

I wish you guys would take Drogheda more seriously as a major town. It should be top of anyone's list of places with a big potential for renovation and development to the benefit of the whole country.

I am a poet, novelist and artist who has lived in Drogheda for 14 years now. I am an active participant in its thriving creative community of writers, artists and musicians for which it is noted in the country and admired by other towns. I find it a very attractive and historic town with a striking new vista round every corner that should be exploited more than it is currently as a major tourist attraction in its own right as well as a tourist hub for the Boyne Valley. As a Tourism Chief with power to encourage (by grants) or oblige landlords and owners to do up and let or sell the many vacant houses and shops and derelict premises. The entry route into town, for instance, is very unwelcoming with its obviously empty and derelict properties. This alone could make a major contribution to the country's housing problem.

With its excellent transport links by road and rail to Dublin and Belfast, to Dublin Airport and Port, excellent schools and hospital, it should be a prime location for business and industry and well worth receiving greater emphasis from the IDA. I am extremely surprised that it has not attracted more foreign companies already. It is the friendliest place I have ever lived and local people seem to have accepted immigrants into the community in a very positive way..

Things that Drogheda would be well capable of handling include a third level educational establishment, In view of the number of writers and artists here, maybe a College of the Performing and Written Arts – possibly a British or American university would like to establish and arm here.?

Another need is a transport supremo with the necessary finance and common sense to install mini-roundabouts and traffic lights and more effective signage to ensure the traffic flow. The town is blessed with wide roads but planners have allowed excessive on-road parking that has necessitated an ineffective one-way system. I'd also like to see more acknowledgement of the long history of the town over many centuries by history trails and plaques/graphics boards with visuals and text about the docks, the religious establishments, where the old street markets were, the unusual and distinctive buildings and fine vernacular architecture. The town also misses out from lack of a good mid-sized theatre. Efforts should be made to encourage landlords to reduce commercial rents to attract businesses into the centre of the town as planners have pushed them out to outskirts.

A major urban conglomeration here could relieve a lot of the pressure on Dublin and maybe forestall the need to develop a new town in the near future. I really think these ideas should be taken seriously.