



Derry City & Strabane
District Council
Comhairle
Chathair Dhoire &
Cheantar an tSraitha Báin
Derry Cittie & Strabane
Destrack Cooncil

16th September 2026

Peter McCallion
Committee Clerk
Committee for the Economy
Northern Ireland Assembly
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

Via email only: Committee.Economy@niassembly.gov.uk

Dear Mr. McCallion,

Subject: Call for Evidence — Regional Balance Bill

Derry City & Strabane District Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Committee for the Economy's Call for Evidence on the Regional Balance Bill, sponsored by Sinéad McLaughlin MLA. The Call for Evidence was considered by the Council's Governance and Strategic Planning Committee at its meeting on 1st September 2026. The Committee's consideration of this matter remains subject to ratification by Derry City & Strabane District Council at its meeting on 23 September 2026.

Accordingly, this interim response has been prepared and submitted by the specified deadline, pending any further observations that Members may wish to make following consideration by the full Council.

The Council's overarching position on regional balance is outlined below.

The Council considers that unlocking the economic potential of the city of Derry/Londonderry, the Derry City and Strabane District Council area and the wider North West remains a significant strategic priority. Although positive progress has

been made in recent years through initiatives including the City Deal, the expansion of the Magee campus, investment in key employers and the work of the North West Strategic Growth Partnership, substantial disparities persist between the North West and other parts of Northern Ireland. These disparities are reflected in indicators relating to employment, productivity, investment and deprivation.

The Council therefore particularly welcomes the Bill's recognition of cross-border economic data and activity. Within the North West City Region, the Council operates in the context of an integrated cross-border economy encompassing County Donegal and the wider North West. Labour-market flows, business activity, tourism, transport patterns and skills development increasingly function according to an economic geography that extends beyond administrative boundaries.

Derry City & Strabane District Council supports the principle and policy intent of the Bill in seeking to promote greater regional balance. The Council has consistently advocated for this objective and has worked extensively with Northern Ireland Executive Departments, local authorities, the Government of Ireland and regional partners to advance economic growth and prosperity across the North West City Region.

The Council recognises that the factors influencing regional balance extend beyond economic policy and encompass transport infrastructure, skills, housing, educational provision, health outcomes and public investment. Their cumulative effect on regional competitiveness necessitates a coordinated, whole-of-government response.

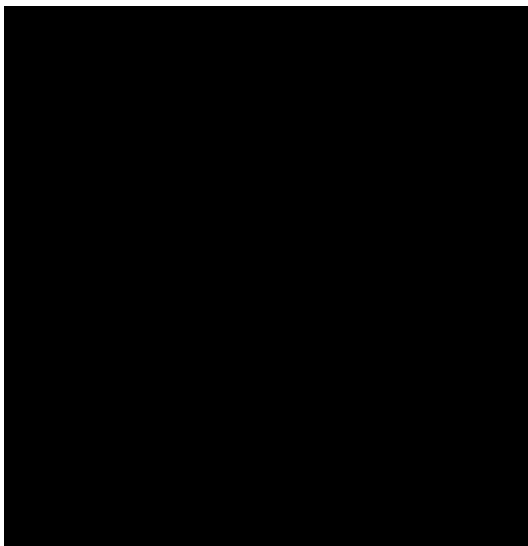
Whilst not directly mentioned in the draft bill, Council would highlight that rating disparities are an extremely important consideration in the context of addressing regional balance. Council has developed and submitted to relevant Government Departments a detailed report clearly demonstrating that, all things being equal, ratepayers in less wealthy and more rural and deprived Councils will bear a higher rates burden than those in more wealthy Council areas. This issue has been made worse by the continued erosion of Rates Support Grant to a now effectively minimal and ineffective level. It is unfair for ratepayers in areas that live in less wealthy and more rural and deprived Councils incur higher rates burdens and future policy development must ensure this is properly considered.

The Council would support the establishment of measurable outcomes, reporting requirements and accountability mechanisms across all Northern Ireland Executive Departments, rather than assigning responsibility solely to the Department for the Economy. Such an approach would be consistent with the statutory duty relating to community planning and would strengthen alignment between Programme for Government outcomes and local community planning outcomes.

The Council considers that the pursuit of regional balance should enhance overall economic performance while enabling areas affected by longstanding disadvantage to realise their full economic potential. Investment in the North West should therefore be regarded not only as a matter of equity, but also as an opportunity to increase productivity, labour-market participation and economic growth across Northern Ireland as a whole.

Derry City & Strabane District Council supports the general principles of the Regional Balance Bill, acknowledges the Bill sponsor's commitment to advancing this important matter and welcomes the Bill's progression to Committee Stage. The Council wishes the Committee well in the discharge of its scrutiny responsibilities as the Bill proceeds through the legislative process.

Yours faithfully,



Derry City & Strabane District Council