

Submission to National Planning Framework from Deputy Imelda Munster, Cllr. Kenneth Flood and Cllr. Joanna Byrne

Further to our previous submission to NPF in March 2017 we wish to submit a revised version of that submission.

We would also like to raise the point that given our original submission were not taken into account in the draft copy of the National Planning Framework, and given that the purpose of submissions is that the matters raised will be taken into consideration, we sincerely hope that you will consider this submission and include it in the final draft of the plan.

The Minister's foreword in the National Planning Framework emphasises balanced regional development and states that the right development can take place in the right places, at the right time.

Drogheda is perfectly positioned to serve Irelands North Eastern Region and has attributes that no other regional town in Ireland can match.

Accessibility and the ability to distribute goods is vital to a regions development. Drogheda is perfectly positioned on the North/South Corridor. It's served by Motorway and Rail, has a thriving port and is only 20 minutes from the state's main airport.

No other regional town can match Drogheda's attributes in this regard.

As Irelands 6th Largest Urban Centre, Drogheda has a young and educated population. The availability of high-speed broadband throughout the town and this willing workforce would be very attractive for FDI which would in turn create indigenous jobs.

But to realise the potential of Drogheda, make the most of its attributes and develop it as a properly functioning regional centre, Drogheda must be included in the National Planning Framework.

This approach must be multifaceted with education, employment and proper management at its core.

And this is what Drogheda, as a regional centre needs from The National Planning Framework.

Drogheda's almost uninhabited IDA business park is missing out on vital Border Midlands Region (BMW) funding because it is in the wrong county. An IDA Business Park on the Northside of the Town could avail of that BMW funding.

A new third level institute, cooperating with industry specific training companies would ensure the highest level of training for the regions students.

To ensure unencumbered access to the town the slip road toll plazas should be removed. No other town in the state is split in half by a toll like Drogheda is.

A regional transport committee should be convened, made up of the Port Company, Irish Rail and road hauliers 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.

Drogheda Borough Council should be reinstated to properly manage this large urban area, with the view Drogheda gaining city status and having a city council.

Drogheda's population has grown at a faster rate than the 5 currently larger urban areas. If we are planning into the future, this fast expanding population must be planned for.

Drogheda was inexplicably left out of the previous National Spatial Strategy, a massive mistake according to Dr Brian Hughes, (DIT) paper "Effects of the 2002-2020 National Spatial Strategy (NSS) on Ireland's Settlement Growth, its Cities and on other Gateways and Hubs"

Drogheda was also left out of The Living City Initiative and every other plan that could properly realise the potential of this fast growing urban centre.

A key policy objective of the plan is to ensure that urban areas that grow to a population of over 50,000 organically will be given special city status with a designation for investment for the future.

Drogheda and its surrounding conurbation is fast approaching this figure, being the largest town in Ireland, and logic would dictate the infrastructural and economic development should meet the demands of this growth.

Drogheda has already reached the same size as the existing threshold achieved by Galway and Kilkenny, therefore Drogheda also should be awarded city status.

Let's not repeat the mistakes of the past and allow bad planning or lack of planning to let Drogheda's potential as a regional centre, wither and die on the vine.

Give Drogheda the status and chance it deserves.