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Given that this plan will become the sole legal reference for all future discussions on city planning it makes absolutely no sense to omit the sixth largest urban centre in the country from the national framework. Drogheda is the gateway to the most historic part of Ireland, the Boyne Valley and it is on the main route linking Dublin and Belfast. Ease-of-access and the ability to distribute goods is vital to a region's development and no other regional town can match Drogheda in this respect as it occupies a prime location on the North/South Corridor with air, sea and motorway links within 20 minutes of the town.

Despite Drogheda's young and educated population and the availability of high-speed broadband both of which make the town an attractive target for FDI which would in turn help create local jobs. But Drogheda needs to be included in the National Planning Framework to accomplish this and we need new thinking to address anomalies such as an almost-empty IDA Business Park which is unable to access BMW (Border Midlands Region) funding because it is in the wrong county.

No other town in the state is split in half by a toll like Drogheda which impacts on both visitors and locals alike . The tolls on the slip roads in and out of the town must be removed. The Port Company, Irish Rail and road hauliers should form a regional transport committee to properly plan the free movement of goods. The Port Access Northern Cross Route, long identified as a vital infrastructure project for Drogheda must finally be actioned and completed.

In local government, Drogheda Borough Council should be reinstated to properly manage this large urban area, as many will agree that since the Council was abolished services have disimproved and we would love to see Drogheda gaining city status and having a city council. Drogheda's population has grown at a faster rate than the other five large urban centres. If we are planning into the future, this fast expanding population must be planned for.

The idea of planning is to anticipate events and plan accordingly. If the Minister is serious about balanced regional development, as is mentioned in the foreword to the framework, then Drogheda needs to be reconsidered for inclusion.

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