

Ibec
For Irish Business

CBI

All-Island Business Policy Priorities 2024

**An Ibec/CBI
Joint Business
Council (JBC)
paper**



June 2024

Introduction

The Ibec/CBI Joint Business Council (JBC) has been fostering constructive all-island economic discussions since the 1970s. With restored political stability in Northern Ireland and a functioning North-South Ministerial Council (NSMC), businesses across the island seek policies that maximise economic benefits from cross-border cooperation.

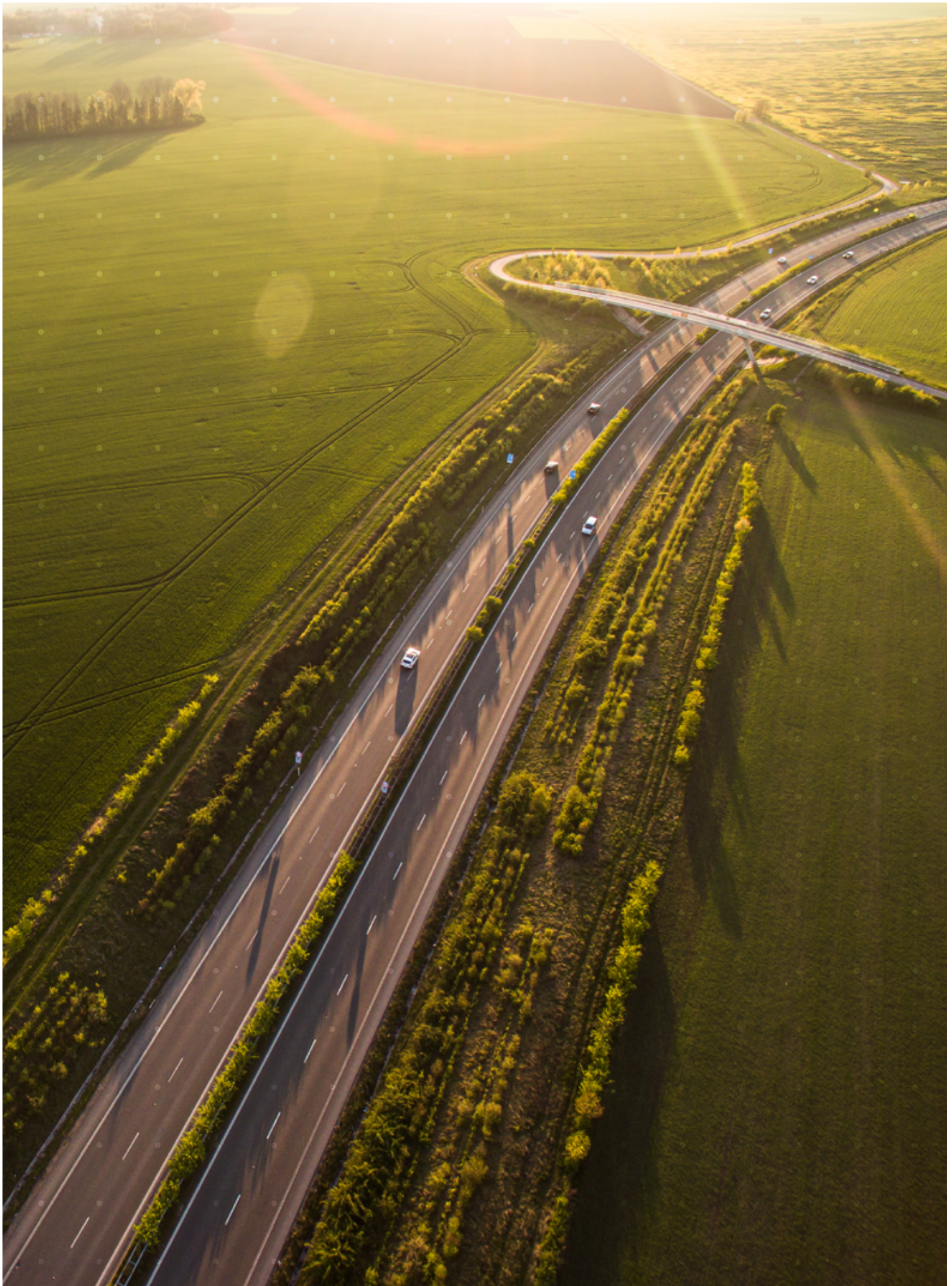
Our conversations and ongoing engagement with businesses across the island have identified the following key policy priorities for all-island firms:

- **Protect and build on all-island trade and business success**
- **Invest in essential infrastructure and connectivity**
- **Build a low carbon all-island economy**
- **Maximise the benefits of the all-island labour market**
- **Highlight the synergies for private sector investment in the all-island economy**
- **Prioritise long-term resilience of the all-island economy**

This high-level summary of Ibec/CBI JBC priority policy asks is supported by more detailed discussion of these issues in our previous reports and consultation responses such as:

- **Ibec/CBI ‘Connected’ Report (2015)** describing the core transport infrastructure investment needed for a prosperous island with a population of over 8m by mid-century;
- **Ibec/CBI ‘Business on a Connected Island’ Report (2018)** evidencing how Ireland and Northern Ireland benefit economically from the improvements brought about by peace, stability and an invisible border for goods, services, labour and finance;
- **Sustaining the Benefits of All-island Business (2022)**: CBI NI and Ibec members detailed the tangible benefits operating all-island is delivering for them;
- **Ibec/CBI Response to the All-island Rail Review (2023)**; and
- **Ibec/CBI ‘Shared Energy Futures’ Report (2024)** highlighting the need for increased N-S cooperation and policy alignment on energy and net zero ambitions for the island.







1. Protect and build on all-island trade success

- Adequately fund and support all-island institutions such as InterTradeIreland (ITI) and Tourism Ireland which work to promote all-island business and economic activity.
- Mobilise and utilise all the agreed North-South institutional architecture set up under the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement.
- Enhance EU-UK policy coordination to ensure the ongoing success of all-island business.
- Implement the Windsor Framework provisions enabling the NSMC and cross border bodies such as ITI to make proposals that protect and support N-S business and business to the EU-UK Specialised Committees established under the Trade and Cooperation Agreement.
- Also ensure Northern Ireland achieves its 'observer status' regarding the UK-EU Joint Committee and that the priorities of the all-island economy are effectively represented in this process.
- Enhance coordination on operational issues where the UK and EU diverge, such as the Carbon Border Adjustment Model (CBAM).



2.

Invest in essential infrastructure and connectivity

Coordination

- Set up a Joint North-South (N-S) Committee to monitor and prioritise all-island Infrastructure Projects.

Road and Rail

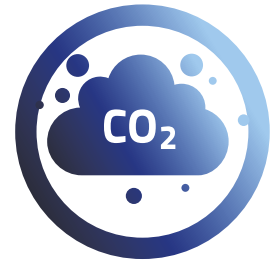
- Engage in regular N-S collaboration on spatial strategies and long-term development plans, such as for the National Development Plan and its regional implementation.
- Prioritise the delivery of all-island infrastructure projects that will deliver most economic benefit such as the A5 North-West transport corridor, the North/South Electricity Interconnector and the train service along the N-S economic corridor.
- Ensure decisions taken today regarding the island's road and rail network are consistent with population projections and comparable in nature to competitive global regions.
- Complete an all-island core road network – including for electric vehicle charging – while supporting de-carbonisation targets.
- Prioritise the Belfast/Dublin Enterprise service and ensure it has long-term flexibility to respond to market growth and commuter needs (frequency, capacity and speed). Examine the economic gains from having a high-speed hourly service.
- Collaborate on the delivery of a rapid EV charging point network across the island.

Water

- Set up an all-island multi-stakeholder taskforce to mobilise financing and strategic investment in all-island water infrastructure to leverage economies of scale and shared catchments to address shared issues and challenges of supply quality and resilience.

Air

- An economic appraisal should be carried out to consider the value to both economies from re-establishing strategic air routes to support the all-island economy, particularly Belfast-Cork and Derry-Dublin. Such an appraisal should weigh up cost against the potential benefits to tourism, trade, student mobility and all-island collaborative university and medical research.



3.

Build a low carbon all-island economy

- **Regional Collaboration:** Embrace new opportunities for North-South and East-West collaboration and policy alignment on energy and climate action.
- **Energy Futures Scoping:** Undertake an Energy Futures 2040 scoping exercise to plan for the future energy landscape.
- **Investment Mobilisation:** Enhance regulatory and policy cooperation and certainty to mobilise investment.
- **Transition Acceleration:** Accelerate the net zero transition through new research collaborations and knowledge transfers.
- **Electricity Market Support:** Ensure adequate investment in electricity infrastructure, including re-enforcing the all-island grid for greater capacity.
- **Single Electricity Market:** Protect and strengthen the all-island Single Electricity Market, which has been integral to reinforcing energy security and integrating renewables.
- **Gas Security:** Strengthen gas security and decarbonisation efforts.
- **Widen the scope of the all-island electricity market:** to help tackle the immediate challenges and, looking to the future, deliver a secure and self-sufficient Single Energy Market on the island of Ireland.
- **Renewables Infrastructure Investment:** Invest in generation and network infrastructure to support renewables and address capacity deficits.
- **Align policy across the island for off-shore energy.**
- **Crisis Cooperation:** Enhance energy crisis cooperation and planning between Great Britain, Ireland and Northern Ireland.
- **Address planning bottlenecks:** Urgently address delays in strategic energy and renewables infrastructure development due to planning and regulatory challenges.
- **Regulatory Certainty:** Provide clear policy signals and guidance for investors and businesses to support the net zero transition.
- **Align with Net Zero/Green Deal standards** across the island to adapt products and services.



4.

Maximise the benefits of the all-island labour market

- Use the evidence base in the forthcoming Labour Employer Economic Forum (LEEF) report on the all-island labour market to address bottlenecks and barriers to all-island labour mobility (e.g tax and social welfare treatment of cross-border workers, recognition of qualifications etc).
- Hold regular Ireland-UK bi-lateral conversations on all-island labour mobility issues such as updating the bi-lateral agreement on Trans-Border Workers Relief.
- Restore the all-island Expert Group on Future Skills to be a dedicated voice in support of the N-S alignment of course content arrangements and qualifications.
- Develop a labour mobility strategy for the island to ensure that the all-island labour market can meet the needs of industry over the next 25 years.
- Strengthen the all-island labour market by attracting the necessary talent to the island.
- Build the evidence base for introducing an ‘all-island work visa’ to underpin labour mobility across the island.



5.

Highlight the synergies for private sector investment in the all-island economy

- Explore the possibility of securing funding from the EU and other sources for all-island investment, particularly in a sustainability context.
- Explore support from the US Government/US Investors which will provide additional investment across the island to support and sustain peace and prosperity underpinned by the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement.
- Consider the development of a new joint Strategic Investment Fund to mobilise critical infrastructure, network upgrades etc., that is additional to existing commitments such as from Shared Island Funding or the EU/UK PEACEPLUS Programme.



6. Prioritise long-term resilience of the all-island economy

- Ensure strategic planning to protect the all-island economy in areas where lack of coordination or disruption could leave the island vulnerable to economic shocks. These areas include demography, food production, AI, and climate change.
- Support an evidence-based assessment of all-island economy policy issues using the all-island economy macroeconomic model developed jointly by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and the National Institute of Economic and Social Research.

For further information

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