

From: Brian Hanratty [REDACTED]
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Sender: Brian Hanratty, [REDACTED]

INTRODUCTION

Drogheda has been identified as a key economic growth centre as far back as the Buchanan Report in the late 1960's. It has seen rapid population growth, and in parallel, significant investment in infrastructure such as upgrading the Belfast-Dublin rail line; the arrival of the M1 motorway and the ongoing expansion of the local hospital which serves the region.

However, as the town and hinterland "straddles" the counties of Louth and Meath, it has failed to secure inward investment commensurate with its population and infrastructure, as its scale has been "hidden" in population data, divided across the two counties.

The recent Drogheda Boundary Review did the town - and Ireland - a major disservice by concluding that the status quo should remain rather than having the town run by ONE administration ... this option was described as the preferred one in the executive summary. That report also claimed to have looked at models internationally before concluding that - effectively - a "two town" approach was the preferred recommendation rather than recognising Ireland's largest town with its ongoing population growth which will position Drogheda as a city in the near future.

The most effective manner to achieve this status and achieve other benefits and efficiencies is to merge Louth and Meath Local Authorities into one larger entity. This effectively creates ONE Drogheda and avoids emotional and political "squabbles," and would be for the greater good of all citizens in the Greater Drogheda area - who currently number circa 80,000. On the global stage, Ireland then has another city it can promote globally, with its own unique features and benefits.

Over 600 years ago, Drogheda was divided into two towns, one on each side of the river. The enlightened leaders at the time saw the benefit of merging to create one town, unlike the authors of the current Boundary Report effectively endorses "disorderly" planning as to date, there has been poor collaboration between the two local authorities. The report also failed to recognise Laytown, Bettystown and Mornington as suburbs.

Finally, another concern is that any Ministerial and other comment re Ireland 2040 refers to moving economic activity away from Dublin and the Eastern Seaboard. This would discriminate against the North East counties of Cavan, Meath, Monaghan and Louth - where Drogheda is the key population and infrastructure centre and can serve as a main centre for economic growth circa 50 Km to the north of the city, displacing some investment away from Dublin for the betterment of citizens in the North East.

KEY PLAYERS

In considering a plan, the needs of at least the following need to be addressed

- Government (including costs and benefits of investment in infrastructure etc)

Already, Drogheda has much key infrastructure including road, rail and port. Unlike other large centres such as Galway, Athlone, Sligo or Waterford, it is just 30 minutes commute to Ireland's busiest airport at

Collinstown.

- Citizens

More than most other large centres, Drogheda has a very large commuter element as people travel to work in the Dublin area, given the lack of employment opportunity locally. Over 22,000 cars travel in this way through the local village of Julianstown daily; and Irish Rail state that Drogheda is their busiest station outside Dublin

- Investors, especially overseas ones seek staff and infrastructure

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