

## Submission to National Planning Framework

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

**Date: 08 NOV 2017**

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To the Government of Ireland, Dáil Éireann & An Seannáid;

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.

Many of my company's employees are based on the outskirts of Drogheda and commute into town to work every day. Drogheda itself has enough infrastructure and potential to overtake many other primary cities in Europe once given the correct support to enable its status to progress to that of City. The people of Drogheda deserve so much more and we have been ignored, completely. By leaving us out of the National Planning Framework the government has resigned us to a fate that is not only uncertain, it is suicide for a town already so ignored due to its proximity to Belfast and Dublin. We are not only the Gateway to the Boyne Valley, we are a Gateway to the world with access to our own Port linking us with Britain, Scandinavia and Asia on a daily basis. Our locations also places us a mere short commute to an International Airport and several other Ports linking us with Britain.

Drogheda and its surroundings have so much to offer and we're already taken so advantage of, we don't get half of the services we should have including transport, health and municipal. Our hospital is already run down, old and lacks the necessary staff to run it, yet it could cater for so many needs and is closer than Dundalk & Navan with more capabilities that have yet to be tapped into. There is much that Drogheda can offer, if only given a "genuine" and meaningful status to do so.

We have lost our Borough Council that has been here for over 800 years as if it was merely a candle in the wind to be snuffed out at a moment's notice and have lost a lot of our say in how our "City" is run – since it was deemed fit to take away our rights despite having one of the oldest Town Charters in Ireland, we will fight tooth and nail to bring our community forward into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with a status we deserve. Our population and society has grown exponentially in recent years and is actually larger than one of Ireland's five official cities.

The question is, why are we being ignored and isolated when we should be supported and recognised officially?

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

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