

November 2009

Comments on the Published IREP from Londonderry Chamber of Commerce

- Commend the Minister for establishing this review which is direct response to concerns expressed by business organizations such as Londonderry Chamber of Commerce.
- Welcome in particular the emphasis on Innovation and R&D. The focus on higher value added jobs for the people of Northern Ireland is entirely the right way to approach economic policy and fits very well with the emerging outcomes from the Derry's regeneration plans.
- Agree with the recommendation that INI and DETI should become more flexible in how support is provided and hope that this move away from programme and compliance based support to a much more entrepreneurial and less risk adverse approach can be speedily introduced. The Chamber in Derry are particularly pleased that this has been addressed in the report given their input which said,

“A considerable amount of our feedback from members centered on the high levels of bureaucracy, slow response times to queries and perceived disincentive to business to take any level of risk. Some smaller member companies who had previously been served by the LEDU suggest that Invest N I is much less flexible in it's approach with much less delegated authority to client managers.”

- Endorse the focus on supply chain integration for smaller companies which will be extremely important for our members and support in developing strong export markets is also of critical importance.
- Welcome the realignment of the education system to meet demand for STEM.
- Welcome the sense of common purpose and the proposed merger of DEL and DETI economic functions and giving the next ISNI greater economic focus.
- Areas of concern include:
 - The phasing out of grants to business which do not relate to R&D and the reduction of support for company training. We need to be careful not to make Northern Ireland uncompetitive in the global space. For the NW, the way these recommendations are implemented will be of critical importance.
 - The lack of importance given to infrastructure as being a key component of economic success
 - Another area of concern that the Chamber had put forward is that within the suite of economic policies and throughout the DETI Corporate plan is the lack of emphasis on Balanced Regional Development. Despite the existence for some years now of a spatial strategy for Northern Ireland and Regional Development Strategy that identifies Derry as the Hub and Regional Capital of the NW, the potential of a key city such as Derry and its cross-border hinterland to contribute to the achievement of the PFG productivity goal members feel is largely ignored. At a strategic level, the Chamber feels this is of critical importance if NI is to achieve real and meaningful success in narrowing the productivity gap. A strong NI needs a strong NW.
 - We would like to have seen more emphasis on this regional aspect

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