

**From:** Cllr Gillian Toole (MCC Ratoath MD [REDACTED])  
**Sent:** 30 March 2017 10:24  
**To:** National Planning Framework  
**Subject:** Ireland 2040/ National planning framework.

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
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To whom it may concern,

Please accept my dissertation below, as my vision for County Meath in particular, but the content is a relevant to Ireland Inc. as it is to any single county.

I think it is imperative that every county can develop self- sufficiency, which would enable it to better weather any future fiscal storm, whether that be indigenous or international. Each strong county will enable a stronger Ireland inc.

Meath is predominantly a dormitory county- it must be enabled to broaden its economic, trade & tourism potentials thereby enabling its residents to become more balanced, productive citizens of Ireland, delivering the objectives of the "Healthy Ireland" policy. "The sum of the whole is equal to the sum of the component parts".

My vision-

To provide a home place & workplace environment for the existing & future residents of our county, which sustain & inspire pride of place in the environment, natural & built heritages, thereby instilling a willing volunteer culture to improve the numerous "assets" of Meath.

Current assets-

Our PEOPLE, increased grants to residents' associations, community festivals, future employment opportunities with Facebook, Shire & Avoca. The recently announced bus service through Kilmessan, Dunsany & on to Dublin. Increased buses to Dublin city centre from Ratoath MD towns, Introduction of the business commercial rates incentive scheme- discounts for direct debit payments. Municipal district allocations to community groups & facilities.

Broad outline-

Priorities for improvement throughout Meath include broadband ( inconsistent in the towns & very poor in the surrounding hinterlands), under-utilised motorway & the proposal to build a costly online service area in the absence of debt reduction/ toll reduction for the commuting taxpayer, increased traffic on local roads & communities with the increase in construction, Meath County Council human & fiscal resources need to increase to service the community & economic development of the District, transport links

required between the towns & the M3 rail parkway, local link service for later life & young people, housing- starter/ affordable homes & laterlife/ step down homes with associated facilities, locally & nationally- legislation required to prevent vulture funds buying up SME business debts, forcing refinancing rather than restructuring & subsequent foreclosure/ seizing of personal assets/ homes.

#### Opportunities for the County-

BALANCE between community & economic development, learning from the past 9 years, review & implement the objectives of the current County & Local Area Plans- they address many of the weaknesses that currently exist.

#### Strengths of the County-

the PEOPLE, increased grants to residents' associations, community festivals, future employment opportunities with Facebook, Shire & Avoca. The recently announced bus service through Kilmessan, Dunsany & on to Dublin. Increased buses to Dublin city centre from Ratoath MD towns, Introduction of the business commercial rates incentive scheme- discounts for direct debit payments. Municipal district allocations to community groups & facilities.

#### Weaknesses-

Broadband ( inconsistent in the towns & very poor in the surrounding hinterlands), under-utilised motorway & the proposal to build a costly online service area in the absence of debt reduction/ toll reduction for the commuting taxpayer, increased traffic on local roads & communities with the increase in construction, Meath County Council human & fiscal resources need to increase to service the community & economic development of the County-transport links required between the towns & the M3 rail parkway, local link service for later life & young people, housing- starter/ affordable homes & laterlife/ step down homes with associated facilities, locally & nationally- legislation required to prevent vulture funds buying up SME business debts, forcing refinancing rather than restructuring & subsequent foreclosure/ seizing of personal assets/ homes.

#### Opportunities for Meath-

BALANCE between community & economic development, learning from the past 9 years, review & implement the objectives of the current Local Area Plans- they address many of the weaknesses that currently exist/ were not addressed in the current County Development plan. Attract more businesses to the district, whilst addressing the infrastructural issues ( transport, water, sustainable energy supply). Youth employment/ job shadowing & mentoring, improved investment in educational facilities as the population grows. Develop excellent transport links- Bus Éireann, the National Transport Authority, Transport Infrastructure Ireland & Meath County Council to meet regularly & plan the services TOGETHER.

Flexibus service to serve the cross links between the towns & villages, improving the viability of local businesses & serving the needs of our young & older people.

Threats to the County-"failing to plan is planning to fail!"- appropriate & timely community notification & consultation is critical- the needs & consequent solutions frequently come from within negating the need for costly consultants. Threats to the County & the Country include BREXIT, excessive "red tape", failure to question & implement existing policies & plans for the District & County!

#### Housing-

- \* All Meath towns & villages to be "Age friendly" by 2020.
  
- \* Starter homes & "step down" homes required in addition to family homes- check out the LILAC project in Leeds, U.K. Community building from the outset.
  
- \* Urban scheme designs should show variety of facades- exclusivity is one of the reasons people choose one off rural housing- vary the urban designs & highlight the benefits of town/ village life to attract more buy in. Local need- strengthen this to perhaps a defined agricultural or horticultural basis. Similarly, rural homes to reflect agricultural or local heritage buildings.
- \* Villages- aim to incorporate more health services, by linking with the HSE property team, to establish centres of excellence & social care. Village centres to become independent living clusters eg. For people with mental ill health, intellectual disabilities, addiction or dual diagnosis.
- \* Community volunteering is easier to encourage & establish in these settings.

#### Economic & health opportunities-

Pharmaceutical industry regulatory affairs centre of excellence- capitalise on BREXIT opportunity- proximity to airport, port, language etc. Ties in with the occupational demographics of the county- need to check this in April when detail of census 2016 published.

Healthy Ireland centre of excellence- supported living projects, incorporating housing & health co-located projects.

SMEs- retailers, tourism supports- promotion, waste, parking, transport of staff, survey of needs on biannual basis by LEO.

( Corporate social conscience companies preferable to those with none!)

## Transport-

Improved local links from towns & villages to main arteries/ transport hubs, using local link/ Flexibus. Inter & intra agency collaboration & planning.

Walking trails linked to biodiversity sites- to promote local knowledge of natural heritage assets, children's early participation in their local environment, sharing of the local knowledge of the later life residents. Yes, visiting tourists can benefit from our 40 shades of green also!!

Free parking in the county towns & villages to encourage a "shop local" culture & support of SMEs.

## Environment-

Provide more bring banks, composting services.

Rainwater harvesting as integral part of housing development both urban & rural.

Solar harnessing via rooftop panels on public buildings, industrial, commercial & agricultural buildings in preference to photovoltaic fields throughout our natural landscape heritage.

Wave power offshore from our coastline, in preference to overhead power lines. We should be looking at power production rather than purchase & transmission of power from monopoly provider situation.

Local trails & walks to be developed & used, thereby preventing illegal dumping due to increased human presence ( Lough lane Ratoath), Broadmeadow river linear park from Ashbourne to Ratoath or vice versa depending on your preference of starting point!

## Tourism-

Opening hours, parking & toilet facilities to be improved at our national & international sites!

Improve local town & village heritage assets, thereby encouraging local buy in, protection, maintenance & provision of guiding services to international visitors.

Encourage the local later life residents to record their recollections of these sites & make them available via AV to visitors.

Link up heritage sites with walking or cycling trails, encouraging a healthy & knowledgeable county!

Joined up thinking, review the objectives & priorities of the current CDP- met or not met? If not, why not? What needs to be done differently? Factor in increasing population needs.

Thanks you for taking the time to read this snapshot of my vision for our great county & Ireland, when each county can be self-sufficient, intra & interdependent.

Implementation of any plan is critical, desktop will achieve nothing.

Yours sincerely,

Gillian Toole.

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