

Councillor Caroline Lynch Meath County Council Submission to consultation process for National Planning Framework (Ireland 2040).

This submission is in addition to the Sinn Fein Councillors group submission for County Meath with a focus on the Trim Municipal District.

One of the key concerns about planning and infrastructure in the County is that the focus may move away from the development of the Dublin Metropolitan area which may hinder the excellent developments both economically and in terms of transportation routes which have already been made. Facebook and Shire have both been attracted to the County because of its proximity to Dublin and the airport. More towns in the County have this capacity to develop. Enfield is a prime example in my area with good motorway and rail link. This area however does not have many of the community facilities required by large investors such as a library, sports centre, and community space for arts etc.,

The population growth in County Meath since the National Spatial strategy has presented many challenges including housing shortages and commuting difficulties with a large percentage of the county's population travelling on congested routes. The argument for the Navan train line is a strong one along with more housing investment in Enfield to increase use of rail line for commuters. The housing needs of all residents of Meath need to be met and it is important to note that the rents are particularly high in the Trim area. We also need to think about the different housing requirements of our growing elderly population and the need for more supported housing schemes for those with disabilities to live independently in their communities. Meath County Council are also currently developing a model of supported housing for those moving on from addiction issues. This work needs to be developed from pilot to mainstream provision when model has been tested.

The fact that the document is placing a focus on health and wellbeing is to be welcomed. Meath has the potential to develop significantly in terms of the live work community model. However, a factor which has hindered progress in the County is the poor roll out of broadband. In my area Ballivor, Longwood and even parts of Trim town are not able to support local work because of this missing infrastructure. Ballivor had a major employer in NEC and the fact that another investor has not taken over this excellent site shows the neglect that South Meath has experienced in not being promoted by the IDA. The roads structure is very poor in terms of connectivity to the Towns of Trim and Enfield where routes to Dublin are excellent.

Developer led house building has brought some problems to the County and this needs to be corrected going forward. In the Trim area, there is a serious deficit of Youth and community space these are essential to the wellbeing of both our increasing school going population and our projected doubling population of over 65's. An excellent example of planned development to overcome these deficits is Meath County Councils commitment to the provision of a dedicated community performance space in Trim town .The support for this space in Trim is central to the development of the town and the development of its population. The county has suffered from a lack of investment in these areas despite its population increase. Meath County Council is currently reviewing its play policy in the County and many parts of the Trim Municipal District still do not have playgrounds eg Ballivor and Kildalkey. Promotion of good health and wellbeing need opportunities for people to engage in a variety of accessible sporting and leisure facilities. Walkways and cycle routes need to be prioritised in all areas unfortunately Trim is not reaching its full potential in this

area at the moment due to funding constraints this impacts on tourism development as well as health.

If we are going to focus on wellbeing we also need to ensure that a Regional hospital is built to service the health needs of our population and mental health services need to be properly resourced with a focus on the deficit in these services particularly for our young people which currently exists.

Education and Training in the County needs more investment.

The Louth Meath Education and Training Board is developing several large building projects in the County including a new post primary school in the Longwood area. This organisation should be targeted for increased investment to be planning for the increase in school going population.

The close proximity of third level opportunities in Maynooth , Blanchardstown Dublin and Dundalk means we have a high number of students travelling to college from the County. Going forward a third level institution could be developed in the County and transportation improved and subsidised as much as possible for young people. A training facility should also be developed to service those in Meath who currently travel to facility in Dundalk operated by Solas .

One of the concerns for the population of the County is that all this good progress it is making will be halted by the focus on the development of cities. We have unique potential in the County which should not be ignored. Trim is obviously one of the jewels in the crown in terms of heritage and tourism potential and already this year has seen a growth in the numbers of visitors to the town because of the extension of the opening hours of Trim Castle by the OPW. The County Council plans supported by the OPW for the re design and build of the visitor's centre and tourist information centre is development that is essential to this future expansion of Trim as a Tourist hub for Meath.

The identity of Meath with its balance of rural and urban environs needs to be preserved but not neglected, connectivity of small towns and villages to the larger centres of population is vital to sustainability of many areas. The investment in our roads in smaller centres of population such as Ballivor, Longwood and Kildalkey are equally important to wellbeing of our people in these areas. Public transport needs to improve in these areas also to increase employment opportunities for people.

In conclusion County Meath has a well-developed economic strategy which needs continued support to reach its full potential. Attracting jobs to the County is something which will enhance the development of our capital city as investors see Ashbourne, Enfield, and Dunboyne as being desirably adjacent to the city and transport links. Recent data from Maynooth University shows how highly educated the population of the County is so investors will be able to recruit locally for staff. The county needs the continued support of this national strategy to maximise these opportunities. This is a vital time in the development of the County and we have a deficit of investment to overcome in many key areas such as Housing, Community facilities and roads infrastructure. If the plan going forward is not about winners and losers then the development of the County should be fully supported as it is an attractive place to live and work and can be greatly enhanced by strategic investment in some of the areas mentioned above.

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