

Submission to National Planning Framework

The Greater Drogheda Area – Designation as a City & Primary Development Centre

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From: Mr. Padraic Kierans, Managing Direct, Anglo Printers Ltd.

Address: Mell Industrial Estate, Drogheda, Co. Louth.

I am an employer in Drogheda, Co. Louth and have been in business here since 1983, employing almost 50 people. In that time we have seen many changes in the area, but significantly the growth in population has expanded to such an extent, that Drogheda is Ireland's largest town. The CSO figures from the most recent Census indicate that Drogheda (Borough in Co. Louth only) has a population north of 41,000 inhabitants. When you include the huge area of Drogheda which lies across in the Meath border, then the population rapidly expands to almost 80,000 people. Within a 60 km radius from the centre of Drogheda, the population jumps to an incredible 1.4m people. This is the highest population density area bar none on the island of Ireland.

In response to the first draft of the National Planning Framework, which failed to recognise Drogheda as one of the largest urban areas in the State, I wish to propose that Drogheda and its full surrounding urban area in both Louth and Meath be counted and administered as one single unitary urban area and designated as a City & Primary Development Centre in the National Planning Framework / Ireland 2040.

The Greater Drogheda Area has a population in the region of 80,000 people straddling both counties Louth and Meath when Drogheda itself and the adjoining Laytown, Bettystown, Mornington (LBM) urban area are combined. It makes no sense for these areas to be counted in isolation of one another in either statistical or planning terms. Doing so leaves a huge gap in the services and infrastructure required and actually provided to what is actually one of Ireland's largest urban areas and deprives the State of an alternative Primary Development Area to counter congestion in Dublin. The Greater Drogheda Area including the town itself plus LBM should be counted as one contiguous interlinked urban area for statistical and planning purposes.

The area surrounding Drogheda stretching from South Louth down through the town itself and on to the Meath Coast is a contiguous urban area that forms a natural geographical entity which should be recognised as one city.

Until such time as the size and population of Drogheda is recognised properly through the recognition of its real status issue the area will not reach its full potential for the attraction of FDI. Drogheda is on a par in terms of surrounding infrastructure and location with parts of Fingal such as Swords and the Airport Zone and major urban centres such as Galway and Limerick but attracts much less Foreign Direct Investment. Drogheda has the potential to be a major economic hub for the North East region with a critical mass of employment opportunities which would end the daily commuting misery into Dublin City for thousands of people in the Louth/Meath/Northern County Dublin areas and reduce inbound traffic and rail line congestion on the M1/M2 and Northern Rail Line services, using the outbound lanes on the M1/M2/N2/R152 and empty outbound morning trains and buses on northern commuter services.

Drogheda's true size both in urban spread and population size needs to be represented more accurately in census data and national statistics which inform Government and Local Authority decisions on planning, resource allocation and prioritisation for public services and promotion of foreign direct investment. Drogheda's absence from the previous National Spatial Strategy should

be addressed by nominating the full urban area as a city and Primary Development Centre in the National Planning Framework.

Yours sincerely

Mr. Padraic Kierans
Managing director
Anglo Printers Limited
Mell Industrial Estate,
Drogheda,
Co. Louth.