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8th November, 2017

A chara,

I am writing to you to express my concern at the glaring omission of Drogheda from the draft national planning framework. In a response to a speech made by our local Senator Gerald Nash in the Seanad on 24th October, Deputy Damien English stated, "*We purposely stayed away from naming new cities and large towns. This is about trying to plan this country in a sustainable way*". I thought that the idea of planning was to anticipate and prepare accordingly. The NPF accomplish neither for Drogheda, Ireland's largest town. To include us in the 'areas with a population of 10,000+' is beyond a joke.

Drogheda has shown an amazing ability to develop and grow over the years despite being continually disregarded by a succession of governments. As this plan will become the sole legal reference for discussion on city planning for the next 20 years it beggars belief that the sixth largest urban centre in the country is omitted from the NPF.

There have already been some wonderfully detailed submissions to the NPF by Drogheda City Status Group, Drogheda and District Chamber and The Mill Enterprise. The 'evidence based' submission by Dr. Brian Hughes gives all the reasons why Drogheda needs to be made Ireland's next city and states that now is the right time for this to happen. I fully support these submissions and wish to add the following points:

1. Drogheda occupies a prime location on the North/South corridor with excellent rail, motorway, air and sea links which gives it ease of access and the ability to distribute goods.
2. Drogheda has a young and educated population and needs investment to provide local jobs for its citizens.
3. The introduction of high speed broadband to Drogheda makes the town an attractive target for Foreign Direct Investment.
4. Investment to expand Third Level Education in Drogheda could lead to the introduction of industry-specific training centres.
5. Removal of the toll roads, main and slip-roads, to address regional transport issues will greatly benefit Drogheda as a whole.
6. In conjunction with no. 5 the long awaited Port Access Northern Cross Route needs to be completed so that the Port Company, Irish Rail and road hauliers can properly plan the free movement of goods. There are also housing planning issues tied in with this which could potentially help with a considerable lack of housing in Drogheda due to years of non-investment.
7. The reinstatement of Drogheda Borough Council is vital to properly manage Drogheda's ever growing population. Drogheda's population is growing faster than the other five urban

centres in Ireland. This fast expanding population must be planned for. This would be with a view to Drogheda gaining city status and having a city council.

8. Drogheda straddles Co. Louth and Co. Meath. Indeed there are housing estates on the Dublin Road area of the town where next door neighbours live in 2 different counties due to the town boundary. Last week I spoke to a resident who was unable to access a broadband service which was being installed as he lived in Drogheda Co. Meath. His neighbour in Co. Louth could get it but there were problems with Meath County Council in digging up the road. A farcical situation. Citizens who live in Drogheda, Co. Meath actually live in East Meath but live, shop, work, attend school, visit their GP, drive the roads etc. in Drogheda town. Planning for Drogheda as a city will develop the area to the benefit of all citizens in the greater Drogheda area. The perfect working example of this is the city of Newry which straddles Co. Armagh and Co. Down. Drogheda City offers the opportunity for Meath and Louth citizens to keep their identity and wear their county jersey, but reap the benefits of city status in the area.
9. The introduction of the Living Cities Initiative would be of enormous benefit to the rehabilitation of Drogheda centre. West Street and especially Narrow West Street with its many listed buildings, have fallen into decline over the past few years due mainly to lack of investment in the town. The town centres 'golden quarter mile' could be restored to its former glory with the Living Cities Initiative.
10. Drogheda is a unique and historical medieval walled town with a great potential for tourism. It is the natural Gateway to Ireland's Ancient East and full of historical areas such as Millmount, The Old Abbey, Magdalene Tower, St. Peter's Church with St. Oliver Plunkett's head to name but a few. It is a stone's throw away from World Heritage Site Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth and the Battle of the Boyne site at Oldbridge. It offers excellent hotels and restaurants. The recent landmark decision by our local councillors to close St. Laurence's Gate to traffic and develop it as a tourist amenity has added another string to Drogheda's bow. Drogheda deserves investment to cherish and maintain our built heritage.

A succession of governments have failed us as a town for many years. We have been stripped of our local government and were completely disregarded in the NSS for Ireland in 2002. The time has come for Drogheda to stand up and be counted. If our government, and the minister, is serious about balanced regional development, as is mentioned in the forward to the framework, then Drogheda needs to be reconsidered for inclusion.

Is mise le meas,

Ann McVeigh.

Proud Citizen of Drogheda.