

JBC all-island electricity policy statement emphasises need for energy competitiveness

The JBC has developed an all-island electricity policy statement which places particular emphasis on energy competitiveness as a key long-term priority for the all-island economy. This will require as priorities, coordinating the development of our transmission networks on an all-island basis; delivering renewable energy capacities and further enhancement of the grid including inter-connection with the UK and other regional markets.

Energy and in particular sustainable electricity supply has become a leading policy area for the business community. Global pressures associated with fuel security, climate change abatement, liberalisation and prices are driving significant change in the way electricity is supplied and consumed.

The EU institutions approved a package of legally binding measures aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions on the 17 December 2008. Under the targets, the Republic of Ireland must reduce carbon emissions by 20 per cent based on 2005 levels and increase the penetration of renewables in energy consumption to 16 per cent by 2020. For the UK, these targets are -16 per cent and 15 per cent respectively.

Meeting these challenging targets requires clear strategic vision delivered through

economically efficient market mechanisms. With the welcome completion of the Single Electricity Market (SEM) on 1 November 2007, the future of electricity policies North and South are inextricably linked. Policy and regulation must be complimentary with an all-island energy strategy pursued. The strategy must also incorporate a wider electricity market and infrastructure vision integrating the all-island market with a wider regionalised EU market including the UK and France.

The JBC believes that a significant gap exists between political aspirations and the delivery of these targets on the island of Ireland. The JBC believe that urgent action is required by policy makers to remove log-jams to the delivery of targets, while at the same time achieving and maintaining competitiveness. These actions include:

1. Ensure the island's competitiveness is enhanced, while decarbonising its economies
2. Develop the grid on an all-island basis
3. Ensure planning alignment and effectiveness
4. Create market certainty for investors and consumers
5. Establish a medium and long-term strategy and associated road-map for the evolution of the island's energy market
6. Target initiatives that decarbonise Ireland's economy

The all-island electricity policy statement will be sent to the relevant government departments and ministers and used as a basis for engaging with policy makers.

A copy of the JBC electricity policy statement is available on the JBC website at www.jointbusinesscouncil.com

News

JBC targets N16-A3 Enniskillen corridor as a development priority

The JBC made a presentation to IBEC's North West Regional Executive in December 2008, at which it was agreed to target the cross-border N16-A4 Enniskillen corridor as a development priority. A number of prominent companies from the region have committed to supporting this lobby effort.

The JBC presentation was based on a joint consultancy study by Sligo County Council and Fermanagh District Council which was published in 2008 and which looked at prospects for upgrading the route from a cost benefit and economic perspective. The IBEC group recently had a meeting with senior officials and elected

representatives from Sligo County Council.

JBC and IBEC North West Region are currently arranging a cross border workshop which will deal with the status of cross border roads in the North West. This event will take place following the local elections.

North Channel Partnership event to review achievements and debate future prospects



Pictured with European Commissioner for Regional Policy, Danuta Hubner were representatives from Dumfries and Galloway Council, CBI Brussels and Reg McCabe and Tom Noonan of IBEC-CBI Joint Business Council.



The North Channel Partnership is a grouping of key public and private sector interests seeking to sustain and develop ferry services between Scotland and Northern Ireland. The Partnership was established in 1999 and has been successful in its lobbying activity in Scotland, Ireland and Europe for investment in landward transport links to the ferry ports of Stranraer, Cairnryan, Belfast and Larne. Partnership events have brought government ministers together in recent years, as was witnessed at the opening of the P&O Irish Sea Ferry Terminal in Cairnryan and the Stena line ferry terminal in Belfast.

To mark the tenth anniversary in November of the first "Partners for Progress" conference

which was held in Stranraer, the next conference is to take place in Larne, Co Down in November 2009. This major transport event will provide an opportunity for the partners and stakeholders to review achievements up to now and to debate future prospects for freight and passenger facilities and infrastructure investment on the corridor.

The timing of the event is particularly significant in view of the coincidence with the current review of the European TENS programme which will be drawing to a conclusion at that time. It will also provide an opportunity to influence the incoming college of Commissioners and the newly appointed transport commissioner and his team.

Contact Information: IBEC-CBI Joint Business Council Executive:

Chief Executive:	Reg McCabe	reg.mccabe@ibec.ie
Project Manager:	Paula O'Dwyer	paula.odwyer@ibec.ie
Regional Administrator:	Mavis Black	mavis.black@cbi.org.uk
Regional Administrator:	Ann Hare	ann.hare@ibec.ie

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News



North/South business leaders meet to discuss coordinated action on education

On 22 April 2009, business leaders from North and South met senior officials from the two education departments at an IBEC-CBI Joint Business Council forum in Queens University Belfast and called for coordinated action on education to boost the all-island economy.

Education is one of the designated co-operation areas between the two governments under the North South Ministerial Council.

Speaking at the forum CBI Northern Ireland chairman Brian Ambrose said that it is very important that business on the island contributes in a constructive way to the development of a business and enterprise-friendly curriculum. In parallel, the enterprise sector can assist educationalists by supporting the rollout of leading edge ICT technologies.

"In this way we can achieve the twin aims of improving the delivery of a more stimulating education 'product' while at the same time promoting business-education links", he said.

The forum also addressed the need for a competitive international benchmarking exercise for the key business sectors North and South.



Pictured at the JBC Plenary meeting on 22 April 2009 were Brian Ambrose, Chairman, CBI Northern Ireland, Alastair Hamilton, Chief Executive, Invest Northern Ireland and Reg McCabe, JBC Chief Executive

Brian Ambrose said "there is scope for the Joint Business Council to play a lead role in an important dialogue that needs to take place with governments, unions and other stakeholders around positioning the two economies for the upturn that is expected to emerge around 2011 or so".

Both economies of Ireland and Northern Ireland are facing very significant challenges and we need to share our abilities and experiences as we seek to position this island as a global leader and successful knowledge economy.

This is all the more important now due to the changed sterling-euro relationship which has particular resonances on this island. If we indeed have a new exchange rate paradigm we can reasonably ask what impacts, in terms of competitiveness and employment, are likely to flow from a parity or near-parity arrangement between the two currency zones.

There are a range of issues including energy, infrastructure, innovation, public sector reform, climate change and energy security, education and skills that are fundamental to our economic wellbeing and the North-South and all-island dimensions are fundamental to our future policies.



New JBC Executive

The JBC would like to welcome Julie Donnelly as the new executive to be based in CBI Northern Ireland. Julie is an Economist with a Masters in Marketing. She has 15 years expertise in economic development. Previously she lectured in economics and enterprise, was an economic and business consultant, worked with Belfast City Council on the development and regeneration of the city. She also worked with the United States Council on Competitiveness in Washington DC as International Policy Director and with InterTradeIreland - the all-island trade and business development body.



JBC welcomes Interreg IVA funding approval

The Interreg IVA JBC work programme was formally approved with a letter of offer from the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) on 7 April 2009.

Receipt of the letter of offer followed a lengthy period of negotiations and discussion involving SEUPB and the two sponsor departments of Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) and Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) since

funding was originally approved by the SEUPB Steering Committee.

The funding covers JBC expenditure over the period 1 January 2007 to 31 December 2010 and is to a maximum value of €1.7 million.

The previous arrangement whereby the East Border Region cross border group provides technical support for the processing of JBC claims will be maintained.

The JBC has been working with the Dissolving Boundaries' Programme team with a view to putting in place a cross-border schools' project on a pilot basis that focuses on the theme of enterprise.



Pictured at the JBC Plenary on 22 April 2009 were Roger Austin and Angela Rickard, Dissolving Boundaries and Paula O'Dwyer, JBC

Promoting cross-border enterprise in schools: a pilot project

The Dissolving Boundaries Programme is funded jointly by the Department of Education and Science, Dublin and the Department of Education in Northern Ireland and managed by the School of Education, University of Ulster and the Education Department, NUI Maynooth. Schools participating in the programme are granted direct funding on the successful completion of project work. This includes an administration grant, cost of equipment and line rental (where appropriate) and a grant for a face-to-face meeting to enhance the pupils' cross-cultural experience.

JBC - Dissolving Boundaries proposed enterprise project

The overall aim of the JBC-Dissolving Boundaries proposal is to develop pupils' enterprise skills. In particular it will promote the use of classroom based ICT working in collaboration with another school. This will lead to the development of interpersonal, intercultural and communicative capabilities among pupils as well as their sense of the importance of personal initiative, research and presentation skills. It will contribute to the professional development of teachers and provide a forum for the exchange of ideas

between schools on both sides of the border. Teachers involved will present the outcomes of their work to the following year's cohort.

The JBC has also consulted with other key education stakeholders, including the two education departments on broader curriculum and education policy issues connected with the JBC proposal. Discussions with the second level schools support service (SLSS) and the curriculum support co-ordinators for the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) have been facilitated by Blackrock Education Centre (BEC) in Dublin. The two education departments endorsed the proposed initiative at the JBC Plenary meeting on 22 April 2009 in Queen's University Belfast.

From the outset the Dissolving Boundaries programme has emphasised the necessity to embed technology within teachers' existing curricular work. Hence, joint planning on the part of the participating teachers has been a critical element in successful partnerships. Teachers are invited to a one-day residential planning conference held in September where the project aims are outlined, partnerships are established

and time is set aside for joint planning of curricular objectives by the teachers.

To ensure that this initiative reaches the widest possible cross-section of students, we propose to develop 'enterprise' activities with students in late primary and early post primary age range, special schools as well as students at upper post primary level where enterprise is a central component of the curriculum for the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) offered in 150 schools in the Republic of Ireland. The project could therefore include students taking LCVP link modules starting in fifth year (2009) who would be matched with the Lower Sixth in Northern Ireland or those doing 'Young Enterprise'.

The project initiative provides considerable scope also for pupils in special schools to engage with the concept of enterprise.

The structure and overall flow of work through the school year would follow the existing Dissolving Boundaries pattern: namely that initial online social interaction among pupils would be followed by one or more curricular projects being carried out. In

the case of the JBC initiative pupils' initial contact could include discussion of their understanding of the theme of enterprise and an exploration of possible enterprise ideas or research projects that they could pursue. The pupils would have to collaboratively plan and carry out a project the outputs of which would have to include a combination of a number of different multi-media applications (web-page, blog, video, podcasts, etc).

One possible area of focus would be around the reasons why some businesses succeed while others fail. The results of the work would be documented in a multi-media way. Other areas of focus might include an innovative collaborative enterprise involving the partners in both schools, profiling a

business or community enterprise or voluntary organisation in their local area, analysis and discussion of an economic or social issue concerning their local area, a profile of an entrepreneur from their local area.

Timeline and partnership arrangement

The project will run for a two year period beginning in September 2009, involving 20 schools in ten partnerships and including one Northern Irish and one Republic of Ireland school in each partnership.

Evaluation

An essential element of the initiative is the inclusion of an internal evaluation to be carried out by the two universities. The evaluation would focus on teachers' and

pupils' perceptions of the quality of the learning and collaborative experience and the scope for generalising innovative approaches to assessment of pupil learning. The quality and sustainability of the teacher professional development model would also be examined.

An interim report will be published in September 2010 with a final report being submitted to the JBC and the two Departments in September 2011.

Funding

The JBC is currently seeking private sector funding for the initiative. In return, the benefit to the sponsor company is the opportunity to be closely linked with a progressive cross border education initiative.

Joint Business Council responds to European Commission Green Paper trans-European transport network policy (TEN-T): A policy review

The JBC responded to the European Commission consultation on the policy review of the trans-European transport network (TEN-T). The objective is to shape the future network and to ensure timely completion.

JBC welcomes the policy review and reiterates, on behalf of the enterprise sector, that an efficient, integrated and interoperable transport system is of utmost importance to promote the functioning of a competitive EU market. This is particularly the case for the more peripheral open economies such as Ireland that depend heavily on trade and export-led growth.

The green paper acknowledges that many important priority projects have yet to be completed. In addition, the indications for time to completion presented by the member states are in many cases overoptimistic.

This is well illustrated in the case of PPP 13 road and shipping corridor (Ireland-UK-Benelux). JBC recognises that securing improvements to the PP 13 corridor is of vital importance from a trade and economic development perspective. A large proportion of the higher value trade (particularly door-to-door, just in time) between the island of Ireland and Europe (approximately 1.5 million tonnes of imports and a little lower volume for exports) passes overland by lorry through Britain, mainly down to the ports of south-

east England and the Channel Tunnel. This relies on the quality and usage cost of the infrastructure in Britain.

A lack of reliable road links to the ports of Pembroke and Fishguard (A477/A40), Heysham (construct Lancaster by-pass) and Stranraer / Cairnryan (A75/A77) have been identified. This is a serious issue facing hauliers and those ports on the island of Ireland which are geographically tied to these routes.

A report from the European Commission (May 2008) provides a useful status report which, with reference to PP 13, suggests that of the 1,690 km earmarked for upgrade, only 18% has been completed. As the project has been on the priority list since 1996, this suggests that upgrades are proceeding at a rate of only 28 km per year.

This axis upgrade is of considerable strategic importance given its objective to improve road transport between Cork, Dublin and Belfast, complementing the development of Ireland's main east-coast rail line (PP9). It will also provide upgraded links to mainland Europe via ferry links to Scotland and Wales,

the A14 and M6 roads across England, and the North Sea ferry ports of Felixstowe and Harwich. The route includes both the construction of new roads, mainly in Ireland, and the upgrading of existing roads to motorway, expressway, dual-carriageway and high-quality single-carriageway standards, 'appropriate to traffic density'.

In the longer term, if the quality of access continues to deteriorate due to the growth of local congestion, this could seriously hamper the ability of the corresponding port, North or South to compete with others on the island of Ireland. Any erosion of competition between ports on the island of Ireland is unlikely to be in the public interest.

Co-operation with the authorities in England, Wales and Scotland is required to ensure that these improvements are prioritised. This issue could also be taken forward by the Governments within the structure of the British-Irish Council.

A copy of the JBC submission is available on the JBC website at www.jointbusinesscouncil.com

JBC responds to the European Commission consultation on Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion

The JBC recently made a submission in response to the European Commission Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion, adopted in October 2008.

The consultation was aimed at achieving a better and shared understanding of the concept of territorial cohesion and its implications for the future of the EU's regional policy. The consultation was referred to by Regional Affairs Commissioner Danuta Hübner at her meeting with JBC in July 2008.

The debate on territorial cohesion began in the mid-1990s and aims to bring a territorial dimension to EU Cohesion Policy and wider EU policies. It suggests that account should be taken of geographical barriers and regional inequalities which will contribute towards more balanced and sustainable development of the EU.

The Green Paper argues that the territorial diversity of the EU is a vital asset that can contribute to the sustainable development of the EU as a whole. To turn this diversity into strength, we have to address territorial cohesion through a focus on new themes, new sets of relationships binding EU territories at different levels and new forms of cooperation, coordination and partnerships. These are the main issues to debate.

In its submission, the JBC recommended that the concept of territorial cohesion should be developed on the basis of improving the territorial competitiveness of the internal

market. This involves developing Trans-European Networks (TENS) projects and strengthening cross border cooperation.

The JBC believes that the incorporation of Western Scotland as an eligible region in the Interreg IVA Programme 2007-2013 and an increased emphasis on cross border cooperation will provide scope for considerable cross border cooperation in the future.

The EU has a crucial role to play in promoting territorial cohesion by encouraging greater cooperation between territories and better coordination across EU policies.

The private sector has a key role to play in developing a territorial cohesion approach as funders, investors and providers. Experience in developing cooperation structures on the island of Ireland shows that the business sector can play a decisive role in terms of shaping the overall agenda in setting interregional policy and investment priorities.

The Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model works particularly effectively in infrastructure investment, such as energy and transport. The interest of the private sector also extends to promoting best

practice and ensuring that efficiencies are achieved in terms of project delivery.

Consideration should be given to the promotion of new financial engineering that is developed between the private sector and the European Investment Bank (EIB) and European Investment Fund (EIF).

In terms of the emerging EU cooperation mechanisms, the JBC submits that a review of the European Grouping for territorial cooperation (EGTC) should be considered with a particular focus on achieving participation in the governance of the EGTC by business organisations. In the context of the JBC's strategic links with cross-border partnerships and particularly those operating at local authority level, the JBC would be particularly interested in the exploring on behalf of the business sector, the extent to which the EGTC mechanism could provide the basis for a new cooperation model on the island of Ireland.

A summary of the consultation is expected to be published by the European Commission shortly.

A copy of the JBC submission is available on the JBC website at www.jointbusinesscouncil.com

JBC meets Scottish partners to discuss closer cooperation

A JBC delegation participated in meetings with Scottish partners in Edinburgh on 3 December 2008 hosted by the Irish Consul General to Scotland, Cliona Manahan.

The meeting provided an opportunity for engagement on wider trade and economic co-operation opportunities, particularly in the context of the INTERREG IV Operating Programme for Ireland - Northern Ireland and Scotland.

In addition to JBC, organisations including the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), Belfast; Dumfries and Galloway Council; Enterprise Ireland, Glasgow; Scotland Europa; Scottish Council for Development and Industry; Entrepreneurial

Exchange, Scotland and Freight Transport Association, Scotland were represented.

There is potential for greater coordination between Ireland- Northern Ireland and Scotland in the areas of transport, energy, R&D on renewable energies, universities and entrepreneurship. The JBC is currently engaged with Enterprise Ireland, Scotland on identifying appropriate issues that can serve to progress the business co-operation agenda across the three regions.

