

Submission to National Planning Framework

The Greater Drogheda Area – Designation as a City & Primary Development Centre

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From: McEvoy Craig Accountants & Auditors

Address: 48 Fair Street, Drogheda, Co. Louth

In response to the first draft of the National Planning Framework, which failed to recognise Drogheda as one of the largest urban areas in the State, I wish to propose that Drogheda and its full surrounding urban area in both Louth and Meath be counted and administered as one single unitary urban area and designated as a City & Primary Development Centre in the National Planning Framework / Ireland 2040.

McEvoy Craig is one of the leading accountancy firms in Drogheda consisting of accountants, tax consultants, auditors and bookkeeping specialists. McEvoy Craig was formed by local woman Gail McEvoy, CPA, after merging with Michael Craig, FCA, our accounting and finance practice has now grown from a small office with one accountant to now employing nine people including six qualified accountants. As a result we understand the business and accountancy challenges our clients meet as they are starting a business, growing a business and as the markets shift.

We believe that receiving City status would encourage Companies to do business in Drogheda and see the area as a growing economic base and a valuable resource for great talent inspiring some Companies to set up base in the area leading to job creation and further development.

Drogheda Business and Technology Park is a 64 acre park located on the Donore Road, adjacent to the M1 motorway linking Dublin and Belfast. There are ample Greenfield areas available for future development.

Drogheda is located off the M1 motorway and is easily accessible from Dublin Airport (approx. 40 km in distance). We have a great commuter service including rail and bus services from all surrounding areas and a large port. The infrastructure is already here.

Receiving City Status would also further increase tourism in the Drogheda area, again leading to job creation and development. Drogheda has already hosted many events such as the Maritime festival, Drogheda Arts Festival and we will be hosting Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in 2018. Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann is the world's largest annual celebration of Irish music, language, song and dance. In addition to the festivals Drogheda is a magnificent medieval town and its surrounding areas are filled with heritage and history including Newgrange, Mellifont Abbey, St. Oliver Plunkett Shrine and the legendary Battle of the Boyne site.

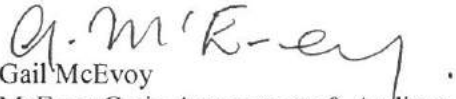
The Greater Drogheda Area has a population in the region of 80,000 people straddling both counties Louth and Meath when Drogheda itself and the adjoining Laytown, Bettystown, Mornington (LBM) urban area are combined. It makes no sense for these areas to be counted in isolation of one another in either statistical or planning terms. Doing so leaves a huge gap in the services and infrastructure required and actually provided to what is actually one of Ireland's largest urban areas and deprives the State of an alternative Primary Development Area to counter congestion in Dublin. The Greater Drogheda Area including the town itself plus LBM should be counted as one contiguous interlinked urban area for statistical and planning purposes.

The area surrounding Drogheda stretching from South Louth down through the town itself and on to the Meath Coast is a contiguous urban area that forms a natural geographical entity which should be recognised as one city.

Until such time as the size and population of Drogheda is recognised properly through the recognition of its real status issue the area will not reach its full potential for the attraction of FDI. Drogheda is on a par in terms of surrounding infrastructure and location with parts of Fingal such as Swords and the Airport Zone and major urban centres such as Galway and Limerick but attracts much less Foreign Direct Investment. Drogheda has the potential to be a major economic hub for the North East region with a critical mass of employment opportunities which would end the daily commuting misery into Dublin City for thousands of people in the Louth/Meath/North County Dublin areas and reduce inbound traffic and rail line congestion on the M1/M2 and Northern Rail Line services, using the outbound lanes on the M1/M2/N2/R152 and empty outbound morning trains and buses on northern commuter services.

Drogheda's true size both in urban spread and population size needs to be represented more accurately in census data and national statistics which inform Government and Local Authority decisions on planning, resource allocation and prioritisation for public services and promotion of foreign direct investment. Drogheda's absence from the previous National Spatial Strategy should be addressed by nominating the full urban area as a city and Primary Development Centre in the National Planning Framework.

Yours sincerely


Gail McEvoy
McEvoy Craig Accountants & Auditors