprise across the North-East Region adapt to and maximise opportunities from digitalisation through:
  - i. The promotion of digital readiness assessments, and
  - ii. Availing of targeted interventions to support their digital transition.



**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3: Strengthen the Regional SME Ecosystem through collaboration, capability and capacity building**

- Action 3.1** Develop an Operational Excellence Support programme for SMEs.
- Action 3.2** Improve linkages between SMEs and multinational/large enterprise in the North-East, while supporting the development of enterprise leadership, management, and entrepreneurial skills.



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4: Support enterprise to mainstream climate action and transition to low carbon into their business planning and delivery

- Action 4.1** Complete an assessment of enterprise's knowledge and understanding of decarbonisation requirements and develop appropriate response to issues and opportunities emerging from the assessment.
- Action 4.2** Leverage the opportunities presented by CREDIT Technology Gateway to promote energy efficiency in the region.



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5: Leverage the full extent of existing and emerging growth sectors in the North-East

- Action 5.1** Establish a North-East Agri Sector Innovation and Leadership forum.
- Action 5.2** Explore opportunities to promote and expand the reach of emerging growth sectors in the region.



# The Regional Enterprise Plans Initiative

## Introduction

In early 2019, nine Regional Steering Committees established by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE), finalised and commenced implementation of the first *Regional Enterprise Plans*. This 'bottom-up' collaborative mechanism, involves the enterprise agencies, local enterprise offices, local authorities, regional assemblies, higher and further education bodies, private sector and others, within each region, chaired by a senior figure from industry. The Committees were formed initially in 2015 to drive the Regional Action Plans for Jobs until 2018.

The Regional Enterprise Plans each contain agreed 'Strategic Objectives' for enterprise development, accompanied by a time-bound set of actions that deliver to the objectives. Progress Reports on implementation of the Regional Enterprise Plans to 2020 are available on the Department's website.

## Policy Context

Delivering balanced regional growth through a coherent policy approach to the enterprise needs of every part of Ireland is a stated objective within the Programme for Government (PfG) and more recently emphasised in the *Economic Recovery Plan 2021*.

DETE contributes to this agenda in a number of ways, including through: the enterprise agencies; the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs); and direct investments in strengthening the enterprise ecosystem (incl. Regional Enterprise Development Fund, IDA Ireland property programme etc.), guided by our national enterprise policy. This work takes place in the context of the National Planning Framework (NPF), which provides the vision and holistic future planning framework for Ireland's spatial development across society and economy over the longer-term, and its translation through Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) and the aligned Local Authority County and City Development Plans.

The NPF and the three RSES provide a statutory long-term framework for the spatial, economic and social development of all regions in Ireland, offering an ambitious and sustainable proposition to delivering balanced regional development in Ireland. Smart Specialisation (S3) represents one of the key economic principles adopted in each of these high-level statutory frameworks, with a key enabling condition for funding interventions under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) also being the development of and alignment with the Member State's S3. By placing Smart Specialisation as one of the thematic areas of the Regional Enterprise Plans, we can ensure that regional enterprise priorities identified and supported in these plans are aligned with the long-term vision and objectives of the NPF and the RSES.



Other pertinent national policies include the *National Skills Strategy 2025*, *Innovation 2020* (with a new innovation strategy forthcoming); and *Making Remote Work* amongst others. Also, as part of the Shared Island initiative, there will be added impetus to delivering balanced regional growth by leveraging the potential to grow the all-island economy, while driving growth and job creation North and South.

Ensuring that all regions can realise their enterprise development potential and that regional disparities are reduced therefore requires that the Department works closely with relevant partners across Government to strengthen the enabling conditions for investment and business growth.

The Regional Enterprise Plans recognise that enterprise policy coherence and collaboration at the national level needs to be mirrored from the 'bottom up', to enable:

- a place-based perspective on needs, capabilities and opportunities to inform national enterprise and other policies;
- economies of scale through joined up actions and investment;
- effective targeting of national initiatives to areas of opportunity and greatest need; and
- development and delivery of a programme of collaborative actions that can drive better outcomes in terms of regional job creation.

Although the Plans themselves are focused and timebound, the Steering Committee mechanism also maintains a live agenda at regional level, responsive to emerging opportunities and challenges, for example: Brexit, COVID-19 pandemic impacts, remote working opportunity for regions, climate action/just transition, and regional shocks requiring joined up responses.

## Developing new Regional Enterprise Plans to 2024

The outgoing Regional Enterprise Plans (REPs) concluded at the end of 2020. Final Progress Reports from the nine Steering Committees show that the model has impact and that actions delivered are complementary and add value to the mainstream interventions of the enterprise agencies and other bodies working to enable enterprise development at a regional level.

The new Plans to 2024 build on the first iteration of the REPs and each Steering Committee had a clear mandate to deliver a new Plan to 2024 that would:

- complement and translate national enterprise policy in a regional context;
- facilitate collaboration regionally to address prioritised ecosystem gaps and opportunities, and help achieve Agency and LEO investment and jobs targets in each region; and
- use collective insight and resources in each region, and available regional funding, to progress initiatives to enable enterprise growth and job creation in each region.

The Department highlighted a number of national policy challenges that each of the Regional Committees were asked to consider as part of the preparation of the new Plans: enabling recovery and building enterprise resilience in the context of COVID-19 and other external shocks; the twin transition imperative for enterprises to digitalise and contribute to a carbon neutral economy; improving competitiveness through effective placemaking, including enabling flexible work patterns; and capitalising on existing and emerging sectoral strengths and capabilities through smart specialisation.

The development of Regional Enterprise Plans to 2024 has for the first time been done in parallel with the creation of Ireland's forthcoming new Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3). The stakeholder consultation events undertaken as part of the development of these Regional Enterprise Plans has acted as an entrepreneurial discovery process which has contributed valuable insights to the S3 for Ireland.

The final appendix summarises the various stages that has led to the publication of the Regional Enterprise Plans. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the development of the nine new Plans to 2024 was undertaken in a virtual environment. The Regional Enterprise Plans and Initiatives Unit, within DETE, will oversee the implementation of the new Plans at the national level, while roll-out of the process in each region will be driven on the ground by the existing Regional Steering Committees, assisted by Programme Managers appointed by the Local Authorities in each region.

Finally, to help drive delivery of the new REPs to 2024, drive best practice across regions, and encourage cross-regional collaboration on areas of common interest and opportunity, the Department has established a National Oversight Group (NOG) for the REPs, chaired jointly by Minister Robert Troy and Minister Damien English. This grouping includes the Chairpersons and the Programme Managers of the Regional Steering Committees, national level representatives of the enterprise agencies and other relevant bodies, as well as relevant Government Departments. The Group will meet over the lifetime of the new Regional Enterprise Plans.





# North-East Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024

## Strategic Objective 1:

**Develop a strong and coherent messaging proposition for the North-East Region highlighting its unique attributes for investment including talent, sectoral strengths and placemaking/quality of life**

### Context and Vision to 2024

A strong sense of place contributes to the attractiveness of a region for enterprise investment and growth as well as supporting regional competitiveness. The inclusion of this Strategic Objective will help address the absence of a cohesive messaging proposition for the North-East and help realise the potential of the region as a location for enterprise expansion and investment as well as promoting quality of life as a key enabling factor and value proposition in supporting the regional enterprise ecosystem. Both within the Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee, and through various Economic Fora, Chambers of Commerce etc., there exists an extensive breadth of local and regional experience and knowledge. Through the Regional Enterprise Plan, we can support a formalised knowledge exchange environment to harness this expertise in aligning and articulating the regional priorities, deficits, and opportunities and in turn, secure action through the appropriate channels, specifically in areas of common interest across the North-East Region. The region has already identified a number of key infrastructural enablers of enterprise including the importance of the availability of lands/industrial space to facilitate business expansion and investment in the development of appropriate ‘landing space’ for all sectors across the region. This will be a priority focus within this Strategic Objective.

Such collaboration will also support the implementation of Project Ireland 2040 in delivering on key infrastructure projects that drive future productivity growth and maximise returns on investment. Both Enterprise 2025 Renewed and the Report of the SME Growth Taskforce highlight the importance of seeking out new opportunities in clustering and networks and how such collaborations lead to a strengthened SME and entrepreneurship base. Under the previous Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020 significant progress was made particularly in the Fintech, Engineering/Manufacturing and Connected Health sectors. By 2024 these clusters will be further developed and opportunities for additional cross-border and intra-regional collaborations will be at an advanced stage. The National Remote Work Strategy aims to make remote working a lasting feature of Ireland’s workforce while IDA Ireland, in its FDI Strategy 2021-2024, recognises the potential of remote working as part of its value proposition to attract investment to Ireland. It is important that this Plan to 2024 maximises the positive effects of a new type of blended working environment through the region’s broad range of remote working facilities. A two-pronged approach will seek not alone to support users but also to build capacity and sustainability of the hubs themselves.



## Actions to 2024

Action 1.1: Co-ordinate and promote a coherent messaging proposition for the North-East Region.		
Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Regional Enterprise Development Office	IDA Ireland Enterprise Ireland Local Authorities Local Enterprise Offices Dundalk Institute of Technology Regional Skills Forum Cross-Border Groups	Initial collateral complete: Q2 2023 Overall Action completed: Q4 2024
<p><b>Rationale:</b></p> <p>The enterprise development agencies and bodies across the North-East Region each have their own messaging propositions that support inward investment and growth. There is an opportunity through this Strategic Objective to identify possibilities for collaboration among relevant regional stakeholders, to develop ‘marketing’ collateral including key datasets that links them together to further strengthen our regional offering and highlight the unique selling point of the North-East as an attractive place to invest, work and live.</p>		
<p><b>Action Outcome:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-ordinate a set of key datasets for the region and use these to promote the North-East as a location of choice for investment including available talent and supporting infrastructure.</li> <li>• Development of marketing materials, value propositions for the established sectors/clusters within the region, Fintech and Engineering/Manufacturing and emerging recognised competitive strengths of the region including Agri-food and Connected Health and Wellbeing to include the dConnect project at DkIT as a sectoral property solution (extension to the Regional Development Centre).</li> <li>• Existing and embryonic clusters to form part of the 2024 IDA cluster Strategy following engagement between the IDA and regional stakeholders.</li> <li>• Development and promotion of linkages to cross-border initiatives that increase the unique selling point of the North-East Region particularly in relation to clustering by:                         <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Identification of opportunities to extend and connect these networks and other regional networks with aligned activities and networks/clusters outside of the region and on a North South basis.</li> <li>› Exploration of interregional opportunities for example linking Boyne Valley Food Hub with BioConnect Centre in Monaghan.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		



**Action 1.2: Strengthen collaboration and the development of strategic partnerships among existing Industry/Enterprise Fora across the North-East Region.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Industry Chair Public Sector Chair	IDA Ireland Enterprise Ireland Local Authorities Local Enterprise Offices Dundalk Institute of Technology Regional Skills Forum Chamber of Commerce	Q4 2024

**Rationale:**

Build upon the existing Regional Enterprise Steering Committee to harness the collective knowledge and expertise from across the enterprise sector, public sector and support agencies and facilitate the communication of the agreed and prioritised needs of the North-East Region to relevant stakeholders at a national and political level. This collective partnering will also provide support in identifying future opportunities and emerging growth sectors, skills development, and investment opportunities for the region.

**Action Outcome:**

- Review of existing Enterprise Fora in the North-East Region and their areas of focus completed.
- Areas of commonality and opportunities for collaboration and developing synergies across work plans identified.
- Evidence that the Regional Enterprise Plans/Steering Committee are being used as a vehicle for articulating the evolving needs of the region with regards to:
  - › Strategically important projects at regional level that will support investment and growth.
  - › Incentives required to facilitate business expansion and investment for all sectors across the North-East Region particularly with regards to enterprise space, near shore supply chains and other enablers of sustainable enterprise.
  - › The development of serviced lands and facilities in partnership with the agencies to help address market failures in the region and encourage and support new and emerging enterprises.



**Action 1.3: Deliver initiatives that will support the retention of talent in the region, particularly those who relocated to take advantage of remote working opportunities.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Industry Chair Public Sector Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital/Remote Hub Managers</li> <li>• Enterprise Ireland</li> <li>• Local Enterprise Offices</li> <li>• Education and Training Boards (ETBs)</li> <li>• Regional Skills Forum</li> </ul>	Establishment of Network: Q3 2022 Overall Action completed: Q4 2024

**Rationale:**

Create a connected ecosystem of co-working space across the region that supports a professional working environment and fosters entrepreneurship and shared learning.

**Action Outcome:**

- Establishment of a North-East Network of Co Working Hubs (NENCoH) to realise opportunities of shared learnings, collective promotion and capacity building contributing to the sustainability of the Hubs and their network members.
- Opportunities identified with related roadmap to take on board the classifications and quality standards currently being developed by CEAI (Community Enterprise Association Ireland), as well as opportunities presented by the Connected Hubs initiative.



## Strategic Objective 2:

### Position the North-East Region as an exemplar in guiding and supporting digital transition for enterprise

#### Context and Vision to 2024

The *Economic Recovery Plan 2021* highlights the fact that, 'Over the next 5 years enterprise policy will drive a step change in the adoption of digital and other new technologies by Irish businesses, as a critical driver of enterprise productivity and competitive advantage'. Through the implementation of this Strategic Objective the Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024 will play its part in assisting enterprise to harness digital technology to transform their business.

*Our Rural Future-Rural Development Policy 2021-2025* also emphasises that developing digital capability within the enterprise sector, especially amongst SMEs and microenterprises, is critical for competitiveness and business sustainability.

Notwithstanding the fact that the application of technologies through automation will mean many jobs will become redundant, *Ireland's Industry 4.0 Strategy 2020-2025* highlights the fact that there will be positive workforce growth in this sector over the years while embracing digital technologies can lead to more efficient and flexible production processes with increased resource efficiency. We must now identify and put in place the appropriate interventions for enterprise across the region to enable them to embrace the digital transition while exploiting new opportunities particularly in advanced and smart manufacturing and sustainable food production and processing. Adoption of Industry 4.0 and the digitalisation of manufacturing will be critical to maintaining a competitive manufacturing base into the future.

As a first step in this digital transition, the North-East must decipher where enterprise within the region, specifically within the Engineering/Manufacturing and Agri food sectors are positioned in terms of their digital readiness. Once this is complete and using existing expertise within the region the North-East can then review, and where necessary, promote the development and uptake of appropriate supports and interventions to enable enterprise to adopt to and maximise opportunities from digitalisation.

This Plan will also seek out opportunities that may arise from initiatives developed through the *National SME and Entrepreneurship Growth Plan* and the European Digital Innovation Hubs (which will be part of a wider European network). The Hubs will have a particular focus on supporting SMEs in their digitalisation journey and will facilitate a broad uptake of Artificial Intelligence, High Performance Computing and Cybersecurity as well as advanced Digital Skills and other digital technologies by industry.



## Actions to 2024

**Action 2.1: Enable enterprise across the North-East Region adapt to and maximise opportunities from digitalisation through:**

- i The promotion of digital readiness assessments, and
- ii Availing of targeted interventions to support their digital transition.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Industry Chair Public Sector Chair	IDA Ireland Enterprise Ireland Local Enterprise Offices Dundalk Institute of Technology Regional Skills Forum Education and Training Boards AMTCE Data Value Hub	Completion of review: Q1 2023 Overall Action completed: Q4 2024

**Rationale:**

The move towards digitalisation will bring about a fundamental transformation in terms of how enterprise operates. This Strategic Objective will advance the shared ambition of the action partners to support enterprise as they develop their digital capabilities. The action will focus on encouraging enterprises across the region to undertake a digital readiness assessment to enable them to benchmark their levels of digital maturity and to identify gaps where intervention is required. Initially the focus will lean towards enterprise in the Engineering/Manufacturing and Agri Food Sectors, being noted as strong sectors in the region, and will broaden out to incorporate other sectors over the lifetime of the Plan. Feedback from the digital readiness assessments will highlight where support is required and enable action partners to work collaboratively and intervene to provide the relevant assistance.

**Action Outcome:**

- Review completed of the region’s status regarding its adoption of digitalisation to benchmark where enterprise is at present and where it needs to be at in terms of digital transition.
- Findings from the *Digital Readiness Assessments* used in informing collaboration with the action partners, identifying where gaps exist in terms of interventions/supports and promoting the development of a suite of targeted supports, to bridge the gap, in enabling enterprise in the region transform and adopt to technological change.
- A pilot *Digital Transition Programme* designed, developed and implemented targeted at enterprises in the North-East Region for sectors not currently eligible for existing available supports.



## Strategic Objective 3:

### Strengthen the Regional SME Ecosystem through collaboration, capability and capacity building

#### Context and Vision to 2024

As SMEs comprise 99.8 percent of firms and account for 68 percent of total employment, a strong focus on indigenous SMEs is critical to a jobs-led recovery. Findings from the OECD review of *SME and Entrepreneurship Policy in Ireland* which subsequently translated into the *National SME and Entrepreneurship Growth Plan* has now identified key target areas within the SME sector including the following: Entrepreneurship; Productivity, Digitalisation, and Competitiveness; Internationalisation; and Networks and Clustering. Many of the enterprise development agencies provide supports to address both challenges and opportunities in the business environment within these target sectors.

This Strategic Objective seeks to support active engagement among the development agencies to prepare a practical guide of supports available and to identify what additional measures could be put in place to bridge the gap between existing supports and those required to improve the effectiveness of enterprise.

Over the past 5 years Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland have focused on supporting enterprise growth and job creation throughout the regions with 68 percent of new jobs created by Enterprise Ireland client companies in 2021 outside the Dublin region while 56 percent of employment in IDA Ireland companies is located in the regions. The multiplier effects of these investments will present employment and supply chain opportunities and the Plan to 2024 will facilitate regional collaboration to capitalise on these opportunities.

Management development is fundamental to improved efficiency of SMEs while investing in innovation and leadership skills has also proven to strengthen competitiveness and productivity growth. Action 3.2 seeks to harness the opportunities presented through a mix of FDI and Irish owned business by promoting collaboration and peer to peer support between larger enterprise/ MNCs and SMEs.

## Actions to 2024

### Action 3.1: Develop an Operational Excellence Support programme for SMEs.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Industry Chair Public Sector Chair	Enterprise Ireland Local Enterprise Offices Dundalk Institute of Technology InterTradeIreland	Review complete: Q4 2022 Operational Excellence Support Programme Developed: Q4 2023
<p><b>Rationale:</b></p> <p>Nurture the ambition of enterprise across the region by providing a practical and focused guide to supports available to enable them to build resilience and unlock economic and employment potential.</p>		
<p><b>Action Outcome:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review completed of the suite of supports, education, training, and advice to enterprise across LEOs, Enterprise Ireland and DkIT and gaps identified with regards to Operational Excellence.</li> <li><i>Operational Excellence Support Programme</i> fully developed for SMEs across the North-East Region that identifies and leverages existing supports and opportunities and develops new value-add offerings to help them on their operations excellence journey.</li> </ul>		



**Action 3.2: Improve linkages between SMEs and multinational/large enterprise in the North-East while supporting the development of enterprise leadership, management, and entrepreneurial skills.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Industry Chair Public Sector Chair	IDA Ireland Enterprise Ireland Local Enterprise Offices Dundalk Institute of Technology Education and Training Boards Regional Skills Forum Chambers of Commerce Focused Engineering Network	Q4 2024

**Rationale:**

To support enhanced linkages between SMEs, Multi-National Companies, and established enterprise across the region to enable greater collaboration with regards to supply chain opportunities as well as harnessing and sharing expertise and experience in leadership, management, and entrepreneurial development.

**Action Outcome:**

- ‘Regional sourcing events’ established and promoted that foster the multiplier effect and enhanced supply chain opportunities for companies in the North-East, building upon short supply chain opportunities that emerged in recent months.
- Relationships established with multi nationals and larger established enterprise across the region that facilitate the development of models for peer-to-peer mentoring and leadership/management and entrepreneurial development through Corporate Social Responsibility Programmes and other formal and informal channels.
- Women being actively attracted back into the workplace through promotion of the Athena STEM Programme (Female led Entrepreneurship and management capability development) while also promoting the work of the Regional Skills Forum and the National Apprenticeship programmes.
- The Regional Technology Clustering Fund, Connected Health and Wellbeing Cluster has FDI and SME collaboration as an aim of the Connected Health Cluster. This initiative will explore and identify further opportunities of linking with public and private sector healthcare and SMEs.



## Strategic Objective 4:

### Support enterprise to mainstream climate action and transition to low carbon into their business planning and delivery

#### Context and Vision to 2024

The Programme for Government commits to an average 7 percent reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions from 2021-2030 (a 51 percent reduction over the decade) and to achieving net zero emissions by 2050. *The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021* sets a legally binding path for Ireland's transition in achieving these targets. With enterprise emissions accounting for 13.3 percent of total emissions in the Irish economy, they must now take stock of the sustainability of their products, services and supply chains and evolve or transform their activities in line with decarbonisation requirements to assist in contributing to the ambitious national targets as outlined above.

The first part of this journey for enterprise is to understand the changes that will be required, along with the significant opportunities and challenges that come with this transformation. *The SME Growth Taskforce* emphasises the fact that SMEs will need to develop management capacity and skills required to assess not alone the regulatory requirements but also the likely changes to their cost base and the needs of their customers. In tandem with this, they will be required to build the capabilities required to deliver sustainable products and services. Enterprise Ireland will prioritise climate action and sustainability in its *Strategy for 2022-2025*, a key pillar of which will be to assist existing clients and new start-ups to exploit the opportunities in transition to a low carbon economy brings.

Strategic Objective 4 seeks to support enterprise across the region on the transition to decarbonisation. Firstly, by helping them understand the imperatives of climate change. Secondly, by helping to identify opportunities to adopt sustainable practices in the products and services they provide. And finally, by identifying opportunities available for both existing and new enterprises to provide the goods and services which will be needed as we decarbonise our economy. We will also collaborate with the Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs) to facilitate effective climate action at regional and local level.



## Actions to 2024

**Action 4.1: Complete an assessment of enterprise’s knowledge and understanding of decarbonisation requirements and develop appropriate response to issues and opportunities emerging from the assessment.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Industry Chair Public Sector Chair	IDA Ireland Enterprise Ireland Local Authorities Local Enterprise Offices Dundalk Institute of Technology/Credit Technology Gateway Education and Training Boards SEAI CAROs	Assessment complete: Q4 2022 Suite of green economy supports identified: Q4 2024

### Rationale:

The transition to a low carbon economy presents a significant transformational challenge for enterprise – part of this challenge includes an understanding of the transition process and the opportunities and barriers that may present. Action 4.1 seeks to identify such opportunities and barriers along with the identification of appropriate supports and interventions required to enable enterprise to withstand the challenges and impacts of transition.

### Action Outcome:

- Feasibility report completed that assesses enterprises’ knowledge and understanding of decarbonisation. Report to comprise three strands:
  - › Strand 1 - an analysis of enterprises’ understanding of transitioning to low carbon and the implications of same in terms of planning for the future - supply chain issues, servicing carbon neutral companies, showing their green credentials and moving to net zero carbon.
  - › Strand 2 – explore opportunities as to how smaller companies in the region may support larger companies in meeting their decarbonisation requirements.
  - › Strand 3 - given the low number of start- ups in the green economy in the North-East Region, identify the barriers to start ups in the green economy and what opportunities exist in this area.
- Using the findings from the Feasibility Report and working in conjunction with the relevant agencies to leverage existing supports such as the Enterprise Ireland Green Offer and LEO Green for Micro and where applicable develop additional targeted supports to enable enterprise in the region transform and meet their decarbonisation requirements.



**Action 4.2: Leverage the opportunities presented by CREDIT Technology Gateway to promote energy efficiency in the region.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Industry Chair Public Sector Chair	CREDIT Technology Gateway IDA Ireland Enterprise Ireland Local Enterprise Offices Regional Skills Forum	Q4 2024

**Rationale:**

Capitalise on the experience and expertise of CREDIT Technology Gateway to assist companies to make both their products and their manufacturing operations as energy efficient as possible.

**Action Outcome:**

Working in conjunction with the Centre for Renewables and Energy Technology Gateway at Dundalk IT (CREDIT), enterprise agencies and their clients across the North-East develop a spread of transformative projects across the region to assist enterprise in making both their products and their manufacturing operations as energy efficient as possible.



## Strategic Objective 5:

### Leverage the full extent of existing and emerging growth sectors in the North-East

#### Context and Vision to 2024

Realising the enterprise and innovation potential in all regions, allowing regions to fully utilise their competitive advantage and build on their distinctive strengths will be a key aspect of Ireland’s forthcoming *National Smart Specialisation Strategy*.

Through the consultative process in preparing the new Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024, a number of existing (Engineering/ Manufacturing/Fintech/Agri) and emerging (Connected Health/Bioeconomy/Amination/Augmented and Virtual reality) sectors were identified as performing and emerging strongly across the North-East Region.

The Agri food sector which is vital to the North-East Region is primed for change with an increased emphasis on smart and innovative farming practices. The Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024 now presents an opportunity to explore in a structured manner, opportunities to strengthen existing and emerging sustainable opportunities in the Agri sector as well as the opportunity to drive more and deeper collaborations between farm, enterprise, research, and tech centres. In doing so it will also support the implementation of the *Agri-Food Strategy to 2030* which envisages Ireland becoming a world leader in Sustainable Food Systems over the next decade.

New opportunities are also emerging in the Connected Health sector and the new digital health innovation hub dConnect, which will support Ireland’s ambition to become a global leader in the development of digital health solutions. There are also prospective opportunities that we should be seeding such as Animation, Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality and Product Design which present opportunity for inter and intra-regional collaboration.

*Future Jobs Ireland* highlights the fact that Ireland is well placed to develop a strong bio economy and in doing so maximise the use of our renewable biological resources to create economic activity, employment and a sustainable society. The Monaghan Bio Connect Innovation Centre which represents a model of Agricultural Innovation will play an important role in driving the ambition for the region in maximising the potential of the circular and bioeconomy to promote rural economic development.

## Actions to 2024

### Action 5.1: Establish a North-East Agri Sector Innovation and Leadership forum.

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Industry Chair Public Sector Chair	Enterprise Ireland Local Authorities Local Enterprise Offices Teagasc Bord Bia Dundalk Institute of Technology	Forum established: Q3 2022 Action Plan completed: Q3 2023

#### Rationale:

To bring together the key players and their expertise in the Agri Sector to map out an ambitious long-term strategic blueprint for the development of the Agri Sector in the North-East Region. In addition, Climate Transition will require companies to collaborate intensively. This innovation and leadership forum will provide the space and opportunity to do that.

#### Action Outcome:

- North-East Agri Sector Innovation and Leadership Forum established.
- Action Plan completed following consultation with the Agri Sector Forum which identifies emerging trends and opportunities in the Agri Food and Agri Tech sectors to capitalise on opportunities for the region.



**Action 5.2: Explore opportunities to promote and expand the reach of emerging growth sectors in the region.**

Action Leader:	Action Partners:	For completion by:
Industry Chair Public Sector Chair	IDA Ireland Enterprise Ireland Local Enterprise Offices Dundalk Institute of Technology Bioconnect Innovation Centre	Q4 2024

**Rationale:**

Under the Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020 some €19 million was awarded to projects across the North East Region under the Regional Enterprise Development Fund and the Border Enterprise Development Fund. These projects are at various stages of development and delivery. The new REP to 2024 presents an opportunity to harness enterprise research and innovation capabilities across these recently funded initiatives as well as presenting opportunities to promote cross collaboration and to extend their reach on an inter and intra-regional basis.

**Action Outcome:**

- Increased collaboration between industry (indigenous and FDI), academia, healthcare providers and enterprise support agencies across the Connected Health Sector enabled by Connected Health and Wellbeing emerging cluster project (Regional Technology Clustering Fund)
- Enhanced capacity of dConnect project (Regional Enterprise Development Fund) in providing a spectrum of supports for start-ups and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) including mentorship, networking, regulatory or technical consultation and commercialisation of research.
- Generation of development opportunities for larger businesses and investors to provide access to innovation and partnership building through dConnect.
- Completion of Monaghan Bio Connect Project (Regional Enterprise Development Fund) and enhanced awareness of the potential of this project in advancing the bio economy industry in the North -East region through promotional and project-based initiatives.
- Completion of review of talent pool coming out of DkIT in Animation and Augmented Reality/Virtual Reality space and emerging regional strengths in Product Design and explore opportunities for inter-regional co-operation with similar projects.
- Completion of the proposed Aviation and Travel Tech cluster feasibility study.



## 3

# Implementation

The consultation process to develop the North-East Regional Enterprise Plan (REP) to 2024 was enhanced by an understanding amongst stakeholders of the importance of ownership, collaboration, and the definition and delivery of specific measurable actions that could add value to the existing activities being undertaken by the Enterprise Agencies, Local Enterprise Offices and other relevant bodies involved in supporting enterprise development. These priorities are reflected in the implementation structure for the North-East REP to 2024.

Implementation of the REP will be overseen by a Regional Steering Committee. The Steering Committee for the North-East Region will continue to be chaired by Mr Richard Hanlon, and this is welcomed by Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The functions of the Steering Committee are as follows:

- Oversee and drive delivery of the REP.
- Nominate and secure Public and Private Sector leads, where appropriate, to support delivery of the Strategic Objectives.
- Oversee the formation of working groups as necessary to drive implementation of actions.
- Explore and propagate new ideas and opportunities for collaborative projects and funding opportunities.
- Provide a forum for the sharing of updates and information by members on key enterprise development initiatives including those set out by the Agencies and LEOs in this Plan and other pertinent updates (incl. REDF, RSES, URDF, RRDF Project Ireland 2040 etc.).
- Oversee, contribute to and sign off on Progress Reports to the Department.

The Chairperson will convene at least two meetings of the Steering Committee per year and will present a progress update on the implementation of the Plan. The Chairperson will also lead the Committee in the preparation of both a mid-term and a final progress report, to be submitted to the Department. These reports will be the subject of a meeting between the Chairperson and/or the Steering Committee and the Minister during one of the biannual meetings.

The North-East Regional Steering Committee will oversee the formation of smaller working groups to drive delivery of strategic objectives and actions in the REP. Working Groups will convene as frequently as is required and will report on progress to the Chairperson and the Regional Steering Committee.

The Department will be responsible for the oversight and coordination of the REPs at national level. A National Oversight Group (NOG), which all Chairpersons attend, will oversee implementation of the new REPs. This group will be chaired by Ministers of State Robert Troy and Damien English and will provide a fora for the Chairs to share good practice and identify potential areas for inter-regional co-operation.





# North-East Enterprise Agencies and Local Enterprise Offices

The Regional Enterprise Plans to 2024 are based on a collaborative approach to regional enterprise development. The Strategic Objectives and actions identified are set alongside and complement the core activities of the Enterprise Agencies and the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs). Each Agency have corporate strategies which include national level objectives as well as activities that support specific regional enterprise development potential. This Chapter provides an overview of those Agency activities and that of the LEOs in the North-East Region to 2024.



## 4.1 Enterprise Ireland: Focus to 2024

Enterprise Ireland is the government organisation responsible for the development and growth of Irish enterprises in world markets. Enterprise Ireland work in partnership with Irish enterprises to help them start, grow, innovate and achieve international growth. In this way, Enterprise Ireland support sustainable economic growth, regional development and secure employment.

Balanced regional development is central to Enterprise Ireland's remit. Enterprise Ireland manage a number of regional development funds on behalf of Government and work in collaboration with key stakeholders in all regions to deliver regional enterprise infrastructure, strengthen the enterprise base and deliver regional growth.

Strengthening regional enterprise development is a key focus in the new *Enterprise Ireland Strategy 2022-2024*, reflecting the varying needs and opportunities of enterprise across the different regions.



## Recent developments in the North-East Region

The North-East Region is home to 275 Enterprise Ireland supported companies, employing 18,606 (2021). Manufacturing activities dominate the Enterprise Ireland client base in the North-East, with sectoral strengths in engineering, construction products, food and beverages, and print and packaging.

Between 2018-2020, Enterprise Ireland invested €29m in client companies in the North-East Region supporting employment creation, innovation, competitiveness, and expansion.

The enterprise ecosystem in the North-East has and continues to be strengthened significantly through the €18.8m Enterprise Ireland funding awarded to infrastructural projects under the Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF) and Border Enterprise Development Fund (BEDF). 13 funded projects have strong themes of skills and capability development, supporting industry transition to new technologies and increasing the level of innovation. These initiatives will assist the enterprise base in the region become more resilient, competitive, and diversified.

A key programme delivered by Enterprise Ireland in 2020 was the Enterprise Centre Scheme, helping centres to support entrepreneurs, micro and small businesses, and a growing demand for remote working. €865,918 in development funding was allocated to 9 Enterprise Centres across the North-East. The funds will be directed to improve facilities, COVID-19 protection, increased investment in IT and Communications hardware and software, and allow the centres to deliver one-to-one supports for their clients.

Strong regional clustering is important to enhancing regional enterprise success. Under the Regional Technology Cluster Fund, Enterprise Ireland approved funding to DkIT for the development of a Connected Health and Wellbeing Industry Cluster in the North-East. This cluster will work closely with the REDF funded DConnect project.

## Enterprise Ireland objectives for the North-East Region to 2024

Enterprise Ireland's key objectives for the North-East to 2024 is to focus on strengthening regional enterprise development and enterprise infrastructure, including:

- The successful delivery of projects funded under the regional development funds including the REDF, the BEDF, the Regional Technology Clustering Fund and the Powering the Regions Enterprise Centre Scheme.
- Broadening and strengthening the North-East's exporting base by identifying and supporting first-time exporters, growing knowledge and capability, and supporting SMEs to scale-up their exporting strategies.
- Enterprise Ireland's sectoral and capability specialists will work closely with clients across the North-East Region to support their growth plans as well as supporting and assisting companies on transformation initiatives such as climate change, digitalisation and sustainability.
- Strengthen engagement with start-ups and entrepreneurs through New Frontiers, Competitive Start Funds, and targeted feasibility calls.
- Drive strong and effective regional clustering and network collaboration in the North-East particularly in Engineering, Connected Health, Agri-Food and Financial Services.
- Continue to strengthen linkages between Dundalk Institute of Technology and industry through the Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund, the Commercialisation Fund, Innovation Partnerships and Innovation Vouchers.
- Enhance the skills and competitiveness of clients across the North-East Region, working with industry and stakeholders. e.g. through the Regional Skills Fora.
- Support Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) to build a vibrant and resilient micro-enterprise sector in the North-East Region, maximising sustainable jobs.
- Capitalise on new ways of working through delivery of a remote working action plan and engagement with external stakeholders.



Enterprise Ireland is a member of the North-East Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee and looks forward to working closely with partners on the implementation of this Plan and continuing the strong spirit of collaboration and collective effort that is essential to delivering on the ambition for the North-East Region.



## 4.2 IDA Ireland: Focus to 2024

IDA Ireland's mission is to partner with multi-national companies (MNCs) to win and develop foreign direct investment, providing jobs for the economic and social benefit of Ireland. IDA Ireland works with key stakeholders both in the public and private sectors to deliver on this mandate. IDA Ireland partners closely with Enterprise Ireland across the regions on multiple initiatives, including under the Regional Enterprise Plans and in relation to the provision of property solutions to the indigenous base, where appropriate.

IDA's strategy Driving Recovery and Sustainable Growth 2021-2024 was developed in the context of the Government's National Economic Recovery Plan and positions IDA to respond to the emerging trends that are accelerating as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic. It identifies the opportunities for sustainable growth among IDA's established base of clients through a focus on transformative investments to increase the productivity of Irish operations and their workforce through RDI, digitisation, training, and actions on sustainability. Crucially it also maintains a focus on attracting the next generation of leading MNCs to locate in Ireland, further driving sustainable growth and maximising the impact of FDI in Ireland to 2024 and beyond. The Strategy has five pillars:

- 1 **Growth pillar** – win investment to support job creation and economic activity
- 2 **Transformation pillar** – partner with clients for future growth in Ireland
- 3 **Regions pillar** – win investment to advance regional development
- 4 **Sustainability pillar** – embrace an inclusive and green recovery; and
- 5 **Impact pillar** – maximise FDI's positive impact on local businesses and communities

Regional development is at the centre of IDA's strategy. Although FDI cannot be the sole contributor in addressing the challenges facing Ireland's regions – from Brexit to COVID-19, digital transformation to the climate transition, it can have a significant impact in propelling economic recovery and realising more balanced growth. IDA is targeting half of all investments (400) from 2021-2024 to regional locations and is maintaining the same high level of investment as targeted in IDA's previous strategy for each region of the country.

Under the Regions pillar of *Driving Recovery and Sustainable Growth*, IDA will:

- Win investment to propel recovery and support development in each region;
- Partner with existing regional clients to transform through innovation and upskilling;
- Develop clusters to support transformation, spill overs and linkages;
- Collaborate with clients and stakeholders to facilitate remote working opportunities; and
- Continue to roll-out IDA's regional property programme, including delivery of 19 Advanced Building Solutions (ABS) to regional locations over the course of the strategy.

The global competition for FDI is intense as countries compete for investment to support economic recovery. It is in this context – of greater competition for potentially fewer projects – that IDA wins investment for Ireland and engages with MNCs on the benefits of choosing regional locations for their investment projects. Key to IDA's success in the past and essential to success in the future is strategic collaboration with national and local stakeholders to ensure that each region has the necessary conditions in place to foster enterprise and innovation and attract investment and talent. The delivery of necessary infrastructure and property solutions, the availability of a skilled and future ready workforce, and an emphasis on quality of life and placemaking in each region are pre-requisites to winning continued investment from MNCs.



## Regional Economic Impact of FDI

IDA client companies directly employed almost 145,000 people outside of Dublin in 2020. Combined with indirect employment of 116,000, an estimated 260,000 jobs in the regions were supported by FDI in 2020. Clients in regional locations had an annual spend of €7.9bn on payroll, €2.7bn on Irish services and €2.2bn on Irish materials in 2019. They contributed a further €1.3bn on in-house R&D. These linkages support diverse, innovative, and vital local economies.

### Over the period 2021-2024 IDA Ireland will:

- Win 800 total investments to support job creation of 50,000 and economic activity
- Partner with clients for future growth through 170 RDI and 130 Training investments
- Win 400 investments to advance Regional Development
- Embrace a green recovery with 60 sustainability investments
- Target a 20 percent increase in client expenditure in Ireland to maximise the impact of FDI

Read more about IDA's 2001-2024 Strategy *Driving Recovery and Sustainable Growth* at [www.idaireland.com](http://www.idaireland.com).

## IDA Ireland objectives for the North-East Region to 2024

IDA Ireland Regional Targets are aligned to EU NUTS III regions which differ from some of the REP regions including the REP North-East Region of Louth, Cavan and Monaghan. The IDA strategy defines the 'Border region' as comprising the five counties of Cavan, Monaghan, Donegal, Leitrim, and Sligo, while Co. Louth forms part of the 'Mid-East region'. Under its Driving Recovery and Sustainable Growth, IDA is targeting 25 investments for the IDA Border region overall in the period 2021 to 2024, with 40 investments targeted for the IDA Mid-East region which includes Co. Louth.

There are 46 IDA client companies across Louth, Cavan, and Monaghan who directly employ 5,894 people in the region. IDA clients in the North-East are supported through the Agency's offices in Cavan and Dundalk.

The North-East Region is well positioned to continue to attract new FDI investment. There are vibrant and thriving clusters of well-established Engineering, Life Science, International Business Services, Financial Services, Consumer Goods and Manufacturing companies located in the North-East.

IDA client companies in the North-East include global leaders such as ABB, Becton Dickinson, National Pen, PayPal, Vesta, Prometric and YapStone, along with more recent investments from WuXi Biologics, Wasdell, and Almac. In the past year new jobs announcements have been made by Hiab/Cargotec with 100 jobs (Dundalk), IT Renew (Drogheda) with 40 jobs, Simply NUC (Dunleer) with 30 jobs, and TrustLabs (Dundalk) with 20 jobs.

IDA will work with stakeholders to build on the strengths and competencies of the region with a particular focus on opportunities arising in Life Sciences, Technology, and services sectors. To that end, novel clustering and networking initiatives in the North-East such as The FinTech Corridor, the M1 Corridor Network, Focused Engineering Network, the Advanced Manufacturing Training Centre of Excellence, dConnect, and the Connected Health and Wellbeing Cluster are important developments that add to the attractiveness of the region for sustaining and attracting new investment. IDA will also take advantage of emerging technologies and business models, including home and hub working.

Over the period to end 2024 IDA has targeted delivery of Advanced Building Solutions in Drogheda, Dundalk, and Cavan and an Advance Technology Building in Monaghan. In addition, two strategic landbanks in Co Louth in Drogheda and Dundalk have been acquired by the Agency to support IDA's long term strategic plan to position the wider region to compete for FDI investment. Further upgrade works are designed and progressing across IDA's portfolio of Business and Technology Parks in the region. IDA will continue to work with the three Local Authorities in the North-East on 'Placemaking', Infrastructure and property initiatives.



IDA Ireland is a member of the North-East Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee and looks forward to working closely with its partners on the implementation of the Plan and continuing the strong spirit of collaboration and collective effort that is essential to delivering on IDA's ambition for the region.



## Local Enterprise Office

### 4.3 Local Enterprise Office (LEOs): Focus to 2024

The Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) aim to promote entrepreneurship, foster business start-ups and develop existing micro and small businesses to drive job creation and to provide accessible high-quality supports for Business ideas.

The LEOs is the First Stop Shop for anyone seeking information and support on starting or growing a business in Ireland.

Entrepreneurs and Businesses are supported to:

- Increase exports
- Build resilience
- Increase productivity
- Prepare for the Low carbon economy
- Embrace the Digital economy
- Innovate
- Be managed by ambitious and capable individuals
- Fuel regional growth

### Recent developments in the North-East Region

Regions	Client Numbers 2021	Total Jobs 2021	Net Job Change 2021
North-East	594	3,275	215

Key areas of strength in the North-East Region include the food, construction and engineering sectors in Counties Cavan and Monaghan, and the technology, services and lifescience sectors in County Louth.

The LEOs in the North-East support a wide variety of business networks, adding to the enterprise infrastructure in the region, including:

- Food Networks
- Women in Business Networks
- North-East Focused Engineering Network
- North-East Lean Network
- The Fintech Corridor
- eCommerce Cluster

Workspace and Targeted Programmes supported by the North-East LEOs include:

- Bio-Connect project in Monaghan (MBio)
- The development of a new Cavan Digital Hub
- M:Tek workspace expansion in Monaghan
- Construction of a new FabLab at Creative Spark, Dundalk
- Development of co-working facilities in Dundalk and Drogheda town centres
- THRIVE Programme, targeted at female entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs in the North-East focused on STEM
- Connected Health and Wellbeing Innovation and Learning Hub for Business, to be located at the Regional Development Centre, DkIT. The project aims to further develop the research, innovation and entrepreneurial landscape within the Connected Health and Wellbeing space in North Leinster South Ulster which has the capacity to create major job opportunities and to drive economic growth in the region. The investment will also support a significant expansion to the Regional Development Centre (RDC), the institute's on-campus centre for business engagement, innovation and research.

The business support networks alongside the workspace and targeted programme supports outlined above, greatly enhance the enterprise infrastructure in the county. LEOs Louth, Cavan and Monaghan will continue to work in collaboration with relevant networks to provide support to encourage and build entrepreneurship and inform businesses of LEO supports available to them.



## Local Enterprise Office objectives for the North-East Region to 2024

The strategic priorities for LEOs Louth, Cavan and Monaghan to 2024 include:

1. Entrepreneurship – the North-East LEOs will aim to increase the number of business start-ups and demonstrate self-employment as a viable career option.
2. Competitiveness and Digitalisation – the LEOs will encourage and provide support to businesses to improve their competitiveness and highlighting to business owners the benefits of introducing digitalisation into their operations.
3. Green/Sustainability – the North-East LEOs will place a strong focus on sustainable projects meeting a ‘green’ agenda. Support will be provided to micro and small businesses to develop plans to introduce green techniques into their operations;
4. Innovation – the LEOs will encourage clients to adopt innovation into their business to help differentiate their product or service offering in the market;
5. Exporting/Internationalisation – facilitating client businesses to explore, identify and secure new export markets, including new eCommerce markets;
6. Enterprise Infrastructure, Clustering and Business Networks – the LEOs will encourage and facilitate the development of enterprise workspace and other enterprise infrastructure that supports business development, including profiling local authority incentives;
7. Developing Client Portfolios – to develop the client portfolios of the North-East LEOs, the 6 priorities outlined above will be delivered by:
  - › working closely with the existing portfolio to increase the number of businesses participating in targeted programmes,
  - › focusing and supporting clients with the potential to transfer to Enterprise Ireland’s portfolio,
  - › building management capability to enable business development, and to prioritise client businesses in receipt of direct grant assistance.

LEOs Louth, Cavan and Monaghan are members of the North-East Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee and look forward to working closely with our partners on the implementation of this Plan and continuing the strong spirit of collaboration and collective effort that is essential to delivering on our ambition for the North-East Region.



## 5

# Complementary Strategies and Initiatives



## 5.1 Fáilte Ireland: Focus to 2024

As the National Tourism Development Authority, Fáilte Ireland's role is to support the long-term sustainable growth in the economic, social, cultural and environmental contribution of tourism to Ireland. In addition to helping to develop destinations, Fáilte Ireland also provides consumer and buyer insights, mentoring, business supports and training programmes and buyer platforms to help tourism businesses innovate and grow. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Fáilte Ireland's mission over the next three years is to support the survival and drive the recovery of the sector in order to maximise the sustainable economic, environmental, cultural and social contribution of tourism to Ireland. It is also Fáilte Ireland's objective to spread the benefits of tourism more evenly around the country.

The North-East Region is served by two of Fáilte Ireland's regional tourism brands, Ireland's Hidden Heartlands and Ireland's Ancient East. Fáilte Ireland is currently preparing a suite of four Regional Tourism Strategies (one for each of the four Regional Tourism Brands), which will be published in early 2022. Through these regional brand development initiatives, Fáilte Ireland has worked closely with a wide range of industry and stakeholder partners towards the sustainable development of tourism in the North-East.

Since March 2020, with the onset of COVID-19, Fáilte Ireland has delivered significant business supports, by way of direct grant-aid, mentoring and training. Destination Recovery Task Forces were established to provide targeted supports to tourism businesses.

At the same time, Fáilte Ireland has remained focused on the medium-to-long term sustainable recovery and development of tourism in the region. For example, preparation of the Shannon Tourism Masterplan (led by Waterways Ireland and in association with the ten Local Authorities), and the preparation of Destination and Experience Development Plans (DEDPs) for the Boyne Valley, incorporating south Co. Louth (Ancient DEDP), a masterplan/vision document for Carlingford (Carlingford Vision '31 – Gateway to the Cooley Peninsula) in partnership with Louth County Council and a DEDP for tourism development in Co. Monaghan (in partnership with Monaghan County Council).

A very successful Website Improvement Programme was delivered in Ireland's Hidden Heartlands which helped to improve the digital 'shop window' for the region and improve the digital skills of 40 tourism businesses and deliver transformational business results, which included businesses in West Cavan.



## Fáilte Ireland's objectives for the North-East Region to 2024

The overall tourism objective for the North-East Region is to continually increase visitor numbers by raising awareness of the region as a visitor destination through sustained domestic marketing and sales promotion; and by substantiating the Ireland's Ancient East and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands brand propositions with exciting saleable visitor experiences that appeal to our target audiences. Fáilte Ireland will also work with Tourism Ireland to ensure awareness of all that's new in the North-East Region such that it informs their international marketing activity as well.

Priority areas of focus for Fáilte Ireland over the coming three years in the region include:

- Continuing to develop and raise awareness of the region as a visitor destination and of the range of things for visitors to see and do.
- Providing a range of business supports focused on meeting the particular needs of tourism businesses in the region in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic over the next three years.
- Implementation of the Shannon Tourism Masterplan in association with Waterways Ireland and the Local Authorities.
- Implementation of the Ancient DEDP and associated actions in partnership with Local Authorities and other government agencies, e.g., OPW.
- Implementation of the Carlingford Vision '31 – Gateway to the Cooley Peninsula plan and associated actions in partnership with Louth County Council and the appointed steering committee.
- Implementation of the DEDP in Co. Monaghan and associated actions in partnership with Monaghan County Council.
- Helping tourism providers to secure new business by introducing them to new markets and buyers and helping them to secure incremental sales. In particular, helping them to hone their saleable experiences to ensure they are picked up by domestic and international tour operators.
- Liaising with Local Authorities and other State Agencies such as Coillte, Waterways Ireland, the OPW and Bord na Móna in optimising the benefit of state assets and attractions for tourism, in particular through the development of Greenways, Blueways, and walking trails, which can be leveraged by tourism enterprises to create new jobs.
- Complete the development of a master plan for the Beara Breifne Way with a view to unlocking its potential to become a significant North-South strand in the lattice work of trails with the North-East Region.
- Ensuring that the potential of existing strategic tourism infrastructure, assets and facilities is fully explored and that they are fully leveraged by tourism businesses in order to create new enterprises and jobs, in particular the River Shannon, and Ulster Canal project among others.
- Establishing and assisting a range of effective commercially focused tourism business networks throughout the region and helping them to cross-promote and cross-sell one another.
- Aiding the digital transformation of the tourism industry in the region through a 'Digital that Delivers' initiative, aimed at providing improved online presence and bookability for tourism businesses, enhancing their connected distribution and improving their digital skills.
- Develop and execute a sustained strategy for Tourism Skills and Careers to both attract and retain staff within the tourism industry – the absence of staff represents an existential crisis as businesses capacity to trade is being restricted.
- Work with Louth County Council to develop an attraction of scale for Drogheda and support the implementation of a re-imagined Boyne Valley Drive in this Destination Town and its hinterland.
- Work with Monaghan County Council to develop a vision for an outdoor proposition of scale at Louth Muckno Estate, Castleblayney.
- Identify areas for collaboration on a cross-border basis to support all Ireland economy and national development plan priorities, along the border.

As a member of the Regional Enterprise Plan Steering Committee to the North-East Region Fáilte Ireland looks forward to continuing the strong spirit of collaboration and collective effort that is essential to delivering on its ambition for the North-East Region.





## 5.2 Regional Skills Forum: Focus to 2024

The *National Skills Strategy to 2025*, provides a framework for skills development that drives Ireland's growth both economically and societally. One of the key elements of the Strategy was the development of a National Skills Council (NSC) and 9 Regional Skills Fora (RSF). The Fora structure fosters engagement and collaboration between relevant Government Departments and agencies, the education (Further and Higher) and training system, and enterprise.

The RSF seek to bring people together at local and regional level, to identify, interrogate and validate skills needs, and to ensure that employers and enterprise are linked with the appropriate resources across the education and training system. The RSF provide an opportunity for employers and the education and training system to work together to meet the emerging skills needs of their regions. The RSF work to ensure the availability of skills and talent to realise the region's economic potential and address upskilling requirements.

The Regional Skills Forum leads a number of key activities in each region:

- acting at local and regional level, to drive forward the National Skills Strategy;
- assisting local enterprises identify skills needs to ensure that the region has the effective use of skills to support economic and social prosperity;
- linking (once skills needs have been identified) companies with regional education and training providers best suited to responding to identified skills need; and
- assisting with actions in the Regional Enterprise Plan where linkages to Education and Training Providers are required.

The North-East Regional Skills Forum (NERSF) is committed to working with the North-East Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024 to achieve the Strategic Objectives outlined for the region. The principal focus for the NERSF over the period is the continued engagement with industry to identify their skills, training and educational needs. Collaboration with our key training and education partners in the region to provide responsive, targeted and flexible solutions continues to be a core objective of the Forum. NERSF will also actively focus on the following areas:

### Clustering

Along with other cluster membership, the NERSF has recently joined the new Border Region Manufacturing Cluster. The NERSF will actively work with cluster members, stakeholders and businesses along the border, both North and South, to progress training solutions to advance new technologies, competitiveness, Industry 4.0, digitisation, Brexit, and the low carbon economy. This approach will ensure new programmes are identified and developed to ensure sustainable, progressive and dynamic businesses.

### Remote Working

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, remote working has changed the landscape of work in Ireland. The NERSF will continue to work with various stakeholders on the Regional Skills Forum to create awareness, promote the opportunities for remote working in our region and highlight the benefits of remote working to employers and the facilities available in our region.

### Apprenticeships

The NERSF recently adopted a key goal to increase its Apprenticeship promotion, raise the awareness of Apprenticeship offerings to industry in the North-East through a collaborative approach with relevant partners.

### Climate and Low Carbon Economy Awareness

The DigiEco programme aims to create a greater awareness of energy and resource efficiencies, improve the digital green skills of employees, increase awareness on environmental practices that can contribute towards a greener workplace, and raise awareness of Climate Change. The programme, an initiative of Regional Skills Fora nationally, is delivered in collaboration between local education and training providers and industry in each region including the North-East.

### Digitalisation and Low ICT Skills

The Explore programme continues to be a key focus to transition our economy and people to a digital future. The programme assists those with low level digital literacy skills in various sectors, while improving their well-being, productivity and their progression to lifelong learning.

### Skills Planning

Engagement with businesses in the North-East on skills planning and responses continues to be a core activity for the NERSF across all sectors. There is a key focus at present on those impacted most by the COVID-19 pandemic – Manufacturing, Hospitality and Logistics and Transport.





Tionól Reigiúnach Oirthir agus Lár-Tíre  
Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly



**Northern & Western  
Regional Assembly**

### 5.3 The Regional Assembly

The North-East Region is covered by both the [Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly \(EMRA\)](#) and [Northern and Western Regional Assembly \(NWRA\)](#).

#### Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

One of the principal functions of the Assembly is the delivery of a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), which sets out the strategic regional development framework for the region. The primary aim of the RSES is to implement [Project Ireland 2040, the National Planning Framework \(NPF\)](#), at the regional tier of Government and to support NPF policy for achieving balanced regional development.

The region's priorities for investment are identified in the RSES and Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASPs) and set a 12-year strategic planning and economic development framework for future economic, spatial, and social development for the region in line with vision and objectives for national change in the NPF and the National Development Plan (NDP).

The Regional Assembly's RSES also aims to develop a sustainable, competitive, inclusive and resilient regional economy. Key to delivering this vision is ensuring the region develops a strong and diverse economic base and with immediate challenges such as COVID-19, Brexit, Just Transition and potential vulnerabilities for Ireland's enterprise base.

Alignment of the economic principles of the RSES and Regional Enterprise Plan (REP) is critical to underpin the achievement of national strategic outcomes at the regional and local level and give regional support for the implementation of actions identified through the REP. This is also of key relevance for EU cohesion funding in Ireland for the period 2021-2027 and the development of priorities under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) 2021-2027 Programme. The Regional Assembly has an enhanced role in the management of this programme which will have a focus on smart cities and a smart region, lower carbon emissions, climate resilience and urban regeneration, themes that support priorities and actions under the REP.



### 5.4 Local Authorities – Local Economic and Community Plans

Local Authorities are the key agents of government responsible for local and community development at local level. The Local Government Reform Act 2014 strengthened the role of Local Authorities towards economic, social and community development.

The Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs), as provided for in the Local Government Reform Act 2014, set out, for a six-year period, the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic development and the local and community development of the relevant local authority area, both by itself directly and in partnership with other economic and community development stakeholders.

The Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) has statutory responsibility for the LECPs overall and additional responsibility for the Local Community Development Committees who are charged with the development and the delivery of the Community elements of the LECP. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) have statutory responsibility for the Economic elements of the LECP. The local authorities are responsible for the development and implementation of the economic elements of the LECP through the relevant Strategic Policy Committee.

The purpose of the community elements of the LECP is to promote local and community development and to ensure the coordination of relevant public funded local and community development actions in a way that reduces duplication, targets available resources where they are most needed and maximises benefits for communities. The focus of the community elements of the LECP should be on the social and economic issues that have relevance and can be addressed at a community level.

The development of the economic elements of the LECP is part of the wider role of economic development in local government. Revised guidelines on the development of LECPs to assist with the development of local area plans were published in November 2021.

As the framework for the economic and community development of the local authority area, the LECP is also the primary mechanism at local level to bring forward relevant actions arising from national and regional strategies and policies that have a local remit.



# Appendices



## Appendix 1: Membership of the Regional Steering Committee

<b>Chair Regional Enterprise Plan:</b>
Richard Hanlon, EMEA Chief Commercial Officer Aon Cyber Solutions
<b>Programme Manager:</b>
Caroline Brady
<b>Membership of the Committee:</b>
Private Sector Representatives
Louth County Council
Cavan County Council
Monaghan County Council
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Department of Rural and Community Development
Department of Environment, Climate and Communications
Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection
IDA Ireland
Enterprise Ireland
Louth Local Enterprise Office
Monaghan Local Enterprise Office
Cavan Local Enterprise Office
Dundalk Institute of Technology
North-East Regional Skills Forum
Cavan and Monaghan ETB
Louth and Meath ETB
Northern and Western Regional Assembly
Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly
InterTradeIreland
Teagasc
Fáilte Ireland
Waterways Ireland
SEUPB
Ibec
Eastern and Midland Climate Action Regional Office (CARO)



## Appendix 2: North-East Regional Statistical Snapshot

Constituent counties	Cavan, Louth, Monaghan			
North-East Population	266,446 <sup>1</sup>			
Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment	196,700 <sup>2</sup>			
ILO Participation Rate	62% <sup>3</sup>			
ILO Unemployment Rate	3.7% <sup>4</sup>			
Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment (Male)	107,400 <sup>5</sup>			
Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment (Female)	89,300 <sup>6</sup>			
Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment from Q1 2015 <sup>7</sup> – Q3 2021	Q1 2015	Q3 2021		
	169,400	196,700		
Actual Increase in Employment between from Q1 2015 – Q3 2021	27,300			
Employment Growth Rate between Q1 2015 – Q3 2021	16.1%			
Persons on Live Register in the Border at 01/12/2021	16,041 <sup>8</sup>			
Persons in receipt of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment at 07/12/2021 in the North-East	4,322 <sup>9</sup>			
Irish-owned Companies – Total Employment in the Border <sup>10</sup> , 2015-2020 <sup>11</sup>		2015	2020	Change between 2015-2020
	Jobs:	15,363	18,043	+2,680
Foreign-owned Companies – Total Employment in the Border, 2015-2020 <sup>12</sup>		2015	2020	Change between 2015-2020
	Jobs:	9,426	11,221	+1,795

1. 2016 CSO Census
2. Q3 2021 CSO Labour Force Survey (Border region)
3. Q3 2021 CSO Labour Force Survey (Border region)
4. Q3 2021 CSO Labour Force Survey (Border region)
5. Q3 2021 CSO Labour Force Survey (Border region)
6. Q3 2021 CSO Labour Force Survey (Border region)
7. Launch of the Regional Action Plan for Jobs
8. CSO Live Register
9. <https://www.gov.ie>
10. Border region – Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Louth, Cavan, Monaghan
11. Annual Employment Survey 2020
12. Annual Employment Survey 2020



## Appendix 3: Other State Agencies and Bodies Supporting Enterprise Development

### Dundalk Institute of Technology (DKIT)

Dundalk Institute of Technology (DKIT) is strategically positioned mid-way along the Dublin Belfast Corridor, on the border with Northern Ireland and serves as a key educational facility for the North-East Region.

As part of its current [Strategic Plan to 2022](#), DKIT seeks to position itself within the Irish Higher Education landscape as a Technological University thereby ensuring that families, employers, enterprise and communities have access to university education within their region. Such a designation would be critical in attracting and retaining talent, industry partners, innovative start-ups and investment, and support existing and emerging sectors and clusters across the North-East.

DKIT is at the forefront of delivering excellence in higher education across teaching and learning, research and innovation and continues to adapt and innovate to meet the ever-changing and ever-challenging talent pipeline requirements. The Institute's research and innovation agenda in both existing and emerging sectors is driven by various research teams which span the Institute's four academic schools. The most recent developments in terms of a new digital health innovation hub, dConnect, the recently launched Connected Health and Wellbeing Cluster as well as the designation of CREDIT as one of 16 national Enterprise Ireland Technology Gateways, which focuses on promoting energy optimisation and efficiency, highlights DKIT's diverse, forward looking and industry facing ambition.

### Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor

In March 2021 the 8 Local Authorities from either side of the border in conjunction with DCU and University of Ulster came together to launch the [Dublin Belfast Corridor](#). This collaborative initiative sees the coming together of key stakeholders to work collectively to find ways of realising the potential benefits of further development of the Corridor.

The economic corridor is home to a growing number of multinational and indigenous companies many of which are centred around Dundalk and Drogheda. Geographic proximity to the greater Dublin area, strong road and rail links and proximity to Dublin and Belfast airports ideally position the corridor to capitalise on such economic and enterprise enablers.

A Partnership Steering Group in conjunction with a working group of local government and university staff have and will continue to develop a series of cooperative initiatives and projects which through their development and implementation will help realise the potential of the Economic Corridor. Their findings culminated in the publication of a report: *The Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor: Current Profile, Potential for Recovery and Opportunities for Cooperation* which was launched as part of the overall initiative.

### Bord Bia

Bord Bia, the Irish Food Board, is responsible for the development of new markets and the promotion of Irish food, drink and horticulture, reporting to the Department of Food, Agriculture, and the Marine. The agency's mandate covers trade development, promotion, quality programmes, information provision and marketing support especially for export markets. Bord Bia operates in thirteen overseas locations. Its Origin Green programme is the only sustainability programme in the world that operates on a national scale, uniting government, the private sector and food producers.



## InterTradelreland

InterTradelreland has been helping small businesses in Ireland and Northern Ireland explore new cross-border markets, develop new products, processes and services and become investor ready for over two decades. Based in Newry, their services include supports for sales growth and innovation, plus funding and business insights for SMEs across the island who are looking to grow their business.

Through their dedicated Brexit-advisory service they also help companies to manage the new trading relationship between Britain and the EU, via a range of supports and services. They have also introduced specific COVID-19 supports focused around funding and recovery. As a cross-border bodies, InterTradelreland is funded by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the Department for the Economy (DFE) in Northern Ireland.

## Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI)

The purpose of the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) is to play a leading role in transforming Ireland into a society based on sustainable energy structures, technologies and practices. SEAI provides a range of programmes and services to homes, businesses, schools and communities. It is a key actor in providing research and advice to Government on sustainable energy policy, including renewables and energy efficiency.

## Údarás na Gaeltachta

The overall objective of Údarás na Gaeltachta is to ensure that Irish remains the main communal language of the Gaeltacht and is passed on to future generations.

They endeavour to achieve that objective by funding and fostering a wide range of enterprise development and job creation initiatives and by supporting strategic language, cultural and community-based activities.

They can offer qualifying businesses and companies from various sectors a range of incentives and supports to start up, develop, expand or locate in a Gaeltacht region. Hundreds of companies have established businesses in the Gaeltacht with our help.

## Waterways Ireland

Waterways Ireland is one of six North-South Implementation Bodies established under the British-Irish Agreement in 1999. It has responsibility for the management, maintenance, development, promotion and restoration of inland navigable waterways, principally for recreational purposes. The waterways under the remit of the Body are the Shannon-erne Waterway, the Shannon, the Erne Navigation, the Barrow Navigation, the Grand Canal, the Lower Bann, and the Royal Canal.



## Appendix 4: Our Rural Future – Rural Development Policy 2021 – 2025

### Introduction

*Our Rural Future-Rural Development Policy 2021-2025* is the most ambitious and transformational policy for rural development in Ireland for decades.

The vision of the policy is for a thriving rural Ireland which is integral to our national economic, social, cultural and environmental wellbeing and development, which is built on the interdependence of urban and rural areas, and which recognises the centrality of people, the importance of vibrant and lived-in rural places, and the potential to create quality jobs and sustain our shared environment.

The policy contains more than 150 commitments for delivery across the whole-of-Government for both short-term recovery and longer-term development. It has a five-year timeframe, with updates on delivery provided by a series of Progress Reports. Annual work programmes allow for the review and revision of priorities contained in the measures for delivery.

### Policy Objectives

The policy aims to bring about improved opportunities and a better quality of life for people who live and work in rural areas, through balanced regional development, benefitting individuals, families, communities and businesses.

We want to see more people living and working in rural Ireland, rural towns as vibrant hubs for commercial and social activity, reduced regional income disparities, improved access to public services such as transport links, rural Ireland benefitting from the transition to a more sustainable future and rural communities – especially young people – having an active role in shaping their future.

### Funding streams

The level of activity across Government in recent months highlights delivery of the Policy's ambition. The Government's commitment to rural Ireland is also evidenced in the unprecedented capital investment of €850m provided under the revised National Development Plan for rural development projects to 2025, across a range of areas such as remote working facilities, rural regeneration projects and outdoor amenities. This includes huge levels of support for important projects under the Department of Rural and Community Development's (DRCD) Rural Development Investment Programme.

### DRCD supports include:

- Revitalisation of rural town centres through the €1bn Rural Regeneration and Development Fund.
- Investment of €220m through the LEADER Programme.
- Provision of funding for other programmes such as the Small-Scale Rural Projects (CLÁR), Town and Village Renewal, Local Improvement Scheme for non-public roads, Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme and Connected Hubs Fund.



## Appendix 5: Shared Island Initiative

### Opportunities from the Shared Island Initiative

There is significant potential to grow the all-island economy, driving growth and job creation North and South. This will make a vital contribution to recovery, particularly in border areas which have been acutely impacted by the pandemic and by Brexit.

As part of the Shared Island initiative, the Government will invest to enhance the all-economy, working with the Executive in Northern Ireland and with the British Government. In the revised National Development Plan, the Government will set out an enhanced level of ambition for investment to build a more connected, prosperous and sustainable island. Through the Shared Island Fund, €500m is provided out to 2025, ring-fenced for investment in North/South projects – including in research and innovation, education and training, sustainable transport and addressing the challenges of the Border regions – to take up the opportunities of our shared island.

The Government will also continue to fully support the work of InterTradeIreland, in working with enterprises to grow trade across the island, dealing with the impacts of Brexit and pandemic, and developing sectors with most potential for the island, including in bioeconomy, advanced manufacturing, health and life sciences and the green economy.

The PEACE PLUS programme – funded by the European Union and UK Government, together with the Irish Government and Northern Ireland Executive – will also provide significant support for economic regeneration and transition in Northern Ireland and the six Southern border counties, including to enhance SME competitiveness and research and innovation capacity, and fund skills development as well as smart towns and villages.

### North-East Regional Enterprise Plan

Operating on a cross-border basis is an important part of growth strategy and of supply chains for enterprises, right across the North-East Region.

Business look to the wider cross-border region for their customer base, for employees and for new partnerships and innovation opportunities.

This Regional Enterprise Plan takes full account of the extent of cross-border economic integration in the North-East Region, and of the opportunities at business and sector levels of working with a cross-border focus.

In recent years, the Government's Regional Enterprise Development Fund and Border Enterprise Development Fund have made investments to support enterprise opportunities with a cross-border dimension. This cross-border focus will be continued and expanded to promote and facilitate enterprise development on a cross-border basis including to enhance clustering, innovation diffusion and collaboration.

There is also important cross-border collaboration on skills and training to meet the needs of business in the North-East Region, which will be fully supported and expanded.



## Appendix 6: Regional Enterprise Development Funding

### Regional Enterprise Development Fund, Border Enterprise Development Fund and Regional Enterprise Transition Scheme

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment's Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF), Border Enterprise Development Fund (BEDF) and Regional Enterprise Transition Scheme (RETS) supports the development and implementation of collaborative and innovative projects that can enable and sustain enterprise and employment growth in the regions. Under the RETS, BEDF and the three calls of the REDF to date, the North-East has secured over €20.5m in funding for 16 enterprise projects.

#### Projects approved for North-East Region

Projects approved award	County	Project description
Monaghan County Enterprise Board	Monaghan	Development of a regional Food Centre of Excellence – creating collaborations in the food sector supporting Food Product Development
Leitrim County Enterprise Fund	Leitrim, Cavan, Longford	3 Digital innovation Hubs including centre in Cavan town.
Focused Engineering Network DAC	Monaghan, Cavan, Louth	North-East Engineering Cluster
Bioconnect Innovation Centre CLG	Monaghan, Cavan	Office, Lab and Biotechnology Research Capabilities
DkIT Connect Designated Activity Company	Louth	Research and Innovation institute of excellence in Connected Health and Wellbeing
Monaghan County Enterprise Fund	Monaghan	A digital hub with co-working space and training/mentoring provision to support SMEs
Creative Spark CLG	Louth	Workspace and training facilities for start-ups and established enterprises
Creative Spark CLG	Louth	Start-up and business support in a town-centre co-working space in Dundalk
Dundalk Institute of Technology	Louth	The ATHENA STEM Project to build a critical mass of female STEM entrepreneurs and business managers
Louth County Council	Louth	Drogheda Digital Innovation Hub (DDIH) for high-potential tech projects seeking to start and grow.
Irish Wood and Furniture Manufacturing Network CLG	Monaghan	National network to initiate, promote and nurture collaboration across the wood, furniture and joinery manufacturing sector.
National Data Platform Designated Activity Company	Monaghan	Digital Innovation Hub for cluster activity in Agrifood and engineering using Artificial Intelligence, Coding, Machine Learning and Edge Computing.
Cavan Monaghan Education and Training Board	Cavan	Further Education Training Centre for training and development of Supply Chain, Logistics and Procurement sectors.
Louth Meath Education and Training Board	Louth	Advanced manufacturing Training Centre. Address the skills needs in the high value manufacturing and technology sectors, provide modular and flexible training courses.
Creative Spark CLG	Louth	Establishment of a FabLab digital fabrication enterprise and co-working initiative, providing access to a suite of digital fabrication hardware and software co-located with a thriving enterprise centre.
<b>Total North-East REDF, BEDF and RETS Funding</b>		<b>€20,558,011</b>



## Appendix 7: Methodology

The process to develop these Regional Enterprise Plans involved the following steps:

<b>January 2021</b>	A round of initial consultations with key stakeholders was undertaken by the Department including the Chairpersons of the Regional Steering Committees, Agency representatives, Programme Managers, and other key organisations represented on the Regional Steering Committees. The bilateral discussions focused on what worked/didn't work well over the period of the outgoing Regional Enterprise Plans.
<b>February-March 2021</b>	In February 2021 the Tánaiste wrote to the Chairpersons of the Regional Steering Committees formally setting out the Department's intention to develop new Plans to 2024.
<b>February-May 2021</b>	The Tánaiste and Ministers of State formally launched the commencement of the process to develop Regional Enterprise Plans to 2024 with meetings of the nine Regional Steering Committees in virtual sessions around the country. Each Committee established a Project Delivery Team for the process, led by the Steering Committee chairperson.
<b>March-May 2021</b>	Each of the Project Delivery Teams met to review the outgoing Regional Plans and considered future thematic areas of focus and agreed an approach for a formal stakeholder consultation with the wider Steering Committee members and other relevant stakeholders.
<b>May-August 2021</b>	An online facilitated Stakeholder Consultation event was held in eight of the nine regions; with a series of bilateral stakeholder engagements and focus group discussions undertaken in the South-East Region. Participants considered topics including: enterprise resilience, smart specialisation, placemaking, transition-climate, digitalisation.
<b>July-October 2021</b>	The Project Delivery Teams re-grouped to consider the consultation outcomes and further develop emerging themes into Strategic Objectives and to identify suitable actions for delivery in the period to 2024
<b>November-December 2021</b>	The Draft Final Regional Enterprise Plans were signed off by the Project Delivery Teams and Steering Committees.
<b>February 2022</b>	Memo for Government considered by Cabinet and noted the Department's intention to publish the nine Regional Enterprise Plans.



**An Roinn Fiontar, Trádála agus Fostaíochta**

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