

Submission to 2040 National Planning Framework – Fergus O’Dowd TD

Dear Sir/Madam,

As a local TD I welcome the opportunity to make a formal submission to the National Planning Framework.

It’s extraordinarily important to me that Drogheda and it’s wider environs are looked at in the context of its large population and the increasing numbers of citizens locating in the area from the Capital and other areas of the country, as they see Drogheda as a more affordable and realistic option to settle in. The exclusion of Drogheda from the previous strategic plan has meant Drogheda has lost out on considerable national and multi-national investment and that mistake cannot be made again.

The close proximity to both Dublin City and Belfast City makes it the ideal location for commerce and tourism. However due to the lack of funding and question marks on the responsibilities and funding from local authorities I feel Drogheda has been left behind and from a Planning perspective we have lost out considerably over the last 2 decades.

Drogheda certainly doesn’t lack in terms of local amenities on our doorstep, our heritage is second to none but yet we fail to capitalise on the volume of tourists flocking in to Dublin airport on a yearly basis. Drogheda has many famous tourist draws such as Plunkett’s Head, St Laurence’s Gate, Millmount’s Cup and Saucer, Baltray Golf Club, the Boyne Valley and many other significant historic, hospitality and family friendly draws. That said I do not believe the town’s planning lends itself to being a tourist trap, we have a significant amount of derelict premises in the town centre some of which are side by side famous historic structures, we need to escalate the powers of CPO in order to ensure as funds come in the country we resolve the derelict issues that have blighted many of the fantastic towns such as Drogheda. The town suffers dramatically from traffic issues and I hope the proposed Drogheda Cross Route will draw the commercial traffic away from our town centre to make it more accessible and more aesthetically pleasing. For future planning in a radical sense I firmly believe a detailed assessment and pre planning report should be funded on the viability of a new road bridge to be built closer to the mouth of the River Boyne to connect the Dublin Road traffic South of Colpe Cross to the North of Drogheda in order for HGVs and commercial vehicles to avoid the town completely, this would certainly limit the damage the local M1 tolls are doing on the towns traffic congestion and provide many other tourist and local opportunities to develop.

Since the abolition of the Drogheda Borough Council we have not seen the devolution of power in Drogheda. The influence of the voice of the people of Drogheda at Council level is considered to be much less than previously held. The significant population regardless of which CSO/specialist figure you use, shows that the population warrants the Drogheda Borough Council to be re-introduced or at the very least the current set up to be re-structured in order to provide more powers to the elected officials in the Drogheda area.

Local employment has continued to rise and the live register has dramatically fallen since 2012, however we cannot boast the availability of large type business premises and business parks that would provide the larger business model the option of expansion in the area. There is currently no Local Enterprise Office in our town. The 30min trip to the Dundalk LEO does not lend itself to providing hands on advice and practical help to what is the largest town in Ireland. There is no reason as to why we can't look at the overall plan to include an enterprise/development office locally that works in conjunction with local business and constituents.

In respect of the National Planning Framework I believe this submission along with many from the Drogheda area will lead to identifying Drogheda as a unique opportunity and an area that deserves and warrants an individual and sustainable plan. Drogheda needs and deserves a plan that will identify the huge mistakes made over the last 2 decades and provide and plan to cater for the huge levels of growth that can be expected in the area, this will involve a more thorough plan to address our road and rail network, our connectivity, our health services, our water and utility network among many others.

Drogheda and district needs to be designated as City and have the powers and functions of a full county council.

I thank you for considering my submission,

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fergus O'Dowd". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'F' and 'O'.

Fergus O'Dowd TD