

From: Brian Hanratty [REDACTED]
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To: National Planning Framework
Subject: Submission to National Planning Framework
Attachments: MAP OF NORTH EAST WITH 25 MILE RADII 0917.pdf; NPF Submission Nov 2017 BH.docx

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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A chara,

I enclose a submission in favour of the full urban area of Drogheda (in both counties Louth and Meath) becoming the first city in the North East, bringing all commensurate benefits to businesses and communities in Counties Louth, Meath, Cavan and Monaghan. I further advocate that Drogheda also be accorded the role of Primary/National Development Centre, given its population, infrastructure and strategic location.

Drogheda is the only centre in the North East that has the critical mass to secure this status. On the enclosed map, the green circle represents a 25 mile radius out from Drogheda – there are circa 750,000 people within this easy commute ...all resident in the State.

The Red circle is a similar radius out from Dundalk, where there are just circa 250,000 people – BUT circa 50% of these reside in Northern Ireland, which is soon likely to be OUTSIDE the EU. It is shocking that the Draft Plan “bypassed” Drogheda, now the fifth largest urban centre in the State to favour a Dundalk-Newry alliance.

So, Drogheda is a hub for circa SIX times more citizens and is more significant in that regard than – not just Dundalk – but other centres such as Galway and Waterford. With scarce resources, the State should invest in this plan where a critical mass of citizens exist – Drogheda stands out as an obvious choice.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Drogheda has been a major commercial and residential location for centuries, having its own Parliament at one stage. Local Poet, Francis Ledwidge stated that “someone has said that Irish History in its most interesting stages has developed itself mainly along the Boyne’s banks.” That history and archaeology traces back to the Bru a Boinne World Heritage site, and more recently, the Battle of the Boyne – both on Drogheda’s “doorstep.” Little wonder Drogheda has the name and reputation of being “The Gateway to the Boyne Valley.”

Some of its more recent sons have included Dr. T.K. Whitaker and Thomas McLaughlin the prime mover behind the ambitious Ardnacrusha Power Generating Station at a time when the Irish Free State was in its infancy in the 1920s.

That age-old local tradition of innovation and enterprise carries on today, with successful businesses such as Boyne Valley Foods and Water Wipes competing internationally. The local business community has also shown its commitment to develop and foster emerging enterprises in “The Mill,” a business start-up centre that is host to circa thirty new businesses.

But – for reasons outlined below – Drogheda and environs has not secured Foreign Direct Investment pro rata to its size and relative to the size of its peers, e.g. Galway and Waterford, which have prospered through more favoured status by the State agencies tasked with job creation. In the North East, Dundalk – a smaller town – has secured significantly more FDI – possibly a consequence of the status it was accorded in the previous National Spatial Strategy and the presence there of the State job creation agencies – IDA; EI and LEO.

As a result, many locals are forced to make long and expensive commutes daily to work in the Dublin Area in an era when Climate Change urgently dictates the need for sustainability and jobs, educational, healthcare and other facilities that are close to and easily accessible to communities. Too many others are less fortunate and unemployed.

Adding to Drogheda’s problems, some years ago, the Drogheda Borough Council was abolished by then Minister, Phil Hogan. With Economic Development determined by Louth Co.Council (LCC) in Dundalk and Tourism Development managed by Meath Co.Council (MCC) in Navan, Drogheda’s future as the fifth largest urban centre in the State is largely determined elsewhere, and from the submissions made by both LCC and MCC to the initial stage of this consultation, it is clear that only “lip service” is advanced towards the resolution of the serious administrative limitations that impede the proper, orderly growth and “self determination” of the 83,000 people in the Greater Drogheda area. Indeed, it may well be that both Local Authorities wish to protect the “status quo,” to the detriment of communities in both Louth and Meath within the Greater Drogheda area.

Set against these issues is the Government’s critical need to spread economic activity and supporting infrastructure to key provincial centres at a time when Dublin faces congestion and high costs. Drogheda can play a key role in rapidly addressing this, given it already has much of the required infrastructure and a significant labour force both locally and drawing on other communities in the North East. For all the above reasons and others cited within this submission, the National Planning Framework must endorse Drogheda’s rapidly expanding area as a city and the North East’s Primary Development Centre. The 83,000 people locally and those close by in Louth, Meath, Cavan and Monaghan deserve nothing less – a city for the North East that also helps alleviate Dublin’s chronic congestion and rapidly rising costs.

2. SITUATION ANALYSIS: IRELAND'S (+DUBLIN'S) PROBLEM:

- **IRELAND – ECONOMIC MELTDOWN IN 2008**
- **CARRYING SUBSTANTIAL DEBT BURDEN SINCE BUT ECONOMIC RECOVERY UNDERWAY**
- **HOWEVER, STATE STILL HAS SCARCE RESOURCES**
- **SOME REGIONS SEEN TO PROSPER BETTER THAN OTHERS**

AND:

- **SIGNIFICANT POPULATION GROWTH**
- **PRESSURE ON SCHOOLS, HOSPITALS etc**
- **PROBLEMS MOST EVIDENT IN DUBLIN/WITHIN M50 HOUSING BECOMING UNAFFORDABLE; RENTS ROCKETING**
- **CONGESTION AND COSTS MAKE DUBLIN UNATTRACTIVE**
- **UNLESS VIABLE ALTERNATIVES EXIST – LOSS OF FDI**
- **GOVERNMENT HAS LIMITED € CAPACITY TO INVEST**
- **EMERGING CLIMATE CHANGE ISSUES – incl. COMMUTING**

URGENT NEED FOR:

- **ATTRACTIVE and VIABLE SOLUTIONS THAT WOULD APPEAL TO OVERSEAS INVESTORS**
- **AFFORDABLE SOLUTIONS**
- **MAXIMISE USE OF EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE**
- **SOLUTIONS TO ADDRESS AREAS OF POPULATION GROWTH**

1. DROGHEDA – A KEY PART OF THE SOLUTION

- **IRELAND'S LARGEST TOWN – and GROWING RAPIDLY !**
- **NOW 5th LARGEST URBAN CENTRE IN THE STATE**
- **POPULATION NOW GREATER THAN WATERFORD – urgently needs to become MAJOR INVESTMENT CENTRE/job creation**
 - **Drogheda and environs > Current Population 83,000**
 - **Population by 2040 approaching 250,000**
 - **Within 25 miles/short commute (now) 750,000**
 - **Within 40 mile catchment (now) 1,700,000***

NOTE:

***(1) No other urban centre in the State (incl. Dublin) has such critical mass.**

(2) Limerick boasts having 500,000 people within a 60 minute drive – Drogheda has 50% MORE within half the distance (see accompanying map which confirms that – unlike Dundalk which has a much smaller count (circa 250,000) within 25 miles50% of whom reside OUTSIDE the State (and shortly, are likely to reside OUTSIDE the EU). It is GUBU that the Draft NPF Report ignored Drogheda and supported a Dundalk-Newry alliance, especially given the likelihood of BREXIT.

(3) Many of these/other details are described in the submission of the Drogheda City Status Group using the expertise of Dr. Brian Hughes, an expert Chartered Planning & Development Surveyor who consults in Urban Economics and Demography – which I would refer readers to.

(4) At an RIAI Colloquium held in Drogheda in 2015, several architects and planners present independently and separately projected Drogheda and environs would have a population of 250,000 by 2040-2050.

- **READY NOW and REQUIRING MINIMAL CAPEX – e.g.**
 - *on M1 Dublin-Belfast Motorway and Railway**
 - *own Port and close to Dundalk/Greenore/Warrenpoint/Dublin ports (and should Dublin Port relocate to outside Balbriggan during the lifetime of Ireland 2040, Drogheda becomes even more strategic)**
 - *fastest Broadband in Ireland**
 - * local water infrastructure can handle population growth**

2. DROGHEDA – A KEY PART OF THE SOLUTION (continued)

- **“DE FACTO” CAPITAL OF THE NORTH EAST and key REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTRE**
- **WILL BE FIRST CITY IN THE NORTH EAST and just minutes by road or rail to EU border with UK in a post-BREXIT environment**
- **ADJACENT TO DUBLIN (and nearest provincial centre to Dublin Port Tunnel) WITHOUT HI COSTS + CONGESTION**
- **HAS AN ABOVE AVERAGE PROFESSIONAL POPULATION**
- **HAS SUBSTANTIAL LAND BANKS FOR COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT**
- **“BOOKENDED” BY UNIVERSITY TO THE SOUTH (DCU) and INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY TO THE NORTH (DKIT)**
- **IRELAND’S MAIN AIRPORT <30 minutes away and two regional airports to the North**

CURRENT CHALLENGES – WHICH THE STATE CAN RESOLVE:

- **GREATER DROGHEDA CATCHMENT currently divided by Louth/Meath Border which runs through the inner suburbs.**
- **AS A RESULT, POPULATION DATA SPLIT BETWEEN CO.LOUTH and CO.MEATH, THUS CONCEALING DROGHEDA’S REAL SIZE – AND INHIBITS PROPER AND ORDERLY DEVELOPMENT**
- **AS A CONSEQUENCE, MANY ANOMOLIES e.g. TWO LOCAL AUTHORITIES; TWO GARDA Divisions etc.**
- **RECENT BOUNDARY REVIEW LEAVES MAJOR ISSUES UNRESOLVED – AND GROWING. For example, in the Co.Meath part – “the South Drogheda Environs,” Meath Co Co confirm 91.9%**

commute to work, underlying the failure of this “enclave” and the failed IDA Park located within it.

3. DROGHEDA – STEPS/WAYS TO RESOLVE THE IMPASSE:

- **RESTORE BOROUGH COUNCIL ASAP AS AN IMMEDIATE FIRST STEP TOWARDS CREATING A CITY COUNCIL**
- **KEY LOCAL GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS REQUIRED incl.**
 - * **Locate/Appoint Assistant County CEO in Drogheda as precursor to appointing a City Manager**
 - **Appoint Town Architect – no County Architect currently in Louth! (even Westport, a much smaller centre, has a Town Architect)**
 - **Establish local LEO Office/IDA/EI Presence (e.g. at The Mill) (All these agencies & staff currently located in Dundalk)**
 - **Tourism/Visitor Development Manager/Officer (currently managed/resourced in Navan)**
- **TO CREATE GREATER EFFICIENCY IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT (as evidenced already in Tipperary etc.) MERGE LOUTH & MEATH COUNTY COUNCILS.**

This removes the emotional and political objections in Louth and Meath to Drogheda being attached to one or other county. It also facilitates the more efficient planning for, and operation of Local Government services across an enlarged area. It would also create a stronger “foil” against a burgeoning Dublin City/County on its border.

(NOTE: This has already been successfully undertaken in Northern Ireland, where Local Government boundaries “straddle” counties – e.g. Derry and Strabane District Council. Several Local Authorities in the Republic have also been rationalised – e.g. North and South Riding in Co.Tipperary have merged; City & County Councils have merged etc. The recent Drogheda Boundary Review appears to have neglected or dismissed both these developments, north and south in declaring that the status quo regarding Drogheda’s boundary should remain, this prolonging a chaotic, inefficient situation which discriminates against Drogheda’s future.

4. DROGHEDA – STEPS/WAYS TO RESOLVE THE IMPASSE:
(Continued)

- **IN THE SHORT TERM, THE NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK NEEDS TO DECLARE DROGHEDA A KEY NATIONAL PRIMARY DEVELOPMENT CENTRE FOR INVESTMENT IN AN AREA WITH RAPID POPULATION GROWTH THAT IS ATTRACTIVE FOR FDI.**

- **IN TANDEM, STEPS NEED TO BE TAKEN TO CREATE THE FIRST CITY IN THE NORTH EAST, THUS ADDRESSING THE CURRENT “FRACTURED” SITUATION.**

5. RELATED ISSUE – SCALING UP CRITICAL MASS FURTHER

- **Louth Co.Council in their earlier submission, have advocated the creation of a “Linear City” running from North Dublin to the Border on the coastal side of the North East. The concept of a “Linear City” has the potential to cause confusion alongside the emerging City of Drogheda. It is also a relatively unknown concept.**

In contrast, the Board at Drogheda’s The Mill have successfully pioneered the concept of the “M1 Payments Corridor” in attempting to attract Payments businesses along the M1 motorway between Dublin and Belfast.

To further strengthen that branding in Ireland (.v. Northern Ireland), consideration should be given to branding the North East Coastal Region (from North Dublin to the Border) along the lines of:

- **Silicon Alley/Silicon Alley Europe***
- **Silicon Frontier/Silicon Frontier Europe**
- **Digital Alley/Digital Alley Europe**

***A Silicon Alley has existed in Manhattan for start-ups. This could lead to confusion and suggest an Irish version was also confined to start-ups.**

5. RELATED ISSUE – SCALING UP CRITICAL MASS FURTHER (Continued)

Should this North East Coastal area be branded, it could be “incorporating the M1 Payments Corridor” as it would be unwise to confine this sub-region’s focus on Payments businesses alone.

This North East Coastal Corridor coincides with a 25 mile radius, of which Drogheda is at the centre of a population catchment of 750,000, bookended by Dublin City University (DCU) to the south and Dundalk Institute of Technology (DKIT) to the north. The entire catchment resides within the State, thus largely benefitting private and corporate citizens there.

With Drogheda as the central “hub” of this catchment, it effectively would create a significant “economic centre of gravity” 45Km north of Dublin, benefitting communities throughout the North East, many of whom are in easy commuting distance of Drogheda; alleviate Dublin’s congestion and satisfy the needs of Foreign Direct Investors.

(State Street/IFI in their submission re the NPF confirm that their Drogheda location is ideal, with employees having an easy commute from an even larger catchment area, encompassing several counties including Down, Armagh, Cavan, Monaghan, Louth, Meath and Dublin).

As can be seen on the enclosed map, a 25 mile radius radiating out from Dundalk reaches far fewer – circa 250,000, of which circa 125,000 reside in Northern Ireland, so for the State, any investment directed there would be much less efficient.

6. CONCLUSION

Drogheda is the only centre with the critical mass to successfully become a city for the North East and a Primary Development Centre in the National Planning Framework and can fulfil a role as the central hub/focus to any sub-regional initiative in the North East Coastal Corridor. It’s potential as a National Development Centre was recognised as far back as the Buchanan Report in the 1960s. The NPF has been positioned as an “evidence based” framework. Despite several submissions articulating that evidence in the first phase of this process, Drogheda did not even get a

mention in the Draft NPF Report. Now the evidence is clearer than ever, thus clearing the way for the North East's first city + Primary/National Development Centre. Failure to provide this for the four counties in the North East Border area would be a major error, distorting development.

B G HANRATTY



10 November 2017

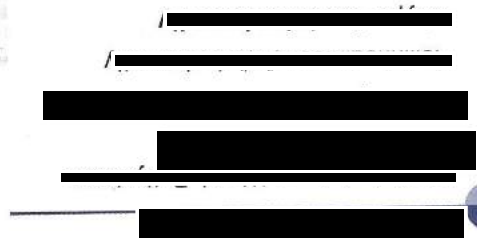
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BRIAN HANRATTY



APPROX
2.5 MILE
RADIUS

Now: UK/IRL
BORDER
Future: UK/EU
BORDER

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