



YEAR 1 PROGRESS REVIEW

The Framework of Regional
Priorities, 2021/2027



The Framework of Regional Priorities

2



The 'Framework of Regional Priorities for the Central Border Region of Ireland / Northern Ireland, 2021/2027' (FRP) is a strategic initiative for the advancement of our regional cross-border economy.

Published in March 2021, the FRP recognises key geopolitical, economic and social challenges impacting upon the Region, including Brexit, climate change and the COVID-19 Pandemic, and sets out how cross-border collaborative working can respond to these.

The Framework presents a strategic response that is both unique and tailored to the assets and characteristics of this particular region. In working together to advance the regional priorities, the Central Border area can become a *thriving, resilient, vibrant, and diversified region*.

The initiative has been driven by the cross-border partnership, the Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) Ltd., working on behalf of its eight member Councils in the area known as the Central Border Region. Those member Councils are Armagh City Banbridge & Craigavon, Cavan, Donegal, Fermanagh and Omagh, Leitrim, Mid Ulster, Monaghan and Sligo.

Launch Event 24th March 2021

The strategy document was launched virtually on 24th March 2021, featuring addresses by the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O'Brien TD, and Minister for Infrastructure, Nichola Mallon MLA.

Since then, ICBAN, together with its member Councils and a host of stakeholders have been implementing various initiatives and projects, including the featured Catalyst Projects.



Members of ICBAN Board and staff with Chair Cllr. David Maxwell (Centre front), Vice Chair Cllr. Sam Nicholson (front left) and immediate Past Chair Cllr. Eamon Mc Neill (front second from left).

ICBAN has established an FRP Sub-Committee with the aim of supporting the strategic work programme, through overseeing and adding an additional focus and impetus to the delivery of the regional priorities. The work of the Council Senior Officers' Forum complements these efforts in bringing together Council Directors on high-level strategic factors impacting on the regional area.

The Purpose of this Progress Report

This Year 1 Progress Review is in keeping with the organisation's pledge to be open and transparent with regard to delivery of the Framework and its ambitions. Updates are provided here across the key Pillars / Themes of the strategy, on the Emergent Catalyst Projects, a range of developing projects and other initiatives, and various cross-cutting outputs and impacts across the thematic areas.

3

River Catchments Catalyst Project

A working group of key stakeholders has been set up to focus on the poor and bad water engagement issues facing both Upper and Lower Lough Mac Nean traversing Cavan, Fermanagh and Leitrim. The group has met regularly.



A community engagements / citizens science element of the wider project has been commenced with funding support from the Department of Foreign Affairs' Reconciliation Fund. Entitled as **'Border Transition'**, this innovative cross-border and cross-community project is focused on 6 cross-border communities across Cavan, Fermanagh and Leitrim. At least 50 people in the area are to be involved and will receive expert support and guidance to develop solutions that promote community wealth and well-being, whilst being climate / environmentally friendly.

At the end of the project, the needs and solutions expressed by the communities will be brought together to develop a future vision for the area. The findings can inform future funding bids as well as providing a model that can be adapted by other cross-border communities.



Farm to Fork Catalyst Project

A Food Tourism study of the area has been completed by QUB Intern, Ms. Callahan Moore. The study is entitled, **Farm to Fork: Strengthening and Developing Agri-Food Initiatives in the Central Border Region.**

An initial agri-profile of the area has also been developed.

A Working Group of member Councils has been set up to discuss common climate friendly farming / biodiversity initiatives that might be progressed on a regional and cross-border basis.

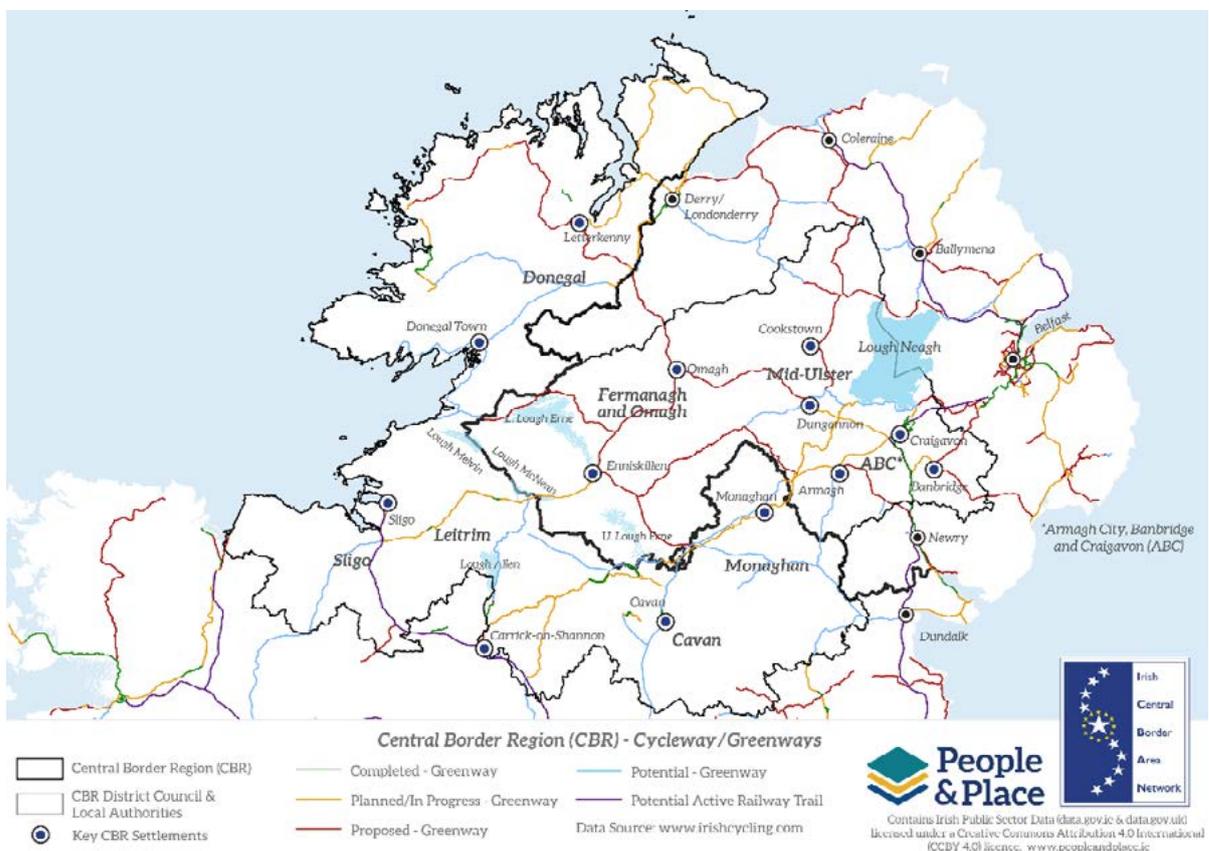


4

Greenways and Blueways Masterplan Catalyst Project

A number of Greenways Cross-Border Development Priorities have been agreed by the ICBAN Board. These, along with the opportunity to promote a Greenways Vision from Sligo to Belfast via both the SLNCR and Ulster Canal Greenways routes under development, are being promoted as part of a Greenways Masterplan for the cross-border region.

A spec and mapping illustration of the opportunities have been completed.



ICBAN continues to advocate to both governments and key stakeholders about the merits of such a joined-up Masterplan.

Mountain Biking Catalyst Project

A scoping study is currently being produced by ICBAN to examine the opportunities for a regionally and nationally significant project or initiative of scale.

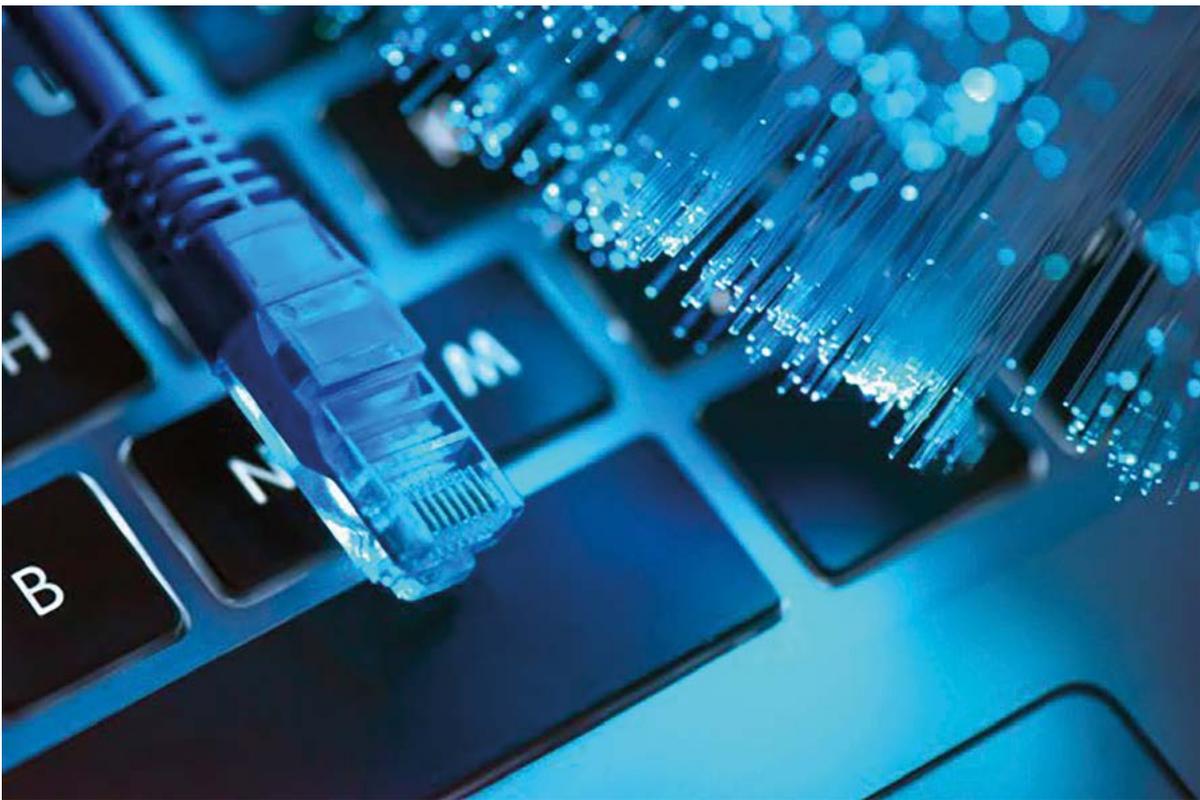


Ulster Canal Promotion

ICBAN is engaging with 5 Councils along the route of the original Ulster Canal, in promoting the original vision of the Canal from Clones to Lough Neagh. Funding opportunities are being followed-up to progress a new business case.

QUB Intern Ms. Laura Sierociuk is currently undertaking a review into opportunities to re-examine the business case anew.

Broadband Infrastructure Advocacy



ICBAN's has produced a series of reports on **broadband infrastructure opportunities** between 2017-2019. The findings of these reports have been supported by NI Audit Office and Stormont Public Accounts Committee, with a PAC Report in March 2022 calling for £14 million clawback, to support broadband delivery in NI.

A similar case has since been made to the Irish Comptroller & Auditor General for an audit.

Human Capital Pillar

A Partnership / Steering Group has been set up between Atlantic Technological University, Southern Regional College, South West College, Cavan and Monaghan Education & Training Board, Donegal Education & Training Board, Mayo Sligo Leitrim Education & Training Board and ICBAN. An initial 4 priority projects have been identified and working groups are being set up between the educational institutions to advance these.



General Promotion and Advocacy

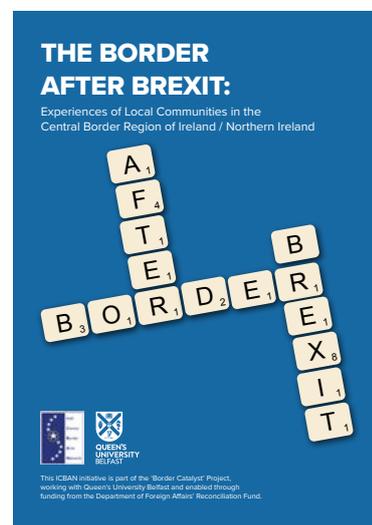
The ICBAN Board has actively promoted the Framework over the past year. Meetings have been held with key stakeholders, including, Government Ministers and Departmental Officials, all member Councils' Senior Management teams, political parties, Shared Island Unit, Oireachtas Joint Committee for the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, Institute of Technology Sligo (now the Atlantic Technological University), Further Education Colleges, Education & Training Boards, North-South Ministerial Council, Special EU Programmes Body, Waterways Ireland, InterTrade Ireland, The Waterways Community etc.

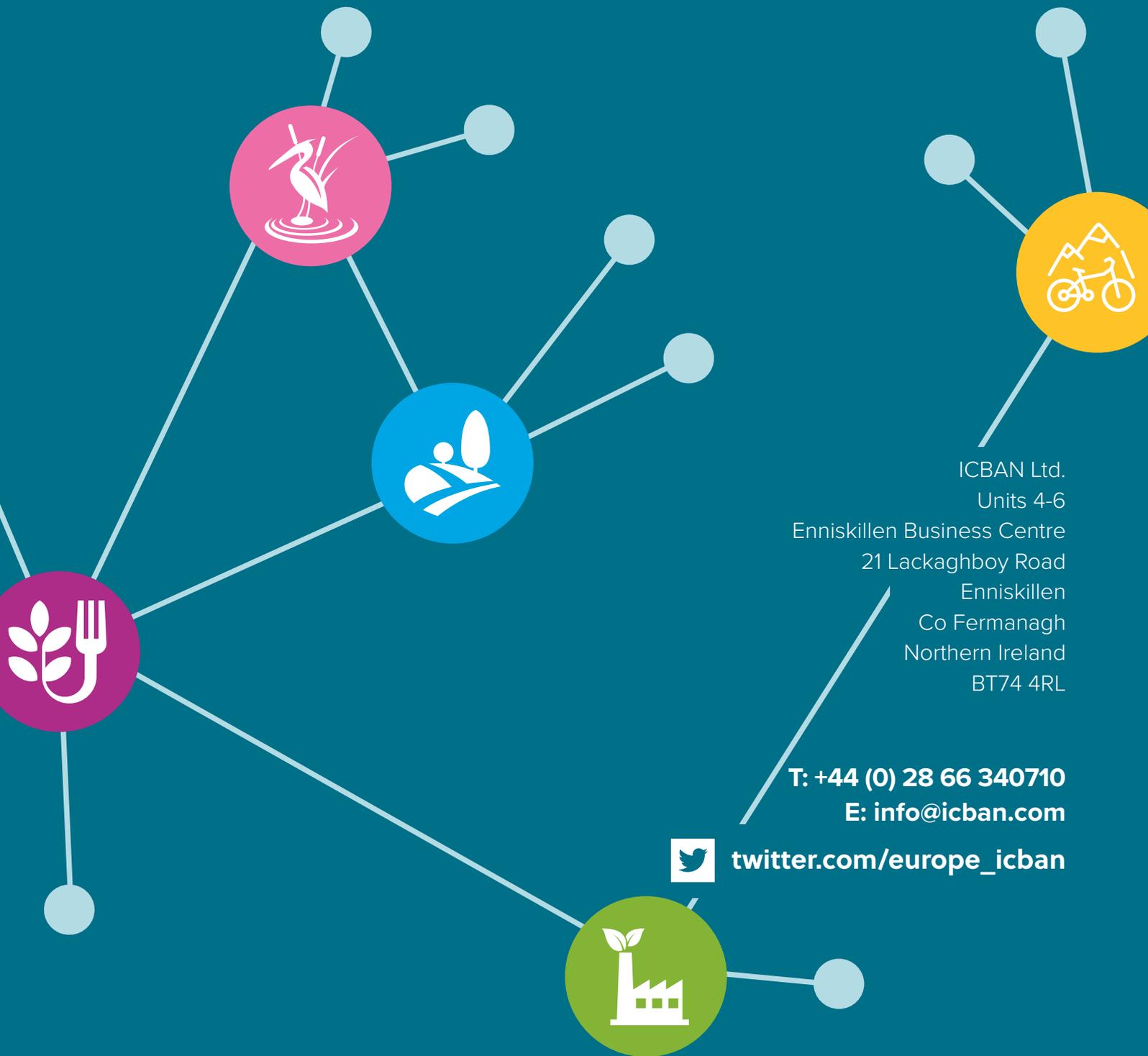
14 consultation responses have been submitted to governments and agencies on both sides of the border in the context of the FRP, on issues including: all-island rail, climate and biodiversity, future agri supports (NI), Peace Plus, green growth, EU connections, NI programme for government, Ireland 2040 National Development Plan, environment.



Having promoted the need for 'Development Funding', ICBAN welcomes the announcement of new funding supports to progress the development of cross-border projects of scale by the Irish Government on 5th April 2022.

Due to an absence of community consultation on both sides of the border, ICBAN together with Queen's University Belfast have published four survey initiatives to date. **'The Border After Brexit'** report was published in October 2021. This draws on research from an online survey which had 400 responses, as well as focus groups / interviews that took place in summer 2021. This latest report has again been widely disseminated to key stakeholders involved in, or with an interest in Brexit and the Irish border, and adds to the evidence already gathered on voices of communities from the Central Border Region.





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