



## DERRY CITY COUNCIL

14 March 2007

Mr Terry McKee  
Department of Finance & Personnel  
European Division  
Annexe F  
Health Estates  
Stoney Road  
BELFAST BT16 1US  
Northern Ireland

Dear Mr McKee,

**Subject: Competitiveness and Employment European Structural Funds  
Programmes in Northern Ireland**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond on behalf of Derry City Council to the consultation document. Since the points I wish to raise concern both Programme documents, I am responding within this letter rather than within the structure of the forms provided.

- These programmes are a welcome opportunity to utilise EU, national and local resources to improve the regional competitiveness of NI relative to other regions in the EU and beyond. However it is important that these resources improve the competitiveness of the NI region as a whole and that targets are not met simply by "backing winners" without dealing with the sub-regional disparities which exist within NI. Enabling investment is required in the capability of some sub-regions to participate in innovation programmes otherwise those sub-regions which already have a concentration of innovation infrastructure will be the main beneficiaries. The UK and IRE Governments recognised the particular needs of the Derry and the North West and the IRE National Development Plan gives particular emphasis on investment in the North West Gateways. It is disappointing that the Northern Ireland EU Competitiveness and Employment Programmes (2007-2013) do not mention this commitment by the two Governments and this omission should be corrected.
- The fact that the Competitiveness Programme and the Employment Programme are dealt with in one consultation process is to be welcomed as the priority must be to create high-value job opportunities at the same time as ensuring that a suitably skilled/qualified workforce is available to benefit from them. It is of concern therefore that there is little read-across in the detail between the two programmes. DETI and DEL must avoid a "silo" approach to the design and delivery of both programmes at the NI and especially at the local levels.
- Local authorities in NI have played a key role in the design and delivery of local economic development programmes since 1995. These LED programmes have been resourced from ERDF and ESF and have allowed local authorities to design and implement innovative solutions to local issues in consultation with DETI and DEL and their agencies. It is disappointing that the future role of local authorities in responding to the Lisbon Agenda at the local level is restricted to just one "enterprise" focused sub-priority within just one priority of the Competitiveness Programme. Local authorities have made a significant contribution to local economic development in promoting innovation, tourism development (particularly Signature Projects) and accessibility and environment. This role was not confined to enterprise support and with local authorities now making a key contribution to Workforce Development Fora, it is important that the Competitiveness and Employment

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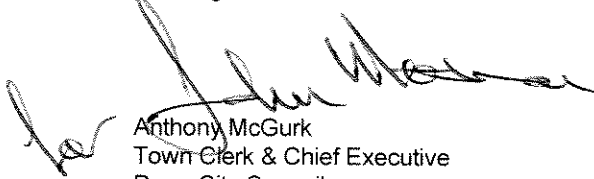
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Workforce Development Fora, it is important that the Competitiveness and Employment Programmes are amended to ensure that the LED allocations provided to local authorities are resourced from ESF as well as ERDF and are not limited to enterprise development.

- The proposal to have priority focusing the Improving Accessibility and Protecting and Enhancing the Environment is to be welcomed. Ensuring the economic cohesion of Derry and the North West with the rest of NI will depend in part of greater accessibility into the sub-region through Belfast and Dublin but also directly into the sub-region through access points such as the City of Derry Airport and the Londonderry Port. It is disappointing that the only reference in the document to airports is to "NI's two main airports" and that proposed investment in public transport is confined to new rail and bus stations with no specific mention of investment in the rail track from Derry to Ballymena.
- A proactive approach is needed to invest in NI's natural and built heritage given current development pressure on our historic town centres and countryside. NI's built and natural heritage is the raw material for our visitor appeal and for creating sustainable and appealing places to live. Lack of an adequate level of conservation incentives for buildings in private ownership in the face of development pressure is contributing to the degradation of historic town centres such as Derry. The minimalist approach to enhancing NI's built heritage is evidenced in the fact that until 2007 the largest monument in state guardianship in NI has been without a conservation, management and animation plan. Resources within the Programmes managed at NI and local authority level must be sufficient to face this challenge.
- Local authorities have been proactive in supporting the establishment of Workforce Development Fora and have commissioned through partnerships sub-regional labour market surveys, skills audits and education strategies. It is important that DEL in the management of the Employment Programme takes account of the knowledge and capability of local authorities, partnerships and Workforce Development Fora.

I will be presenting these points to Derry City Council and I would welcome feedback on how these specific issues will be dealt with in the revised Programme Documents,

Best regards,



Anthony McGurk  
Town Clerk & Chief Executive  
Derry City Council