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

9/11/2017

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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.

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. The Port Access Northern Cross Route, long identified as a vital infrastructure project for Drogheda must finally be actioned and completed.

In local government, Drogheda Borough Council should be reinstated to properly manage this large urban area, with a view to Drogheda gaining city status and having a city council. Drogheda's population has grown at a faster rate than the other five large urban centres. If we are planning into the future, this fast expanding population must be planned for.

The idea of planning is to anticipate events and plan accordingly. If the Minister is serious about balanced regional development, as is mentioned in the foreword to the framework, then Drogheda needs to be reconsidered for inclusion.

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.

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Drogheda has everything a good city needs, it's tourism potential is second to none, with it's proximity to Newgrange, Dowth, Nowth, The Jumping Church, and the now closed to traffic and opened to tourism St Laurences Gate.

Include into that mix The Round Tower at Monasterboice and the stunning ruins of old Melifont Abbey along with Drogheda Museum and our wonderful Arts Centre and Art Galleries, well who wouldn't want to come visit the City of Drogheda nestled on the historic Boyne river home of both the Salmon of Knowledge and the Battle of the Boyne.

Lets plan for the future, let not this plan be spoken of as the last one was, let us never again hear the words "**now-discredited**". Let's get it right. Give Drogheda City Status, think in terms of Newry where the Armagh man wears his jersey and the Down man wears his, but they both shout for Newry City AFC and they both reap the benefits of being part of a city

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Annie Mc Ginley