Ireland/N Ireland Local Authorities and Territorial Cooperation?

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Pamela Arthurs Chief Executive EBR
Ireland/N Ireland Territorial Cooperation 2016

Two forms
• INTERREG Programme
‘to address problems that arise from the existence of borders’
• Peace Programme
‘to reinforce a peaceful and stable society’
1990 – 2020 £2,385m
Eligible area. All N Ireland/Border Counties
Impact of Territorial Cooperation?

Since 1990 T/C funding has transformed the Border area. Impacted on

- Infrastructure (Roads)
- Telecommunications
- Economy (Inward Investment/Jobs)
- Environment
- Energy
- Health
- Social Inclusion
Cross Border Local Authority Led Groups

Funding mechanism – Local Authorities used to work together on a cross border basis.

• East Border Region – 1976
• North West Group – 1975
• ICBAN – 1996

Border Corridor since 1996
Local Authority Led Cross Border Groups

- East Border Region
- ICBAN
- North West Region Cross Border Group
- North East Partnership
- COMET

Striped areas illustrate Local Authorities who are members of two groups.
IRL/NI Border Area 1970’s

• Idea working cross border unheard of.
• ‘Back to back development’
  ‘..early 70’s there was no cooperation at any level between local authorities that were adjacent to each other.. It simply wasn’t the done thing.’

  Jim Mc Cart ( former councillor NMDC )
1970’s- 80’s Success?

Local Authority groups made little or no impact

• Cross Border working wasn’t fashionable
• Depts in Dublin or Belfast not interested
• Areas closest to border disadvantaged
• Growth primarily around Dublin and Belfast and Border decisions taken centrally
• Finances were very difficult but Local Authorities supported groups.
• Political situation was very difficult

But;
Local Authorities identified common challenges
Trust and capacity was developed
INTERREG Funding

• 1990 – first time outside funding available.
• EBR NWRCBG grasped the opportunity
• Interreg – Cross Border Economic Development. Non political? EU.
• Aim to benefit people of the cross border region
• Local elected members united across the border to jointly draw down funding
2000 – 2006 INTERREG IIIA

• Local Authorities wanted control over border funding decisions.
• Politicians from all political parties Local Authorities north and south lobbied Dublin/Belfast/Brussels

Result:
Local Authorities – Implementing Body INTERREG IIIA €60m
Local Authorities at forefront cross border cooperation.
Direct Result - EU Funding
Infrastructure

Gobbins Cliff Path
Infrastructure

N.I. Science Park
Infrastructure

Newry – Dundalk Road
Economic Development

Highlanes Gallery
Economic Development

F.E. McWilliams Gallery
Economic Development

The Bright Room
Tourism

High Cross
Down County Museum
Environment

Biodiversity/Greenways
Energy
Post 2006 INTERREG IVA & VA

- Global Economic Down turn
- Centralised Funds
- Dublin – Belfast hands on
- Reform Local Govt & RPA

Result:
Local Authorities – grant recipients
Competing for scarce funds
‘bottom up approach’ gone
Lengthy approval process
‘Cooperation has been challenging’
Ireland N Ireland Border Region 2016

EU Funding has contributed to
• More modern and prosperous Border Region
• Local Authorities know each other
• Trust and Capacity enhanced
• MOU

Requirement
- Continued funding
- Cross border cooperation still not easy!
Future Local Authority cross border cooperation

• In the absence of EU Funds Cross Border Cooperation - less priority

Result?
- Piecemeal cooperation
- Little regional impact
- Policy divergence Dublin and Belfast
- Return ‘Back to Back’ development
- Return to peripherality of border region.
Ireland/N Ireland Cross Border Cooperation Post Brexit

• What priority Cross border cooperation? Competing interests e.g. Farmers, Fishermen, Business, Environment, Health, Infrastructure
• Requires consent of UK government
If Future funding derived from Treasury would cross border cooperation enjoy current levels?
• Irish Government to prioritise
• Requires Political Will
Conclusion

Local Authority Cross Border cooperation has been mutually beneficial.

• has enabled the development of the Irl/NI border corridor

• Essential that there is a plan and a Way Forward for cross border cooperation before an exit.

• “Bottom up approach” to future funding and cross border cooperation is critical.

• EBR – 40 years old – Brexit biggest challenge