

From: Dom Gradwell [REDACTED]
Sent: 09 November 2017 14:32
To: National Planning Framework
Subject: The inclusion of Drogheda in the National Planning Framework

Dear Sirs,

I am deeply concerned at the astonishing lack of foresight in omitting Drogheda from the draft national planning framework.

Given that this plan will become the sole legal reference for all future discussions on city planning it makes absolutely no sense to omit the sixth largest urban centre in the country from the national framework, particularly considering its potential as a major hub with its proximity to both Dublin and Belfast. Ease-of-access and the ability to distribute goods is vital to a region's development and no other regional town can match Drogheda in this respect as it occupies a prime location on the North/South Corridor with air, sea and motorway links within 25 minutes of the town.

It beggars belief that given the Citizen's Assembly's recent deliberations on climate change that the National Planning Framework chooses to ignore the congestion and related pollution issues with continuing to cram more and more traffic into an already clogged Dublin transport infrastructure instead of redirecting the investment to an urban agglomeration that is already served with first rate transport links via the M1 to Dublin Airport and Dublin Port via the Port Tunnel. In fact the Port Tunnel can be more quickly and consistently accessed from Drogheda via the M1 than any area in Dublin south of the Liffey along the clogged M50.

Drogheda's young and educated population and the availability of high-speed broadband makes the town an attractive target for FDI which would in turn help create local jobs, instead of having a stream of people leaving Drogheda and its environs every day to waste hours sitting on trains, cars and busses. By simply including Drogheda in the framework, jobs can be provided in the area and the quality of life for the people who fill those jobs will be vastly improved. By having more time to spend in their community, the social and sporting fabric of the area can only be greatly advanced by giving people their time back.

But Drogheda needs to be included in the National Planning Framework to accomplish this and we need new thinking to address anomalies such as an almost-empty IDA Business Park which is unable to access BMW (Border Midlands Region) funding because it is situated in a part of the town that for reasons which beggar belief is managed by the local authority in Meath.

The whole area of higher education is another area where Drogheda's industrial heritage could be exploited by making it a centre of excellence for in the area of skills and training for

Inclusion in the Framework could also address issues like regional transport. No other town in the state is split in half by a toll like Drogheda is. The tolls on the slip roads in and out of the town should be removed. The Port Company, Irish Rail and road hauliers should form a regional transport committee to properly plan the free movement of goods. Funding simply must be provided for the Port Access Northern Cross Route, long identified as a vital infrastructure project for Drogheda to allow the project to be actioned and completed. The correct management of these issues will free up the centre of the town and allow it once again to become a thriving business hub for its hinterland.

In local government, Drogheda Borough Council should be reinstated allow Drogheda to become the administrative centre of its natural hinterland with a longer term view towards gaining city status and having a city council. The outdated county boundary lines offer a huge disservice to all 80,000 people in what could be a Drogheda Municipal Area. As pointed out by Dr Brian Hughes Drogheda's population has grown at a faster rate than the other five large urban centres named in the framework, and if the

government is really serious about strategically planning into the future in an open non-partisan way, this fast expanding population must be planned for, by allocating Drogheda a central role in the framework

The idea of planning is to anticipate events and plan accordingly. In relation to Drogheda, all of the facts are there. With modest investment in the grand scheme of things, Drogheda with both its distance away from and its proximity to the capital ticks all of the boxes in relation to further developing an already well serviced area. In this era of 'new politics' replacing political expediency, if the Minister is serious about balanced regional development, as is mentioned in the foreword to the framework, then Drogheda needs to be included in the framework.

Yours Sincerely,

**Dom Gradwell,
Chairman,**

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