



Ireland's Digital Payments Region

www.M1PaymentsCorridor.com

Response to Draft NPF - Nov' 10th 2017

NorthEast contains largest and fastest growing towns – CSO Press Release May 2017:

“Drogheda, with a population of 40,956 (up 6.2% since April 2011) remained the largest town in Ireland. Swords (39,248) and Dundalk (39,004) complete the top three. Ennis (25,276 persons) remained the largest town in Munster. Sligo with 19,199 persons was Connacht's largest town, while Letterkenny (19,274 persons) was the largest town in the three Ulster counties. The latter three towns experienced a slight decline in population since April 2011”.

(<http://www.cso.ie/en/csolatestnews/pressreleases/2017pressreleases/pressstatementcensus2016resultsprofile2-populationdistributionandmovements/>)



Summary:

Response to Draft NPF:

In response to the first draft of the National Planning Framework, which failed to recognise the NorthEast's strategic location on the Belfast-Dublin axis, and to highlight **Drogheda, Dundalk, and Navan as three of the largest urban areas in the State, we wish to propose that Northeast receives more prominence in the final NPF plan.**

The NorthEast / M1 Corridor has no cities, but, according to census 2016 figures, contains four of the five largest towns in Ireland – Drogheda, Dundalk, Navan and Swords. Even without national prominence, these towns are all growing rapidly, in comparison to other smaller towns that have a declining population.

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The current draft plan has a focus on developing the five Cities, and inserts 40 other towns with populations of over 10,000 into another group. We believe that the NorthEast, and the larger towns need to receive greater prominence to capitalise on the potential within NorthEast to ease the infrastructural limitations of Dublin. There is a massive opportunity to develop these large and rapidly growing towns into fully self-sustainable economic entities, and to minimise the dependence on current commuter culture, which further adds stress to Dublin's infrastructure. In addition, Cavan and Monaghan regions are also experiencing population growth.

Drogheda and its full surrounding urban area in both Louth and Meath **should 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.** The Greater Drogheda Area (within 10km of town centre) 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. The **population is likely increase significantly** during the term of the 2020-2040 NPF plan. It makes no sense for these areas to be counted in isolation of one another in either statistical or planning terms.

About 'M1 Payments Corridor'

An M1 'Digital Payments Corridor' is a key part of the Government's 'NorthEast Action Plan for Jobs' which proposes the creation of a National Payments Centre in Drogheda, and the development of a 'Digital Payments Hub' along the M1 economic corridor and surrounding region, with the potential to create hundreds of sustainable new jobs. A 2017 Feasibility study, co-funded by Enterprise Ireland, concluded that over 600 new indigenous 'Payments-related' jobs would be created if the M1 Payments Corridor is developed to its potential. This excludes the numerous FDI roles that will also be created.

M1 Payments corridor Overview



- ❖ The M1 Payments corridor is an industry grouping of ePayments/Fintech companies and allied stakeholders, promoted by The Mill, that serves the wider geographic M1 corridor in a Fintech vertical known as ePayments.
- ❖ Three strategic pillars
 - Providing marketing supports and collateral for FDI
 - Building R&D capacity with the two major 3rd level institutions – DCU and DKIT
 - Enabling up/down stream interaction between the startup/SME community and the MNC to drive innovation and capability building
- ❖ Three Programmatic Pillars
 - Physical space – e.g. @The Mill, Payments Park
 - Programme Manager/MarComms
 - Education/event planning

The M1 Payments corridor has been developed and proposed by The Mill Enterprise Hub, Drogheda, as a means of utilising and adding value to the geographic concentration of ePayments and Fintech transaction companies that already exist along the M1 corridor (i.e. PayPal, Vesta, State Street, Yapstone Aphix Software, Gecko Governance etc)

It is an industry grouping of ePayments / Fintech companies, and allied stakeholders (IDA, EI, DCU, DKIT, Louth Economic Forum), promoted by The Mill, that serves the wider geographic M1 corridor in a Fintech vertical known as ePayments. The Payments sector currently employs circa 5000 people in Ireland, and this is expected to increase significantly in the future.

Industry members of the M1 Steering Group include a mixture of Multinationals and Indigenous Startups: Vesta, PayPal, State Street, Aphix Software, Yapstone, Coca-Cola International Services.

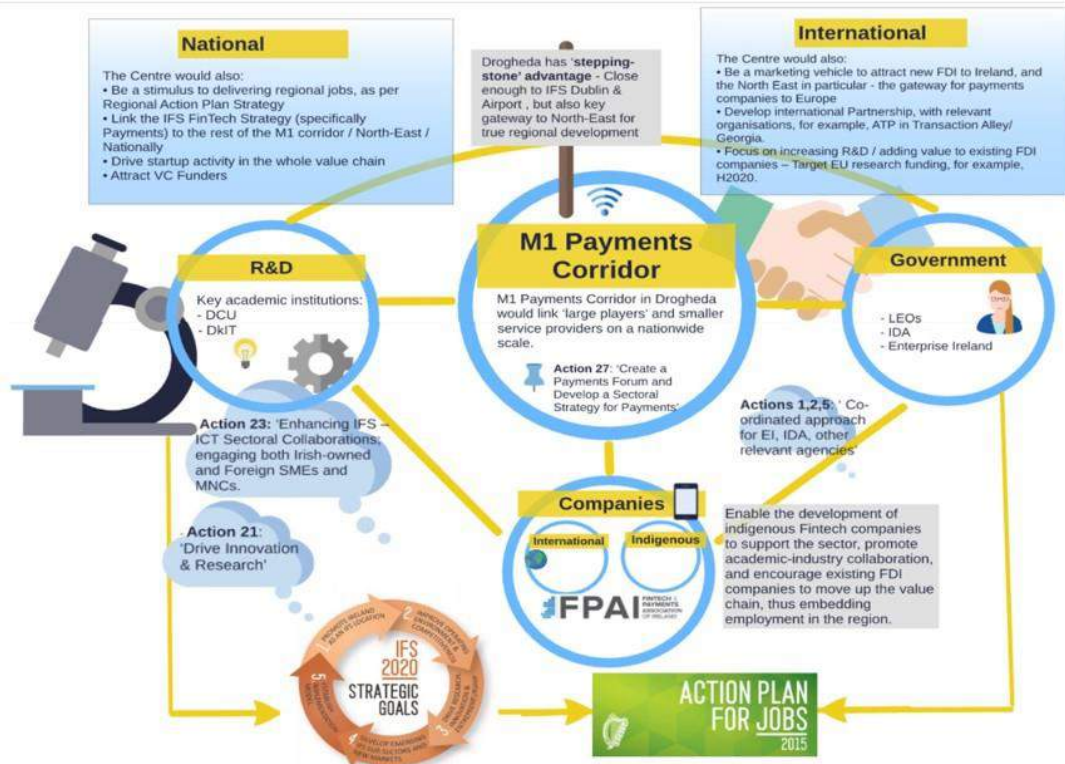
The three strategic pillars of the proposed plan include:

1. Enabling up/down stream interaction between the Startup/SME community and MNC to drive innovation and capability building.
2. Building R&D capacity with the two major 3rd level institutions – DCU and DkIT.
3. Providing marketing supports and collateral for FDI

A regionally located National Payments Corridor would extend from the existing IFSC / Dublin airport, and facilitate clustering of established and new payments companies engaged in innovation, and supported by the region's academic institutions (DCU and DKIT). It will enable the development of indigenous Fintech companies to support the sector, promote academic-industry collaboration, and encourage existing FDI companies to move up the value chain, thus embedding employment in the region.

The vision is to recognise the specialist role that ePayments will have on our future economy, and become The European counterpoint to 'Transaction Alley' in Atlanta, Georgia, where circa 70% of US Payments are processed. ***There is a real opportunity for the region (NorthEast Ireland) to become the EU Gateway for Payment firms.***

This plan includes developing a 'National Payments Centre' in Drogheda that would co-ordinate Fintech / Payments activity across the island of Ireland. Drogheda currently doesn't have a 'National' centre, and the Government's recent financial services report has specifically highlighted the need to develop a National Centre. It will also have an All-Island dimension as the 'Corridor' will extend from Dublin Airport to Belfast.



The Mill Enterprise Hub in Drogheda proposed the original concept, and is taking a lead in developing the project, alongside an active Steering group. The Mill’s mission is to promote a culture of innovation and enterprise to everybody in our community (Drogheda, South Louth, and East Meath area), and work with other relevant organisations across the region to promote these aims. The supports include training (personal & business skills), coaching and mentoring, access to state of the art office space, guidance from an experienced Centre Manager, sign-posting to sources of finance, and being part of a ‘can-do’ community.

The Mill is a registered Charity, and has received significant support from local corporations, SME’s, and public sector organisations (Louth County Council, Enterprise Ireland). The voluntary Board consists of local entrepreneurs, Meath & Louth LEO, DKIT, Louth County Council, and experienced business practitioners from a diverse range of businesses.

In its short existence, the Mill has created a number of critical economic development programmes to foster entrepreneurship in the region, for example:

- M1 Payments Corridor
- FoodTech programme for companies providing IT and professional services to the Food & Beverage sector
- Illuminate Female Entrepreneurship (partnered with DCU Ryan Academy) for early-stage entrepreneurs,
- IgnYte programme - Supporting young unemployed sector to develop a business idea
- Drogheda Young Innovators – supporting innovative ideas from 9 local secondary schools.

The M1 Payments Corridor initiative, www.M1PaymentsCorridor.com is included in the Governments 'North East Action Plan for Jobs', and Louth Economic Forum's (LEF) FDI Strategy document. There has been significant project activity over the past eighteen months including:

- Two National ePayments Conferences: October 2015 and September 2016.
- World's First 'Payments Dojo', Oct 2016 – Teenagers examining Digital Payments sector.
- Steering Group formed of industry (State Street, PayPal, Coca-Cola International Services, Yapstone, Vesta, Aphix), Government Agencies (IDA, Enterprise Ireland, Louth Economic Forum), and Academia (DCU and DKIT) to deliver the project's potential.

Our next stage in development is to compete for **three year's Funding via the Irish Government's 'Competitive Enterprise Initiative' Programme** to formally designate the region as a 'Payments Corridor' and deliver a range of programmes supporting the sector.

M1 Economic Corridor Profile:

“The function of an economic corridor is to connect economic agents acting in a defined geographical area. It involves the creation and/or improvement of economic links, co-operative initiatives and social cohesion between two or more large urban areas. The economic links created in an economic corridor are not only infrastructure links but also links between markets, educational facilities and societies. The economic corridor model of development has been used in many regions across the globe to generate “inclusive growth”, that is, economic growth that generates benefits for many different sectors of society”

KPMG Report 21st May 2014, Lord Mayors Forum

The M1 Economic Corridor has been spoken about for the past 20 years as a way of integrating the two largest Cities on the Island of Ireland. Both Cities have a strong Financial Services sector, and in the recent past a significant ‘Payments Cluster’ has developed across Drogheda, Dundalk, Navan and surrounding areas. This includes large Multinationals such as PayPal and Vesta, but also consist of indigenous startups (Gecko Governance, Aphix software) and expanding overseas companies.

The Border region is especially cognisant of the recent Brexit vote. This may adversely affect some sectors, but could prove a significant boost to the region if Payment & Fintech firms continue to establish their premises along the M1, and there is a window of opportunity to become the ‘EU Gateway Region for Payments’. The North-East has the potential to be place-named on the same way as Galway cornered the MedTech market, or Cork has prospered with Pharmaceutical companies.

Drogheda is ideally located to lead this project due to its location. It is crucial that companies currently based in Dublin could easily access a National Payments Centre and associated companies. Drogheda’s proximity to Dublin airport (25 minutes and Belfast airport (90 minutes) offers an opportunity to link the two Cities.

Drogheda, as the largest town in Ireland, should be considered a complementary City to Eastern region and Dublin sprawl. It is large enough to be stand-alone urban area which also supports the large population in hinterland, including East Meath, Fingal County, and the adjacent M1 Motorway region. This will be facilitated by improving services, increasing local employment opportunities.

As per CSO press release, above, it is not appropriate for the current draft NPF plan to group Drogheda and Dundalk with 40 other towns of over 10,000 population. The NPF plan should be encouraging the development of Drogheda and Dundalk to alleviate some of the stress on Dublin’s infrastructure

(housing, traffic etc). Drogheda is already expanding on a natural basis, in comparison to other smaller towns (Sligo, Ennis, Letterkenny) which are declining, according to the 2016 status. Drogheda will not be able to cope with the growth if it is not supported by the appropriate funding and designated support.

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.

Drogheda is an ideal situation (geographically & economically) to complement Dublin's dominant economic position, and absorb some of the strain on its resources. As the town with the largest population in Ireland, we believe that we can mirror the 5 cities in offering a focal point to drive growth, and to work with the smaller and larger (Dundalk, Navan, Swords) towns in our hinterland to develop pockets of innovation.

There is not enough suitable office accommodation for FDIs or expanding SMES. The IDA Business & Technology Park in Drogheda has not been developed in the past ten years, and only contains one large company. It is ideally located off the M1, but current IDA capital spend is limited to nine towns. Mill-ers have experienced extreme difficulty in obtaining suitable accommodation in the town of Drogheda.

The NorthEast can complement Dublin by offering alternative urban locations that are large enough to be self-sustainable, and close enough to Dublin to supporting each other in relation to economic development.

The Mill Contact Details:

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[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
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