

Ballymena Borough Council

Economic Development Strategy 2007-2013 & Action Plan 2007-2010



European Union
Structural Funds

Contents

Page

1. Introduction & Background	3
2. Strategic Context	11
3. Economic Analysis & SWOT	21
4. Strategic Aims & Objectives	31
5. Action Plan 2007-2010 & Costs	35
6. Delivering the Strategy	41

Appendices

- I Socio-economic profile
- III Best Practice Case Studies

1 Introduction & Background

1.1 Introduction

The Ballymena Economic Development Strategy provides a vision for the local authority area and working framework for Ballymena Borough Council and other key stakeholders. The strategy is based on a detailed analysis of the economic characteristics and priorities of Ballymena Borough and highlights the importance of Ballymena as a major contributor to the economic performance of the wider north-east sub region.

Importantly, the strategy has been developed in the light of a comprehensive consultation process including face-to-face interviews with 20 key stakeholders, a public information evening held at the ECOS centre and a business survey which provided over 60 responses. The consultation process generated widespread support for the need for an over-arching strategy and reflected the positive approach of key players to work in partnership to achieve the aims of the strategy.

Ballymena Borough Council is one of twenty-six local authorities in Northern Ireland. A key function of the local authority is to articulate the needs of the local area and in partnership with others develop strategies that demonstrate how they will deal with the most important issues in the local area. There are a number of other fundamental reasons for the strategy including:

- Complementing and adding value to the existing range of economic development, regeneration and related strategies and initiatives in the Ballymena and north-east region;
- Providing an integrated framework for effective partnership and joint working, not only between Ballymena Borough Council and public bodies serving the local area, but also with stakeholders in the private, community and voluntary sectors;
- Defining common goals and priorities for the economic development and regeneration of the Ballymena area – providing a key input to future policy development at both the local and regional levels;
- Facilitating the delivery of relevant economic development and regeneration programmes and initiatives.

The strategy is deliberately ambitious but pragmatic. It sets out a range of short and medium term objectives, which provide a challenge to all key stakeholders with an interest in Ballymena. The strategy is founded on the principles of:

Maximising Effective Use of Resources

Making the most of local, sub-regional, national and European funding; exploiting synergies and leveraging in private sector investment where possible; focusing on sectors with the greatest potential for growth.

Enhancing economic performance in Ballymena

Offering a comprehensive economic development approach including enterprise, business development, inward investment, town centre management, tourism and rural development. The coordination of existing services and advice are seen as central to enhancing economic performance but the strategy also acknowledges that these measures need to be underpinned by improvements to the physical environment.

Working in partnership

The key stakeholders and partners involved in the implementation and development of this strategy represent the main economic development agencies, funding and delivery organisations, as well as businesses located in Ballymena. In taking the strategy forward, this partnership approach enshrined within the proposed '*Ballymena Economic Task Group*' will also ensure that any weaknesses in approach will be identified early and tackled by constantly building on strengths and promoting and disseminating information on good practice. The implementation, review and development of the strategy will be overseen and steered by the '*Ballymena Economic Task Group*'.

Adopting an inclusive approach

Creating an environment which encourages and supports economic activity by individuals from all genders, cultures, religious background, ages, disabilities, and social circumstances.

1.2 What do we mean by local development?

Local development is a means of improving living standards by developing the capacity within a local area to create jobs and the conditions for job creation whilst addressing problems of low employment rates and social exclusion through increased participation in local decision making. In this context the emphasis is on actions promoted at a local level as distinct from those administered by government departments or agencies. This work is often characterised by the formation of local partnerships involving local authorities, government departments, the private sector, the voluntary sector and the local community, to identify opportunities upon which to shape and deliver responses. Although not an exclusive list, local development will include actions in support of rural, community, tourism and economic development.

In seeking to define or describe local economic development, it is important to distinguish between local development (as a process and approach to the delivery of public programmes in support of local regeneration and development) and development in the locality. The latter involves all government programmes which bring in resources to, and impact on the locality. It is legitimate to have a coexistence of both approaches (i.e. some aspects of development are best undertaken by central government, others are more appropriate through local action) and to promote linkage between the two. Local development is designed to fill gaps and provide for more flexible, locally sensitive responses where “top-down” action is inappropriate or fails to impact effectively. In practice much local development in Northern Ireland is concerned with decentralised delivery of main programmes (bending programmes to respond better to conditions in local environments).

1.3 The Ballymena Economy

Ballymena has enormous economic potential to generate a world class and thriving business community serving markets in Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, Great Britain and beyond. It has a strong, growing economic base, is within a 30 minute drive of Belfast city providing a prime location for future business investment. Strengthening the local economy further is the most effective way of improving the quality of life for all communities.

“The Regional Development Strategy indicates that Ballymena is expected to generate higher levels of future growth reflecting its established role and strength as a local engine of economic activity in its sub region.” **DOE Antrim, Ballymena and Larne Area Plan 2016, Issues Paper**

In general Ballymena outperforms the rest of Northern Ireland in terms of economic growth and prosperity. The total number of employee jobs in Ballymena was 29,236 in 2005 and constituted 4.2% of the total jobs in Northern Ireland. Between 2003-2005 2,218 jobs were established in Ballymena, the fourth highest jobs increase of all 26 local authority areas. Similarly, unemployment within Ballymena has been declining steadily and in April 2007 had a total Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) claimant rate of 1.8% which is significantly below the Northern Ireland average of 2.4% and well below the UK and EU average.

Population continues to rise, between 1995–2005 the population increased by 4.7%; mid 2005 estimates indicate a population of 60,738. Ballymena has a high level of economic activity (80.4%) which in 2005 was 8% higher than the Northern Ireland average and an employment rate of 77.2% which is also 8% above the Northern Ireland average of 68.7%. Manufacturing, wholesale & retail are the two largest sectors in terms of employment, with real estate, rent and business activities also important. The 2001 census indicates that Ballymena’s occupational structure is fairly representative of the overall structure for Northern Ireland, with a higher share of skilled trades, administrative and secretarial, process plant and machinery operatives.

Agricultural performance in Ballymena has been following the downward decline of the Northern Ireland economy. Between 2000 and 2006 the number of farms in Ballymena declined by 150 (10.9%) and the number of people employed within agriculture decreased by 429 (15.6%).

At the time of the 2001 census, the percentage of people in Ballymena with no qualifications was 45%, which is higher than the Northern Ireland average of 42%. Of those with qualifications 16% have a Level I¹ qualifications, 17% Level II² qualifications,

¹ 1+ GCSE pass, NVQ level 1, Foundation GNVQ

² 5+ GCSE passes, NVQ level 2, Intermediate GNVQ

8% Level III³ qualifications and 14% with Level 4/5⁴ qualifications.

In 2005 Ballymena benefited from 72,000 tourist trips, 2.3% of the Northern Ireland total and £11million tourism spend, 2.4% of the total spend in Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland Tourist Board local authority tourism estimates for the period 2000-2004 highlight that Ballymena benefits from above average tourism spend (primarily retail spend) but is well below the Northern Ireland average in respect to the number of tourist trips and bed nights. This is one particular area of the local economy which needs to be addressed through future economic planning.

1.4 The Northern Ireland economy

Ballymena's performance needs to be seen in the context of the overall performance of the Northern Ireland economy, where GDP growth levels of 2% to 3% have equalled or outperformed the UK average since the mid to late 1990s. Manufacturing output has outperformed the UK average since the mid to late 1990s (growing by 2.3% between Q4 2003 and Q4 2004 compared to 0.6% in the UK) and with proportionately fewer job losses than the UK. Employment is at a record high with 10,830 jobs created in the year 2005-2006, while unemployment at 4% is at a record low.

Despite the relatively small private sector and the equally low historic level of business starts, there is some evidence of the impact of the enterprise economy. The latest Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) Report shows that entrepreneurial activity in Northern Ireland is steadily increasing, albeit from a relatively low base and that cultural support for entrepreneurship is high in relation to other UK regions. However, fear of both failure and debt are major barriers, with men and women equally dissuaded from setting up a business by fears of financial failure, while women particularly perceive themselves lacking the skills to set up in business. Of all sections of the community, Northern Ireland graduates are more likely to set up in business than any other group, while entrepreneurial activity is highest among those aged 35 to 44.

There are, nevertheless, a number of underlying structural weaknesses in the local economy. These include:

³ 2+ A levels, 4+ AS levels, NVQ level 3, Advanced GNVQ

⁴ First and Higher degree, NVQ level 4 and 5 and qualified teachers, nurses, doctors and dentists

An under-developed private sector

Of Northern Ireland's 53,770 VAT-registered private sector businesses, 89% employ fewer than 10 and a mere 65 employ more than 500 workers;

Over dependence on the public sector

Northern Ireland's public sector equates to 61% of GDP, compared to UK's 42% and the Republic of Ireland's 27%;

Low levels of business formation

Northern Ireland has the second-lowest level of business formation and the lowest level of business growth amongst the 12 UK regions;

Low levels of R&D spend

Northern Ireland has amongst the world's lowest percentage of GDP invested in R&D - 41% of the UK average. Overseas-owned manufacturing firms account for 60% of Northern Ireland's R&D spend;

Low levels of labour market participation and high levels of long-term unemployment

Over 290,000 people in Northern Ireland (28% of working-age population) are not economically active and whilst unemployment has fallen steeply, the rise in incapacity claimants is almost three times the total fall in unemployment. Northern Ireland currently has the highest level of long-term and youth unemployment amongst the 12 regions; and

Addressing the structural weaknesses highlighted above is at the heart of the Draft Northern Ireland Programme for Government 2008-2011.

1.5 Ballymena Borough Council

The Ballymena Economic Development Strategy 2007-2013 builds upon the two Local Economic Development Plans which were delivered by the council (1996 – 2006) in order to draw down European funding to support the promotion of local economic development. An evaluation of the Ballymena Local Economic Development Plan (2002-

2006) was carried out in 2005 and provided evidence that the council had met or surpassed the vast majority of targets and outputs included within its plan.

In summary it identified a number of key challenges for the Ballymena economy, including:

- Continuing to generate employment growth;
- Combating the decline in manufacturing;
- Maintaining existing public sector employment and where possible securing additional employment arising from the consequences of the Review of Public Administration in NI;
- Identifying methods to minimize the reduction in EU funding opportunities to take advantage of opportunities arising;
- Maintaining the high level of business starts in the Borough;
- Strengthening and expanding the social economy in the Borough;
- Maintaining the position of Ballymena as a premier retail centre;
- Ensuring the viability of smaller towns and villages;
- Developing the knowledge based economy; and
- Expanding the area's tourism base.

Our analysis of Ballymena leads us to affirm a redefined set of challenges which are supported from the research and analysis carried out during the development of the strategy. We suggest that Ballymena should:

- Provide an environment conducive to the promotion and development of an enterprise culture;
- Provide additional resources to enhance the number of new business starts in the Borough;
- Promote self employment as a viable career choice, particularly for young people and women ;
- Develop the skills of those in employment, particularly those in part-time, low wage jobs;
- Maintain the position of Ballymena as a premier retail town;
- Develop the area's tourism product; and
- Develop a more positive, outward looking image of Ballymena.

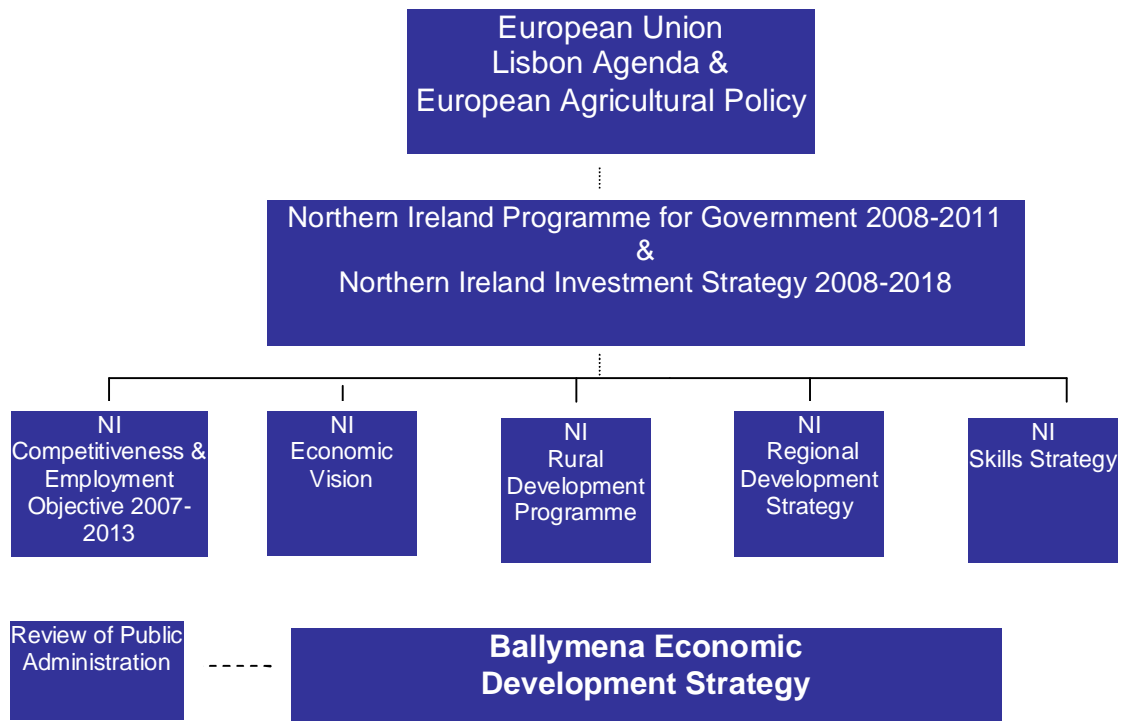
The Ballymena Economic Development Strategy 2007-2013 will be delivered through two Action Plan periods, the first runs from 2007-2010 and the second from 2010-2013. This is to align the plan firstly with the current European funding programme and secondly to allow Ballymena Council to discuss and develop new clustering approaches for delivering economic development activity with neighbouring local authorities in advance of the outcome of the Review of Public Administration.

Can the relatively strong growth of the Ballymena economy continue? And what are the key policy issues that will drive continued growth and investment? There is a growing acceptance that the Northern Ireland regional economy will only continue to grow as long as either national government keeps spending, or the local private sector can take up the slack. The transition, from a public sector dominated economy to one driven by the private sector, will take time. The next section identifies the key policy context for the Ballymena Economic Development Strategy, from a European, national and regional perspective.

2. Strategic Context

Ballymena Borough Council will deliver its economic development programme in an ever changing policy environment, not least as a result of the restoration of the devolved assembly in May 2007 and the Northern Ireland Programme for Government 2008-2011 agreed on Tuesday 22nd January 2008. The policy context cascades down from European Regional Policy, to the Programme for Government and relevant departmental strategies as summarised below.

Strategic Context



2.1 European Regional Policy

Ballymena's future competitiveness will be increasingly reliant on the outcomes and impact of regional policy at UK and European level. At the Lisbon Summit in March 2000, the EU Heads of State and their governments agreed on an ambitious goal: to make the EU

“the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion”.

The summit identified the main issues necessary to realise this goal. These included:

- Driving national investment in research and development up to 3% of GDP;
- Reduction of red tape to promote entrepreneurship;
- Achieving an employment rate of 70% (60% for women)

The EU Heads of State reaffirmed the pledges made in 2000 four years later and outlined three priority areas:

- Investment in networks and knowledge: stating the priority projects approved in the European Growth initiative;
- Strengthening competitiveness in industry and services: stepping up efforts in the areas of industrial policy, the services market and environmental technologies; and
- Increasing labour market participation of older people: promoting active ageing by encouraging older workers to work for longer.

All of these have been identified as lying at the heart of EU competitiveness policy and it is important that these issues be fully explored and exploited by Ballymena as potential drivers of future growth.

2.2 Building a Better Future – Northern Ireland Programme for Government 2008-2011

The First Minister in his address to the Assembly on the 25th October introducing the Programme for Government and Investment Strategy stated,

“Growing a dynamic innovative economy will be our top priority over the lifetime of this Programme for Government. Sustainable economic growth and increased prosperity will provide the opportunities and the means through which we can enhance quality of life, reduce poverty and disadvantage, increase health and well being and build stronger more sustainable and empowered communities.

As an Executive we recognise the characteristics of a successful economy – namely a highly skilled and flexible workforce and employment growth. To that end, we will work to increase the employment rate from 70% to 75% by 2020. We will create the environment to support 45 new businesses and 600 existing companies to become exporters for the first time by 2011. We will seek to secure inward investment commitments promising over 6500 new jobs by 2011 and ensuring that at least 75% of these provide salaries above the local private sector average. We will aim to increase the number of tourists visiting Northern Ireland and to increase tourism revenue from £370m to £520m each year by 2011.

We will also take steps to address problems of economic inactivity and promote greater employment opportunities in rural areas and disadvantaged communities. We will invest £45m by 2013 to improve the competitiveness of the rural sector.”

The Programme for Government will be delivered through five priority areas, including:

1. Growing a Dynamic, Innovative Economy
2. Promote Tolerance, Inclusion & Health & Well-Being
3. Protect & Enhance Our Environment & Natural Resources
4. Invest to Build Our Infrastructure
5. Deliver Modern High Quality & Efficient Public Services

It is important to align Ballymena’s strategic objectives to the Northern Ireland Programme for Government, in order to maximise future opportunities for the Ballymena economy and surrounding region. Ballymena Borough Council in its response to the

public consultation on the draft Programme for Government 2008-2011 and draft Investment Strategy 2008-2018 stated:

“Council welcomes the general approach of the Programme for Government to grow a dynamic and innovative economy through a well-educated population having the right skills to meet the needs of business....”.

2.3 ‘Building a Better Future’ - The Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2008-2018

The Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland agreed in January 2008 sets out a £18 billion programme of investment in public infrastructure over the next ten years. It includes investment in public transport, road, water and sewerage, and energy infrastructure to deliver economic returns and environmental benefits. Future investment will be taken forward under six ‘Pillars’ that help to join up the plans of government departments and other stakeholders.

The six ‘Pillars’ are:

- Networks – roads, public transport, gateways, telecoms, energy
- Skills – schools, higher and further education, youth services, libraries
- Health – primary care, public safety and technology, hospitals modernisation
- Social – regeneration, social housing, welfare reform & modernisation, culture, arts sports and inland waterways
- Environment - water & waste water, waste management, flood risk management, environment
- Productive – enterprise & innovation, tourism, rural development and primary industries, public sector reform

A number of specific goals are identified under each of the six pillars. Under Productive, the Executive aspire to deliver:

- Sustained private sector growth in the manufacturing and internationally tradeable services industry sectors, by supporting high value added projects from existing and prospective Invest NI clients;
- Sufficient high quality serviced sites for industrial development at strategic locations across Northern Ireland to meet the demand from Invest NI clients, both local and

foreign-owned, thereby supporting balanced industrial development and job creation across the region;

- Tourism infrastructure to develop and improve the quality of our tourism product;
- Continue to support the economic and social development of our rural communities, and support the modernisation of our primary industries and to help ensure compliance with EU directives.

There already exists considerable alignment between the goals of the Investment Strategy and the Ballymena Economic Development Strategy.

2.5 Northern Ireland Competitiveness and Employment Objective 2007-2013

The strategic objective of Northern Ireland's ERDF Competitiveness Programme 2007-2013 is to create a more competitive and sustainable Northern Ireland and to close the productivity gap with the UK and increase Northern Ireland's GVA per hour worked compared with international averages. It will be targeted through the concentration of resources on activities that are most directly related to the realisation of the NI Economic Vision and other policies aimed at securing sustainable competitiveness improvements.

The programme's three key expenditure areas will be:

- Increasing investment in research and development;
- Promoting enterprise and entrepreneurship; and
- Improving accessibility and protecting and enhancing the environment.

The overall strategic aim of Northern Ireland's ESF operational programme is to reduce economic inactivity and increase workforce skills. The programme will support regional policy priorities to increase the employment rate and improve the skills levels of young people and adults, within the framework of the Lisbon Agenda for growth and jobs.

The Programme's strategic aim will be supported by two objectives:

- To contribute to employment policies to make progress towards increasing the overall employment rate and reducing inactivity in Northern Ireland (subject to

economic conditions) by extending employment opportunities in particular for those groups at a disadvantage in the labour market; and

- To contribute to skills policies to increase productivity, enterprise and competitiveness by raising the skills levels and adaptability of workers and new entrants to the labour force through lifelong learning and ensure the right workforce skills for future employment opportunities.

Both the ERDF and ESF programmes provide Ballymena Borough Council with opportunities to source additional funding to support local development activities. In particular the NI ERDF programme highlights a significant role for local authorities in respect to the promotion and development of enterprise at a local level. The programme states:

'A locally driven economic and enterprise development component is essential to complement and enhance regional initiatives that support and strengthen business competitiveness. These locally driven activities, in line with Local Action and Community Plans, actively encourage enterprise and innovation and seek to develop imaginative local solutions to local environmental and access issues that are currently acting as a constraint on development. This local delivery approach facilitates the ability separately to address rural and urban issues.'

2.6 The Economic Vision for Northern Ireland

The Economic Vision for Northern Ireland, published in February 2005, sets out the principals for the new economic policy in Northern Ireland. The overarching driver to achieving the vision is described as 'improving our global competitiveness through increased productivity and value added leading to enhanced market share in products and services'.

Reflecting the objectives of the Lisbon strategy, this confirms that Northern Ireland must create businesses able to compete in global markets, not, as in the past, on the basis of low cost but on the basis of high value added. High value added can be created by production processes which are efficient and create good margins, or by providing goods and services which are innovative in nature or have some form of knowledge base.

The Economic Vision suggests that Northern Ireland should aspire to the position of, '*...a high value-added, highly skilled, innovative and enterprising economy which enables us to compete globally leading to greater wealth-creation and better employment opportunities for all.*' In seeking to realise the Vision, the authors identify four economic 'drivers:'

- Increase investment in R&D and promote innovation/creativity;
- Promote and encourage enterprise;
- Ensure our people have the right skills for future employment opportunities;
- Ensure we have a modern infrastructure in place to support business.

There is a direct alignment between the four economic drivers identified above and the Ballymena Economic Development Strategy.

2.7 The Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme 2007-2013

The NI Rural Strategy 2007-2013 advocates a strategic approach to growing competitiveness, fostering job creation, maintaining and investing in the region's natural, cultural and community assets and supporting innovation in rural areas. By helping Northern Ireland's rural areas fulfil their potential, rural development policy can play its part in the sustainable development of the entire region.

The importance and relevance of the CAP and rural development at a European level have increased with the recent enlargement of the European Union. The European Model of Agriculture reflects the multifunctional role that farming plays in the richness and diversity of landscapes, the production of food and the cultural and natural heritage of rural areas.

The European Commission agreed the 'Support for Rural Development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development' (EAFRD) which reinforces the EU's rural development policy and aims to promote sustainable rural development throughout the Community in a way that complements the market and income support policies of the CAP, Cohesion Policy and the Common Fisheries Policy.

EAFRD sets out three major objectives (referred to as Priority Axes) for rural development policy for the period 2007–2013, reflecting the November 2003 Salzburg conference conclusions and the outcomes of the Lisbon and Göteborg European Councils. These three comprise:

Axis 1: Improving the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry by supporting restructuring, development and innovation;

Axis 2: Improving the environment and the countryside by supporting land management; and

Axis 3: Improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification of economic activity.

EAFRD also indicates a significantly strengthened role for the LEADER approach to delivery within rural development programmes and proposes that each programme should also contain a LEADER Axis, which can cut across the other Axes. Ballymena Borough Council together with four other local authorities in the north east is currently establishing a new LEADER model to deliver and manage its rural development programme. It is anticipated that up to £10 million pounds will be available to the north-east region.

2.7 The Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland (Shaping Our Future) 2025

The Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025 establishes a spatial planning framework for all public bodies undertaking development, in order to make the best use of key regional assets, deliver balanced and integrated development, address regional disparities and encourage more sustainable patterns of development. The pivotal focus of Shaping Our Future is the Spatial Development Strategy which is a hub, corridor and gateway framework for regional development. The Spatial Development Strategy is designed to reinforce and strengthen the hubs, corridors and gateways, making best use of key regional assets to accommodate growth by:

- Investing in the urban hubs: promoting a sustained urban renaissance based on maintaining compact cities and towns, and creating high quality urban environments with improved urban transport systems, and green spaces,

thus underpinning their strategic role as hubs of economic activity, employment and services, and providing more attractive towns in which to live.

- Creating an upgraded and integrated transport system, built around the Regional Strategic Transport Network of the key transport corridors with their main public transport services providing the skeletal framework for future physical development.
- Enhancing the regional gateways with a focus on generating employment opportunities in and around the ports and airports.

Economic development is a cornerstone of the spatial strategy which provides the infrastructural framework for job creation and tourism growth. While the importance of Belfast and its hinterland as the primary engine of growth is recognised, and the role of Londonderry as the economic hub of the North West, the Strategy encourages decentralised growth throughout the Region, focused on the main towns, and facilitated by upgraded transport corridors, to provide a regional network of economic development opportunities, supporting a vibrant economy.

2.8 ‘Success through Skills’ - The Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland

The Department of Employment & Learning produced the ‘Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland’ in 2006. This strategy seeks to provide, for the first time, an over-arching framework for the development of skills. The Skills Strategy is delivered through four strategic themes, they are:

- Understanding the demand for skills;
- Improving the skills levels of the workforce
- Improving the quality and relevance of education and training, and
- Tackling the skills barriers to employment and employability

Strategic objectives two and three have particular relevance for the Ballymena Economic Development Strategy. One of, if not the single greatest priority for Ballymena must be to enhance educational attainment for its residents and secondly to raise the skills of those in employment. The Skills Strategy created a mechanism for the identification of local skills needs through the establishment of a small number of employer-led Workforce Development Forums. The Forums bring together the further education colleges, local

public and private sector employers, the trade unions, key training organisations, the local Invest NI offices, the Careers Service and the Employment Service. The Forums' key tasks are to advise the department on the local demand for skills and on the appropriate vocational training needs in the areas. Ballymena is part of the Northern Workforce Development Forum. The Forum is currently chaired by a senior manager of Michelin's, Ballymena.

2.09 The Review of Public Administration

Ballymena Borough Council is one of 26 local authorities in Northern Ireland. The current Review of Public Administration (RPA) proposes changing the way Northern Ireland administers many of its existing public services including health, education and local government. Prior to the restoration of the devolved assembly the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Peter Hain, MP recommended the establishment of seven councils, from the current twenty-six, with enhanced powers and budgets to deliver a range of local services. This has obvious implications for Ballymena as the seven council model envisages a new council serving the north east comprising of five existing local authorities; Coleraine, Moyle, Ballymoney, Ballymena and Larne.

The NI Executive agreed in July to the detailed proposals for a review of the local government aspects of the Review of Public Administration in the context of Devolved Government and wider decisions on the RPA implementation programme. The review is considering what local government is expected to deliver in the context of a fully-functioning devolved Assembly and Executive, and is being undertaken via three distinct but interlinking strands. The first strand is focusing on developing a shared vision for local government in Northern Ireland. The second on the numbers of councils and the third is looking at the functions to transfer to local government. The review is also looking at the decisions of the previous administration to develop a council-led community planning process and the complementary power of well-being.

The review is being overseen by a sub-committee of the Executive, reporting to the Executive as a whole. The sub-committee is being chaired by the Minister for the Environment, Arlene Foster MLA, and also includes the DRD, DSD, and DHSSPS ministers, given their interest in significant transferring functions. An emerging findings paper was considered by the Executive in October 2008. A process of further

engagement with departments and stakeholders will take place to refine the findings, with the sub-committee then presenting a final report to the Executive with a view to the Executive announcing its decisions to the Assembly and the public in January 2008.

Ballymena Borough Council is already engaged with neighbouring local authorities identifying potential clustering arrangements for the delivery of its rural development and Peace III programmes.

3. Ballymena Economic Analysis & SWOT

This section provides a brief summary of the key economic, social and labour market characteristics of the Ballymena council area. Coupled with the consultation process, this analysis is important in highlighting key economic development priorities for the Ballymena area.

The SWOT analysis set out in this Section provides a synopsis of the area's economic opportunities and challenges.

3.1 People and Skills

In 2001 the resident population of Ballymena Borough Council was 58,610. Population estimates mid 2005 show that the population had increased by 2,128 (3.6%) to 60,738⁵. The population has increased by 4.7% over the period June 1995 to June 2005 which is in line with the NI average population increase of 4.6%. This population increase is attributable to:

- population growth through natural change – there were 7,593 births during this period and 5,360 deaths, resulting in a natural increase of 2,233
- population gain due to net civilian migration which accounted for 572 people

This trend of population increase is forecast to continue with the number of people living in Ballymena in 2019 increasing by 5% providing a total population of approximately 63,780. This may prove to be a conservative estimate given the impact which new migrant labour is having on the NI labour market in general and Ballymena specifically. Undoubtedly population will increase, which in itself is an important driver for economic growth. However, it will be essential to match labour market growth with appropriate investment in the creation of new jobs and supporting infrastructure.

Overall, the skills and qualifications of Ballymena's population does not compare well to the Northern Ireland average. At the time of the 2001 census, the percentage of people

⁵ NISRA

in Ballymena with no qualifications was 45%, which is higher than the NI average of 42%. Of those with qualifications:

- 16% have Level 1 qualifications – 1+ GCSE pass, NVQ level 1, Foundation GNVQ
- 17% have Level 2 qualifications – 5+ GCSE passes, NVQ level 2, Intermediate GNVQ
- 8% have Level 3 qualifications – 2+ A levels, 4+ AS levels, NVQ level 3, Advanced GNVQ
- 14% have Level 4/5 qualifications – First and Higher degree, NVQ level 4 and 5 and qualified teachers, nurses, doctors and dentists

Analysis of deprivation at a ward level shows that Ballymena exhibits some very high levels of deprivation. Education deprivation is the single most concerning indicator with 6 wards within the top 10% and 20% most deprived in NI as illustrated in table 1.

Table 1: Education Deprivation

Ward	Rank ⁶	Position
Ballykeel	18	Top 5% most deprived
Fair Green	31	Top 5% most deprived
Ballee	42	Top 10% most deprived
Moat	53	Top 10% most deprived
Castle Demesne	56	Top 10% most deprived
Dunclug	93	Top 20% most deprived

Source: NISRA

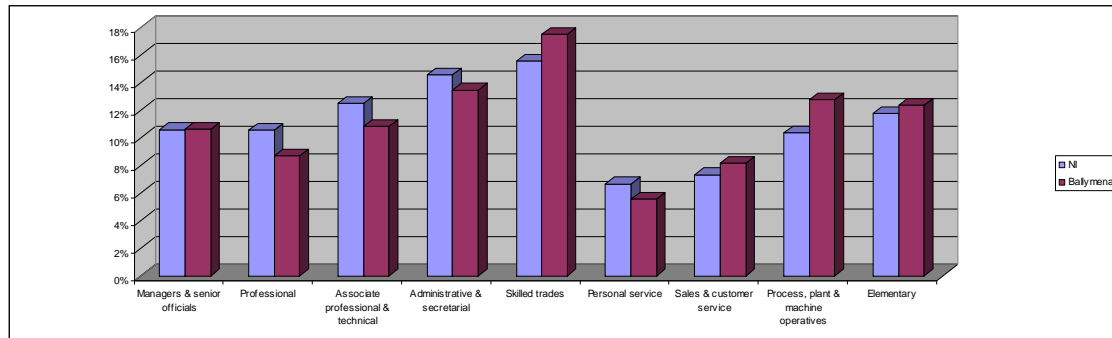
3.2 Labour Market

The 2001 census indicates that Ballymena's occupational structure is fairly representative of the overall structure for NI, with a higher share of skilled trades,

⁶ out of 566 wards in NI where 1 is the most deprived and 566 is the least deprived

administrative and secretarial and process plant and machinery operative occupations. There are low levels of management and professional occupations.

Figure 1: Workplace Occupation Structure



Source: NISRA

The median gross weekly earnings for all employees in NI at April 2006 was £324.70⁷. In order to analyse Ballymena wages it is necessary to look at workplace wages i.e. wages paid by local businesses and resident wages i.e. wages earned by Ballymena residents. Gross weekly earnings of those working in Ballymena are 3% higher comparative to NI as a whole yet the resident wages of those living in Ballymena are 1.5% lower than NI as a whole.

An analysis of wages by gender shows that workplace and resident wages for men are higher in Ballymena than in NI as a whole by 10% and 14% respectively. For women, Ballymena workplace wages are 19% lower than for NI yet resident wages are 14% higher.

3.3 Enterprise and Employment

The total number of employee jobs⁸ in Ballymena District Council area was 29,236 in 2005 and constituted 4.2% of the total jobs in NI. During the period September 2003 to 2005 Ballymena experienced an 8.2% (2,218) rise in employee jobs, well above the NI average of 3.7%. Of the 26 District Councils, Ballymena had the fourth highest jobs increase, behind Magherafelt, Banbridge and Newry & Mourne.

⁷ NI Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, 2006

⁸ Excludes agriculture

In terms of employment structure, a number of key observations can be made:

- Manufacturing (21%), wholesale and retail trade(19%) and real estate, rent and business activities (15%) together account for 55% of total employment within Ballymena;
- Employment within manufacturing and real estate, rent and business activities is greater in Ballymena than in NI as a whole;
- Employment within the health and social work sector is below the NI average;
- Over the period 2003 to 2005, the sectors that have experienced significant employment growth have been other services, transport, storage and communication and education;
- In line with NI performance, Ballymena has experienced a reduction in employee jobs in the public administration and defence sector;
- In terms of manufacturing, by contrast to NI performance, Ballymena has experienced increased employee jobs, albeit a small increase;
- Employment in construction, financial intermediation and hotel and restaurant sectors is below the NI average, with Ballymena experiencing a reduction in employee jobs in the hotel and restaurant sector between 2003 to 2005.

Rates of self employment are higher in Ballymena than the UK average, 9.4% compared to 9.2% and considerably higher than the NI average of 8.1%. It is interesting to compare Ballymena to other local authority areas, for example Belfast 4.4%, Antrim 8.5% and Coleraine 9.1%. This reflects the prevalence and importance of small businesses: agriculture and retail in particular.

3.4 Investment

DETI figures indicate that in 2002 there were 2,265 VAT registered businesses in Ballymena. In terms of composition, a number of key observations can be made:

- 40% of VAT registered businesses within Ballymena are in agriculture;

- Construction (15%), retail (11%) and property and business (8%) are the next most significant industry grouping within Ballymena;
- 59% of VAT registered businesses have a turnover of less than £100,000 per year and 55% do not employ any staff, while 90% employ less than 10 staff.

Table 2 illustrates the level of investment by Invest NI to businesses in Ballymena district during the period 2004 to 2007.

Table 2: Invest NI Business Support

Year	No of Offers	Assistance £m	Investment £m
2004/05	173	4.68	22.93
2005/06	87	0.67	4.32
2006/07 ⁹	93	3.49	18.14
TOTAL	353	8.83	45.39

Source: Invest NI

In total 353 businesses have been supported by Invest NI during the period 2004 to 2007, with a contribution of £8.83 million being invested in the District. Of the 353 business supported, 100 (28%) were existing businesses and 253 (72%) were new businesses. Of the new businesses supported 245 (96%) were locally focused while 8 (4%) were export focused.

Table 3: Invest NI Start Ups by Ballymena District Council Area

Year	Externally Focused	Globally Focused	Locally Focused	Total
2004/05	4	0	95	99
2005/06	1	0	71	72
2006/07 ¹⁰	3	0	79	82
TOTAL	8	0	245	253

Source: Invest NI

Externally focused start ups are those new businesses that have been supported under the Export Start Programme while locally focused start ups are those that have been

⁹ 2006/07 figures are provisional and may be subject to amendment

^{10/9} 2006/07 figures are provisional and may be subject to amendment

funded under the Start a Business Programme, Home Start and Community Business Start. 99% of locally focused start ups have been funded under the Start a Business Programme.

Table 4 illustrates that approximately 2% of all new businesses in NI supported by the Start a Business Programme (2004 to 2006) are within the Ballymena District while table 5 demonstrates a slightly higher performance over the same period for export start businesses.

Table 4: New Businesses Supported by the Start a Business Programme

Year	No of New Business Start Ups		Ballymena % of NI Total
	NI	Ballymena District	
2004/05	3,803	93	2.4%
2005/06	3,427	71	2.0%
Total	7,230	164	2.2%

Source: Invest NI

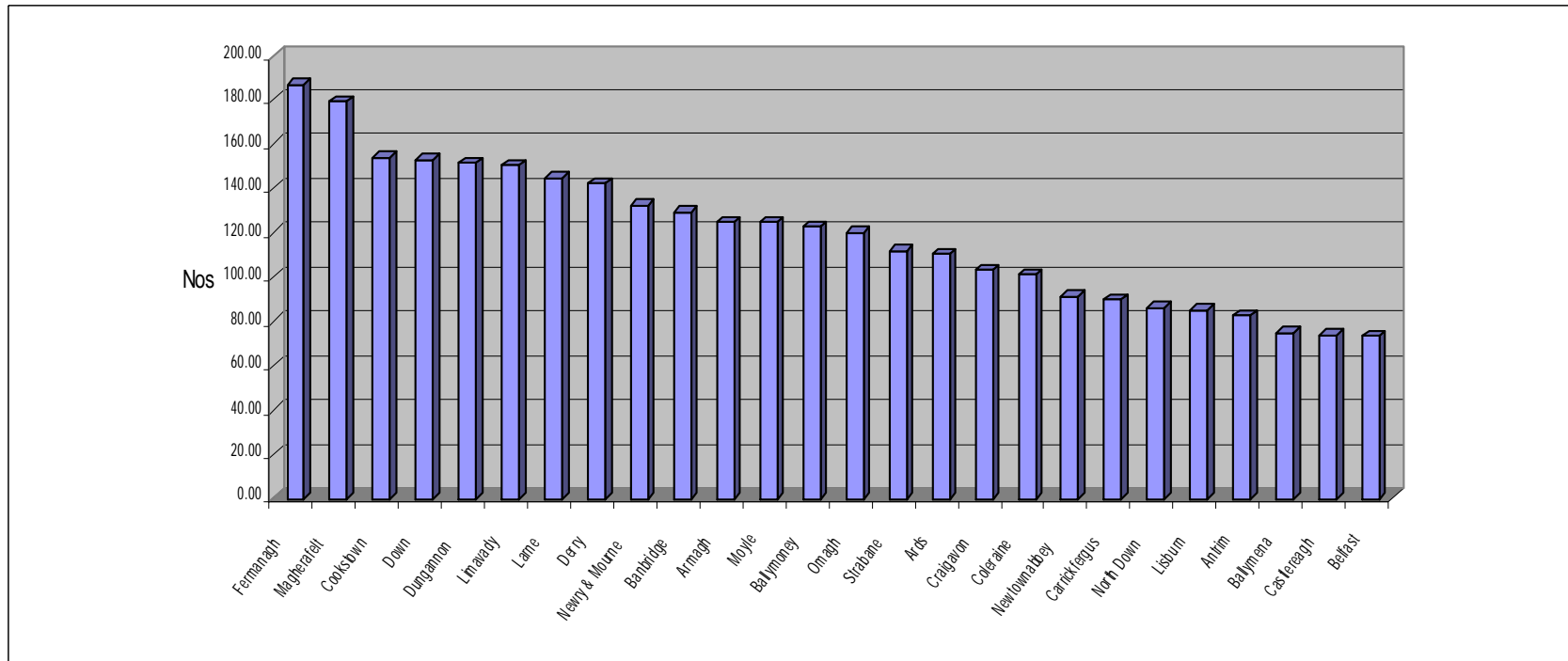
Table 5: New Businesses Supported by the Export Start Programme

Year	No of New Business Start Ups		Ballymena % of NI Total
	NI	Ballymena District	
2004/05	82	4	4.8%
2005/06	44	1	2.2%
Total	126	5	3.9%

Source: Invest NI

Figure 2 illustrates that Ballymena District is ranked 24th out of 26 local authority areas with regard to Start a Business Programme approvals during the period 2002 to 2007 per 10,000 adult population. Fermanagh at number 1 has 186 Business Start approvals per head of adult population compared to Ballymena which has 74.

Figure 2: Invest NI Start a Business Programme Approvals by District Council Area Per Head of Adult Population 2002/03 to 2006/07¹¹



Source: Invest NI

¹¹ Figures for 2006/07 are provisional and may be subject to amendment

3.5 Tourism

Ballymena is within the Causeway Coast and Glens tourism district and in 2005 benefited from 72,200 tourist trips, 2.3% of the total to NI, 306,100 tourist nights, 2.5% of the NI total and £11 million tourism spend, 2.4% of the total spend in NI.

Table 6: Tourism Performance

Year	Trips		Nights		Spend	
	(000)	%	(000)	%	(£ million)	%
2002	73.9	2.7	322.7	2.9	9.5	2.4
2003	77.3	2.5	347.9	2.8	10.3	2.5
2004	78.9	2.6	315.8	2.7	11.4	2.7
2005 ¹²	72.2	2.3	306.1	2.5	11.0	2.4

Source: NITB

NITB Local Authority tourism estimates for the period 2002 to 2004 show that the Borough has exhibited below average performance with regard to the number of tourist trips and bed nights but has performed well above average with regard to tourism spend over the period.

Table 7: Tourism Performance 2002 - 2004

	Performance 2002 – 2004		
	Trips	Nights	Spend
Ballymena	6.7%	-2.1%	20%
Causeway Coast & Glens	10.8%	5.8%	2.9%
NI	8.7%	4.9%	8.5%

Source: NITB

In 2002 the average spend per trip in Ballymena was below the average for the tourism region and for NI but by 2004 Ballymena spend per trip is above average.

¹² Due to a change in the survey methodology relating to domestic trips, the above figures cannot be compared to any previous year.

3.6 SWOT Analysis

Table 8 summarises the key opportunities and challenges facing Ballymena.

Table 8: SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ballymena is recognised as a regional hub (Shaping Our Future) • High numbers in work • Low numbers on JSA • Strong centre of manufacturing • Not overly reliant on public sector jobs • High percentage of people in self employment • World leading companies located within the Borough including Michelin and Gallaghers • Ballymena town is a strong retail centre • Growing population • Close proximity to International Airport, Motorway, Belfast Port and City 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Largely poorly qualified workforce • 2 large manufacturers employing large numbers of local people. Constant threat of relocation! • Tourism spend is inflated as it is primarily retail spend, bed nights continue to be poor • Poor educational attainment levels • Ballymena suffers from an image problem • Uncertainties provided by the Review of Public Administration • Lack of coordination between government departments, local authority and local delivery organisations • Limited use of events to attract people into Ballymena and its surrounds • Shortage of available land and premises for high quality and prestige occupiers • 2 Neighbourhood Renewal Areas characterised by high levels of economic, social and environmental deprivation • Town Centre development requires reinvigoration

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination of economic development services within Ballymena • Development of Northern Regional College as a centre of excellence • Support the development of a tri-partite relationship between Northern Regional College, University of Ulster and Ballymena Borough Council • Key development opportunities including ECOS site, Bridge Street, Alexander Street, Tower Centre , St Patrick's Barricks and Ballee West site etc. • Enhanced promotion of enterprise and entrepreneurship within Ballymena • Workforce Development particularly at Michelin and Gallagher's • Enhancement and promotion of existing enterprise and business development programmes • Development of events programme for Ballymena which attracts visitors into Ballymena • Development of new hotels located within the Borough • Promotion of Ballymena as a place for inward investment • Supporting the development of national and international relationships which help redress image issue and explore economic benefits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fragmentation without co-operation • Piecemeal planning and delivery of enterprise and business support services • Loss of established businesses, in particular Michelin or Gallagher's without an exit strategy being considered • Agriculture and rural decline • Labour and skills shortages • Lack of engagement with small businesses • Continued growth of Belfast as a retail centre will threaten Ballymena's position • Delays in new area plan and resolution of key planning issues eg. PPS14

4. Strategic Aim & Objectives

4.1 Strategic Aim

The overall aim of the Ballymena Economic Development Strategy 2007-2013 is to create:

“A competitive local economy built on an entrepreneurial culture, recognised as the economic driver of the north-east region with improved access to quality employment opportunities for all”

4.2 Strategic Objectives

- **To support and develop new and existing businesses.**
- **To develop and enhance tourism and commercial business opportunities in Ballymena town and surrounding villages.**
- **To help people to fulfil their potential and promote learning opportunities.**
- **To promote Ballymena as a premier Northern Ireland location.**

4.3 Defining the Objectives

Strategic Objective 1: To support and develop new and existing businesses.

New business start-ups, indigenous business growth and new inward investment are three approaches for creating jobs and prosperity in any locality. Ballymena must strive to provide local conditions which support business start-ups, reward and support business growth, whilst attracting new inward investment into the local area. Business and enterprise development is fundamental to sustainable growth in Ballymena.

Strategic Objective 2: To develop and enhance tourism and commercial business opportunities in Ballymena town and surrounding villages.

Ballymena town has grown from being a market town in mid Antrim to its current position as the main retail centre for the north east region. In terms of performance and attractiveness, the town was ranked 3rd highest behind Belfast and Londonderry by both Experian (2002) and Management Horizons (2003). Given that the town is only the 9th largest in terms of population, it is clearly performing well. However, there is also an acceptance that Ballymena and surrounding towns and villages could be performing

better if there was a more coordinated, strategic approach to development. In addition the Northern Ireland Programme for Government identifies tourism as the key growth sector within the economy. Ballymena must ensure that it grasps the opportunities provided through tourism growth and development.

Strategic Objective 3: To help people to fulfil their potential and promote learning opportunities.

The Northern Ireland economy has been transformed over the past decade or more. There are more people in jobs and more women, lone parents and disabled working than ever before. The mass unemployment that blighted Northern Ireland in the 1970s and 1980s is now a fading memory. Yet there are stubborn barriers to achieving full employment (UK Government target) and the Northern Ireland target established within the Draft Programme for Government of 75% employment rate in 2020. Ballymena has 3,942 residents receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA is payable to people who are disabled and who have personal care needs, mobility needs or both) which equates to 6.5% of total population (Feb 2007 DSD), has 2,097 recipients of Attendance Allowance (Attendance Allowance is a benefit for people who are so severely disabled, physically or mentally, that they need someone with them to help with personal care) which equates to 22.6% of the population (Feb 2007, DSD). Finally, there are 733 people in receipt of Carer's Allowance (Carer's Allowance is a non-contributory benefit for men and women who look after a severely disabled person for at least 35 hours a week, who are not gainfully employed and not in full-time education) which equates to 1.5% of the total resident population.

In addition it is important to recognize that in spite of a high employment rate and low JSA claimant count, Ballymena also has a low skills base. At the time of 2001 census, the percentage of people in Ballymena with no qualifications or Level 1 skills was 61% of the resident population. This must be of major concern for the local authority and relevant government agencies. In times of economic recession it is the very same people with low / no skills that are most at risk of redundancy and unemployment. This is compounded locally by the existence of a small number of large international companies who employ significant numbers of local people. If these companies were to relocate it would have a significant impact upon the local economy.

Strategic Objective 4: To promote Ballymena as a premier Northern Ireland location.

Ballymena has many strengths which it needs to build upon. It is recognized as a regional hub within the Regional Development Strategy and is identified for continued economic growth and development. Undoubtedly, the council area has suffered as a result of its image over the years, much of which is unmerited. The council has a requirement under its civic leadership role to promote a more positive image of the Borough, to help attract visitors and investors alike into the Borough and to develop external linkages which can help bring civic, social, educational and economic benefits to the residents of Ballymena Borough.

Strategic Compliance between Ballymena Borough Economic Development Strategy and Policy Framework

<i>Ballymena Economic Development Strategy</i>	<i>Objective 1: To support and develop new and existing businesses.</i>	<i>Objective 2: To develop and enhance tourism and commercial business opportunities in Ballymena town and surrounding villages.</i>	<i>Objective 3: To help people to fulfil their potential and promote learning opportunities.</i>	<i>Objective 4: To promote Ballymena as a premier Northern Ireland location.</i>
<i>Lisbon strategy for growth and competitiveness</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>NI Programme for Government 2008-2011</i>	✓	✓	✓	
<i>NI Investment Strategy 2008-2018</i>		✓		✓
<i>NI Competitiveness & Employment Objective 2007-2013</i>	✓		✓	
<i>NI Economic Vision</i>	✓	✓	✓	
<i>NI Skills Strategy</i>			✓	
<i>NI Rural Development Programme</i>	✓	✓		
<i>NI Regional Development Strategy</i>		✓		✓

5.1 Action Plan 2007-2010

Objective 1: To support and develop new and existing businesses.						
Target	Potential Actions	Process	Outputs	Potential sources of funding	Costs £	Timescale
1.1 To develop and support sustainable, profitable business start-ups	Invest NI fund the Start a Business Programme . Ballymena Economic Task Group has the opportunity to enhance the existing programme or tailor it to better match local needs.	Commence discussions with Invest NI and Ballymena Business Centre to explore avenues for enhancing the Start a Business programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 10 additional start ups per annum in Ballymena ▪ Increase in percentage of self employed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ballymena Borough Council /LED 	£30,000 p.a.	Year 1-3
1.2 Increase in the business survival rate	Provide (free of charge) a Business Health Check service to existing SME's within Ballymena Borough and take remedial actions where required.	Tailor and adapt existing business health check models and promote extensively to SME's within Ballymena,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 20 SME's per annum provided business health checks ▪ 10 SME's per annum provided additional support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ballymena Borough Council / LED 	£50,000 p.a. £20,000	Year 1-3 Year 2-3
1.3 Increase business growth within the Borough	Provide a suite of business development programmes which support business growth and expansion.	To commission bespoke programmes which deliver support to up to 12 local SME's per annum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 12 existing businesses supported ▪ Increase in turnover, profitability and job creation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ballymena Borough Council /LED 	£30,000 p.a	Year 1-3
1.4 To increase the number of sustainable rural enterprises.	Develop and promote a 'Farm Diversification Programme' in Ballymena.	Draw up a terms of reference, tender and appoint a delivery agent to provide a farm diversification programme in Ballymena.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 12 new farm diversification enterprises established per annum ▪ 8 new jobs created 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DARD's Rural Development Programme 	£30,000 p.a.	Year 1-3

Objective 1: To support and develop new and existing businesses.						
Target	Potential Actions	Process	Outputs	Potential sources of funding	Costs £	Timescale
1.5 Increase in the number of people entering or considering self employment	The Economic Task Group to agree innovative programmes which encourage and support people with business ideas to move into self employment.	Agree a terms of reference, procure a delivery agent to provide programme. Future programmes might target the FE sector, women, social enterprises etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An increase in the number of people considering self employment ▪ An increase in the numbers of people entering into self employment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ballymena Borough Council / LED 	£20,000 p.a.	Year 1-3
1.6 To increase the number of SME's utilising knowledge based technologies as a business development tool	To provide knowledge and economy based SME development programmes targeted at local SME's.	Agree a terms of reference, procure a delivery agent to provide programme (s).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase in the number of local SME's utilising knowledge transfer technologies ▪ Increase in turnover, profitability and job creation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ballymena Borough Council /LED 	£50,000 p.a.	Year 1-3
1.7 A more competitive outward looking economy	To develop and deliver export programmes targeted at suitable SME's within the Borough.	Agree a terms of reference, procure a delivery agent to provide programme (s).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase in the number of local SME's exporting profitability ▪ Increase in turnover, and job creation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ballymena Borough Council /LED 	£35,000 p.a.	Year 1-3

Objective 2: To develop and enhance tourism and commercial opportunities in Ballymena town and surrounding villages.

Target	Potential Actions	Process	Outputs	Potential sources of funding	Costs £	Timescale
2.1 To provide an agreed Master plan for Ballymena town	DSD has recently commissioned a master plan for Ballymena town centre . The master plan will provide an overarching framework for the regeneration of the town.	To ensure the master plan process is inclusive and takes into account the concerns and ideas of local traders, developers and stakeholders. To share the resultant master plan with Ballymena Economic Task Group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shared Vision for Ballymena Town ▪ Regeneration and investment priorities established 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dept. for Social Development 	n/a	Year 1
2.2 Support Ballymena Town Business Improvement District.	Work in partnership with Ballymena Town Centre Partnership to support and assist with the current BID	To resource the work of the existing town centre partnership, establish a formal linkage between town centre partnership and the Economic Task Group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ballymena BID delivered ▪ Regeneration of Ballymena town accelerated ▪ Partnership approach enshrined in delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ballymena Borough Council ▪ Dept. for Social Development 	£50,000 p.a.	Year 1-3
2.3 To enhance the physical appearance of Ballymena town.	To deliver a Public Realm Enhancement Programme .	To secure funding from government and council. Develop funding criteria, promote and manage scheme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 5 projects per annum supported ▪ Enhanced environment which supports regeneration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dept. for Social Development ▪ Ballymena Borough Council 	£50,000 p.a.	Year 2-3

Objective 2: To develop and enhance tourism and commercial business opportunities in Ballymena town and surrounding villages.

Target	Potential Actions	Process	Outputs	Potential sources of funding	Costs £	Timescale
2.4 Maximising the benefit of major physical regeneration projects.	Early awareness and wide spread consultation on large regeneration projects.	Ensure these developments allow local businesses and surrounding communities full opportunity to grasp benefits of major change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Greater understanding of local regeneration projects ▪ Community buy-in 	n/a	n/a	Year 2-3
2.5 Development of evening economy	Investigate opportunities for evening economy.	Commission research and action plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Report with concrete proposals for taking forward the evening economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ballymena Borough Council 	£25,000	Year 3
2.6 Promotion and development of the ECOS Innovation Centre.	BCC to appoint an Enterprise Manager with responsibility for leading the ECOS Innovation Centre and raising awareness of entrepreneurship.	BCC to recruit Enterprise Manager.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appointment of an Enterprise Manager ▪ Proactive and strategic development of the ECOS Innovation Centre. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ballymena Borough Council / LED 	£ 50,000 p.a.	Year 1-3
2.7 Promotion and development of the ECOS Innovation Centre with a focus on marketing.	Resources are required in order to market the ECOS Innovation Centre. This programme provides additional resources.	ECOS Enterprise Manager to produce a development brief for the site and proactively market it locally, nationally and internationally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Production of a Development Brief ▪ Marketing and promotional campaign ▪ Secure new development at the ECOS Innovation Centre. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ballymena Borough Council / LED ▪ Private Sector 	£50,000 p.a.	Year 1-3

Objective 2: To develop and enhance tourism and commercial business opportunities in Ballymena town and surrounding villages.

Target	Potential Actions	Process	Outputs	Potential sources of funding	Costs £	Timescale
2.8 To enhance the physical environment of the villages within Ballymena Borough	To develop, promote, manage and monitor a Villages Environmental Enhancement Programme.	To commission consultants to develop a village environmental enhancement programme and submit to Rural Development Programme for funding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 3 major Environmental Enhancement Programme per annum ▪ Regeneration of the villages within Ballymena Borough greatly enhanced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DARD's Rural Development Programme 	£250,000	Year 1-3
2.9 To develop the tourism offer / product within Ballymena Borough	To develop, promote, manage and monitor a Product Tourism Development Programme.	To coordinate existing tourism providers / community representatives to agree a development programme (utilising existing Ballymena Tourism Strategy) and submit to Rural Development Programme for funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Greater number of visitors to the villages within Ballymena Borough ▪ Economic regeneration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DARD's Rural Development Programme 	£200,000	Year 1-3

Objective 3: To help people to fulfil their potential and promote learning opportunities.						
Target	Potential Actions	Process	Outputs	Potential sources of funding	Costs £	Timescale
3.1 Raise educational attainment within the Borough.	Establish an ' Education & Skills Working Group ' with a remit to develop an Action Plan to address education standards. The Working Group will be time bound and tasked with 1 action – the establishment of an Education & Skills Action Plan.	Establish an 'Education & Skills Working Group' comprising of key stakeholders. Commission the production of an Action Plan which establishes steps to address educational under achievement within Ballymena.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agreed actions which address the underlying problems with educational underachievement within Ballymena ▪ Government buy-in ▪ Greater awareness of issue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ballymena Borough Council ▪ DENI ▪ DELNI 	£25,000	Year 1
3.2 Target pockets of long term unemployment / high levels of economic inactivity within Ballymena	Ballymena has a number of neighbourhoods with high concentrations of JSA, economic inactivity. There is an opportunity to pilot an Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) approach within these three target areas.	Develop a terms of reference, circulate and appoint a delivery agent to provide an ILM programme in Dunclug, Ballykeel and Ballee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 20 LTU into sustainable employment ▪ Decrease in JSA / IB / DLA claimants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DSD NRP 	£70,000 p.a.	Year 2-3
3.3 Enhance the skills level of those in employment	Support and enhance the work of the Workforce Development Forum .	Agree with the North East Workforce Development Forum an action plan (specific to Ballymena) which can be used to draw down resources for the provision of workforce training courses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 50 people in employment per annum obtain additional skills / qualifications ▪ Greater skills base within Ballymena ▪ Less numbers of residents at Level I or no qualifications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ballymena Borough Council ▪ Department for Employment & Learning 	£50,000 p.a.	Year 2-3

Objective 3: To help people to fulfil their potential and promote learning opportunities.

Target	Potential Actions	Process	Outputs	Potential sources of funding	Costs £	Timescale
3.4 A better qualified and skilled agricultural base	Provide a training programme tailored to meet the needs of the local farming community.	Draw up a terms of reference and appoint a delivery agent to provide training support to farmers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 8 people per annum from the farming community undertake training ▪ Enhancement of the skills base within farming community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rural Development Programme. 	£30,000 p.a.	Year 2-3
3.5 Support the integration of migrant labour into the local labour market.	Support skills for work based approaches for migrant workers entering the local labour market.	Work with existing providers including DEL to provide outreach services to the growing migrant community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enhanced employment skills of migrant workers in Ballymena 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ballymena Borough Council. ▪ DEL 	£10,000 p.a.	Year 1-3
3.6 A better skilled, motivated young workforce	Support the development of skills / employability of young people (18-28).	Draw up a terms of reference and appoint a delivery agent to provide a programme (similar to the Wider Horizons Programme)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 12 young people per annum participate on programme ▪ Employability skills enhanced ▪ 8 enter into full time education / employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ballymena Borough Council ▪ IFI 	£50,000 p.a.	Year 1-3

Objective 4: To promote Ballymena as a premier Northern Ireland location.

Target	Potential Actions	Process	Outputs	Potential sources of funding	Costs £	Timescale
4.1 To enhance the image of Ballymena	Develop a communications strategy which provides a strategic framework for the marketing & promotion of Ballymena.	Commission a communications strategy and implement its recommendations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Perceptions of Ballymena change ▪ Ballymena identified as outward looking, forward thinking region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ballymena Borough Council 	£25,000 p.a.	Year 1 - 3
4.2 To enhance the image of Ballymena through the development of the Tourism Product to a recognised national and international standard.	To appoint a Product Development Officer to support the development of the tourism product to attract visitors and local people alike.	Agree job description, advertise and recruit new events coordinator.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appointment of a Product Development Officer ▪ Development of an annual events programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ballymena Borough Council. 	£35,000 p.a.	Year 1-3
4.3 To enhance the image of Ballymena through the development of the Tourism Product to a recognised national and international standard.	To provide additional resources to support an enhanced Tourism Product in Ballymena.	Develop a Tourism Product Plan and secure a 3 year commitment from council for funding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 2/3 existing initiatives supported per annum ▪ 1 new initiative supported per annum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ballymena Borough Council ▪ DARD's Rural Development Programme 	£50,000 p.a.	Year 2-3

Objective 4: To promote Ballymena as a premier Northern Ireland location.

Target	Potential Actions	Process	Outputs	Potential sources of funding	Costs £	Timescale
4.4 To support existing and develop new linkages with other areas to develop economic development opportunities for Ballymena.	Continue to support existing local, national and international linkages with a view to promoting Ballymena as centre of commerce, culture and community cohesion.	Review all external relationships and networks with a focus on their economic potential.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1 overseas visit supported per annum ▪ 1 new linkage established during programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ballymena Borough Council 	£20,000 p.a.	Year 1-3
4.5 Increase the number of tourist bed nights spent in Ballymena.	Develop a promotional package and campaign targeted at attracting quality budget hotel chains .	Commission research and promotional materials which can be used to target hotel chains into the Borough.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1 new budget hotel attracted into Ballymena Borough ▪ Increase in overnight stays / visitor numbers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ballymena Borough Council 	£10,000 p.a.	Year 1-3
4.6 Increase the level of economic activity throughout the Borough.	Establish a database which identifies opportunities for business expansion / key industrial sites within Ballymena Borough.	Ballymena Economic Task Group to commission a feasibility study which looks at the needs for industrial / commercial sites and land throughout the Borough.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Database established ▪ Promotion of key sites to developers ▪ New business attracted into Borough 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ballymena Borough Council 	£15,000	Year 2
4.7 Ballymena secures its fair share of investment.	Ensure that quality information is available to the prospective investor including a property register, staff recruitment information, available grants, houses, leisure info..	Commission quality inward investment materials , ensure website is kept up to date and enquires are dealt with in a professional manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ballymena Economic Task Group ▪ Invest NI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ballymena Borough Council 	£50,000	Year 1-3

Objective 4: To promote Ballymena as a premier Northern Ireland location.

Target	Potential Actions	Process	Outputs	Potential sources of funding	Costs £	Timescale
4.8 Enhanced local government.	To commence discussions with neighbouring local authorities in the run up to the implementation of the Review of Public Administration .	Establish an economic development discussion group, meet regularly and share information / plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ballymena proactively engages in RPA debate ▪ New local government body established in North East. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ballymena Borough Council 	N/A	Year 2-3

5.2 Costs

Project Title	Total Costs	Potential sources of funding	Council contribution
Objective 1: To support and develop new and existing businesses			
1.1 Start a Business Programme	£ 90,000	LED	£ 45,000
1.2 Business Health Check	£150,000	LED	£ 75,000
Additional support	£40,000	LED	£ 20,000
1.3 Business Development Programme	£ 90,000	LED	£ 45,000
1.4 Farm Diversification	£90,000	NI Rural Development Programme	n/a
1.5 Innovative Programmes	£ 60,000	LED	£ 30,000
1.6 Knowledge & Transfer Technology Programmes	£150,000	LED	£ 75,000
1.7 Export Programmes	£105,000	LED	£ 52,500
Sub-total	£775,000		£342,500
Objective 2: To develop and enhance tourism and commercial opportunities in Ballymena town and surrounding villages.			
2.1 Ballymena Masterplan	n/a	DSD	n/a
2.2 Ballymena Town Centre Partnership	£150,000	DSD	£100,000
2.3 Public Realm Programme	£150,000	DSD	£ 50,000
2.4 Consultation of large regeneration projects	n/a		n/a
2.5 Evening economy research	£ 25,000	LED	£ 12,500
2.6 Enterprise Manager	£150,000	LED	£ 75,000
2.7 Ecos Innovation Centre Programme	£150,000	LED	£ 75,000
2.8 Villages Environmental Enhancement Programme	£250,000	DARD Rural Dev Prog	n/a
2.9 Villages Tourism Development Programme	£200,000	DARD Rural Dev Prog	n/a
Sub-total	£1,075,000		£ 312,500

Objective 3: To help people to fulfil their potential and promote learning opportunities.			
3.1 Education & Skills Working Group	£ 25,000	LED	£ 12,500
3.2 ILM Programme	£210,000	DSD Neighbourhood Renewal Prog	£ 45,000
3.3 Workforce Development Forum	£150,000	DEL	£150,000
3.4 Farm Training Programme	£90,000	DARD Rural Dev Prog	N/A
3.5 Migrant labour programme	£ 30,000	DEL	£ 30,000
3.6 Overseas Work Placements	£150,000	IFI	£ 75,000
Sub-total	£655,000		£312,500
Objective 4: To promote Ballymena as a premier Northern Ireland location.			
4.1 Communications Strategy	£ 75,000		£ 75,000
4.2 Product Development Officer	£105,000		£105,000
4.3 Events Programme	£150,000	DARD Rural Dev Prog	£100,000
4.4 Local, national and international linkages	£ 60,000		£ 60,000
4.5 Attraction of a quality budget hotel	£ 30,000		£ 30,000
4.6 Opportunity Sites	£ 15,000		£ 15,000
4.7 Inward Investment Marketing Materials	£ 50,000	LED	£ 25,000
4.8 Review of Public Administration	n/a		n/a
Sub-total	£485,000		£410,000
TOTAL	£2,990,000		£1,377,500

6. Delivering the Strategy

It is important to stress that the action plan relates to the period 2007-2010, and will be followed by a further three year action plan covering the period 2010-2013. Taking forward the action plan will require an integrated and partnership approach. Ballymena Borough Council does not have either the responsibility or the resources to address a number of the issues identified within the action plan. For this reason, we have proposed the establishment of the 'Ballymena Economic Task Group' which will be responsible for managing and monitoring the delivery of the economic development strategy.

The delivery of the economic development strategy is dependent on the ability of local and national partners to agree collective priorities and to commit to the long-term implementation of these priorities. Clearly, a strong culture of co-operation and partnership is already established in Ballymena and the north-east as clearly evident from the Local Strategy Partnership, LEADER+ group, Causeway Coast and Glens RTT and the Northern Workforce Development Forum. This provides the foundations for a greater degree of joint working.

A trawl of best practice case studies highlights the need for effective local economic development structures to be established. The ILO Working Paper, 'Overview and learned lessons on Local Economic Development, Human Development and Decent Work', 2001 stated:

"In local economic development processes implementation structures are needed for making effective the realisation of the objectives, strategies and plans shared by the local actors, enabling their transformation into concrete projects, and into business proposal or orientation. In the absence of such structures the management of local networks and coordination is difficult and risks being chaotic."

The OCED-LEED, "Best Practices in local economic development" 2000, report recommended:

"Initially local development structures need to be created, involving the creation or nomination of a lead agency, the recruitment and training of managers and development

workers and the establishment of partnership mechanisms with other local agencies. The creation of a functional structure, or Local Economic Development Agency, is likely to contribute to success. Such a structure will likely establish an identity and visibility for the local development initiatives and act as a vehicle for communication between partners and interest groups. It is also helpful if the structure has a degree of autonomy from political pressures so that it may develop a long-term strategy rather than be forced to respond to short term priorities”.

The Ballymena Economic Task Group should be responsible to, but yet independent of council. It is proposed that the Task Group meet regularly to manage and monitor the Economic Development Strategy. It will be responsible for coming up with its own recommendations which will then be brought to Ballymena Borough Council for ratification in the form of a council report. It is important that sound information channels are established between council and the Task Group. Council should consider seeking an input from the Task Group when appropriate, for example if council were asked for a view on economic or employment policy.

Membership of the Economic Task Group should be kept to a maximum of fifteen members. One such model highlighted below shows:

Ballymena Economic Task Group	
Ballymena Borough Council	2 x nominated council members
Ballymena Borough Council	1 x Chief Executive or Director
Invest NI	1 x Regional Manager
Department of Employment & Learning	1 x Senior Manager
Department for Education Northern Ireland	1 x Senior Manager
Department for Social Development	1 x Regional Manager
Northern Regional College	1 X Chief Executive or Director
Ballymena Business Centre	1 X Chief Executive or Board Member
Workforce Development Forum	1 x representative
Private Sector	5 x Private sector nominations
Total	15 Members

It is essential that the Task Group focuses on priorities which warrant collective action, either in avoiding duplication or where planning and / or delivery of initiatives at the local level adds significant value.

In taking forward the economic development strategy, it will be important to build in a regular review of progress and to ensure that strategic objectives and associated actions continue to be justified. Furthermore, implementation of the actions will involve a more complex and involved process of partnership working, which will include commitment of human and financial resources.