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Application form “AEBR-Cross Border Award” 2015
Deadline: 25.09.2015

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The Future of Cross-Border Cooperation in Europe

1. General information

1.1 Applicant border / cross-border region:

Ireland and Northern Ireland (UK)

Title of the cross-border measure* [project(s), programme(s) / strategy (ies)]:

“The Central Border Region Spatial Planning Initiative“

1.3 Period:

2013 to 2027

1.4 Lead Partner:

ICBAN

Contact:

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1.5 Partners:

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council

Mid Ulster District Council

Department of Regional Development

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council

Cavan County Council

Donegal County Council

Leitrim County Council

Monaghan County Council

Sligo County Council

Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government

International Centre for Local and Regional Development

Border Regional Authority

Department of the Environment

Contact:

Contacts for all Partners can be provided upon request by AEBR.

1.6. Financing of the cross-border measure (e.g. INTERREG):

Remark: It should be explicated how the financing of the strategy (ies) / concept(s) / project idea(s) has been or is realised.

The Ireland / Northern Ireland INTERREG IVA Programme, and ICBAN Ltd.

1.7 Links to other projects, measures and/or programmes (only if applicable):

To National Spatial Strategy (RIS) & Regional Development Strategy (RDS), & EU 2020 Strategy

2. Contents

2.1 Objectives of the cross-border measure:

INTERREG IVA Priority 2 Theme 1 – Public Sector Collaboration. This initiative was aimed at providing a set of co-ordinated future investment priorities for the Central Border Region of Ireland / Northern Ireland as well as to develop working linkages to promote greater collaboration in respect of economic development. The project proposed to facilitate within ICBAN an improved level of strategic planning and associated operational actions for regional development and future economic functionality. The project has provided an evidence base for future public investment priorities for ICBAN in economic development, tourism, infrastructure, telecoms and the environment, of which each are key to attracting investment and resources to the Central Border Region. <http://www.icban.com/Spatial-Planning>

The overarching aims of the Spatial Planning Initiative were:

- To ensure that all future development of the Region is underpinned by a shared vision of the Region's future functionality in economic and infrastructural terms
- To support the requisite political and civic collaboration capacity required to underpin the adoption of new collaborative approaches to regional development and
- To provide consultative and communicational links between other key INTERREG IV funded initiatives in the Region. The Spatial Planning Initiative will add value and ensure a coherent impact to all economic and physical investment in the Region in terms of its future competitiveness and cohesion.

2.2 Organisational structure and activities to implement the objectives (e.g. joint secretariat, contract, etc.):

The project was directed by a Steering Committee comprising elected members and senior management of all project partners. The Steering Committee represented local authority, business development and sectoral interests on a cross-border basis.

The project activity to implement the objectives of the Spatial Planning Initiative consisted of the following key structures and areas of activity:

- 1) Project Implementation Structures:
 - Steering Committee
 - Planners Working Group
 - Regional Development Working Group (Economic Development Practitioners)
- 2) Central Border Area Data Capture Project <http://www.icban.com/Data-Central>
- 3) Regional Strategic Framework <http://www.icban.com/The-RSF/Download-the-Regional-Strategic-Framework>
- 4) Civic and Political Collaboration Programme
 - Strategic Co-operation Programme.
 - Capacity Building Programme.
 - Themed Working Groups.
- 5) Roads to Opportunity Business Case <http://www.icban.com/Home/Publications/Roads-Study-Reports>
- 6) Publicity & Communications Strategy <http://www.icban.com/Home/Publications/Telecomms-Study>

2.3 How far has the measure been implemented?

This initiative provided a facilitated space for a major regional initiative that attempted to address the need for a co-ordinated and agreed set of future investment priorities for the Region in the form of the 'Regional Strategic Framework' (RSF). Also it has facilitated a greater level of operational and working linkages in respect of collaborations on land use and other planning in the Region on a cross-border basis. This was done through cross sectoral consultation and participation which identified the future functionality of the Region and the priorities for future investment in the cross-border area.

The local authority members within ICBAN have identified a number of key strategic priorities within the RSF, which are currently being addressed for the border region. The cross-border group is working to promote the principles employed in the development of the RSF, namely Community Planning, Sustainable Development, Territorial Cohesion and In-

egrated Development into various local and regional plans and strategies, to help ensure that local authorities adopt similar priorities in a joined-up regional development approach. This has helped establish the RSF and give it the support necessary to further cross-border co-operation.

The RSF specified that 2015 would be a year of capacity building and in this time the focus has been on looking towards new opportunities and exploring how innovation can help advance these. Learning is being readily taken from examples of best practice throughout the EU as ICBAN and partners work to develop new solutions to cross-border needs, building on years of work in INTERREG programmes, to consider new opportunities for cross-border co-operation elsewhere within the intervention supports available from the EU. The foundation for this work has been created and now the partners are working to realise these.

2.4 Special framework conditions (a. geographical, political, etc. / b. only rural area (no regional metropolis))

The Central Border Region accounts for 1/5 of the land area of the island of Ireland and 1/10 of its population. It has a specific and unique rural nature with common experiences of marginalisation, and a sense of removal in historical terms from the centre of decision-making on both sides of the border. Therefore significant challenges for the integrated and 'joined-up' development of the social, economic and cultural life of the Region exist.

The Region also openly acknowledges its challenges. It has not escaped the current recession, resulting in job losses, emigration and a certain loss of confidence. With more public and private services being centralised in larger towns and cities there is a need for stakeholders to find new ways for the Region to sustain a range of local public and private services. There is a need to further improve connectivity infrastructure through investments, which will improve access to services and allow businesses to operate competitively, on a local, national and international level. On a variety of economic and social indicators the Central Border Region is disadvantaged compared to other regions of Ireland and Northern Ireland. There is a need to address this inequality of economic and social outcomes between the Central Border Region.

The Spatial Planning Initiative (SPI) was a proposal for activities which were undertaken within a robust sub-regional strategic context. It was unique to this Region, as no formal resourcing of activity of this nature had ever taken place before. Consultations with key government departments indicated that such a proposal would be viewed as entirely complementary to national government agendas and would not be duplicating other work. All research indicated that the SPI would establish badly-needed activities which had not received any formal commitment on resourcing.

3. Contribution of the measure (added value) to the development of the border/cross-border region:

(not more than half a page)

ICBAN undertook this work for the Central Border Region which would be of a cross-border nature and a 'bottom up' approach. It was supported as an essential vehicle in terms of future investment in the Region and in building institutional capacity for collaborative spatial planning, economic development, and the co-ordination of public investment to the Region.

ICBAN came to this initiative on the basis of a careful and thorough pre-development process which involved informal liaison and consultation with key officials concerned with the National Spatial Strategy (Roi) and the Regional Development Strategy (NI) and key expertise contained within the existing land use planning authorities working within the Region on both sides of the border.

ICBAN has sought, through its strategic development role in the Central Border Region, to establish complementary processes at a sub-regional level which crucially can support national policies and add value to them. This in turn gave meaning to the national strategies in terms of sub-regional cross-border development. At a local level ICBAN was able to facilitate its member councils in coordinating their work by bringing an additional dimension through an awareness of the cross-cutting dynamics of its different stakeholder organizations across the Central Border Region and through an appreciation of the values employed in the development of the Regional Strategic Framework (RSF) such as Community Planning, Territorial Cohesion and Integrated Planning etc..

The two governments in Ireland have together provided the opportunity to create a Regional Strategic Framework (RSF) for development in this cross-border area, through their agreement to a 'Framework for Co-operation - Spatial Strategies of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland'. This wider trans-national agreement enables the RSF to set out a series of opportunities and priorities for the Region over the period to 2027 which, taken together and if well implemented, will lead to the area becoming more confident in itself and in its future. It is intended that the Regional Strategic Framework will provide a structure, skeleton or scaffolding on which more detailed plans will be developed from time to time over the period to 2027. During the development of this Framework, representatives of Local Government, Government Departments, Public Bodies, the Private Sector, Community and Voluntary Sector have been actively involved in engagement to identify the needs of the Region and how they might be addressed.

4. Added value for the development of cross-border cooperation at European level

(not more than half a page)

The Spatial Planning Initiative recognizes the role the border regions have to play in achieving the Lisbon principles throughout the European Union. The Spatial Planning Initiative represents a progression to a new level of engagement in building a model of best practice in cross border development which is capable of delivering key and desired outputs for the Region which will assist with developing competitiveness and cohesion within the sub-region. This model has been developed over a number of years and has received support from all key stakeholders. The initiative represents an important step towards the comprehensive tackling of disadvantage in the Region by providing a framework for cross-boundary, cross-jurisdictional and interagency collaboration for Regional Development of the Central Border Area sub-region. The key principle underlying this approach has been the linkage of policy makers and practitioners in agreed processes for the achievement of common goals and in a spirit of mutual support.

The Regional Strategic Framework (RSF) which was developed over a period of 18 months under the SPI is linked to a number of key plans and strategies. Central to it has been the EU 2020 Strategy and the RSF offers a means of implementing EU 2020 policies at the regional cross-border level.

Europe 2020 is the European Union's main strategy for putting Europe's economy back on the path to growth and to make the EU a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy. These three mutually reinforcing priorities are intended to help the EU and the Member States to deliver high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. There is a clear relationship between the objectives of the Regional Strategic Framework and the drivers of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

Over the period of the Framework the Central Border Region will engage more strategically with other European regions. The Central Border Region can learn from other EU regions and can, progressively, contribute its own experience to the development of those regions. In carrying forward this work the Central Border Region will have the opportunity to work in co-operation with other cross-border areas on the island of Ireland, such as East Border Region and the North West Region, to share resources and opportunities and to develop concepts such as a border development zone. Over the period of the Regional Strategic Framework, it is likely that the emphasis on linkages with other EU regions will widen to an emphasising of the internationalisation of the Central Border Region, building on the worldwide markets of many of the Region's businesses and the international aspirations and intents of its educational establishments. In particular the Central Border Region is well placed geographically and organisationally to promote sharing of experience from the EU and to be able to reflect on a mature regional crossborder development process which will be an example to other rural cross-border regions.

5. Further annexes yes no

Which ones? Short description of the contents of the strategy / programme / project (in English, French and German, not more than 2-3 pages)

- a) Central Border Area Data Capture Project
- b) Central Border Area Regional Vision Plan – Regional Strategic Framework (RSF) <http://www.icban.com/The-RSF/Download-the-Regional-Strategic-Framework>
- c) Roads to Opportunity Business Case for Transportation Infrastructure to the Region
- d) Political & Civic Collaboration Programme
- e) Telecommunications Study

a) Central Border Area Data Capture Project

In Ireland and Northern Ireland evidence-based spatial planning is now high on the political agenda and the demand for high quality data on an all-island and regional basis is ever increasing. There is a need for complete, consistent and comparable datasets to assist development and implementation of all-island collaborative spatial planning. The Irish Government's "National Development Plan 2007-2013" noted the importance of cooperation on spatial planning on a North-South basis. It also pointed out that collaborative spatial planning will be based "for the first time on new all-island datasets and thematic mapping which will greatly enhance evidence based policy and strategic decision making on an all-island basis". Similar initiatives are underway by various government departments in Northern Ireland. In this context, the Central Border Region's data capture project which has been completed through the measure is complementary to the wider work being taken forward at national and all-island levels.

b) Central Border Area Regional Vision Plan – Regional Strategic Framework (RSF)

The Regional Strategic Framework (RSF) was undertaken as part of the measure. It is a cross-border collaborative project which aims to ensure regional commitment to the adoption of new joined-up planning practices amongst stakeholders. It also will assist in maximizing future investment and development of the Central Border Region and it will provide a vital building block for the other threads of activity making up the Spatial Planning Initiative measure.

Defining a 'Framework' for the Region required looking at its future collaborative functionality and developing this unique opportunity to recognize and grow indigenous assets to become a smarter more resilient Region. This is a blue-print to focus attention on the key areas where maximum benefit can be reaped in this area. This RSF will inform planning locally and government spending policies and priorities centrally. It has been the product of a facilitated engagement process involving all many stakeholders.

c) Roads to Opportunity Business Case for Transportation Infrastructure to the Region

This strand of activity related to the commissioning of a strategic business case for investment in effective and adequate roads infrastructure to the North West of the Island of Ireland. This study specifically looked at the current blockages presented by current roads investment plans to economic advancement of the Region. It addressed the potential benefits which would accrue to the island economy as a whole of opening up the North West of the island of Ireland in terms of roads access. The study built on the work of the joint cross-border groups' Roads to Opportunity Working Group which has engaged in strategic development relating to the A4/N16 and the A5/N2 transport corridors. These are both key routes in connecting the whole of the North West with the rest of the island, and in connecting the key ports of Larne and Belfast with the Western Corridor, as part of the Trans European Network (TenT).

d) Political & Civic Collaboration Programme

The Political & Civic Collaboration Programme was a capacity building programme for elected representatives, Councils officials, plus key stakeholders/strategic partners such as representatives from rural, community and voluntary networks, and the business sector in the Central Border Region. The roles of politics, civic engagement and democratic processes are critical to the sustainable development of the Region. This Initiative was a cross-border collaborative project which aims to ensure regional commitment to joined-up planning practices amongst stakeholders and to maximize future investment in and development of the Central Border Region.

Through this Initiative, ICBAN and its member Councils developed a greater appreciation of each jurisdiction's structures, systems and applicable procedures and policies. It has also led to networking opportunities and joined-up representations in promoting the development of the Central Border Region.

e) Telecommunications Study - A Strategic Way Forward For Telecommunications Infrastructure In The Central Border Region

This report provides a comprehensive assessment of the current broadband and mobile telecommunications infrastructures and services within this Central Border Region. It also provides a detailed action plan to help drive the development of the telecommunications environment in the Region. The Region has a strong and growing micro business and Small Medium Enterprise (SME) community, enormous tourism potential and is continually seeking to target inward investment. However, this is dependent upon a world class telecommunications infrastructure, without which the Region, its businesses and residents are at a permanent and significant disadvantage. The research used a combination of workshops and surveys to examine the demand issues affecting business and residential users, and a combination of interviews and desktop research to examine the supply issues impacting communications providers.

As a result it has provided an in-depth picture of the telecommunications infrastructure and services in the Region. It also developed a fuller understanding of the infrastructural deficiencies and the issues affecting users and operators. This action plan assists ICBAN in how to support current central government initiatives, and how to highlight the Region's issues in order to influence evolving government policy. It also assists ICBAN councils in terms of streamlining and aligning the planning regimes, and the role and potential for council sites in addressing coverage gaps. The action plan also involved the private sector in the form of the Communications Providers, who will benefit from the above improvements and consequently increase their investment in the Region.

Date: 23/09/2015

Shane Campbell

Signature

(If submitted by e-mail please also insert your name and contact details!)

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