

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 31 March 2017 12:14
To: National Planning Framework
Subject: Submission of Thomas Byrne TD

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Dear Sir/Madam,

Please find the submission of Deputy Thomas Byrne TD in respect of the National Planning Framework with specific regard to county Meath.

Kind regards,
[REDACTED]

Population and Housing:

It is vital that the National Planning Framework take cognisance of the growing population of county Meath.

I cautiously welcome the news that county Meath has seen a population increase of 5.9% since 2011. I encourage and implore the Department and Council to reflect this increase in population with an increase of local services such as, housing, schools, health care and recreational facilities. The increase of 5.9% is one of the largest increases of population in the country. Our population now stands at almost 195,000, which is an increase of 10,807 people living in county Meath. It is imperative that investment is delivered to every corner of the county for essential services. The largest increase within the county was in the Kilbree area, which encompasses the north side of Ashbourne town. Other areas which have experienced significant growth are Cople/Beamore/Mornington. I note that areas in North Meath have also shown an increase in population, which is contrary to other recent trends. Vital services such as schools and hospitals, good quality transport infrastructure and broadband in rural areas need to go hand in hand with these increases in population.

We must prioritise the provision of houses in county Meath to reflect the housing crisis that exists throughout the country. I welcome that the new County Meath Development Plan will encompass a specific housing strategy.

We must also recognise the need that exists for playing pitches and recreational facilities throughout the county. The council must develop a plan for the provision of playing pitches and park space across the county.

Settlement:

I note the proposed Variation Number 3 to the County Development Plan. The variation, if it takes effect, suggests changing the development status of Stamullen from "Small Town" to "Moderate and Sustainable Growth Town" by 2019 subject to approval by the Midlands and Eastern Regional Assembly and the Government. The proposal to change the development status of Stamullen would see the population of the village increase from 3,130 (Census 2011) to somewhere in the range of 5,000 - 15,000. This is a significant proposal which will have a massive impact on the local community.

It's important that any future development in the village be backed up with adequate services for the local community and that they consent to this. People do not want a return to the past where developments were constructed without the necessary support services being put in place in advance. I have previously called on Meath County Council previously and do so again to engage fully with the residents and community groups in Stamullen.

The development plan must allow rural villages to thrive and allow villages to serve the housing needs of the local community.

Economic Development, Enterprise, and Employment:

I would encourage the Department and the Council to engage and practically assist (where necessary) the Small to Medium industries that exist throughout the County. These local businesses and industries have contributed in no small way to the economic recovery in the region. It is imperative that the Council deliver a plan that keeps local businesses in towns and villages. The Council might investigate the car parking charges that are currently enforced in towns throughout the county. Perhaps local shopping initiatives could be assisted and promoted by the Council. The Council must also continue the trend of attracting Foreign Direct Investment into the county. I would like to commend the Council for their proactive role in securing FDI to our region in recent years such as SHIRE and FACEBOOK.

Tourism

The Department must support and assist the local communities that have invested so much in the local tourism products throughout the county. I believe that we not making the most of our heritage sites. The Council must get 'hands on' with communities in offering assistance and advice as to how best improve the tourism experiences at our heritage sites.

A balance must be achieved between protecting and sustaining our built and natural heritage but also recognising that communities must grow and develop. A specific plan must be adopted to deal with residents and their families who live in the Bru na Boinne area and who wish to continue to live in this very historic area that they are afforded an equal opportunity.

Transportation and Movement

The Department, in conjunction with the Council need to deliver a major examination, in respect of the N2 road because of ongoing safety issues and continued inadequacies. The general effectiveness of the road as a national route must be investigated.

We must also recognise that the extension of the train line must be delivered to Navan. As the Council will be aware there had been a proposal under the Transport 21 programme to reopen the Navan rail line from the existing M3 Parkway Station to Navan. However, this project was deferred due to the reduction in the capital investment programme. The proposed extension consisted of 34km of railway line with stations located at Dunshaughlin, Kilmessan, Navan town centre and a further station on the northern edge of Navan. This project was costed in a 2011 feasibility study at €332 million. The project is absolutely crucial to be progressed if we are serious about rail in this country. In relation to the Navan rail line, I wish to point out that any proposed station in the Dunshaughlin area must be located within a short walking distance of the town. The NTA should also not rule out the extended train line serving the large town of Ratoath before making its way to Dunshaughlin and on to Navan. While I am calling for the reinstatement of the Navan rail line, many Kells residents feel that when and if Navan is being constructed, it would be cost effective and beneficial to extend to Kells. I agree with them.

I also wish to emphasise the importance of Gormanston station in serving East Meath. It has effectively been downgraded over the years due to high fares and reduced services. It should immediately be placed in the Dublin short hop commuter zone. Recently, Sallins and Naas and Kilmessan were put into the short hop zone and it is completely unfair to Gormanston that, while it is similarly distanced from Dublin, it has vastly higher fares. Please also note that Gormanston serves the commuter town of Stamullen, which Meath County Council wishes to expand dramatically.

Waste Management:

I wish to point out the recent decision to allow almost an entire year's quota of waste be dumped at Knockharley landfill, Kentstown, Co. Meath. This decision resulted in almost a year's waste into the above dump being deposited in the space of a few weeks. No public consultation had been engaged in or any public input whatsoever. I understand that significant national Government pressure was placed on the Council to allow this. Local residents have enough to put up with without the traffic and smell implications of this. The dump is located beside homes and a range of community facilities. It is simply not fair on them and no regard was had for them. It is totally improper for Meath to be allowed to become the dumping ground for the waste of Dublin and it is about time Dublin got its act together to dispose of its own waste. I think this decision also gives an unfair head start to the dump owners in their planning quest for a massive expansion of the dump, which is now underway.

There are other waste disposal issues throughout the county including Duleek and Kilcock which the council must address.

Environment:

The Department needs to implement a solid policy on dealing on dealing with planning applications for industrial windfarms in across the country. There have been applications to the national planning authority in recent years to construct huge wind turbine farms which are not accepted by the local community. The Department must protect the residents of these communities. I also note there have been a number of applications to the local authorities for planning permission for Solar Farms. As there are currently no national guidelines for the development of these solar farms, developers are required to observe the objectives of the local county development plan.

Please acknowledge receipt of this submission.

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