



*“Anyone can build a new building...Only some can build a new culture”*

[www.themilldrogheda.ie](http://www.themilldrogheda.ie)

## **NPF Submission**

**March 31<sup>st</sup> 2017**

“A continuation of ‘business as usual’ will not deliver the national vision and goals we all share, such as *improved living standards*, a desire for people to live in safe, *vibrant communities* and to experience life-long *health and well-being*”.

Simon Coveney T.D., Introduction to NPF

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## **About The Mill Enterprise Hub**

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 Phase 1 building, completed in October 2013 was a significant milestone and proved that the Drogheda region is truly entrepreneurial, and has delivered significant entrepreneurial support on the ground. The Phase 2 building was completed in December 2016, and has been equally successful with 95% occupancy projected from April 2017. Our Capital projects are now fully operational, comprising of a 15,000 sq. foot centre of excellence campus.

We intend to concentrate on our programme support, including the M1 Payments Corridor project, the objective of which is to position the North East as a destination for Payments and Fintech companies

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](http://www.M1PaymentsCorridor.com) is included in the

Governments 'North East Action Plan for Jobs', and in Louth Economic Forum's (LEF) Strategy. Work completed to date includes:

- 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), Government Agencies (IDA, Enterprise Ireland, and Academia (DCU and DKIT) to deliver the project's potential.
- *Next Stage: May 2017* – Apply for three year's Funding (€1.5 million) 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.

Breannan Casey, BDM at The Mill, was the NorthEast co-ordinator for The StartUp Ireland Gathering which was a key part of the Irish Government's Action Plan for Jobs 2015 strategy. This helped to cement our newly-formed position as a key player for enterprise support in the North-East. With over 400 events for startups across the country, the Startup Gathering proved to be the biggest startup event in the world in 2015. In February 2017, Breannán and his colleagues were selected to make a presentation to members of the Dail and Seanad on 'best practise regional enterprise centres'.

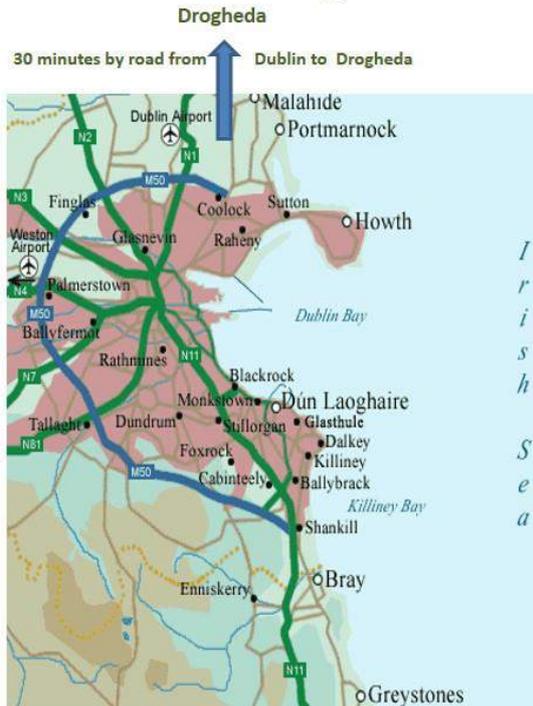
Additional positive impacts include:

- Ignyte participants won special recognition from national organisation, Young Social Innovators at their National awards, <http://themilldrogheda.ie/category/programmes/ignyte>
- Over 25 companies / Start-ups permanently based at The Mill
- Over 40 networking & training events for SMEs, with circa 800 attendees
- 100 free mentoring sessions with StartUps.

## Drogheda Region Profile:

Drogheda is the largest town in Ireland according to the most recent census (2011) with a population of 38,578. Of the 14,224 workers enumerated in Drogheda, 6203 worked outside the area.

### Drogheda – Part of Greater Dublin Area



**By Road:**

✓ Easily accessible from all parts of Dublin city & GDA via M50 and M1

	KM	Miles	Minutes
Dublin	46	29	30
Dublin Airport	37	23	20

**Dublin Airport**

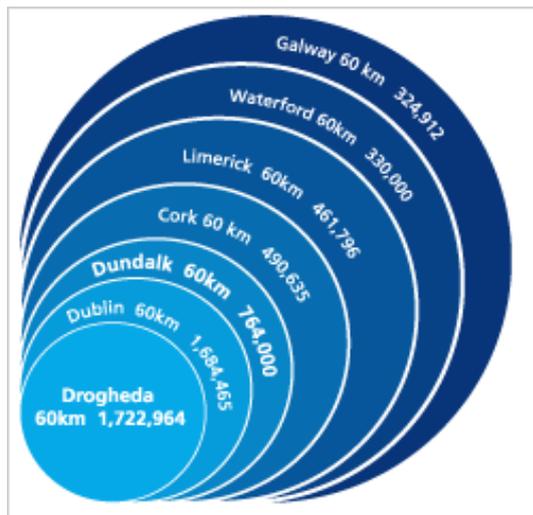
- ✓ 23 Million passengers per year
- ✓ 90 Airlines
- ✓ 150 Destinations
- ✓ 450 Daily Flights

Combination of High Speed Rail and Express Bus Services To & From Dublin

The daytime working population (resident and non-resident) of Drogheda was 11,368 with professional services being the largest industry.

The greater Drogheda region is unique in relation to National Spatial Strategy as it crosses two counties (Louth & Meath), and also traverses two Regional Assemblies. Louth has recently moved to the Eastern Midland Region Assembly but, in addition, is also represented on the Northern & Western RA due to past position on BMW assembly. This fact poses difficulties for the Drogheda and Entire North-East region as it's future spatial strategy is often based on information from one source, instead of focusing on the larger catchment area. Another example of a serious lack of cohesive approach is that Louth (and Drogheda) is included in the Northeast Action Plan for Jobs (including the proposed M1 Payments Corridor project), but is now based in the Eastern Midland Regional Assembly.

Drogheda's close proximity to Dundalk and Dublin increases its population within a 60km (1 hour commute) catchment area to over 1,700,000 – the **largest population catchment in Ireland**. Over 40% of the Drogheda area population are between the ages of 20-44 (a higher percentage than the national average) providing Drogheda and the surrounding area with a comparatively higher economically active population.



*(based on CSO 2011 figures – the most up to date).*

Drogheda's location in both County Louth and Meath, has traditionally had practical implications for enterprise support. For example, IDA and Enterprise Ireland have different 'regional' contacts in both counties – Louth was part of Border region, whilst Meath was in Mid-East region. At a very basic level, it would duplicate activities if Meath County Council established an additional Enterprise Centre in the Meath area of South Drogheda. Similarly, it is not practical for Meath and Louth to both have a separate FDI policy for the one town, which may or may not match each other. This creates the critical need for a cohesive and integrated urban development plan for the greater Drogheda area.

Drogheda town is the closest 'urban' area to citizens of the Meath-based South Drogheda environs. It makes practical sense that they gravitate to Drogheda in relation to accessing economic development support, or other non-economic government support. At the moment, they need to apply to Meath-based agencies to access that support, and can't access it if they decide to set up a business a couple of hundred meters up the road in the Louth part of Drogheda. This current situation is hindering entrepreneurial development in the greater Drogheda area.

Given the size of Drogheda, it is clear that it has not fully benefited from that distinction. Over the past thirty years, it has become a commuter town as illustrated with residents travelling to Dublin to work. If Drogheda is to truly prosper, it needs to have a local sustainable economy with the right mixture of FDI and indigenous businesses. To achieve this, it will need strong leadership, clear goals, and a cohesive plan for Drogheda, its environs, and its wider population. Based on past experience, the fact that two councils have to jointly deliver this leadership/cohesive plan, we believe the economic growth has not been as successful as it could have been.

A town is not just about economic development – people will only establish businesses (FDI or indigenous) in Drogheda if the living conditions are right. We need to encourage greater sporting, recreational, and artistic development in the town to ensure that a culture and identity is formed. For example, Drogheda Arts festival and Drogheda Maritime Port festival occur every year, and are supported by Louth County Council, and other private organisations on both side of the Louth/Meath border. These, and other festivals could be expanded if National agencies truly recognised Drogheda as the largest regional town. Additionally, Meath County Council's Arts focus does not cover the wider Drogheda area even though the southern environs of Drogheda, with a population of 6000, are within the Meath boundary. In effect, Meath County Council could support an Arts festival in South Drogheda, but are currently unlikely to do so due to the overlap of county boundaries. We expect Drogheda's population to continue to grow, and envisage additional difficulties / duplications if an effective solution is not found. For instance, it's not unrealistic to see the southern environs population increase from 6000 to 12,000 or 15,000 people in the mid to long-term future (according to census, Drogheda population increased by 13,000 between 1996 and 2011, from 25,282 to 38,578 people). By 2030/2040, will the division become even more pronounced with Meath delivering services to 15,000 people, and Louth delivering services to a potential population of forty to fifty thousand?

## Rural Economic Development Zone (REDZ) Report - Department of Environment

In 2015, The Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA) identified the need to take a more tailored approach to planning at both a regional and local level and recognised that this approach should not be restricted by current administrative boundaries. “The Commission believes this will require not only new systematic approaches but also a new cultural approach to planning that is focussed on participation and flexibility while centred on evidence of where the *potential for economic development is* situated.

“REDZ are defined as *functional rather than administrative* geographic areas that reflect the spatial patterns of local economic activities and development processes, i.e. they are the sub-county zones within which most people live and work. Research surrounding this element of the CEDRA report identified potential REDZ in all areas of Ireland and recommended the implementation of a pilot initiative that supports the formulation of a localised strategic approach to the development of REDZ.”



Drogheda council administrative borders are zig-zagged right across the town, and visitors to Drogheda (whether business investors or tourists) are most likely oblivious to whether they are in Louth or Meath. Drogheda is classified as a 'Flagship' town by the rural Economic Development Zone (REDZ), with a number of smaller towns of up to 10,000 population within a 10 mile radius.

The region is classified by REDZ as an Intermediate Rural Area, defined as "Intermediate rural areas are associated with the smaller cities, larger towns and geographically small REDZs which contain a town that accounts for a large proportion of their total population". According to the REDZ report, Drogheda is "Intermediate-Strong" which means that "Areas that are Weak or Intermediate on the Supply Side *may warrant enhanced enterprise support on the basis that they have available labour that may wish to work locally*; this is particularly true of areas that are Weak – Intermediate, Weak – Strong, Intermediate – Intermediate and Intermediate – Strong".

There is a risk that that East Meath could become marginalised with regard to economic development, as its within Drogheda REDZ zone, but it's current economic development plans are based on the fact that it's in County Meath. The Census statistics above show that East Meath exceeds the population of larger towns such as Navan & Kells that have traditionally been the focus for Meath economic development. The Mill is in a position to support delivery of economic programmes (in partnership with Meath and Louth County Councils) in the Drogheda REDZ region, as a source of support to Meath and Louth businesses.

*"With 35,960 people now living between Bettystown, Grange Rath, Mornington, Julianstown, and Stamullen, East Meath now has a larger population than Navan, the county town, with its 28,559 residents"* – Census 2011, <http://www.independent.ie/regionals/droghedaindependent/news/huge-rise-in-east-meath-population-27166404.html#sthash.k8iyacwi.dpuf> ). The article continues:

*" Bettystown, Laytown and Mornington (BLM) is home to 10,889 residents alone which means Bettystown has new town status according to the Census 2011 figures. Overall it has had a 21.3% jump in its numbers since 2006"*

The region needs to capitalize on it's proximity to Dublin, without becoming reliant on it – it needs to ensure that indigenous industries can access all the available support locally, including advice and funding.

### **NPF Objectives:**

This submission directly relates to NPF's core objectives:

- Facilitate improvements to people's quality of life and well-being:

The greater Drogheda region has seen high population growth, and an increase in commuters travelling back and forth to Dublin on a daily basis. Ensuring that Drogheda has a self-sustainable economy will increase quality of life of its residents, and ease commuter traffic congestion.

- Prevent further overdevelopment and sprawl:

Drogheda is the largest town in Ireland, and should be considered a complementary town 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

- Encourage population growth closer to where employment is located and is likely to be:

Drogheda and surrounding areas has one of the largest population increases in recent years. Since the 1970's, Drogheda has replaced its traditional manufacturing business with Professional services companies. The proximity (25 minutes) to Dublin airport, lower housing and office costs (compared to Dublin), and ability to attract employees from the wider population area is a unique advantage to Drogheda.

- Identify and support employment potential throughout Ireland, including greater regional employment growth:

The Mill Enterprise Hub is actively working on a number of Regional Enterprise initiatives – FoodTech, M1 Payments Corridor etc.

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.

- Achieve effective regional development:

Increase regional infrastructure to match potential:

- Develop Drogheda Port
- Extend Dart service to Drogheda
- Develop Northern Cross road to alleviate port traffic through Drogheda town centre, and divert straight to M1.
- Local bus service between business parks, cycle lanes etc
- Relieve development pressure on the Eastern part of the Country whilst protecting the key role played by Dublin.

Drogheda can complement Dublin by offering an alternative urban location that is large enough to be self-sustainable, and close enough to Dublin for supporting each other in relation to economic development.

- Reduce carbon emissions:

Effective Planning will ease motorway congestion by having less people commuting daily to Dublin City, and by having residents in North Dublin / East Meath/ Fingal completing a shorter commute to Drogheda for employment.

- Harness the planning system in order to maximise the role it can play in relation to climate change:

Avoid duplication of services across county councils and regional assemblies.

- Manage the planning and development process so that the right development occurs in the most suitable places and at the right time, ensuring sustainability and best use of scarce resources.
  
- Increase co-operation between Meath and Louth Council
- Ensure that Drogheda (and Louth) is not on diverse economic or infrastructure plans (for example sitting on Eastern Midland Regional Assembly, and having economic activity driven by Northeast Action Plan for Jobs)

## **NPF Priorities:**

### **People's Health & Well-being:**

*“With our high car dependency rate, over two-thirds of commuters travel to work by car, and nearly one in ten workers spent one hour or more commuting to work. This pattern of car dependence means that many city and particularly town-based businesses and services require significant car parking to ensure viability, being reliant on an increasingly dispersed car-borne catchment, as well as resulting in a widespread physical move towards out-of-town or edge-of-town shopping, business, leisure and service activity, undermining the vibrancy of many historic main streets and urban centres” NPF Summary, p7*

Due to proximity to Dublin, the Drogheda region has a relatively high level of commuters travelling back and forth to Dublin for more than one hour. We would like to see the DART train service extended to Drogheda train station, and an increase in the number of local buses servicing housing estates, business sites, and the town centre. There are currently very few local bus options for those wishing to travel by train which stifles ability to attract wider workforce from Dublin region. In addition, there is a need for extensive cycle / walk lanes throughout the region.

There is a boardwalk from Drogheda to the Battle of the Boyne site, but there is an additional need to extend the Boardwalk eastwards into East Meath.

### **Place-Making Strategy:**

*“the spatial pattern of Dublin’s influence now extends from Louth through Meath, Westmeath and Kildare to Laois, Carlow, Wicklow and Wexford, also partially affecting Cavan, Longford and Kilkenny. This spread of activity together with the objective of achieving more effective regional development elsewhere in Ireland makes it difficult to prioritise the needs of the Capital and our other cities. Dublin’s success as a city-region is a double edged sword. While it has enabled Ireland to compete in an international context, such success has also given rise to pressures in areas such as housing, transport and infrastructural requirements, which affect competitiveness.” NPF Summary P8*

Drogheda is an ideal situation (geographically & economically) to complement Dublin’s dominant economic position, and absorb some of the strain on it’s 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 towns in our hinterland to develop pockets of innovation.

The Mill already partners with DCU and DKIT on a number of projects including the M1 payments Corridor and our Illuminate Female entrepreneurship programme. We work across

Louth and Meath on the Refresh Boyne programme that supports creative, digital, and IT companies in the region.

Although Drogheda has experienced a fast pace of growth, it's potential is often underestimated by the general public and government agencies. It's crucial that Drogheda stakes a claim as a significant urban hub along the North-East / M1 Corridor. This will also assist greater economic development across the entire region including the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest town in Ireland, Dundalk.

*How might we develop one or more strong regional complements to Dublin that can address their whole city-region, including interactions between settlements?*

*Do we need to reform and strengthen administrative and governance structures so that they are capable of delivering the necessary alliances, collaboration and actions to build up our cities and their regions?*

It is imperative that Louth and Meath County Councils work closely to ensure that Drogheda and it's hinterland reach it's potential. In the past, each council may have had different priorities, and Drogheda has lacked a cohesive economic & social plan for all it's residents.

There is not enough suitable office accommodation for FDIs or expanding SMES. The IDA Business & Technology Park in Drogheda, which is based in County Meath, 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, and doesn't include Drogheda, despite it's many clear advantages.

### **Opportunities for the Regions:**

*“Effective regional development is about reducing disparities by embracing the spatial development opportunities specific to each of the regions and in particular the Regional Assembly areas. This requires choices to be made that result in sustainable solutions and means that NPF policies may look different from one region to another”. NPF Summary P9*

Louth (and Drogheda) has moved to the Eastern Midland Regional Assembly which presents opportunities to further complement it's proximity to Dublin, and inherent opportunity for companies that need to be close to Dublin, but not based in the City Centre. However, due to our past position in the Border Midland Assembly, Louth is also represented on the newly-formed Northern-Western Assembly.

As Drogheda is on the outer periphery of both Assemblies, it is crucial that our natural location as a significant urban hub is not overlooked by both assemblies. In addition, our economic direction is based on the Government’s Northeast Action Plan for Jobs, but our Assembly does not control any of that budget or have strong influence on how the Assembly’s plans will converge with NorthEast Action plan.

*What are the levers for effective regional development?*

*What is needed to be done to increase human capital at a regional level?*

*What regional ‘value proposition’ i.e. an innovation, service, or combination of measures and approaches can make the regions more successful and what are the means by which this can be achieved?*

*Are there strategic issues (i) across local authority boundaries or (ii) on an inter-regional basis, that the Regional Assemblies can co-ordinate to ensure more effective sub-regional and regional outcomes?*

*Are there funding opportunities than can support investment on a regional basis?*

An M1 ‘Digital Payments Cluster’ is a key part of the Government’s NorthEast Action Plan for Jobs which proposes the creation of a ‘Digital Payments hub’ in Drogheda, and along the M1 economic corridor, with the potential to create hundreds of sustainable new jobs.

## 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 Centre, Drogheda, as a means of utilising and adding value to the geographic concentration of ePayments and Fintech transaction companies along the M1 corridor (i.e. PayPal, Vesta, State Street, Yapstone 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.

Industry members of the M1 Steering Group include Vesta, PayPal, Sate Street, Aphix Software, Yapstone, and Coca-Cola International Services.

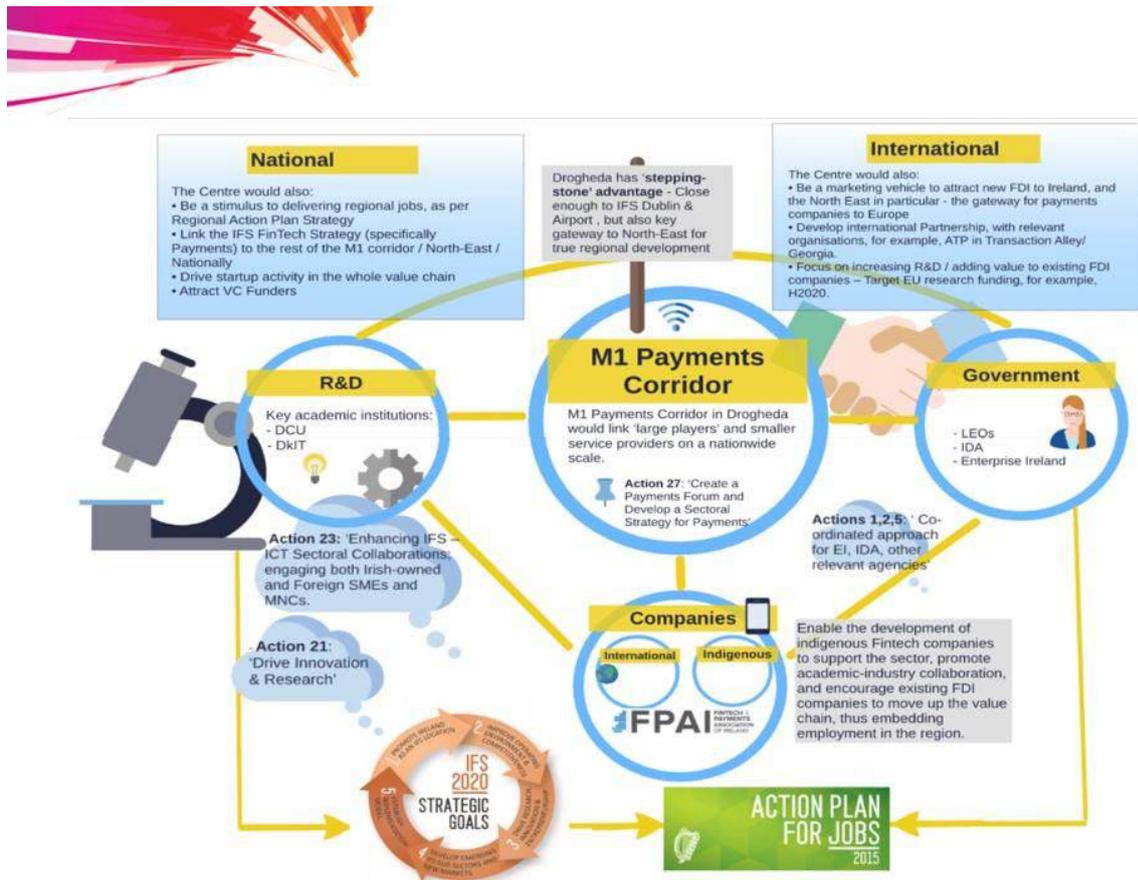
The three strategic pillars:

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

A regionally located National Payments Hub would extend from the existing IFSC and facilitate clustering of established and new payments companies engaged in innovation, and supported by the region's academic institutions. 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.

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 it will extend from Dublin Airport to Belfast.



### Food & Drinks industry / Foodtech:

Drogheda / Boyne Valley is synonymous with the Food & Beverage industries (Boyne Valley Foods, Coca-Cola, East Coast BakeHouse). We expect that to continue to increase as a strength, and to further develop the Agri-Tech sector.

### Reverse commuter trend:

Drogheda is in an ideal location to develop a critical mass of companies that can entice workers from entire region (1.7 million population within 60km), including Fingal/North Dublin

### **Ireland in an all-Island Context**

*“As with interaction between places, sectoral development and clustering of enterprise does not follow administrative boundaries and requires a coherent approach to cross border networks and spill-overs where relevant. There are opportunities to identify sectors with potential for cross-border/all-island clustering to effectively brand and market such strengths.*

*“What economic opportunities and sectoral clusters exist that can benefit economies within both jurisdictions and how can this be best captured and supported in the NPF? NPF p.12*

Drogheda is ideally located on the M1 Motorway with easy access to Dublin Airport, Belfast, and Dublin City Centre.

The M1 Payments Corridor project has significant potential to develop cross-border collaboration due to Northern Ireland’s strong sectoral expertise - First Derivatives in Newry, Citi Centre of Excellence in Belfast, Queens University currency/fintech expertise. This is particularly relevant due to the recent BREXIT result which could see

### **Integrated Land & Marine Development:**

*“Working together with the National Planning Framework, Ireland’s first Marine Spatial Plan will provide the strategic policy framework to encourage sustainable development and use of the marine environment to deliver economic and social benefits for island and coastal communities”. NPF Summary, P13*

- Drogheda Port Plans: Louth County Council are in the process of beginning to manage Drogheda Port, and there are numerous opportunities to develop it further.

- Drogheda Maritime Festival is a new successful festival, which recently won a Failte Ireland award
- Potential R&D Co-operation with DKIT
- Develop Boyne Boats / Pontoon / Boardwalk / Nature Reserve as tourism assets
- Develop the Northern Environs ring road that will enable traffic from Drogheda Port to avoid driving through the town centre, and directly access the M1. It will also increase opportunity to develop the North-East are of Drogheda for further economic development.
- Develop the Port district; tourism projects, housing, marine enterprise, and as central focus of Drogheda

### **Ireland's Unique environment / Climate Change & Sustainability**

*“Ireland has a rich vein of heritage, ranging from the iconic historic buildings and sites within our towns and cities, to the natural heritage of our countryside. The NPF provides an opportunity to refocus on the sustainable and adaptive reuse of our existing and historic assets, regenerate existing areas and reduce pressure for unsustainable expansion on the edges of our settlements. In particular, Ireland’s landscape offers a wealth of natural and cultural assets which support our quality of life and our visitor economy.”*

- Drogheda is “Gateway to the Boyne Valley”- There is a need to develop tourism, and position Drogheda as a natural location for overnight stays in region.
- Gateway to Boyne Valley for Food & Drink companies, Boyne Valley Food series

*What measures should be implemented in order to safeguard our landscapes, seascapes and heritage and ensure that Ireland continues to be an attractive place to live, visit and work?*

- Improve Water/Sewage systems and improve quality of swimming water in adjacent Irish Sea
- Create Cycle lanes and Boardwalk – similar to recent Boardwalk from Drogheda to Battle of the Boyne site)
- Improve Planning process for Housing Development in Drogheda – currently split between Meath and Louth Councils

## Equipping Ireland for Future Development – Infrastructure

“High-quality infrastructure is an important element of a modern society and economy. It strengthens economic growth through enhancing efficiency, productivity and competitiveness. It also underpins social cohesion through providing vital facilities for people in the form of schools, public transport, healthcare and housing.”  
NPF Summary, P16

- Drogheda needs ‘joined-up thinking’ across Councils in relation to schools, services, health, shopping centres, centres of population etc
- Drogheda should not have a mixed messages for FDI- As per LEF plan, Drogheda is seen as part of Greater Dublin economic zone, but can also offer multiple additional advantages.
- Develop Northern Cross Road to reduce town centre traffic, and allow Port traffic to bypass town centre, and divert straight to M1.
- The DART rail service should be extended to Drogheda, reducing costs of commuting, decreasing the need for cars, and offering a better solution for workers traveling from Dublin region to Drogheda.
- Develop a local bus service to office-parks from the Bus and Train station

*“Given that it is possible to make projections for population growth, household formation and anticipated housing requirements, it is timely to examine the relationships between housing demand, supply, location and supporting infrastructure as part of a strategic, long-term national approach to planning for people and place. The NPF offers an opportunity to do this and this will require a strategic view of likely housing demand and land supply at a national level to support coordinated investment across a number of Departments and Agencies. P16*

- Drogheda & hinterland is on continuous growth trajectory, but ancillary support services are currently limited. Drogheda needs a cohesive a plan that recognises it’s size and future growth, and which is not limited by county boundaries or Regional Assembly plans.
- The population of Drogheda is 38,000 as per Census 2011, but there are 80,000 people within 10km of Drogheda population. That larger 80,000 figure and how that will increase in near future, offers significant potential to develop another urban centre that complements Dublin and the surrounding region.

## **Enabling the Vision – Implementing the National Planning Framework**

*“The key implementation arrangements that are therefore identified at this point of the development of the NPF include the following:-*

- *Interdepartmental Drive: Through a NPF Management Team;*
- *Statutory Backing: Through the Planning and Development (Amendment) Bill 2016;*
- *Administrative Structures to Respond to ‘Real-world’ Issues, at regional and local levels:*
- *Investment: Capital Programmes of Government Departments and relevant public bodies and the use of ‘bid’ based systems that **incentivise cross-authority/agency working** in qualifying for targeted funding;*
- *Monitoring and Policy Feedback: Establishment of independent monitoring of the NPF to identify and put in place key data gathering systems that will measure NPF effectiveness and outcomes. Annual reporting to Government and to the Oireachtas could provide a formal oversight arrangement for the NPF”*

The Mill has significant reservations that Drogheda’s current size and future growth potential, will be stymied by having myriad agencies and government departments (Louth & Meath Council, Eastern Regional Assembly, Border Action Plan for Jobs etc) have partial control of our economic and social projects, with no high-level agency offering a cohesive strategic overview and associated budget.

Drogheda is ideally suited to “incentivise cross-authority/agency working’, but is overly-reliant on a large number of organisations working together on a single vision, unless pressure is exerted and additional enticements offered by the National Planning Framework process.

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