

A chara,

*I have written this submission to express my deep concern at the absurd lack of foresight in omitting Drogheda from the draft national planning framework (NPF).*

*Drogheda is the sixth largest urban centre in the country with a greater area population of greater than 80,000, which far exceeds that of Waterford city. Given that this plan will become the sole legal reference for all future discussions on city planning it makes absolutely no sense to omit Drogheda, particularly considering its potential as a major hub with its proximity to both Dublin and Belfast, as well as a port, giving it access to Britain.*

*Inclusion in the Framework could also address issues like regional transport. As a recent graduate, I have had first-hand experience of the discrepancy between public transport in Dublin and in Drogheda. With the current set up of public transport in Dublin, a 30-day rambler ticket (which includes unlimited access to Dublin Bus, Luas, DART and train services) costs €157.50/€114.50 (Adult/Student). This ticket offers services only to the Dublin area, i.e. train services up to Balbriggan. A 30-day train only ticket from Drogheda to Gormanston on the other hand costs €127/€89 (Adult/Student). The disparity between these services and associated costs is incredible. Inclusion of Drogheda in the NPF would help to improve public transport, thereby reducing traffic on motorways etc. Furthermore, no other town in the country is divided by a toll like Drogheda is. The tolls on the slip roads in and out of the town should be removed, which would further increase ease of access to the urban area.*

*In local government, Drogheda needs to have a dedicated council (such as the abolished Drogheda Borough Council) in order to effectively manage the towns needs and services. At present, Drogheda is caught awkwardly between both Louth and Meath County Councils. As such, residents in the greater Drogheda area are not serviced efficiently, which is something that a dedicated council could easily resolve.*

*The idea of planning is to anticipate future events and prepare accordingly. Drogheda's population is growing at a phenomenal rate and therefore needs to be planned for. The complete lack of mention of Drogheda in the NPF is a travesty which cannot be ignored. If the Minister is serious about balanced regional development, then Drogheda needs to be reconsidered for inclusion, both for the future of the town and the future of the country as a whole.*

Kind regards,

*David Phelan*